

MEXTESOL

Journal

Special Issue

*The Internet and
Technology in EFL/ESL*

2010

Vol. 34 No. 2

MEXTESOL Journal

Editor-in-Chief

*Ulrich Schrader
Free Lance Consultant*

Associate Editor for Refereed Articles

*M. Martha Lengeling
Universidad de Guanajuato*

Associate Editor for Non-refereed Articles

*Saúl Santos
Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit*

Special Issue Editor

JoAnn Miller

Production Editor

JoAnn Miller

Volume 34, Number 2, 2010

The MEXTESOL Journal is a publication of the Mexican Association of Teachers of English.

El MEXTESOL Journal es una publicación de la Asociación Mexicana de Maestros de Inglés.

Printed in Mexico

Impreso en México

Editorial Board MEXTESOL Journal

Fátima Encinas
Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Karen Englander
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California

Douglas Goodwin
Universidad de Guanajuato

Juan Manuel Guerra
Q.T.L.A. Quality Teaching Language
Advisors, Monterrey

Nancy Hayward
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

L. Edith Herrera Díaz
Universidad Veracruzana-Veracruz

Ma. del Carmen Márquez Palazuelos
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California

Patricia McCoy
Universidad de las Américas-Puebla

Luz María Muñoz de Cote
Universidad de Guanajuato

José Luis Ramírez-Romero
Universidad de Sonora

María del Rosario Reyes Cruz
Universidad de Quintana Roo

Clare Marie Roche
Universidad Regional del Sureste. Oaxaca

Ma. Guadalupe Rodríguez Bulnes
Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León

Josefina Santana
Universidad Panamericana, Guadalajara

Ma. Guadalupe Santos Espino
Universidad de Guanajuato

Peter Sayer
University of Texas at San Antonio

Kathryn Singh
San Diego State University

Rebeca E. Tapia Carlín
Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Aurora Varona
Universidad Veracruzana-Xalapa

Pia Maria White
Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes

Editors:

Editor-in-Chief

Ulrich Schrader
Free Lance Consultant

Associate Editor for Refereed Articles

M. Martha Lengeling
Universidad de Guanajuato

Associate Editor for Non-refereed Articles

Saúl Santos
Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit

Production Editor

JoAnn Miller
Free Lance Consultant

The Mission of MEXTESOL

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.

More information about MEXTESOL is available at the website:
www.mextesol.org.mx

The Mission of the MEXTESOL Journal

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.

La revista MEXTESOL Journal se publica tres veces al año, en abril, agosto y diciembre.

MEXTESOL Governing Board, 2010-2011

Maria Trapero Dávila	President
José Manuel Ortiz Velasco	Vice-President
Lilia Zulema Gaytán Martínez	Secretary
Fernando X. Gómez Orenday	Treasurer
Aurora Varona Archer	Parliamentarian
Virginia Ortiz Gómez	President of Ethics Committee
María Isabel Arechandieta Ramos	President ex-officio

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

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

MEXTESOL JOURNAL

Volume 34 / Volumen 34

Number 2 / Número 2

2010

Contents/Contenido

Editorial Policy	<u>7</u>
Manuscript Guidelines MEXTESOL Journal	<u>9</u>
Technology and Teacher Training: Assessing Incidental Learning on In-service Courses.....	<u>11</u>
<i>Gerrard Mugford, Universidad de Guadalajara, México</i>	
Virtual Portfolios in Blended Learning: Assessment and Collaboration.....	<u>25</u>
<i>Marisol Guzmán Cova, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla</i>	
The Use of Corpus Linguistics to Teach Cognates to Spanish-speaking English Language Learners	<u>33</u>
<i>María del Carmen Barrera Cobos, Universidad de las Américas Puebla</i>	
Ethnic Media Technologies enhance Chinese English as Second Language Learners' Intercultural Identities	<u>57</u>
<i>YuLin Feng, Valentin Ekiaka Nzai, Department of Bilingual Education, Texas A&M University-Kingsville</i>	
The Effect of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on Grammatical Accuracy of EFL Students	<u>77</u>
<i>Sasan Baleghizadeh, Elnaz Oladrostam, Shahid Beheshti University, G.C., Tehran, Iran</i>	
Learner Response to Oral Homework in Numbers and Words	<u>87</u>
<i>Elba Méndez García, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla</i>	
Wii Want Interaction – WiiMote Board: Una Alternativa Económica Para Un Pizarrón Interactivo y Sus Aplicaciones En La Enseñanza Del Inglés.....	<u>103</u>
<i>Tessifonte López Reynoso, José Luis Ramírez-Romero, Depto. Lenguas Extranjeras, Universidad de Sonora</i>	
Using Web 2.0 Tools for English as a Foreign Language Teacher Reflective Practice	<u>113</u>
<i>Ruth Ban, Barry University and Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, Robert Summers, University of Alabama</i>	
Getting them to Read Outside of Class: Let Moodle be the Enforcer!	<u>123</u>
<i>Thomas N. Robb, Kyoto Sangyo University, Japan</i>	
WIKIS + TECH = WIN-WIN COMBINATION	<u>131</u>
<i>Valeria Guerra, William Machado, Alianza Cultural Uruguay Estados Unidos, Uruguay</i>	
The Skype Advantage: An Anecdote of a Teacher's Journey to Discover a Tool that Allows Students to Reach Their Learning Objectives Despite Their Busy Schedules.....	<u>137</u>
<i>Fabiana Hernández, Alianza Cultural Uruguay-EEUU, Pocitos-Punta Carretas Branch</i>	

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.

Submission Guidelines: In order to facilitate the publication process, if possible, submissions should first be sent by e-mail to the address of the Journal. The article and any graphics must be written using Microsoft Word and sent as an "attachment." Please specify if you are submitting for a **Refereed** or **Non-refereed** article.

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.

Journal Correspondence:

National MEXTESOL Office

Fax/Telephone: (55) 5566-8774, (55) 5566-8749

E-mail: nationaloffice@mextesol.org.mx

Política Editorial

La revista MEXTESOL está dirigida al maestro de inglés en México y en América 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 más 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.

Correspondencia:

Oficina Nacional MEXTESOL

Fax/Teléfono: (55) 5566-8774, (55) 5566-8749

E-mail: nationaloffice@mextesol.org.mx

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>

Technology and Teacher Training: Assessing Incidental Learning on In-service Courses¹

GERRARD MUGFORD, UNIVERSIDAD DE GUADALAJARA, MÉXICO²

Abstract

In this paper I investigate whether the use of technology on in-service teacher training courses results in increased learning in terms of incidental and independent learning. Given that working teachers have different knowledges, histories and experiences, traditional courses may not be able to respond adequately to a wide range of professional needs and teaching contexts. By analysing an MA in TEFL and an in-service course for university language teachers, I examine how course participants viewed their learning progress. Through the use of questionnaires, I conducted qualitative research as to whether on-line technologies provided opportunities for incidental learning i.e. learning that is not the primary focus of the course. To achieve this objective, I present the specific investigative context, the research findings and the subsequent analysis and conclusions.

Resumen

En este escrito investigo si el uso de la tecnología aplicada a cursos de entrenamiento para maestros en servicio incrementa su aprendizaje de forma incidental e independiente. Dado que cada uno de los profesores en servicio cuenta con conocimientos, historias y experiencias diferentes, los cursos tradicionales podrían no responder adecuadamente al amplio rango de necesidades profesionales y contextos de enseñanza que éstos requieren. Mediante el análisis hecho a una maestría en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera y a un curso para maestros de lengua a nivel universitario, exploro la manera en la que los participantes percibían el progreso de su aprendizaje. Para ello, recogí información cualitativa a través de cuestionarios cuyo propósito era revisar si la tecnología en línea les proveía de oportunidades de aprendizaje incidental; es decir, aprendizaje cuyo enfoque principal no fuera el del curso. Para cumplir con mi objetivo, presento el contexto específico de la investigación, los hallazgos, el correspondiente análisis y las conclusiones.

Introduction

Whilst students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) often willingly embrace new technologies both inside and outside the classroom, language teachers have sometimes shown reluctance and a lack of enthusiasm. Furthermore, the use of new technologies has often focused more on the novelty value of the latest software rather than on obtaining feedback from the learners themselves with regard to the effectiveness of such programmes. To investigate teachers' own perceptions of on-line learning and their own progress, I have conducted research with teachers currently undertaking on-line in-service teacher training courses offered by a Mexican public university.

¹ This is a refereed article.

² g_mugford@yahoo.com

To answer how teachers perceive their own progress, I first describe how the new technologies respond to teachers' needs. Secondly, I explain the characteristics of two on-line programmes which were the focus of this study. Thirdly, I present the results of qualitative research which examined how teachers perceive deliberate, incidental and independent learning on the courses. To achieve this objective, I present the specific investigative context, the research findings and the subsequent analysis and conclusions.

EFL Teachers and Technology

Whilst pre-service teacher training courses are largely carried out in the traditional classroom setting with instructors leading and guiding the class, it is often difficult to organise in-service training courses in the same way for three main reasons. First of all, teachers, even within the same institution, work long and varied hours and it is difficult to schedule a mutually agreeable course schedule and timetable. Secondly, teachers are often scattered across a wide geographical area and travelling times undermine the feasibility of running such courses. Thirdly, teachers have different and contrasting needs and therefore it is difficult to organise homogenous groups. To meet such challenges, on-line distance courses offer a way for teachers to study from their own location, in their own time and enrol in courses that satisfy their own personal needs.

In-service on-line teacher training courses can be found from proficiency level to B.A. and postgraduate levels and are offered both by private and public universities. For reasons of space, I will not describe different on-line courses but suffice it to say, courses often share the same characteristics: they are part-time; students follow a course programme; resources can be downloaded, and there is on-line contact with a tutor. A popular platform for offering these courses is Moodle, which offers a range of facilities from uploading assignments and sharing resources to forums and chat. Students can see their grades and raise doubts with their tutor. Moodle offers both synchronous (real time) communication (e.g. chat) and asynchronous (delayed) communication e.g. message boards. The two modes of communication promote both immediate and delayed interaction with other course members and tutors. Other platforms are available for teacher training courses. However, they tend to offer the same features and tools as Moodle.

On-line Learning

As important as technology is, it will not in itself promote learning if it does not offer new ways of, and insights into, interacting with content. Whilst on-line content may well be similar to that found in a traditional classroom, the learning methodology ought to offer learning experiences that respond to course participants' individual needs especially in terms of peripheral and unintended contextualised learning. On-line learning should allow participants to take charge of their own learning which I discuss in terms of deliberate, incidental and independent learning.

Deliberate or intentional learning involves following the stated aims and objectives of a course and success is measured in terms of satisfactorily

completing course content. Hatch and Brown define 'intentional learning as being designed, planned for, or intended by teacher or student' (1995, p. 368). The underlying problem with deliberate or intentional learning is that, in the case of vocabulary for instance, students may not learn enough words in the classroom to meet their communicative and/or academic needs. Paribakht and Wesche note that 'direct vocabulary instruction cannot account for a significant proportion of the words learners acquire' (1997, p. 175). Depending on their communicative needs, fluent language users may need up between 15,000 and 20,000 words in the target language. Hatch and Brown argue that fewer words are learned through direct learning than through incidental learning. If this is indeed the case, incidental learning may offer advantages over intentional learning with regards to online courses.

Hatch and Brown loosely define incidental learning 'as the type of learning that is a byproduct of doing or learning something else' (1995, p. 368). Incidental learning assumes that students learn by being exposed to language that is not an integral part of the course content. Nation closely associates context with incidental learning, arguing that 'Incidental learning via guessing from context is the most important of all sources of vocabulary learning' (2001, p. 232). Examining current teaching methodology towards vocabulary learning, Coady concludes that 'the vast majority of these words have been learned through context rather through direct instruction' (1993, p. 16 - 17).

However, incidental learning should not just be seen in terms of learning vocabulary. Thornbury argues that incidental learning also comes about through carrying out tasks and understanding instructions:

*This often takes the form of **metalanguage** – that is, the language that is used to talk about language. Grammatical items such as verb, preposition, present tense and linker are examples of metalanguage. So, too, are functional terms, such as inviting, refusing, apologising and complaining. Understanding task instruction language (sometimes called **process language**) is particularly important for learners working without the assistance of a teacher (2002, p. 43).*

With regards to overall reading skills, incidental learning has been investigated as to whether it effectively aids academic and communicative abilities such as 'the subskills of summarizing a text, finding the main idea, identifying rhetorical structures in a text' (Coady 1993, p. 5).

Whilst Coady and Nation argue direct learning should lay the foundations for subsequent incidental learning, this paper examines whether on-line students themselves engage in incidental learning and how useful they feel it is. Given that the study involves teacher training courses, the teachers themselves should be in a strong position to reflect on whether the course has produced opportunities for incidental learning.

Whilst technology and vocabulary development is the focus of current research, Martinez and Schmitt argue that 'formal research into the effect various technologies have on vocabulary acquisition is still in its infancy' (2010, p. 1). In a special issue of *Language Learning & Technology*, approaches to vocabulary learning are examined through the use of video (Sydorenko 2010), electronic

games (deHaan, Reed, and Kuwada 2010) and mobil phones (Stockwell 2010). Incidental learning and technology has been examined by Yoshii (2006) in a multimedia environment. However, the effect of independent vocabulary learning on on-line courses appears to be a less researched area.

Research Methodology

Given the lack of research into technology and teacher training courses in Mexico, I attempt to understand how teachers perceive the use of such technology. To examine whether on-line courses promote individual learning, this paper sets out to answer the following research question:

Do on-line courses promote independent, incidental and unplanned learning?

If on-line courses do indeed enhance individual learning, they would enjoy a distinct advantage over teacher-controlled classroom teacher training courses. To further explore this overarching question, teachers were asked through the use of questionnaires to reflect in general terms on whether they engaged in incidental and independent learning during on-line courses. In a second questionnaire, teachers were asked to consider specific categories of incidental learning. Data collection took place on-line and respondents could answer in English or Spanish.

Data were processed and analyzed by, first of all, examining how the participants reflected on their overall learning in terms of planned and unplanned learning, incidental and independent learning. Given the qualitative nature of the study, I wanted to understand whether participants thought they took charge of their own learning. In the second stage of the analysis, I focused on the specific strategies and techniques participants employ when engaging in incidental learning.

1. To investigate whether they engaged in incidental learning, teachers were asked the following questions in the first questionnaire (see Appendix 1):
2. How useful is the course in promoting independent learning i.e. being able to learn on your own?
3. How useful is the course in promoting deliberate learning i.e. learning course content?
4. How useful is the course in promoting incidental and unplanned learning i.e. learning extra or additional information that is not the main focus of the course?
5. How do you feel your learning is progressing? Do you feel comfortable / challenged / frustrated etc. with your learning?

Whilst subjective in nature, these questions asked course participants to look beyond course objectives and reflect on their own learning processes and achievements. The first question asks whether the teachers feel comfortable learning on their own or whether they need the face-to-face contact of the traditional classroom. The second question asks whether participants feel they are learning what they ought to be learning i.e. achieving the course objectives. The third question asks participants to reflect on whether their learning reflects individual needs and interests. Finally, course participants evaluated their overall learning.

The second questionnaire (see Appendix 2) focuses on the strategies and techniques participants employ when engaging in incidental learning. Questions 1 to 4 asked teachers to reflect how they negotiate new words e.g. in terms of guessing from context and whether they actually remember new words. Questions 5 to 7 investigated the strategies participants employed when they came across new vocabulary e.g. ignoring the word or looking it up in a dictionary. Finally, questions 8 to 12 asked participants to determine which language skills had been strengthened and whether these skills had increased through incidental language e.g. reading instructions and teacher feedback.

Whilst participants' answers are difficult to quantify, their observations and perceptions may increase the face validity of on-line programmes and point towards levels of learner satisfaction with such training courses.

In attempting to understand whether on-line courses promote incidental and independent learning, I could have approached the problem by trying to quantify individual vocabulary learning and produce a 'statistical digest of ... responses (Cameron 2001, p. 14). However, given the difficulties in trying to 'measure' such learning and analyse 'the relationship between variables' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 8), I adopted a qualitative approach which attempts to identify 'the intentions, beliefs and propositional attitudes' of teachers (Scott & Usher 1999, p. 4). Qualitative research is interested in identifying patterns and practices and providing insights and understandings. Such an approach allowed me to examine whether the course participants felt that they had benefited from incidental learning.

Participants

As I was grappling with the question regarding whether on-line learning courses promote incidental and independent learning, the two groups (MA in TEFL and an in-service course for university language teachers) in my university provided an 'opportunity sample' (Brown & Dowling 1998: 29) to gauge course participants' perceptions of their own vocabulary learning. The results do not reveal substantial differences between the two groups because teachers shared the same profile in terms of age, language level, professional context etc. Course content provided different learning experiences in terms of incidental and independent learning.

All the participants in the study were experienced university language teachers either studying for an MA or undertaking a teacher training proficiency course. There were five teachers studying for their MA and 20 teachers studying on the proficiency course. All the teachers studying for their MA participated in the study along with 13 teachers studying on the proficiency course. The teachers are all Mexican and between 25 and 55 years old. The respondents were equally divided between women and men. The participants in this study have all been given pseudonyms in order to provide them with anonymity.

The teachers studying for their MA were contacted in the middle of their second semester, after two months of study, when they were studying a module on language description. They reported no problems using on-line technology.

Students followed a programme, uploaded their work and received their grades on the Moodle platform. Most of the course content, which consisted of authentic readings, was on the Moodle platform. Sometimes students had to find some of their own sources.

The teachers studying on the proficiency course had studied for two months when the research took place. Their learning platform was similar to that of the teachers studying for their MA. All their readings, which were authentic, could usually be found on the platform. For teachers studying on the proficiency course, it was their first time using on-line technology and they had been given a short explanatory course on how to use the platform. The platform had a 'Doubts' link, which was also connected to the tutor's e-mail account, through which they could ask for clarification and extra assistance. Furthermore, course participants could ask for technical help at the self-access centres that were located on their respective university campuses.

Findings and Results

Independent Learning

In response to Question 1 in which participants were asked to reflect on whether the course had fostered individual learning, both groups of teachers emphasised the need to take responsibility for one's own learning. This view was captured by Luz Maria, a teacher studying for her MA, who said: 'The course definitely promotes independent learning since there's nobody directly teaching or explaining the content. It is us who seek for the material, read, analyze, reflect and write the essays and learn.' Whilst finding relevant sources had been a considerable challenge on both courses, participants generally agreed that searching for such sources added a more personal dimension to the learning process. This view was expressed by Lucio, a teacher studying on the proficiency course, who asserted that '... the only problem is the struggle to find the resources sometimes, but other than that I think it is a good challenge for all teachers working by ourselves that makes it more interesting and more personalized.'

Another recurring problem was both the physical and psychological distance from other students as expressed by a teacher studying for his MA, Pedro, who reported: 'For me it has been difficult since the isolation is real. I have the companion of my classmates; the point here is that they are not in real time connection.'

Numerous advantages were highlighted by the respondents including freedom and flexibility in managing one's own time and increased self-esteem because, as Raul, a teacher studying on the proficiency course, reported: '*Es muy bueno porque te das cuenta de lo que eres capaz*' ('It is very good because you realize what you are capable of doing').

Deliberate Learning

Respondents did not report any decrease in the degree of deliberate learning on the on-line course and felt that it was same as that of the conventional

classroom. Some course participants went further and said that the on-line mode gives students time to reflect on course content, especially with regard to one's own teaching context, and to work at one's own pace. Marta, a teacher studying for her MA, argues that on-line may actually enhance deliberate learning: 'All the activities we have made, forum interactions, illustrations and reflections have been very useful to gain and achieve the purpose of the module by promoting a conscious learning'. Meanwhile, Alejandro, a teacher studying on the proficiency course, asserted that deliberate learning took on another dimension in on-line courses: 'I manage different types of learning according to the way I learn, because, now I take into consideration that I am multi task.'

Incidental and Unplanned Learning

All respondents were aware of the incidental and unplanned learning that took place whilst they were studying. Alvaro, a teacher studying on the proficiency course, felt that on-line courses encouraged incidental learning 'because when the tutor suggests some readings, we can always follow some links or references to obtain more information even when it is not related to the main topic.' Meanwhile, Samuel felt that on-line courses expected more from students: 'This course demands more than the readings and the assessments. Requires a deep study of the topics we're learning at the moment, it means extended readings.'

Marta went as far as to say that it is 'part of the online learning process to acquire and expand your resources in a way to better understand the content of the main course.' Luz Maria claimed that incidental learning was an important aspect of on-line courses:

I would say that incidental learning is a consequence of this kind of learning model. Since we have to look for the material if it is not provided or for extra material, this means reading different authors; so there are a lot of possibilities to find additional information that sometimes results more useful than the bibliography provided. This is due to the amount of information presented by the author, the point of view, the complexity some authors write with, and other details.

At the same time, Pedro underscored one of the disadvantages of incidental and unplanned learning in that 'sometimes they distract us a little since we are in a hurry trying to upload the essays in time. In my case, when I have some free time I go back to those subjects.'

Perception of Individual Progress

Whilst they all felt that they were progressing on the on-line courses, respondents also pointed out the demands and frustrations they faced. Time management was one of the most important challenges because 'sometimes time runs out' (Alejandro) and because of 'the short time to read' (Karla, a teacher studying for her MA). Brenda, a teacher studying on the proficiency course, had another take on time: 'I'm not paying too much attention to grammar and reading skills and so on. But I sure lose track of time when I'm working on tasks because I'm really enjoying this.' Difficulty in finding the relevant bibliography was also often mentioned as one of the frustrations of undertaking an on-line course. For instance Luz Maria

commented 'The negative side is that sometimes the recommended bibliography is not available and the extra material is not as useful as expected...'

Respondents frequently reported that they went through a range of emotions when undertaking assignments. Lucio said that 'I feel very comfortable but challenged at the same time and sometimes frustrated'. Berenice, a teacher studying for her MA, expressed the same sentiment: she felt comfortable, challenged and frustrated at the same time:

To be honest, I think I have and keep having a mixture of those feelings in each assignment. That is, sometimes I feel comfortable with the topic and I find it easy to express my ideas, I sometimes feel frustrated since there are topics I do not have an in-depth knowledge of and in each assignment I feel challenged since there is something that creates the need in me to keep reading and analyzing in order to give a better analysis each time.

Vocabulary Learning

All the respondents said that they had learned new words on the on-line course although there was a marked difference between the achievements of proficiency course teachers who stated that they had learned between 11 and 30 words and MA students who reported that they had learned over 50 words. Alvaro said that 'I think that this course has helped me in acquiring more academic vocabulary and to discipline myself on reading' whilst Samuel said 'the course has helped me to increase my vocabulary related to methodology.'

Most teachers said that they could guess the meaning of new words which they claimed led to actually learning the word. Successful guessing was mainly achieved by respondents relying on their own schemata i.e. personal experiences and knowledge of the world.

The vast majority of participants said that they did not ignore words with unknown meanings. Their reasoning is summed up by Berenice who argued that 'I believe that a word can change the intended meaning of a sentence or text, so if I ignore it I might understand something different...' Her argument runs contrary to contemporary teaching practice which claims that EFL users should not try to understand every word.

When going beyond guessing and finding out the meaning of words, respondents said that they consulted dictionaries particularly those on the internet. They reported learning a wide variety of metalanguage including *aphasia, chunks, dichotic, drills, jig-saw activities* and *utterance* and compound nouns such as *information gap, reasoning gap activities* and *peer observation*. More significant was the range of general vocabulary words that teachers said they learned including: *abide, approach, acknowledge, aging, attrition, attainment, commonsensical, comprised, concealed, drawbacks, due, enhance, hinterland, myriad peer, subsumes, utmost* and *wintry*.

Incidental Learning Achievement

When asked specifically about what they had learned through incidental learning, respondents went well beyond vocabulary. Teachers reported that their

grammatical knowledge and reading skills had increased significantly along with their ability to assimilate new information. A sizeable majority said that the course had increased their perception of reading as an enjoyable activity.

Respondents reported that course content was not the only way through which they had increased their reading ability and vocabulary skills. Most teachers said that they had increased language knowledge and linguistic ability through reading instructions and explanations and, to a lesser but still important degree, from feedback or contact with tutor.

As to whether they had developed their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and reading more through seeing language used in context than through the deliberate study of language structures, respondents were equally divided. Perhaps Alvaro sums up a common view:

At this point, I think that I can assimilate better by reading, by the context. Sometimes when I find a new word, I usually assume the meaning by the context and if I have to use the dictionary I just go ahead and check it.

Teachers, more often than not, combined seeing language used in context with the deliberate study of language structures.

Data Analysis

The two on-line courses altered teachers' perceptions towards learning as they participated in novel modes such as forums and chats. In terms of course content, incidental and unplanned learning resulted in teachers, on an individual basis, being able to notice those aspects of the course that held a special interest for them whether it was new vocabulary, enhanced reading skills, increased familiarity with the structure of academic texts or learning new information. On-line courses appeared to promote more independent learning and allowed course participants, to a certain degree take charge of their learning.

In specific terms, on-line learning gave teachers opportunities to build up a large quantity of vocabulary through incidental learning. However, it remains to be seen whether new technologies such as on-line learning can help students reach a target of 15,000 - 20,000 words. The teachers studying on the proficiency course were only reporting an increase of 11 to 30 words during two months of study. Given that teachers were using authentic readings and none of the respondents were near-native speakers, the rate of learning new vocabulary as perceived by the respondents themselves may not have been sufficient to achieve advanced fluency levels and direct pedagogical help may be required. For example, respondents said that they often used their own schemata and external sources such as dictionaries when coming across a new word. But few teachers reported employing their existing linguistic knowledge e.g. understanding of synonyms and antonyms when negotiating new vocabulary. Therefore, teachers may need direct intervention from a tutor or traditional classroom teacher in order to activate linguistic resources. On the other hand, it might be argued that the respondents were undertaking teacher training courses (rather than English-language courses) and therefore the teachers would not have been expected to learn new vocabulary.

It is important to note that vocabulary learning is only one of the benefits of on-line incidental learning. Teachers increased their negotiating skills and their ability to guess the meaning of new words. The teachers' assertion that correct guessing resulted in learning the word reinforces arguments in favour of incidental learning. More importantly, from engaging in incidental learning, teachers appeared to question the existing status quo and develop their own learning strategies. This was evident when respondents said that they did not ignore every new word they came across. More importantly, teachers appeared to be aware of their own learning processes. For instance, Alvaro said: 'At this point, I think that I can assimilate better by reading, by the context. Sometimes when I find a new word, I usually assume the meaning by the context and if I have to use the dictionary I just go ahead and check it.'

The case for incidental learning is reinforced by teachers' comments that instructions, explanations and interaction with the course tutor increased their language ability. Whilst this may also be the same case in the traditional classroom, on-line students seem to have developed a greater awareness of these sources of new language and vocabulary.

Conclusion

In answer to the research question as to whether on-line courses promote independent, promoting incidental and unplanned learning, the answer is a cautious and tentative yes. However, it remains to be seen whether this results in sufficient progress for students to achieve advanced communicative or academic levels without deliberate learning.

Whilst it is difficult to quantify incidental learning, all respondents felt they had benefited from unplanned learning. These courses appear to give students a real sense of progress in terms of enhanced reading skills, and increased familiarity with the structure of academic texts. In the final analysis, if students feel that the more they invest in a course of study the more they get out of it, then on-line courses may be a powerful motivator for students and teachers to further increase their knowledge and use of English.

References

- Brown A. & P. Dowling (1998). *Doing Research / Reading Research: A Mode of Interrogation for Education*, London: Falmer.
- Cameron D. (2001). *Working with spoken discourse*, London: Sage.
- Coady J. (1993). 'Research on ESL /EFL Vocabulary Acquisition: Putting it in Context' in Huckin T, M. Haynes & J. Coady. *Second Language Reading and Vocabulary Learning*, Norwood: Ablex, pp. 3 - 23.
- Denzin N. K. & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.)(2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- deHaan J., W. Reed, and K. Kuwada (2010). 'The Effect of Interactivity with a Music Video Game on Second Language Vocabulary Recall' *Language Learning & Technology*, <http://llt.msu.edu/vol14num2/dehaanreedkuwada.pdf> June 2010, Volume 14, Number 2, pp. 74 - 94 (accessed June 8, 2010).
- Hatch E. & C. Brown (1995). *Vocabulary, Semantics and Language Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Martinez R. and N. Schmitt (2010). 'Invited Commentary: Vocabulary', *Language Learning & Technology*, <http://llt.msu.edu/vol14num2/commentary.pdf> June 2010, Volume 14, Number 2, pp. 26 - 29 (accessed June 8, 2010).
- Nation I. S. P. (2001). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paribakht T. S. and M. Wesche (1997). 'Vocabulary enhancement activities and reading for meaning in second language vocabulary', in **Coady** J. & T. Huckin, *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 174 - 200.
- Scott D. & R. Usher (1999). *Researching Education: Data, Methods and Theory in Educational Enquiry*, London: Cassell.
- Stockwell G. (2010). 'Using Mobile Phones for Vocabulary Activities: Examining the Effect of Platform' *Language Learning & Technology*, <http://llt.msu.edu/vol14num2/stockwell.pdf> June 2010, Volume 14, Number 2, pp. 95 - 100 (accessed June 8, 2010).
- Sydorenko T. (2010). 'Modality of Input and Vocabulary Acquisition' *Language Learning & Technology*, <http://llt.msu.edu/vol14num2/sydorenko.pdf> June 2010, Volume 14, Number 2, pp. 50 - 73 (accessed June 8, 2010).
- Thornbury S. (2002). *How to Teach Vocabulary*, Harlow, Essex: Pearson.
- Yoshii M. (2006) 'L1 and L2 Glosses: Their Effects on Incidental Vocabulary Learning', *Language Learning & Technology* <http://llt.msu.edu/vol10num3/yoshii/> September 2006, Volume 10, Number 3 pp. 85 - 101 (accessed June 8, 2010).

Appendix 1

1. How useful is the course in promoting independent learning i.e. being able to learn on your own?
2. How useful is the course in promoting deliberate learning i.e. learning course content?
3. How useful is the course in promoting incidental and unplanned learning i.e. learning extra or additional information that is not the main focus of the course?
4. How do you feel your learning is progressing? Do you feel comfortable / challenged / frustrated etc. with your learning?

Appendix 2

1. Have you learned any new words during the course? Yes / No
 If you answered yes, how many words approximately have you learned?
 Please tick the appropriate answer:
 a) 0 – 10 _____ b) 11 – 20 _____ c) 21 – 30 _____
 d) 31 – 40 _____ e) 41 – 50 _____ d) 50+ _____

2. Can you guess the meanings of new words successfully as you are reading?
 Please answer yes / no _____

3. When you guess do you principally use your knowledge of:
 - a. Spanish ()
 - b. Loan words (i.e. words that are more
 5. or less similar in Spanish and English ()
 - c. English ()
 - d. Personal experience and world knowledge ()

4. Do you think that guessing the meaning of a new word correctly results in actually learning the word and remembering it? Yes / No

5. Do you find yourself ignoring words that you don't know? Please answer yes /no _____

6. When you see a new word in a reading or in the instructions whose meaning you don't know, what do you usually do? Please tick the appropriate answer.
 6. a. Ignore it and keep reading
 7. b. Look it up in a dictionary
 8. c. Ask somebody for its meaning
 9. d. Look it up on the internet
 10. e. Other: _____
 - 11.

7. Do you find yourself looking up new words in a dictionary? Yes / No.

8. If you answered yes, can you mention any words that you have looked up on this course?

9. Thinking about your individual progress and development, has the course helped you to improve any of the following (Coady, 1993; Nation, 2001):

Vocabulary knowledge	Yes / No
Grammatical knowledge	Yes / No

Familiarity with the structure of academic texts	Yes / No
Reading skills	Yes / No
Learning new information	Yes / No
Reading as an enjoyable activity	Yes / No
Affixes a word can take	Yes / No
Word collocation	Yes / No
Other: _____	

10. Have the course instructions or explanations provided you with new vocabulary? Yes / No

11. Has feedback or contact with tutor provided you with new vocabulary? Yes / No

12. Do you think that you have systematically learned new vocabulary, grammar and reading skills during this course? Yes / No

13. Has your knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and reading developed more through seeing language used in context or through the deliberate study of language structures?

14. Additional comments:

Virtual Portfolios in Blended Learning: Assessment and Collaboration¹

MARISOL GUZMÁN COVA. BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA²

Abstract

A portfolio is an alternative way of assessment that offers many opportunities for both teachers and students to foster a teaching-learning experience. There are many kinds of portfolios that can be adapted into different contexts, levels, necessities or interests. The virtual portfolio offers the opportunity to work in an asynchronous way, permitting different kinds of interaction and collaboration. Besides this, the teacher has the opportunity to follow and accompany the student learning process during the course and in the end, to assess it based on many elements as participation, reflections, learning products and feedback. In this study developed in Mexico, students were evaluated with virtual portfolios that let them develop different kinds of abilities, not just cognitive, but affective and collaborative.

Resumen

El portafolio es una forma alternativa de evaluar que ofrece diversas oportunidades tanto a maestros como alumnos para conducir una experiencia de aprendizaje enseñanza. Existen diversos tipos de portafolios que pueden adaptarse a cada contexto educativo, nivel, necesidad o interés. El portafolio electrónico ofrece la oportunidad de trabajar de manera asíncrona permitiendo diferentes formas de interacción y colaboración. Además, el maestro tiene la oportunidad de seguir y acompañar el proceso de aprendizaje del alumno durante el curso y al final, evaluarlo basado en diversos aspectos como participaciones, reflexiones, productos de aprendizaje y retroalimentación. En este estudio que se llevó a cabo en México, los alumnos fueron evaluados con la construcción de portafolios electrónicos que permitieron que los alumnos desarrollaran diversas habilidades, no solo cognitivas si no también afectivas y colaborativas.

Introduction

This article reports on the use of virtual portfolios with a group of undergraduate language students in a public university in Mexico. The students were taught in a face to face modality and at the same time, distance education was simulated to learn and practice a virtual culture. These combinations of approaches permitted the group create a blended learning community. This simulation was held in a Yahoo[®] group to create our virtual classroom where the students created their electronic portfolios in teams. The implementation of the portfolio was an alternative way to assess students and at the same time, it was an opportunity to promote autonomy and collaboration among learners. In the first part, the author presents a brief overview on portfolios, then, the impact and results of the virtual portfolios to assess learners; finally, a reflection about alternative assessment which can be implemented through the use of electronic portfolios.

¹ This is a refereed article.

² marisolguzmancova@yahoo.com.mx

Review of the Literature

Today learners use different channels of communication and technologies are present in many of them. It is essential to create an integral development in our students that permits their active participation in society as productive and useful members of it (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2007). In this work developed at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla in the Language School a group of undergraduate language students were taught with traditional face-to-face lectures. In addition, virtual communities were formed with the purpose of forming blended communities. The professor implemented a free, virtual space online using Yahoo® groups to permit students reflect, discuss, summarize, collaborate and upload learning products, building their electronic portfolios in teams. The professor assessed students in that virtual environment monitoring every product they uploaded online, accompanying them during the discussions and reflections, and enhancing student's participation during the course. In different contexts, assessment is still based on paper exams; "many language classes assess at the end of the course responding tests, and teachers prepare students to present paper exams" (Johnson, 2001). The exam does not always represent accurate development in the learning process. Elements of the test usefulness have to be considered: the validity, the difficulty, reliability, and applicability among others. "Nowadays, authentic assessment has been relevant in highlighting the importance of the assessment as a process rather than just as a means of grading students" (Savin-Baden, 2003). Our challenge nowadays as facilitators is to assess students in an integrative way that considers not only knowledge, but other skills that are part of lifelong learning. As Paris & Ayres (1999) state "authentic assessment is defined by the situational appropriateness of teaching and learning practices" (p.7) which makes us analyze our context in order to determine our specific needs and thus lead to the use of appropriate methodologies in our courses. "The challenge is to create frameworks for assessment which genuinely progress towards valued goals, which are sensitive to the contexts in which the genuine understanding is displayed, but which also provide clear, hard evidence which can be communicated to others" (Bentley, 1998). There are some options to evaluate students that are based on the learner's process and development, for example, journals, diaries, projects, portfolios. A portfolio is an opportunity for both learner and educator to foster learning and literacy. They have been considered as a "project of learn -as-you-go" (Paris & Ayres, 1999). In this work, virtual portfolios were created in teams to promote collaboration, cooperation and autonomy. The zone of proximal development defined as "the distance between actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vigotsky, 1978, p. 86), was enhanced by the collaboration among learners to help each other construct a portfolio as an authentic assessment for their learning process. To develop the portfolio, students had specific requirements but not specific formats, so each member showed their own learning style and personality to work online. Portfolios develop a sense of self-regulation that "requires an awareness of socially approved behaviors, in addition to the maturation of the thought and speech processes" (Schunk & Zimmerman,

1994). The advantages of portfolios lie as much in the decision-making process they initiate as in the range of products they contain.

Defining Portfolios

Portfolios are comprised of selected student work representing their development during a course. Beyond this simple definition, student portfolios widely vary in content and purpose and even in who decides what goes into the portfolio. "A portfolio is a record of learning that focuses on student's work and their reflections on the work" (Benson & Barnett 1999).

The Concept of Portfolio Assessment

Learners deserve to be active participants in assessment of their own learning rather than "passive respondents to a series of tests" (Paris & Ayres 2002, p. 6). Portfolio assessment is the systematic, longitudinal collection of student work created in response to specific, known instructional objectives and evaluated in relation to the same criteria. Portfolio creation is the responsibility of the learner, with teacher guidance and support, and often with the involvement of peers. There are many kinds of portfolios that can be developed in a course to assess the student's process. "It is always hard for academics to empathize with a learner's sense of bewilderment in encountering a new idea, as assessing with portfolios is, for the obvious reason that they either never experienced it that way or have long since forgotten it". (Laurillard 1993).

Kinds of Portfolios

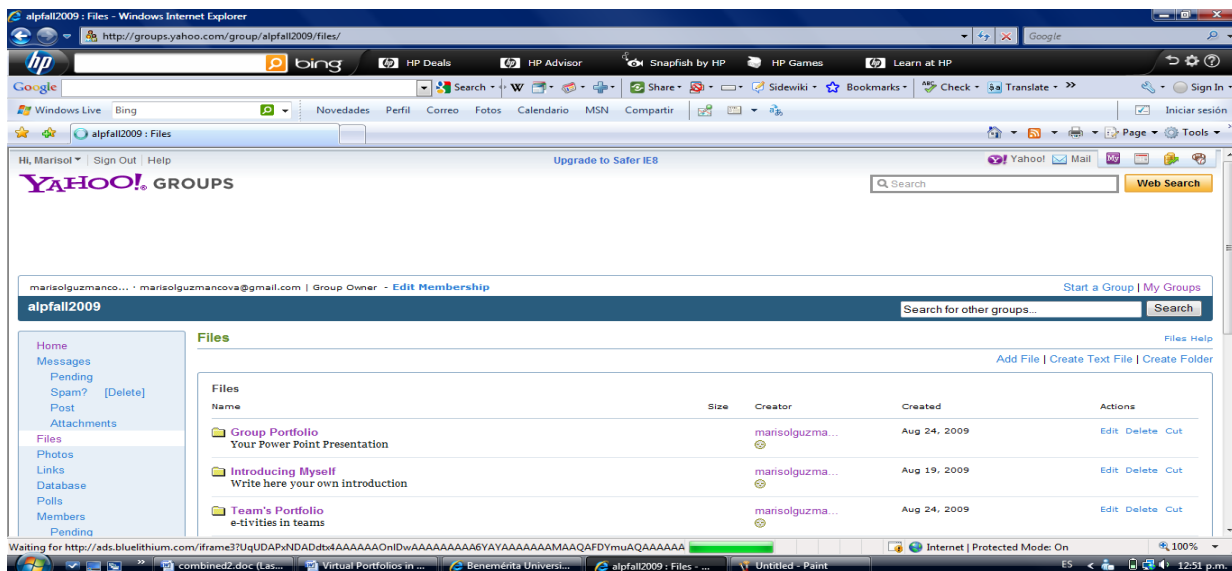
There is a variety of portfolios that can be adapted to every learning necessity at diverse levels and contexts. As Robert and Pruitt state (2003) "a professional portfolio is a thoughtful document demonstrating a teacher's approach to teaching". (p. 159). There are frequent formats of portfolios that educators select: "The working portfolio contains complete collections of evidence; detailed units, photographs of classroom activities, many samples of student work, work in progress, reflections; this is a dynamic, ever-changing document". (p. 159). "The presentation or showcase portfolio is smaller than the working portfolio and contains one sample of picture, video of activities, summaries, examples of used activities. It should be easy to handle, attractive, and representative of the writer's view". (p. 159). Virtual portfolios contain the same information as the traditional portfolio but "they are developed and accessed electronically." (p. 165). They can contain a variety of files as images, audio, video, scanned material, texts. "The collaborative portfolio classroom encourages students to use multiple criteria for evaluation" (Paris & Aires 2002, p.67) and students become analytic and critic to assess all work developed during the course.

In all cases, a portfolio is an alternative to evaluate students' development in and out of the classroom, "Creating portfolios for a grade only does not make them authentic. Portfolios become authentic when they are intended to be used beyond the classroom" (Benson & Barnett 1999, p. 3).

An example of a virtual portfolio

First of all, in our context, the virtual portfolio was a collection of work online that permitted open communication between teacher and students that formed this virtual community. We used yahoo groups[®] with the URL: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/alfall2009> to collect works, presentations, reflections, feedback, show social presence online and reflective assessment. Then, two versions of electronic portfolios were created; one in teams and another with all the group's Power Point presentations. Each team created a virtual folder to collect all their reflections, learning outcomes, comments, summaries, charts and peer evaluation into the yahoo group[®]. Finally, the teacher led, monitored, e- mailed, posted in the group to foster the learning process, gave feedback and assessed students.

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE



Methodology

In this work developed at *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*, undergraduate language students were taught the subject "Alternative Learning Processes" in a face to face modality. The participants were male and female language students in a range of age between 20 and 29 years old. In this subject, the students learnt how to use technologies for teaching languages. The methodology was based on the model "The Community of Inquiry" (Garrison & Anderson 2003) and included the creation of a virtual community, a space was opened online to develop virtual literacy and foster the three presences that the model states: Cognitive, Social and Teaching. As a result, both kinds of communities were formed; virtual and face to face with the purpose to combine modalities (Blended-learning) and develop real e-learning during the course. Lectures took place in the classroom but learning outcomes were uploaded to the virtual space in teams into the Yahoo group[®] to build portfolios. The lectures were the input to create learning products in electronic formats. The professor

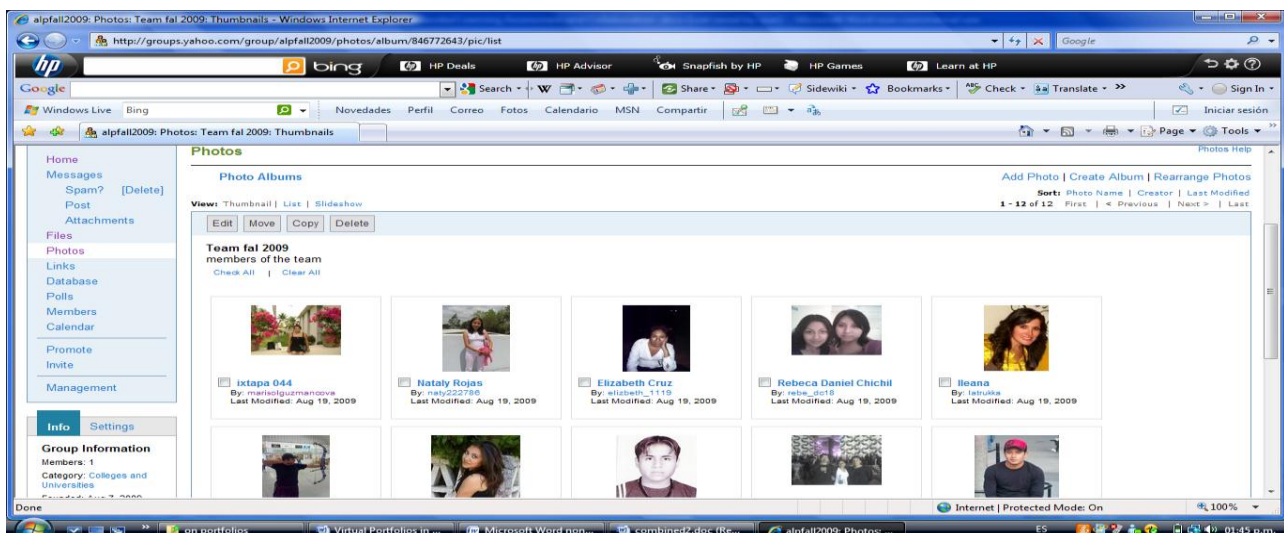
taught students to design didactic materials using software (Hot Potatoes[®], c-map[®]) created their blogs using Blogger[®], developed a mini course using the demo free version of BlackBoard[®], and the Yahoo groups[®] to develop e-tivities online and create their portfolios. The assessment consisted of an electronic team portfolio that was integrated by electronic activities or e-tivities (Garrison & Anderson 2003) and a reflection or task was designed to consolidate each part of the curriculum. The electronic group portfolio contained team Power Point presentations and reflections about each topic presented in the classroom.

Results

There were many relevant aspects that the implementation of virtual portfolios had in our classroom; they will be listed in three main categories: Cognitive, Social and Teaching. The cognitive aspect is usually emphasized in educational fields as the most important to be developed. With the use of the virtual portfolios, the students had the opportunity to receive information, comment on in the classroom, compare it with other sources of information, and work individually and in teams to develop learning outcomes and most importantly, to reflect about all the topics reviewed in the course. Those were indicators that demonstrated that the Cognitive Presence (Garrison & Anderson 2003) was developed in our course with an acceptable level. All of this process was monitored and followed openly online by both teacher and classmates during the creation of the virtual portfolio.

To understand the virtual culture, the learner has to be part of it. During this experience, the students formed part of a community, collaborated, interacted and socialized online, discovering the opportunity to transmit their own personality using Text Based Communication. As humans, the social part constitutes the base to motivate learners to feel satisfied and collaborate with the rest of the group forming a family of learners. The Social Presence was demonstrated by the expression and projection of students online as real people forming part of a community.

FIGURE 2: SOCIAL PRESENCE



The teaching part constituted the most satisfactory for me as an organizer of this learning moment in my students' lives. I could observe them not just working but discovering their potential and little by little, integrating a community of motivated people, learning together, asking and answering during the revision of contents, acquiring new autonomous abilities and collaborating with a common learning purpose.

Final reflection, advantages of the alternative assessment with virtual portfolios.

This study, based on Brown's supportive ideas (2004), emphasizes many of the advantages of the use of portfolios in different contexts.

As Brown summarizes (Brown 2004, p. 257) portfolios:

- Foster intrinsic motivation, responsibility and ownership, promoting student-teacher interaction with the teacher as facilitator.
- Individualize learning and celebrate the uniqueness of each student.
- Provide tangible evidence of a student work; facilitate critical thinking, self-assessment, and revision process.
- They offer opportunities for collaborative work with peers and permit assessment of multiple dimensions of language learning.

Apart from these results, electronic portfolios developed a virtual culture among learners. They could show their Social Presence online through open communication and developed their writing skills to communicate in a text-based context. The students noticed that the use of Internet is not just for entertainment but also for academic purposes. The facilitator took advantage of the asynchrony of the interaction, the flexibility of time and space to be there in the virtual community, participating and guiding the learning teaching process. The learners conducted their own process with responsibility, respected deadlines and uploaded their learning products, expressed their opinions in a confident way, reflected individually and in teams, commented, and compared with the rest of the students the target point in each section of the course.

References

- Benson, B., & Barnett, S. (1999). *Student-Led Conferencing Using Showcase Portfolios*. California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Bentley, T. (1998). *Learning beyond the Classroom: Education for a Changing World*. New York: Routledge.
- Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. (2007). *Modelo Universitario Minerva: Documento de integración*. Puebla, Puebla: BUAP.
- Brown, Douglas H. (2004) *Language Assessment. Principles and Classroom Practices*. New York: Longman.
- Garrison, D. R. , & Anderson, T. (2003). *E-Learning in the 20th Century*. London: Routledge.
- Johnson, K. (2001). *An Introduction to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Laurillard, D. (1993). *Rethinking University Teaching: A framework for the Effective Use of Educational Technology*. London: Routledge.

- Paris, S., & Ayres, L. (1999). *Becoming Reflective Students and Teachers with Portfolios and Authentic Assessment*. Washington: American Psychological Association .
- Robert, S., & Pruitt, E. (2003). *Schools as Professional Learning Communities: Collaborative Activities and Strategies for Professional Development*. California: Corwin Press.
- Savin-Baden, M. (2003). *Facilitating Problem-Based Learning: Illuminating Perspectives*. Philadelphia: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press. SRHE, Open University Press, McGraw Hill Education.
- Schunk, D., & Zimmerman, B. (1994). *Self-regulation of Learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Scott G. & Paris, L. R. (2002). *Becoming Reflective Students and Teachers with Portfolios and Authentic Assessment*. Washington: Psychology in the Classroom .
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society. The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

The Use of Corpus Linguistics to Teach Cognates to Spanish-speaking English Language Learners¹

MARÍA DEL CARMEN BARRERA COBOS, UNIVERSIDAD DE LAS AMÉRICAS PUEBLA²

Abstract

The rapid growth of technology has made the development of better, cheaper, and more accessible computers possible. As a consequence, the information stored on computers is now more easily available to teachers and students, such as the data obtained from corpora (Wichmann, Fligelstone, McEney, & Knowles 1997). However, despite these rapid advances in technology, the use of corpora in the L2 classroom is still a practice many teachers are not familiar with. Hence, the purpose of this study is to integrate corpora into the L2 classroom, and to get students to act as language researchers through the analysis of concordance listings obtained from a corpus. The participants in this study were native Spanish speakers learning English as a second language at an English language teaching institution. They were encouraged to analyze the data obtained, to come up with their own hypotheses about how language works and behaves, and to interpret and describe the language. The participants were guided through the process of analyzing data obtained from a corpus, they analyzed and interpreted the data without much difficulty, and most of the hypotheses they formulated were confirmed.

Resumen

El acelerado crecimiento de la tecnología ha hecho posible el desarrollo de computadoras más baratas, avanzadas y accesibles. Como consecuencia, la información almacenada en las computadoras, como la que se obtiene a partir de corpus, se ha vuelto accesible a estudiantes y maestros (Wichmann, Fligelstone, McEney, & Knowles 1997). Sin embargo, y a pesar del acelerado avance tecnológico, el uso de corpus en la enseñanza de una segunda lengua es una técnica que muchos maestros no conocen aún. Por lo tanto, el propósito de este estudio es integrar el uso de corpus en el salón de clases de segunda lengua y lograr que los alumnos actúen como investigadores del idioma a través del análisis de concordancias obtenidas de un corpus. Los participantes de este estudio eran hablantes nativos del español, estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua en una institución de enseñanza del inglés. En este estudio, los participantes analizaron la información obtenida de un corpus, formularon sus propias hipótesis sobre el funcionamiento y comportamiento del idioma, y fueron inducidos a interpretar y describir el mismo. Los participantes fueron guiados en el proceso de análisis de información, y la mayoría de las hipótesis que propusieron fueron correctas.

Introduction

Nowadays, computers have become an important part of our lives. They are becoming smaller, cheaper, and more accessible to teachers and students. As a consequence, the amount of information stored on computers is now more easily available, such as the data obtained from corpora (Wichmann, Fligelstone, McEney, & Knowles 1997). However, despite the rapid growth of technology, the

¹ This is a refereed article.

² maria.barreracs@udlap.mx

use of computers and corpora in the L2 classroom is not a practice many teachers are familiar with. In order to promote the integration of corpora into the L2 classroom, it is necessary for teachers to encourage students to exploit all the tools available to them that can help them learn a language. Students should try to go beyond the language they learn in the classroom and in their books, and one useful tool that can help them learn a language in a more autonomous way is corpora. Students can analyze words, collocations, and sentence structure, and they can get information about the language through corpora.

Johns (as cited in McEnery et al. 2006, p. 99), is believed to be one of the first to realize the potential that corpus linguistics could have in language learning. He argues that research is too serious to be carried out by researchers only, and that language learners should be encouraged to act as researchers with access to linguistic data in order to carry out their learning. According to Kennedy (as cited in McEnery et al. 2006, p.99), the learning of a language is a process of learning knowledge explicitly with awareness. This process requires students to be exposed to language data. There are two types of data-driven learning (DDL): teacher directed or learner led (i.e., when students discover learning), but DDL is mainly learner centered. Leech (as cited in McEnery et al. 2006, p. 99) argues that the DDL is an autonomous learning approach that gives the students the opportunity to act as researchers and to want to make discoveries by making an individual contribution.

Johns (as cited in McEnery et al. 2006 p. 99), also identified the three phases of inductive reasoning with corpora in DDL: observation (of concordances obtained from a corpus), classification (of relevant features of the language), and generalization (of the rules of the language).

In this small-scale exploratory study, the use of corpora in the teaching of vocabulary in English will be implemented in order to promote a more autonomous learning style. In this study, students will be encouraged to act as researchers of the language, and to formulate hypotheses about how the language works through the analysis of data obtained from corpora.

Research questions

Given the growth of technology today, it is necessary that we, as teachers of languages, keep up with its development and try to implement it in the language classroom as much as possible. Hence, the purpose of this study is to incorporate corpora into the L2 classroom, and to get students to act as language researchers. The present study is a small-scale exploratory study that addresses the question of the potential effectiveness of the use of corpus linguistics in the L2 classroom to teach a specific vocabulary building activity using cognates. The main research question that this study will address is:

How effective is the use of corpus linguistics in the L2 classroom?

In an attempt to answer this question, some subsidiary questions will also be addressed:

How effective is it to analyze data obtained from a corpus in the L2 classroom without using computers?

How difficult was the interpretation of the data for the students?

Are students capable of successfully interpreting concordances? Are they able to formulate correct hypotheses about how English works and behaves?

Is it feasible to use corpora to create activities for the L2 class?

The expected answers to all the research questions are affirmative. However, for questions 3 and 4, considering that students are not familiarized with corpus linguistics, they have difficulty interpreting the data and formulating correct hypotheses about how the language works and behaves. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate students' analysis of the data, they will be carefully guided through the instructions on how to use the corpus chosen for this study.

Review of the Literature

With the rapid growth of technology, computers have become cheaper, smaller, and more accessible to people (Wichmann et al. 1997). The growth of technology makes the development of computers that now offer massive storage and an increased processing power at an affordable price possible (McEnery, et al. 2006). According to Wichmann et al. (1997), computers have also become more accessible to teachers and students. As a result, the information stored on computers, such as the data obtained from corpora, is now more easily available to them.

What is a corpus?

McEnery et al. (2006), define a corpus in modern linguistics as "a collection of sampled texts, written or spoken, in machine-readable form which may be annotated with various forms of linguistic information" (p. 4). That is to say, a corpus is a compilation of natural texts stored into a computer that contains interpretative linguistic information that is useful for the analysis of a language. According to Cook (2003), through the systematic analysis of corpora, it is possible to observe the different patterns and regularities of language use.

As Cook (2003) states, before computers existed, printed materials were collected in order to study language. These materials were read laboriously, and facts were recorded by hand. In recent years, however, corpus linguistics has evolved with the help of electronic and automatic searching. Nowadays we are able to search millions of words within seconds to obtain information about word combinations and frequencies.

According to Kennedy (1998), Corpora are compiled for different purposes. Some corpora have been designed for general descriptive purposes in linguistic research. That is to say, they have been designed so that they can be examined in order to answer questions regarding different linguistic levels, such as the lexis, grammar, prosody, pragmatics and discourse patterns of a language. Some other corpora have been designed for specialized purposes, such as deciding which words and word meanings should be included in a dictionary for learners; finding out which words or meanings are most commonly used in a certain

domain (e.g. economics); or to discover how language is used differently in a specific geographical, social, historical or work-related context.

There are two main types of corpora, as stated by Kennedy (1998). These are:

General: a text base for unspecified linguistic analysis. It generally includes text of various genres, domains, forms. They are sometimes also called *core corpora*, and they are to be used mainly for comparative studies.

Specialized: corpora designed with a particular research project in mind; e.g., training and test corpora, dialect and regional corpora, spoken and written corpora, and learner corpora.

A brief description of some of the main corpora that can be accessed today is provided below:

Corpora in English:

12. American National Corpus. This is a general corpus available for research and educational purposes. It contains over 22,000,000 words of written (72%) and spoken (28%) American English. It can be accessed at: <http://americannationalcorpus.org/OANC/index.html>
13. Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English. Academic, spoken corpus made up of approximately 1.8 million words. This corpus gives access to 152 transcripts, 1,848,364 words and over 190 hours of recorded material. It can be accessed at: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase>
14. British National Corpus. This is a general British English corpus. It includes a 100 million word collection of samples of both written (90%) and spoken (10%) language from different sources. It can be accessed at: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk>
15. Collins, The Bank of English. General corpus that contains 524 million words and continues to grow with the constant addition of new spoken and written material. It can be accessed at: <http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx>
16. Child Language Data Exchange System. Specialized corpus that contains about 20 million words from spoken language, and it keeps growing. It can be used to study first language acquisition, and language development in children. It can be accessed at: <http://chilides.psy.cmu.edu>

Corpora in Spanish:

17. Corpus de la Real Academia Española. General corpus that contains over 200 million words from spoken and written language. It can be accessed at: <http://corpus.rae.es/creanet.html>
18. Corpus del Español. General corpus that contains approximately 100 million words from written language dating from the 1200s to the 1900s. It can be used to study the evolution and development of Spanish throughout the years. It can be accessed at: <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org>

Procedures used in corpus analysis

There are different procedures that can be used to obtain information from a corpus, to search a corpus, or to show, classify and categorize the data that is being investigated. The following are the most commonly used formats:

Wordlists

Kennedy (1998) defines wordlists as lists of the word forms in a certain corpus, displayed in alphabetical order. The number of times each word appears on the corpus (occurrences) is added and presented next to the word. Biber, Conrad, & Reppen (1998) also talk about lists of all the words in a corpus, but refer to them as frequency lists. These lists show the number of times each word occurs in a corpus, and they can be sorted in order of frequency.

Concordances

Concordance listings, or concordances, are displays of the occurrences of a certain word with the context that surrounds it. The chosen word and the context that surrounds it are presented in a single line, in the form of a sentence. The chosen word is displayed in the middle of the line, and the context on each side of it. Usually, concordances display several lines of context. Through concordance listings, it is possible to see the meanings and words related to the word being investigated, as well as how it behaves in a context (Biber et al. 1998).

Statistics

Basic descriptive statistics on the number of word forms, the length of sentences, the number of sentences in a text, and the number of words contained in particular sentences, are often provided in corpora. Statistics are useful for identifying certain features associated with particular text types (Kennedy 1998).

What is a corpus-based approach?

Kennedy (1998) mentions that a great amount of effort has been put into the development of corpora during the last ten years. Corpus-based approaches have introduced new methods to language description through quick and accurate analyses carried out by computers.

According to Biber et al. (1998), a corpus-based approach is empirical; it analyzes authentic samples of language use in natural texts; it uses a corpus in order to carry out the analysis; it uses computers extensively to analyze the data using interactive and automatic techniques; and it depends on qualitative and quantitative techniques for the analysis.

Biber et al. (1998) mention that there are many advantages of using a corpus-based approach. To begin with, computers are able to recognize and analyze large amounts of language than could be done by hand. Also, computers are reliable and consistent since they do not get tired during the analysis. Another advantage is that the human analyst and the computer can work in an interactive way: while the analyst makes difficult linguistic judgments, the computer keeps record of the analysis.

With corpus-based approaches it is now possible to analyze great amounts of data, making it easier for linguists to carry out more studies about how language works. Corpus-based studies can also be applicable to the area of educational linguistics. New materials and classroom activities can be designed with the help of corpora, allowing teachers to provide students with real language that is used in different natural settings (Biber et al. 1998).

The present study is an example of the application of a corpus-based approach to the area of educational linguistics. The activity created for this study is an example of how concordances can be explored and analyzed in order to identify the meaning of words. Concordance listings were used in this study to help students determine whether some words in English and Spanish were cognates or false cognates.

What are cognates?

Spanish and English are two languages that have many similarities. According to Rodriguez (2001), one of the most evident similarities is that both English and Spanish use the Roman alphabet. Also, these two languages share many cognates. Frunza and Inkpen (2008) define cognates as words in two or more languages, which have a similar meaning and spelling.

Whitley (1986) distinguished 3 different origins of cognates in Spanish and English:

1. Inheritance. Some words in English and Spanish were inherited from Indo-European languages, e.g. mother-madre, six-seis, name-nombre.
2. Coincidence. Some words are not true cognates if their similarity is only a coincidence, e.g. have-haber, much-mucho, other-otro.
3. Borrowing. Occurs when Spanish borrows a word from English, when English borrows a word from Spanish, or when both languages borrow a word from a third language.
 - a. English → Spanish: estándar, boicot, sándwich, láser, líder.
 - b. Spanish → English: ranch, vista, canyon, patio, vanilla, guitar.
 - c. Both from Latin: application-aplicación, exact-exacto.
 - d. Both from French: hotel, control, menu-menú.
 - e. Both from Italian: piano, soprano, bank-banco.
 - f. Both from Greek: map-mapa, diploma, planet-planeta.

Rodriguez (2001) identified 7 different types of cognates in English and Spanish:

1. Words which have an identical spelling in both languages, e.g. hospital, fatal, actor.
2. Words whose spelling is almost the same, e.g. contamination-contaminación, evidence-evidencia.
3. Words whose similarities are not as apparent, e.g. sport-deporte, perilous-peligroso.
4. Words which are cognates in spoken speech (oral cognates) rather than in written speech (written cognates). In other words, they sound more

similar than they appear in their written form, e.g. pleasure-placer, peace-paz.

5. Words that have more than one meaning and which are cognates for one meaning, but not for the other, e.g. letter-letra (letter of the alphabet), letter-carta (written correspondence).
6. Words that are similar, and that can be used as reference to teach other words, e.g. disappear-desaparecer, appear-aparecer.
7. False cognates: words which are similar in both languages, but whose meaning is not related, e.g. succeed-tener éxito (not suceder); embarrassed-avergonzado (not embarazada).

Why is it important to know when words are cognates or false cognates?

According to Malkiel (2009), identifying when a word is a cognate or a false cognate is vital for second language learning. Since cognates are words which have the same meaning in two languages, they provide students with what could be referred to as “free” vocabulary. That is to say, students could acquire these words in the second language without much effort.

Teaching cognates

Rodriguez (2001) argues that Spanish speakers know more English than they are aware of. He believes students know more words in their second language than they realize, due to the fact that they are similar in form and in meaning in both languages. Therefore, it is important that cognates and false cognates are taught in the L2 classroom, so that students can become aware of the similarities in vocabulary in both languages, and acquire words in the L2 almost effortlessly.

Rodriguez (2001) suggests that cognates should be used to teach students to guess the meaning from context in a text whenever they come across a word that is similar in form in both English and Spanish. This way, students will analyze the language and will make sense of a text.

Finally, cognates should be used to scaffold students’ learning. In other words, teachers should take advantage of what students already know about their L2 without being aware of it.

Methodology

Location

This study was carried out at an English language teaching institution with over 65 years of experience in teaching English as a second language. There are 33 courses in total in this institution, each of them consisting of 30 hours of class work. These courses have been grouped into an introductory level and 6 cycles:

Introductory Level

1. Basic Cycle: levels Basic 1 (B1) to Basic 6 (B6).
2. Intermediate Cycle: levels Intermediate 1 (M1) to Intermediate 6 (M6).
3. Advanced Cycle: levels Advanced 1 (A1) to Advanced 6 (A6).

4. Higher Studies Cycle: levels Higher Studies 1 (HS1) to Higher Studies 6 (HS6).
5. English Mastery Cycle: levels English Mastery 1 (EM1) to English Mastery 4 (EM4).
6. English Proficiency Cycle: levels English Proficiency 1 (EP1) to English Proficiency 4 (EP4).

Participants

For this study, a group of Advanced 3 students was selected. The group consisted of 5 students; however, only 3 agreed to take part in this study. The participants were 3 Mexican students of English as a second language at the chosen institution. From these participants, one was a male student and two were female students. The male student was 20 years old, and the female students ranged in age from 50 to 55 years. All three students were studying the third level of the Advanced cycle (Advanced 3). At this level, students will have completed 450 hours of effective studying, and will have finished the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The Advanced 3 level introduces students to the B2 level of the CEFR, and prepares them for B2 level examinations such as the First Certificate in English (FCE).

Materials

Two handouts were created for this study. Handout 1 (see Appendix 2) consisted of 3 pages. Page 1 included some general information about what cognates/false cognates are; it also contained a brief explanation of what corpus linguistics is, a description of the corpus used in this study (Collins, The Bank of English), and a short explanation of what concordances are. Pages 2 and 3 included a step-by-step guide on how to use the Collins corpus. Each step on the handout included instructions, and was illustrated with an image of the Collins corpus website, so that students could see what the webpage looks like.

Handout 2 (see Appendix 3) contained printed concordance listings for each of the words used in this study: *career, realize, resume, eventually, actually, notable, splendid, criticize*. In order to facilitate students' analysis, the 10-11 most comprehensible sentences obtained from the corpus were chosen. For the creation of the second handout, the Collins, The Bank of English corpus was used. The Collins, The Bank of English corpus is a collection of modern English language, and can be accessed at: <http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx>. It was founded in 1991 by the University of Birmingham in the UK, and by Collins. The Bank of English corpus contains 524 million words, and it is continuously growing with the addition of new data. The corpus includes written texts from magazines, fiction and non-fiction books, reports, newspapers, websites, and brochures. It also includes texts from spoken material that comes from conversations, discussions, television, radio broadcasts, interviews, and meetings. The Bank of English is mainly used by Collins lexicographers and linguists that analyze patterns of word combinations, the frequency of words, and the uses of some words in particular, in order to include this information in dictionaries. However, The Bank of English can also be used by language teachers, linguists, translators and students as a

tool for their studies and professional activity (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2004).

Procedure

In order not to take up class time, the participants were asked to turn up at the institution 1 hour before their class. A 60-minute lesson was prepared for this study (see Appendix 1), and it was carried out at the institution in order to make students feel at ease in their usual learning environment.

At the beginning of the class, some words in English that could be either cognates or false cognates were written on the board so that students could guess their meaning. The words used in this study were: *career, realize, resume, eventually, actually, notable, splendid, and criticize*. From these words, *career, realize, resume, eventually, and actually*, were false cognates, and *notable, splendid, and criticize*, were cognates. The false cognates used were chosen due to the fact that they are problematic words for students. Students use those words very frequently, but they use them as if they were cognates; therefore, they attribute the wrong meaning to them, and the sentences they produce turn out to be incorrect. The cognates used in this study were randomly chosen.

Students were encouraged to guess what the words presented meant. Their answers could be either a definition in English, or an equivalent word in Spanish. Once students had come up with a meaning for each word, they were asked if they thought the words looked like some words in Spanish. Students agreed that in fact the words were similar to some Spanish words, but they did not know what they were called. In order to familiarize students with the terms *cognates* and *false cognates*, a special handout that included information about cognates was given to them (see Appendix 2). The students went through the first part of the handout, and the teacher explained what cognates/false cognates are. The teacher also raised students' awareness of the importance of knowing when a word is a cognate/false cognate, since they can help them learn more words in English. If students know a word is a cognate, it might be easier for them to remember its meaning. As a result, their range of vocabulary becomes wider. Students were then told that one way in which they can discover the meaning of cognates and false cognates is with the help of corpus linguistics. Handout 1(see Appendix 2) also contained some information about corpus linguistics. Students read a definition of what a corpus is, and a brief description of the corpus (Collins, The Bank of English) that was used to obtain the data needed for the analysis. The last section on the first page of Handout 1(see Appendix 2) included a short explanation of what concordances are, and how they should be interpreted. The teacher and the students went through this last section, and the teacher further explained how to read concordances to the students.

Once students had been given some background knowledge about what a corpus is, they were referred to pages 2 and 3 on Handout 1 (see Appendix 2), and they were guided through the 5 steps of the step-by-step instructions on how to use the Collins corpus to obtain concordances. Students were reminded that the purpose of the lesson was to know whether the words previously written on the board were cognates or false cognates, and that they would use the

concordances from the Collins corpus in order to find it out. The teacher gave out Handout 2 (see Appendix 3), which contained the printed concordances, and asked students to work together to analyze and interpret the data obtained from the corpus. They were given 35 minutes to complete this task. The students read the concordances for each word, and tried to identify whether they were cognates or false cognates. When students agreed that a word was a false cognate, they were asked to guess what it meant based on the context that surrounded it. This activity led students to use concordances as a resource to get information about the language, and to formulate hypotheses about how the language works.

When students finished analyzing all the concordances, the teacher checked their hypotheses. The students said whether the words were cognates or false cognates, and what their meanings were. Students were reminded of the meanings they had attributed to each word at the beginning of the class, and they compared them with the meanings they came up with after the analysis. The teacher gave students feedback on their answers, and told them if the words were actually cognates or false cognates, and what they really meant.

Once students' answers had been checked, they were encouraged to reflect on the use of corpora to examine the way language works. The teacher asked some reflection questions about using the corpus and the concordances to analyze language:

- How did you feel while using the concordances from the corpus?
- Do you think using a corpus could help you learn English?
- Did you find it easy to use?
- Apart from guessing the meanings of words, what else could you use the corpus for?

At the end of the lesson, students were reminded of the importance of the use of all the tools available to learn a language. The teacher encouraged students to become language researchers, and to think about the way the language works, rather than simply looking up a word in a dictionary and getting the meaning without analyzing how the word behaves in a context or structure.

Results

At the beginning of the class, students were asked to work in a group and say what they thought the words used in this study meant. Some of the answers students provided were definitions in English, and other were equivalent words in Spanish. These were students' answers:

- Career: what you study at university. In Spanish: una carrera.
- Notable: distinguished. In Spanish: notable.
- Realize: to do something. In Spanish: realizar.
- Resume: to summarize. In Spanish: resumir.
- Criticize: In Spanish: criticar.
- Eventually: very often.
- Actually: in the present, in this moment. In Spanish: actualmente.

- Splendid: a generous person.

It can be seen from the definitions above that students assumed all the words were cognates. Therefore, the meanings students attributed to the false cognates were all wrong. However, it should be mentioned that one of students' answers was quite unanticipated. The meaning students attributed to the word *splendid*, was not the expected one. *Splendid* is translated as *espléndido* in Spanish. However, the word *espléndido* can have two meanings:

1. Splendid, magnificent (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2005).
2. Lavish, generous (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2005).

The definition that students were expected to provide was the first one. Nevertheless, students first thought of the second meaning of the word *espléndido*. This led students to believe that the word *splendid* was a false cognate. However, students were told that the word *splendid* is translated into Spanish as *espléndido*, and its meaning is something which is *magnificent*. Depending on the context in which the word *espléndido* is used, the word *splendid* can either be a cognate or a false cognate.

The definitions of what cognates and false cognates are, and the step-by-step instructions on how to use the corpus (see Appendix 2), were carefully explained in order for students not to be overwhelmed by so much information. However, as the teacher presented all the new information, students seemed a little confused: they were frowning and looking at each other and at the teacher, as if they could not understand what the teacher was saying. Nevertheless, when Handout 2 (see Appendix 3) was given out, and students were asked to analyze the words, they understood the instructions, and started working without difficulty. During the 35 minutes in which the analysis took place, students interpreted the data obtained from the corpus, and used concordances as a resource to get information about the language. Students were talking to each other about the possible answers, they were very engaged in the activity, and they negotiated the meaning of words. Each student participated actively in the task, and they all expressed their own opinions and hypotheses about the way words behaved in a specific context. The conversations that students had, and the decision-making process that they went through were both very interesting. Unfortunately, the class was not recorded and students' discourse could not be analyzed.

Students' answers and hypotheses about the language were checked once they had finished analyzing the words. The effectiveness of the use of concordances to teach cognates was measured based on how many correct hypotheses students formulated. Since students seemed a little confused at the beginning of the analysis, the possibility of students' answers being incorrect was considered a potential result. Surprisingly, and contrary to expectations, most of the students' hypotheses and answers were correct. Students were able to identify which words were cognates, and which words were false cognates. However, in some cases it was difficult for them to say what the exact meaning of the words was. The answers that students provided after analyzing the data were the following:

- Career: false cognate. Meaning in English: an occupation. Meaning in Spanish: una profesión o vida profesional.
- Notable: cognate. Meaning in Spanish: notable.
- Realize: false cognate. Meaning in Spanish: darse cuenta de algo.
- Resume: false cognate. Students were not able to identify the meaning of this word.
- Criticize: cognate. Meaning in Spanish: criticar.
- Eventually: false cognate. Students were not able to identify the meaning of this word.
- Actually: false cognate. Meaning in Spanish: de hecho.
- Splendid: cognate/false cognate depending on the meaning in Spanish. Splendid is a cognate when it means espléndido in Spanish, but a false cognate when it means una persona generosa.
- The teacher helped the students with the two words that they could not guess the meaning of, by going through the concordances again. Students' attention was drawn to the two or three most comprehensible sentences in the concordance listings that provided evident clues. One more time, students were encouraged to try to guess the meaning of the words. Students kept talking to each other and discussing the possible meanings of both words. However, they were still unable to come up with a final answer. The teacher then helped students by telling them what the words really meant:
- Resume: false cognate. Meaning in English: to start again. Meaning in Spanish: retomar, reanudar.
- Eventually: false cognate. Meaning in English: finally. Meaning in Spanish: finalmente.

The teacher reminded students of the meanings they had attributed to the words at the beginning of the class, and they compared them to the meanings they provided after they had analyzed the concordances. The students were really surprised by how different the meanings were, but because they witnessed how the words behaved in a context, they were convinced that their answers were correct, and they realized that they do not always have to depend on the teacher for getting the correct answer. Students were also surprised because they realized they had used the words incorrectly for a long time. At the same time, they were happy that they had now learnt the correct meaning of each word, and how to use them.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked some questions in order to encourage students to reflect on the use of corpora to analyze the way language works. Students mentioned that at first they were a little nervous about the analysis because they thought it was going to be a difficult task to carry out. However, once students started reading the concordances, they felt comfortable because they understood what the sentences said, and they were able to analyze them without difficulty.

When asked if they thought using a corpus could help them learn English, students mentioned they thought it could be very useful. Students said they found concordances very helpful, since they are examples of real language produced by native speakers of English. They also found the analysis of concordances to be more interesting than simply looking up a word in a dictionary. By analyzing concordances, students said they were able to look at a word in context, and to guess what it meant. They mentioned that the analysis of concordance listings could help them remember words more easily because they become aware of how they are used in the language, instead of just being given the meaning of words as in dictionaries.

Finally, students were asked if they could think of something else they could use the corpus for, and they contributed with some of their ideas. Students said they could use the corpus to see how phrasal verbs are used, to get more examples of comparative and superlative adjectives, and to find out the meanings of new words without looking them up in a dictionary.

Conclusion

The purpose of this small-scale exploratory study was to integrate corpora into the L2 classroom, and to get students to act as language researchers through the analysis of concordance listings obtained from the Collins, The Bank of English corpus. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, a one-hour lesson to teach cognates and false cognates in English was prepared.

There were 5 research questions that this study addressed. The main question was:

How effective is the use of corpus linguistics in the L2 classroom?

The results obtained in this study suggest that the use of corpus linguistics in the L2 classroom is effective, indeed. Despite the fact that the students who participated in this study had never heard of corpus linguistics before, they felt comfortable analyzing concordance listings and hypothesizing about how words behave in the language. Students understood the instructions, and analyzed the data without difficulty.

This study also addressed some subsidiary questions that attempted to answer and elaborate on the main question:

How effective is it to analyze data obtained from a corpus in the L2 classroom without using computers?

Even though corpora are collections of texts stored into computers, no computers were used in this study due to the fact that there were not enough computers for students to work with at the English language teaching institution where they study. However, having the step-by-step instructions on how to use the corpus, and the concordances printed out, turned out to be very effective for the vocabulary activity that was prepared for this study. In order to access the Collins, The Bank of English corpus, students need to have an internet connection. This could lead students to feel overwhelmed when asked to access the corpus online, due to the amount of information available to them on the

web. Nevertheless, since all the materials used in this study were printed out, the amount and the type of information presented to students was a 100% controlled. Even though students did not access the corpus online, they understood how to interpret concordances with the help of Handout 2 (see Appendix 3) and the teacher's explanation; they were engaged in the activity; they paid attention throughout the class, and were successful in carrying out the activity.

How difficult was the interpretation of the data obtained for the students?

At first students seemed a little confused and overwhelmed by so much information that was presented to them. However, once students read the concordances and realized they were able to understand the sentences, they started interpreting the data without difficulty. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the best concordance lines were chosen beforehand, and were printed out instead of using the raw data from the computer. The only problem students encountered was that they could not identify the meaning of two of the given words.

Are students capable of successfully interpreting concordances? Are they able to formulate correct hypotheses about how English works and behaves?

Because students were not familiarized with corpus linguistics at the beginning of the lesson, there was a probability that students might find it difficult to interpret the data and formulate correct hypotheses. Nevertheless, the majority of students' answers were correct, and the hypotheses they formulated were confirmed.

Is it feasible to use corpora to create activities for the L2 class?

It is highly recommended that specific language activities are created when using corpora in the L2 classroom, since they guide students throughout the activity, they draw the attention of students to the task, and they engage them throughout the class. When using corpora in the L2 classroom, it is crucial that teachers have a clear objective that they want to achieve by the end of the class. If no activities are created, students will be overwhelmed by the amount of information they will come across on the internet. This could lead students to feel frustrated, and to not want to learn the language anymore.

The integration of corpora into the L2 classroom demands the teacher to create specific language activities, rather than just giving students free access to the information. A corpus is a complex database that requires some skills in order to interpret the data obtained, e.g. one needs to know how to read frequency lists, concordances, and statistics. Therefore, it is necessary to guide students through the process by which they will be able to analyze data (Gavioli 1997). That is to say, in order for students to be successful at interpreting the data, they need to be taught how to read concordances, frequency lists, and statistics.

This study intended to get students to act as language researchers through the analysis of concordance listings obtained from a corpus. Corpora provide data that needs to be read, to be analyzed, or to be interpreted. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to encourage students to analyze the data, and to

come up with their own hypotheses about how language works and behaves. Through the analysis of concordances, students were led to interpret and describe the language, rather than just looking up the words in a dictionary and getting the meaning without making any effort to understand how language functions.

The use of corpus linguistics in the L2 classroom is an important issue for future research. This small-scale exploratory study addressed the question of the potential effectiveness of the use of corpus linguistics in the L2 classroom to teach a specific vocabulary activity. In this study, the use of corpora to teach a vocabulary building activity turned out to be effective. The students were successful in carrying out the activities using data obtained from a corpus. However, it is recommended that further studies are undertaken in order to develop a complete teaching approach or method that language teachers can follow when using corpora in the L2 classroom. Finally, it should be taken into consideration that in order for teachers to be successful at integrating corpora into the L2 classroom, it is necessary that they are trained on how to use a corpus so that they can transfer those skills to students.

References

- Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, G. (2003). *Applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Frunza, O., & Inkpen, A. (2008). Disambiguation of partial cognates. *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 42(3), 325-333.
- Gavioli, L. (1997). Exploring texts through the concordancer: Guiding the learner. In A. Wichmann, S. Fligelstone, T. McEnery & G. Knowles (Eds.), *Teaching and language corpora* (pp. 83-99). Longman: London and New York.
- HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. (2004). *The Bank of English, 2004* [electronic corpus]. Available from Collins Web Site, <http://www.collins.co.uk/books.aspx?group=153>
- HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. (2005). Espléndido. In *Collins Spanish-English dictionary* (Eight Edition, p. 423). HarperCollins Publishers.
- Kennedy, G. (1998). *An introduction to corpus linguistics*. London: Longman.
- Malkiel, B. (2009). Translation as a decision process: Evidence from cognates. *Babel*, 55(3), 228-243.
- McEnery, T., Xiao, R., & Tono, Y. (2006). *Corpus-Based language studies: An advanced resource book*. New York: Routledge.
- Rodriguez, T. A. (2001). From the known to the unknown: Using cognates to teach English to Spanish-speaking literates. *Reading Teacher*, 54 (8), 744-746.
- Whitley, M. S. (1986). *Spanish/English contrasts: A course in Spanish linguistics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Wichmann, A., Fligelstone, S., McEnery, T., & G. Knowles (Eds.). (1997). *Teaching and language corpora*. Longman: London and New York.

Appendix 1

Lesson Plan: Teaching Cognates using Corpus Linguistics

<p>Level: Advanced 3 (B2 CEF)</p> <p>Students: 3 students: 1 young adult (20 years old), 2 women (between 50-55 years old).</p> <p>Main Aim(s): To use corpus linguistics to teach cognates and false cognates in English, without using a computer. To get students to act as language researchers by analyzing the data obtained from a corpus.</p>				
Subsidiary Aims	Time	Activities	Interaction	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise students' expectations. • To engage students in the class. 	2 min.	<p>Warm up.</p> <p>The teacher will write the following words on the board: <i>career, realize, resume, eventually, actually, notable, splendid, criticize</i>; and will encourage students to work together and decide what each word means.</p> <p>The three students will work together, and will come up with the meaning of each word. Students' answers can be either a definition in English, or an equivalent word in Spanish. Both types of answers are acceptable.</p> <p>The teacher will check students' answers. At this stage, the teacher will not tell students whether their answers are correct or incorrect.</p>	<p>Teacher-student</p> <p>Group work</p> <p>Group work</p> <p>Class as a whole</p>	Markers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce students to the topic of cognates/false cognates. • To raise students' awareness of the importance of knowing when a word is a cognate/false cognate. 	3 min.	<p>The teacher will ask students if they think the words on the board are similar to some words in Spanish. The teacher will tell students that words that are similar in two languages are called <i>cognates</i> (if they have the same meaning in both languages), or <i>false cognates</i> (if the meaning is different in each language).</p> <p>Each student will be given a handout (Appendix 2) with more information about cognates and corpus linguistics. The teacher will read out loud the <i>What are cognates?</i> part, and will give students some more examples if necessary.</p> <p>The teacher will then tell students that it is important that they know if cognates are false or not, since they can be very helpful when learning English. If they know a word is a cognate, it might be easier for them to remember its meaning; therefore, their range of vocabulary becomes wider.</p> <p>The teacher will tell students that one way in which they can find out/investigate the meaning of cognates is with the help of Corpus Linguistics.</p>	Teacher-student	Handout 1 (Appendix 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce students to 	4 min.	<p>The teacher will refer students to the <i>Corpus Linguistics: What is a corpus?</i></p>	Teacher-student	Handout 1

<p>Corpus Linguistics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To briefly describe the corpus used for this activity. To explain what concordances are and how they should be read. 		<p>section of the handout, and will explain what a corpus is. Then, the teacher will read the description of the corpus he/she used to obtain the data needed for the class (Collins, The Bank of English). It is important that the teacher tells students that they do not need to register or pay in order to use this corpus since they can access it for free.</p> <p>The teacher will refer students to the <i>What are we going to look at?</i> section, and will explain what concordances are and how they should be interpreted. The teacher will show students the concordances (Appendix 3) they will be working with later in the class (in order for them to see what they look like), but will not give them out yet.</p>		(Appendix 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give students a general idea of how to use a corpus. To guide students through the step-by-step instructions on how to use the corpus. 	4 min.	<p>Now that students have a general idea of what a corpus is, they will look at page 2 of the handout in order to follow the step-by-step instructions on how to use the Collins corpus to obtain concordances.</p> <p>The teacher and the students will read together the step-by-step instructions on how to use the corpus. Each step on the handout is illustrated with an image of the website of the Collins corpus (Appendix 2 p.2-4), so that students can see what the webpage looks like.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first step is to go to the website of the corpus. The teacher will tell students that they need to log on to the following website: http://www.collins.co.uk/books.aspx?group=153. The second step is to scroll down the page until students see the <i>Can I use this resource?</i> section, and then click on the first <i>click here</i> link to access the free Concordance Demonstration and Collocation Demonstration. Students will now have access to the Concordances. The third step is to type in the word students are interested in, in the <i>Type your query</i> box. Students will also need to select in which sub-corpora they want to search the word: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> British books, ephemera*, radio, newspapers, magazines. American books, ephemera* and radio. British transcribed speech. <p>* Students might not know the meaning of <i>ephemera</i>; therefore, the teacher will have to explain what it is: Ephemera are paper collectibles that were not designed to be collectible or conserved. Some examples</p>	Teacher-student	Handout 1 (Appendix 2 p.2-4)

		<p>are greeting cards, newspapers, magazines, menus, or ticket stubs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once students have chosen the word and the sub-corpus, they can go on to step four, which is to click on the <i>Show Concs</i> button to obtain their results. • A new window with students' results will appear on the screen. Step five is to analyze the data obtained. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce students to the analysis of data. • To lead students to interpret the data obtained from the corpus. • To teach students to use concordances as a resource to get information about the language. • To lead students to formulate hypotheses about how the language works. 	35 min.	<p>Now that students have become familiar with the corpus, they can start analyzing the concordances. The teacher will remind students that what they are interested in is knowing whether the words previously written on the board are cognates or false cognates, and that in order to know this, they will be using the concordances from the Collins corpus.</p> <p>The teacher will give each student a copy of the handouts with the concordances (Appendix 3). The handouts contain printed concordances for each of the words students guessed the meaning of at the beginning of the class. In order to facilitate students' analysis, the teacher chose the easiest sentences (10 or 11) from the corpus.</p> <p>The three students will work together to analyze the data. The teacher will tell them which word should be analyzed first (the order doesn't matter). Students will read the concordances, and they will first try to identify whether the word is a cognate or false cognate. If students decide that the word is a false cognate, then they will be asked to guess what the word means based on the context that surrounds the word.</p> <p>The teacher will give students enough time to go through each word. While students are working, the teacher will walk around the classroom and monitor students' work. If there are any questions or problems, the teacher will help students.</p>	Group work	Handout 2 (Appendix 3).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To check students' answers and hypotheses about the language. • To measure the effectiveness of the use of concordances to teach 	7 min.	<p>When students have finished analyzing all the words, the teacher will check their hypotheses.</p> <p>The teacher will check students' hypotheses about the meaning of each word, i.e. the teacher will say one word and will remind students of the meaning they attributed to such word at the beginning of the class. Then, the teacher will ask students what they think now, whether the word is a cognate or false cognate (based on the concordances), and</p>	Teacher-student	

<p>cognates based on how many correct hypotheses students formulated.</p>		<p>what it means. The teacher will give students feedback on their answers, and will tell them if the word is actually a cognate or false cognate and what it really means.</p> <p>If students are doubtful about their answers, the teacher will go through the concordances again, and will try to encourage them to guess the answer. If students are still uncertain, the teacher can give them some more examples. If students are still unable to guess the meaning of the word, or whether it is a cognate or false cognate, the teacher will give them the correct answer.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage students to reflect on the use of corpora to analyze the way language works. • To know what students think about/how they feel about the use of corpora to learn English. • To encourage students to become language researchers, rather than simply getting answers from reference material such as dictionaries. 	5 min.	<p>Once students' answers have been checked, the teacher will conclude the class by asking students some reflection questions about using the corpus and the concordances to investigate/analyze language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel using the concordances from the corpus? • Do you think using a corpus could help you learn English? • Did you find it easy to use? • Apart from guessing the meanings of words, what else could you use the corpus for? <p>Finally, the teacher will remind students of the importance of the use of all the tools available to us to learn a language. The teacher will encourage students to become language researchers, and to think about the way the language behaves and is structured, rather than just looking up a word in a dictionary and getting the meaning out of context and structure.</p>	Class as a whole/class discussion	

Appendix 2

What are cognates?

Two words in two languages that have a common origin. Cognates are often similar or identical in form. For example, the English "kiosk" and the Spanish *quiosco* are cognates because they both come from the Turkish *kosk*. They can also be words in two languages that are similar but have no common origin, such as the Spanish *sopa* (meaning "soup") and the English "soap."

Cognates often have a similar meaning, but in some cases the meaning is different. **False cognates** are cognates that have different meanings, such as the Spanish *molestar* (to bother) and the English "molest" (to abuse sexually). A more precise term to use for such word pairs is "false friends."

Taken from: <http://spanish.about.com/cs/vocabulary/g/cognategloss.htm>

Corpus Linguistics

What is a corpus?

A corpus is a collection of texts in an electronic database. It is a systematic, planned, and structured compilation of texts.

Description of our corpus

Name: Collins. The Bank of English

Size: The corpus contains 524 million words and it continues to grow with the constant addition of new material.

Form: Spoken and written language.
Free access!!!!

What are we going to look at?

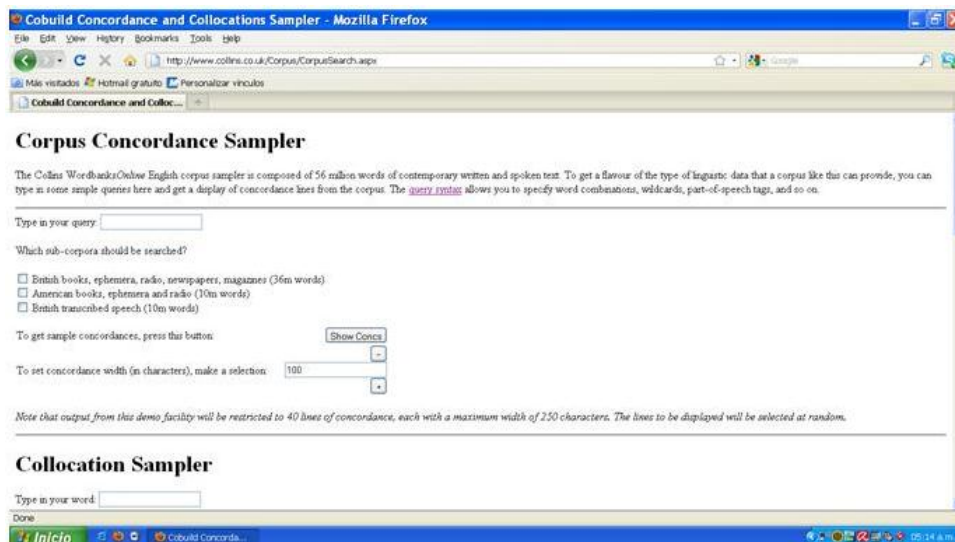
Concordances:

Concordances are lists of words/sentences that can be used to examine the use and behaviour of words in their original context. They can help us distinguish the meanings of words.

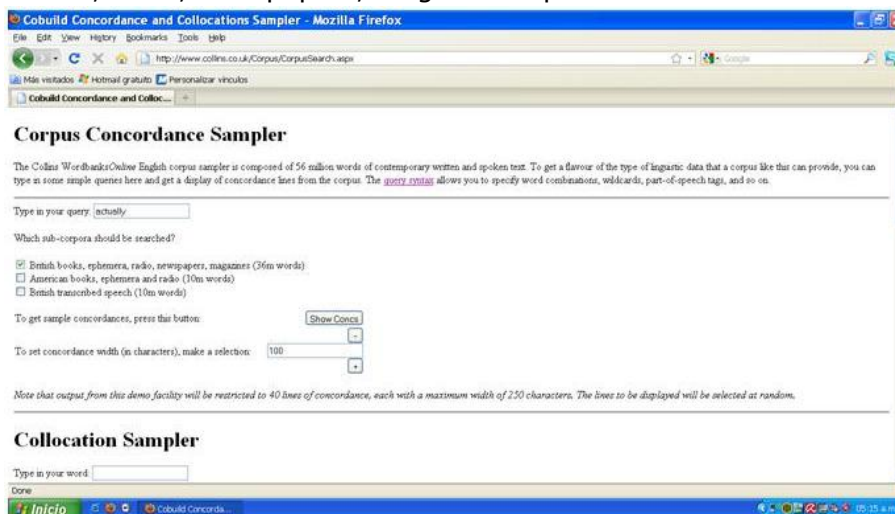
Step 1. Go to: <http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx>

Step 2. Type in the word you are looking for in the **Type your query** space, and select where you want to look for the word in the corpus:

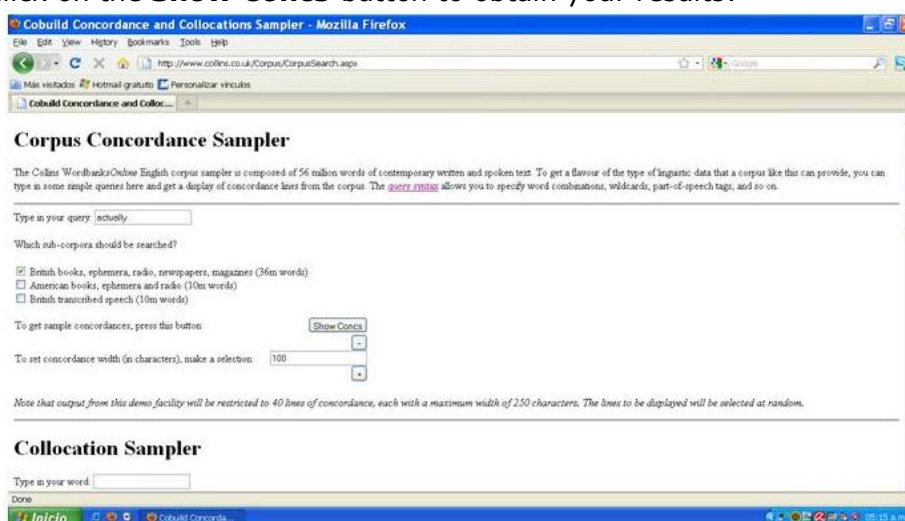
- British books, ephemera, radio, newspapers, magazines (36 million words)
- American books, ephemera and radio (10 million words)
- British transcribed speech (10 million words)



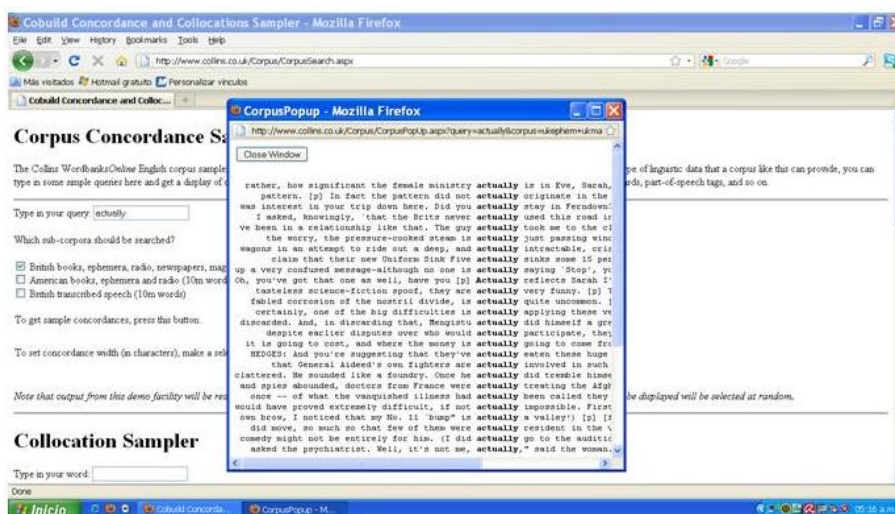
Example: the word *actually* was typed in the *Type your query* space, and the British books, ephemera, radio, newspapers, magazines option was chosen.



Step 3. Click on the **Show Concs** button to obtain your results:



Step 4. A new window with your results will appear on the screen!!!! We're ready to start analyzing!



Appendix 3

Look at the following concordances and analyze them. Are the words cognates or false cognates? What are their meanings?

Actually

pattern. [p] In fact the pattern did not actually originate in the town, but took a long
 ve been in a relationship like that. The guy actually took me to the club he went to with his
 tasteless science-fiction spoof, they are actually very funny. [p] The year is 2012, and Accion
 certainly, one of the big difficulties is actually applying these very large sheets of material
 despite earlier disputes over who would actually participate, they appear to have got under
 it is going to cost, and where the money is actually going to come from. According to the World
 would have proved extremely difficult, if not actually impossible. Firstly, the British Library's
 comedy might not be entirely for him. (I did actually go to the audition, but South Africa, the
 asked the psychiatrist. Well, it's not me, actually," said the woman. "It's my husband. He
 On Saturday we must be sensible. Past results actually mean nothing nor do past events. But this is
 there was something much more than any of us actually thought about at the time. He was saying

Career

where he'll go from there. [p] I don't have a career path mapped out. Opportunities just come
 bar. What type of woman does he like? `A career girl who wants to make something of herself
 of music. Peter Nettleship looks back on his career: [h] DESK REYNOLDS CAIRO [/h] The British
 [p] Judith B. was a 45-year-old journalist, a career which she found stimulating and rewarding.
 of his paper and the ending of his political career. The success of Fascism now in command of
 better than at any time in his distinguished career, resumes his partnership with Unguided
 bit as flamboyant. He came to Britain after a career as a cowboy, buffalo hunter, and failed
 Europe. She returned to Minnesota to start a career in television and it was at a London party
 always seemed naturally destined for an acting career, and started on radio while she was still at
 [p] This will definitely be a huge step in my career. It now means I've beaten all the top players
 Raspberry Award. [p] Last month, Madonna's career reached a new low when she delivered her most

Realize

see the sights or go shopping, you'll soon realize that Frankfurt is a lot more than just
 know everything before I teach it to kids. I realize that I could teach just about any topic to
 mind. [p] Through television, she had begun to realize there was a world outside Turtle Ridge that
 was because I had to travel so much. You must realize that in my job I often have to be away. It's
 [p] Slowly, with rising terror, she began to realize the truth. [o] She was tempted to grab the
 time. [p] That's the most important thing to realize. Accept that your feelings are likely to be
 so make sure your family and workmates realize that they cannot take advantage of you. [p]
 the ecology of the parks." Perhaps he didn't realize how long the car had been in use in the
 therapy unit as the medical staff began to realize that, instead of recovery, something with
 as she sat waiting for her check-up did she realize how little she had thought during the last
 [88] A list like the one below can help you to realize that what you are continuing to strive for
 the spacing. It is also important to realize that the grammar does not have to be precise

Eventually

but end up in tears when he drops the ball. Eventually he will probably refuse to join in ball
 to take advantage of the opportunity and eventually opened this shop [p] The current popularity
 of Prey will only fly because it knows that eventually it will be rewarded with food; it will not
 been confident that the United States would eventually stop the dialogue: [h] NEWSDESK CURRELL NEW
 whatever one man can produce another man can eventually learn to imitate. But expensive. But the
 I hope that current research will lead eventually to some clearer idea of what it is. [p]
 my faith in Christ. Don't you agree?' Vicky eventually answered the question herself, just as Rana
 parents. If he married Serena - which would eventually make her the next Countess of Snowdon - he
 Suddenly she developed double vision. [p] Eventually she was sent to Walton Hospital. They gave
 were not allowed to see her alone. [p] They eventually regained custody, but the fear of losing
 no avail. After more very nasty letters we eventually went in and paid it all off [p] Powerhouse

Resume

Guyana's main opposition party is expected to resume his responsibilities next month after taking
 RIGA [/h] The Latvian parliament is due to resume its discussions later today on a declaration
 the White House has stressed the dialogue can resume as soon as Washington's terms are met. But as
 rebel movement, UNITA, says it is ready to resume direct talks with the government as soon as
 Monetary Fund and the World Bank to resume the repayment of Peru's foreign debt of some
 kill Mr. Rushdie. In any case, the decision to resume relations will have come from Iran which
 ministers are travelling there this weekend to resume their mediation, and two members of the
 to Iran last month that Germany would not resume its work on the plant, which was suspended in
 Confederation Rome: Mozambican peace talks resume. BRITAIN IRA: Judgment in case of three
 those who have had serious mental illness resume their lives as normally as possible, which
 will never recover sufficient [p] strength to resume his job. [p] Unless he resigns, he cannot
 in New York [/b] [p] SINEAD O'Connor is set to resume her pop career after confessing her decision

Notable

Viscount Melville and Baron Dunira, a notable politician of his day, who during his career invasions and yet has seen prosperity and notable developments due to its position at the and white roses. [p] One of the most notable trees in the garden is known as Sydney's Oak measurement was made. [p] Among Robert's notable helpers was Andy Wilkinson, last year's the women. [p] In the west, the group's most notable success was the case of a 20-year old the sun. [20] The big ears are the most notable feature. As is the way of things, most of seem to have nothing to declare except their notable antecedents and their intense yearning for open their wallets. Jones has encountered some notable exceptions, however. The innovative online annually, said that it had not seen any notable rise in requests for funding since the of the historical novel with which he had a notable success nine years ago in The Maid of built on the World Cup winning side, the most notable change being the introduction of Karl Heinz

5

Splendid

active volcano (19,700'), and admire the splendid views around the Crater Lake of Quilatoa - provide Birmingham with a new landmark and a splendid piece of architecture. [c] drawings [/c] [h] the other hand you get quite a lot for it - splendid surroundings, friendly, indeed noticeably has a lively night life. There are also splendid sandy beaches nearby on Jutland's west coast the tension formidable, the stars are as splendid as you could wish for and the jargon is throughout Brittany but nowhere more splendid than here. Some damage has been done to the the Royal College of Defence Studies. The 'splendid book' he referred to was Strategy of And you have our humble thanks indeed for so splendid a meal." She rose and walked out of the room The ceremonies going in and out are rather splendid with the Swiss Guards and the Papal Gall said she and her family had received a splendid welcome. [p] [h] Congress summons [/h] [b]

Criticize

its ability to govern - rather than just criticize - in the showcase example of Budapest. [h] licenses: It may well be that it's unfair to criticize individuals who don't have this technical the street. At the same time, she started to criticize her rapidly-developing female physiology. even though it has become fashionable to criticize modernization theory as a whole (Bernstein, questions) one professional cannot comment or criticize another's work; some professions are are individual priorities as well. Try not to criticize each other too much, but end up with a with past usage and custom. Although we can criticize what may sometimes appear to be the of good and evil. Consequently we may criticize cultural innocence without rejecting the This is inevitable. Indeed, they may need to criticize in an effort to satisfy their ego and He has been nice to you, and I shouldn't criticize him. He's typical, God knows, which is what

Ethnic Media Technologies enhance Chinese English as Second Language Learners' Intercultural Identities ¹

**YULIN FENG, VALENTIN EKIKA NZAI, DEPARTMENT OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION,
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-KINGSVILLE ²**

Abstract

In a predominantly English speaking society, newcomers are large consumers of ethnic media technologies. This paper, from a pilot mixed methods project, explores the effects of ethnic media technologies in the development of intercultural identity among Chinese ESL (English as Second Language) learners.

Twelve Chinese, who graduated from ESL programs in the United States of America, responded to a questionnaire relating to the topic of inquiry. A third part of participants was interviewed. Research data indicated that participants habitually spend an average of 6.04 hours per day using ethnic media in their daily lives, partly because they are still striving for maintaining their cultural ties in a predominantly subtractive bilingual setting.

Findings highlighted not only how ethnic media technologies play an important role informing new immigrant minorities' cross-cultural values when establishing group kinship within the host culture, but also how participants use ethnic media technologies to enhance integrative awareness, coherent bicultural identity, and cultural competence.

Recommendations for one-way and two-ways dual language classroom teachers are framed from cross-cultural adaptation and community of practice approaches.

Introduction

The use of ethnic media technologies constitutes a natural bridge toward the development of intercultural identity for people who are immersed in cross-cultural adaptation processes. In fact, ethnic media technologies have grown dramatically in the United States of America. According to a New America media report, the numbers of African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans using ethnic media technologies on a regular basis increased approximately 16 percent, zooming from 49 million to 57 million adults over the past four years (New America Media 2009). The media outlets mostly used by the above three ethnic groups included ethnic television (TV), radio, newspapers and websites. In fact, minorities in the United States are consciously or unconsciously influenced by ethnic media technologies in their daily lives (Tisdell and Thompson 2007). With the advancement of ethnic media, they learn something about themselves as well as others (Lam 2006; Reece & Palmgreen 2000; Tisdell and Thompson 2007).

Research on the role of ethnic media in minority students' learning (Chen, Haufler and Taam 1999; Heintz-Knowles, Chen, Miller and Haufler 2000; Kim 1979) suggest that ethnic media plays a crucial role in portraying characters of diverse racial, ethnical, and linguistic backgrounds. In other words, ethnic media also functions as an important tool for developing minorities' self-perception and

¹ This is a refereed article.

² kuve2002@tamuk.edu

knowledge of others' cultural identities within the mainstream society (Neuendorf 1982; Rivadeneyra, Ward and Gordon 2007). Thus, it is important to pay attention to its effect on minorities' intercultural identity development in a predominantly monolingual-monocultural society.

So far, research on new immigrant cultural identity development has mainly focused on minority youth keeping an absolute silence on adults. However, recent studies (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz and Kopacz 2008) on media and ethnical/cultural studies mostly emphasize minority portrayals in media in general, especially TV. Adults have been under-represented and negatively stereotyped (Chen, Haufler and Taam 1999; Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005; Mastro and Greenberg 2000). For example, Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) examined the frequency and quality of Latinos' portrayals of the 2002 primetime television programs. Results showed that Latinos were much under-represented compared to whites and blacks. Also, Latinos' characteristics were portrayed less favorable than the above groups.

In addition, some scholars (Entman and Rojecki 2000; Lubbers and Scheepers 2000; Rada 2000) have claimed the existence of a direct relationship between the mainstream media portrayals of minorities and subsequent behavioral responses toward minorities. Generally speaking, minorities spend more time using mainstream media technologies than white using ethnic ones (Fujioka 2005). Among them, adults represent a large number of ethnic media consumers.

This paper discusses data from a pilot research project conducted in 2009. The study analyzed participants' preferences for media outlets, the amount of time they spend using Chinese media and the media usage motives. Therefore, the main topic of inquiry consists of informing not only MEXTESOL Journal readers, but also teachers involved in dual-language and adult English as second language (ESL) education on the power of media technologies on learners' intercultural identity/personality development in a predominantly English speaking society through exploration of the following research questions: a) What are foreign-born Chinese non-native English speaking professionals' perceptions toward the use of ethnic media?, and b) how do ethnic media influence foreign-born Chinese non-native English speaking professionals' bicultural identity development?

Certainly, the answers to the aforementioned questions, reported in this article, will evoke professional awareness, spark interest, stimulate thoughts and discussions, and disseminate knowledge needed to effectively teach K-12, college and adult ESL learners in a predominantly subtractive bilingual setting such as Mexico. To help our readers better understand the structure of this article, first we will provide an overview of some research related to the topic of inquiry before describing our research methods. Afterwards, we will present the research findings, implications and recommendations for teachers, bearing in mind that the terms dominant - majority - mainstream and ethnic media technologies - ethnic media are respectively used interchangeably in this paper.

Notion of Ethnic Media and Cultural Identities

Ethnic media technologies have been acknowledged as mass media communications including traditional TV, newspapers, magazines and advertisements, digital radio, TV, and newspapers, and the Internet, etc. Forms of ethnic media are written and broadcast in the native language of a racial/ethnic group (Faber, O'Guinn and Meyer 1986; Lekgoathi 2009). That is, ethnic media are tied to a particular group and have the capacity to deliver information to that group. For this research, we purposely limit forms of ethnic media to traditional and digital TV, newspapers, the Internet, and music targeting Chinese immigrant minorities.

In fact, history of ethnic media (Ballinger and Kim 1996; Johnson 2000; Keshishian 2000; Kim 1979; Moon and Park 2007; Viswanath and Arora 2000; Zhou and Cai 2002) reveals that it can be divided into three distinct phases: assimilation, acculturation and pluralism.

The first phase (assimilation) took place in the 1920s and consisted of promoting cultural assimilation under the American melting-pot and whiteness approaches. Assimilation involved the rejection of the minority culture and strived for a complete integration into the mainstream culture (Neuendorf 1982). In light of mass media, early immigrant newspapers contained only a great deal of advertising and were sent to intended customers (Johnson 2000). Eventually, social science and media researchers began to focus on participation in mainstream media which was a need for acculturation. In the 1960s, immigrants' assimilation process was moved to the second phase: Acculturation.

Acculturation refers to the process in which minorities adapt to the mainstream society (Kim 2001; Kim, Lujan and Dixon 1998). Acculturation is an ongoing and interactive process which involves inter and intra personal communication with the mainstream culture. In this communication - acculturation process, mass media function as information providers regarding the dominant cultural environment and a buffer from the assimilation forces of the dominant culture (Johnson 2000). Also, the aforementioned scholar argued that media can help ethnic minorities reduce pressures in the process of acculturation.

However, this assumption was further challenged by some researchers (Kim 1996; 2001; Kim, Lujan and Dixon 1998) who addressed two postulates which may limit media communication in its acculturation function. Claims have been made that immigrant minorities who learn the mainstream culture from media may react or behave in different ways (Kim 1979, Moon and Park 2007). That is, media may not control media users' cultural practices. Also, newcomers may not have communication competence to develop interpersonal relationships with people within the new socio-cultural environment (Kim 1979; Yang, Wu, Zhu and Southwell 2004). Due to various challenging postulates, the acculturation phase was set to move to the third phase. In the 1970s, ethnic media researchers (Ballinger and King 1992; Johnson 2000; Melkote and Liu 2000) dropped the term acculturation in favor of the term of pluralism.

The pluralism stage led to the creation of many ethnic media outlets in the United States. Chinese language media (CLM) initially took root in the American-

dominated media in order to smooth and provide important tools to foster the newcomers' adaptation to the mainstream American society (Zhou and Cai 2002). Also, new Chinese immigrants used a wide variety of media, including television, radio, movies, magazines, and most recently, electronic publications and broadcasting to strengthen and support their bilingualism-biculturalism processes (Zhou and Cai 2002).

In short, ethnic media may lessen the cultural gap between the mainstream society and minority communities and preserve cultural ties. Ethnic media also can build up immigrant minorities' understandings regarding the mainstream culture because they receive the information in their native languages (Lee, 2004). Thus, immigrant minorities should be conscious of the existence of their cultural duality in order to actively participate in the two cultural spheres. So far, this literature review is important to understand how ethnic media influence cultural identities among new immigrant minorities.

Without any doubt, adult minorities are often acculturated within two or more cultural frameworks simultaneously. They may maintain values and practices of their heritage culture through family members, members of their racial groups, and ethnic media while adjusting themselves to the host culture value-based system and norms through friends, colleagues and mainstream media. In the United States, new Chinese immigrants, especially ESL and college students, are also exposed to a third culture and/or fourth culture through other immigrant minorities who recreate their own cultural frameworks within a salad bowl America.

In fact, the process of developing a bicultural identity in predominantly monolingual-monocultural cultures is complex. From cross-cultural adaptation and community of practice approaches (Kim, 1996, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002), it implies a move from the periphery to the center of both cultures. In other words, it requires the participant to strengthen his or her heritage culture status while acquiring and developing the needed human competences to become a cultural insider of his/her host culture.

From the cross-cultural adaptation viewpoint (Kim 1977, 1988, 2001), learning is central to intercultural communication. Individuals involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes are weighed down by the stress of entering a new cultural environment. They may experience confusion, self-doubt, and frustration when they encounter internal or external conflicts between their ethnic and host cultures. In order to reduce the cross-cultural stress and overcome challenges, they should learn how to adapt to the new culture. The cross-cultural adaptation process is characterized by stress-adaptation-growth which is facilitated by interacting with members in the new cultural environment and mass media (Kim 2001). However, when individuals learn new cultural elements (acculturation), they unconsciously lose some cultural elements of their home country to some extent (deculturation). Cultural identities change, form and develop through communication and social interaction (Kim 1979, 2001).

Certainly, Chinese professionals, who graduated from ESL programs in the United States (also called in this paper Chinese ESL learners), as well as many new

immigrants, in the United States, involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes, experience acculturation and deculturation effects discussed in Kim's (2001) research. Ethnic media may provide Chinese ESL learners with opportunities to complement their interpersonal communication experiences and activities especially when they are far away from their home land. In addition, exposure to ethnic mass communication assists them in strengthening their cultural identity (Kim 1988; 2001) while remaining at the periphery of their host culture. Simply put, ethnic media might act as a barrier in Chinese ESL learners' cross-cultural adaptation process. This idea of moving from the host culture periphery is well elaborated in Wenger's (1998) concept of community of practice.

In fact, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder's (2002) notion of community of practices can be defined as groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. The aforementioned scholars believed that learning relies on domain, community and practices.

As members of the Chinese community in the United States, Chinese ESL learners have been favored by ethnic media which help them to strengthen their cultural heritage status while moving from the periphery of their host culture to the center. Exposure to ethnic media might provide Chinese ESL learners with opportunities to (1) participate in the Chinese community, which in turn sustain ethnic identity, (2) receive social support from others, and (3) move from being passive cultural learners to active practitioners or knowledge contributors. At the same time, Chinese ESL learners set to work accumulating rich resources, skills, and knowledge regarding their host culture from the cultural periphery to become competent cultural insiders. From the above discussion, it does follow that the exposure to ethnic media has a strong bond to cultures and the development of cultural identities. In the next section, we will highlight various formats of ethnic media.

Formats of Ethnic Media and Cultural Identities

Ethnic media scholars (Jeffres 2000; Ferle and Morimoto 2009; Johnson 2000) have used various formats to facilitate the development of a relationship between ethnic media and identity. Information can be delivered by air, print, and online. Traditional or electronic publications are well-known formats that have been used in the past. Zhang and Xiaoming (1999) documented the potential benefits of electronic Chinese publications. Their study demonstrated that ethnic media can encourage the exploration of diverse possibilities regarding the enhancement of minorities' sense of identities. Later, Johnson (2000) conducted an exploratory study of Latina magazines where he articulated the necessity of providing U.S. Hispanic with ethnic magazines, so that they can maintain and transmit their ethnic culture and build up their ethnic pride.

More recently, Ferle and Morimoto (2009) examined the impact of ethnic identification on the use of ethnic media between Asian American working adults and Asian American students. The results showed that Asian Americans with a high sense of ethnic identification frequently used ethnic media regardless of their life-stage (student or working adult).

According to the research results from *Chinese for Affirmative Action* and the *Association of Chinese Teachers* (1980), television programs make Chinese-American children conscious of their bicultural identity because the media highlighted the differences and/or conflicts between the traditional Chinese and dominant cultures.

Although research on immigrant minorities cultural identity development (Lee 2004; Moon and Park 2007; Park 2009) revealed that mainstream or ethnic media were significantly associated with ethnic identity, so far, the majority of studies has mainly focused on Hispanic and African American groups keeping an absolute silence on Chinese immigrant minorities (Faber, O'Guinn and Meyer 1986; Fujioka 2005; Godfried 2002; Neuendorf 1982; Rivadeneyra, Ward and Gordon 2007). However, as described above, Asian Americans make up one of the three major ethnic groups (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans) who frequently use ethnic media on a regular basis (New America Media 2009). Among these Asian Americans, adult Chinese, especially those young-adults involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes, spent more time using ethnic media than other Asian groups. Thus, emphasis should be placed on this specific group of Chinese immigrants in order to understand how media influence their bicultural identity development in a predominantly monolingual society.

Methods

It is worth to remind our reader that the main topic of inquiry of this paper consists of informing MEXTESOL Journal readers and those teachers involved in dual-language and adult ESL education of the power of media technologies on learners' intercultural identity/personality development in a predominantly English speaking society.

The study is grounded in one questionnaire (see Appendix I) and one in-depth interview. Unlike random sampling, purposeful sampling allows researchers to select participants who have in-depth knowledge of the topic of inquiry at hand or where information is rich (Patton 1990). For this research, the participants were recruited through university network of friends who will represent variation in the phenomenon of interest. The types of variation we were looking for including participants' preferences for media outlets, amount of time they spend using Chinese language media, and media usage motives.

The theoretical sampling criteria we used for participants' selection included the following: being a foreign-born Chinese who graduated from a college Intensive English Program in the United States and being currently categorized as an immigrant minority in the United States. According to Ogbu (1990) typology of minorities, immigrant minorities are those who voluntarily move to another society because they believe that the move may help them improve their economic status and in turn provide better opportunities or more political freedom. For the sake of confidentiality in describing the data, we assigned the following codification to refer to research participants: RP #1 (research participant #1), RP #2, RP #3, RP #4, RP #5, RP #6, etc. Also, we selected participants who consider themselves as bilingual/bicultural individuals.

Participant ages ranged from 25 to 35 and have been living in the United States from 0.95 to 10.3 years.

Signature of an informed consent which included procedures and protection of human beings was obtained from each participant. At first, participants had to fill out one 13 items web-based questionnaire related to their preferences for media outlets, the amount of time they spend using Chinese media, and their media usage motives. Based on their answers to the questionnaire (see Appendix I), we selected three participants who better represented the topic of inquiry for the in-depth phone interview.

The questionnaire, named Ethnic Media Survey (EMS), was an attempt to provide participants with opportunities to reflect on their ethnic media using patterns, attitudes, and perceptions to find out if they were consciously or unconsciously aware of the role ethnic media plays in their daily lives in general and bicultural identity development in particular. It was upgraded from Reece and Palmgreen's (2000) television viewing motives scale (TVMS). Reece and Palmgreen (2000) divided their original scales into six factors with a total of 30 questions. However, based on the purpose of this study, we reduced and upgraded the TVMS original version by adding some items relating to the cross-cultural variables. The EMS scale ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Later on, we coded the EMS items into four categories. Prior to sending it out, an expert review process was used to assess its validity.

In general, participants spent approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the TVMS questionnaire, which was the first step in the data collection process. Participants' responses were represented in a graphical format for further analysis. We assessed the credibility of data by sharing the emerging themes with participants. Furthermore, we compared data gathered from in-depth interview to questionnaire's responses in order to answer the research questions.

The purpose of the in-depth interview was not only to find out Chinese ESL learners' perceptions toward the use of ethnic media, but also how ethnic media influence their bicultural identity development. Each interview was conducted by phone and lasted approximately 50 minutes. Data were recorded through an interview protocol developed by the researchers.

For the sake of clarity in describing the data, we assigned the following codification to refer to the two sources of data: DI for data from the questionnaire (quantitative data) and DII for data from the interview (qualitative data). Data from the questionnaire (DI) were processed using graphical software (Kaleidagraph 3.5). Quantitative results were reviewed, along with patterns found in the qualitative analysis. Research findings were categorized into three themes. We used constant triangulation analysis to validate the accuracy of the finding themes. From the themes, we interpreted the data by reflecting on how the findings relate to previous studies. Finally, a narrative of findings was written as part of the research report presentation.

Findings

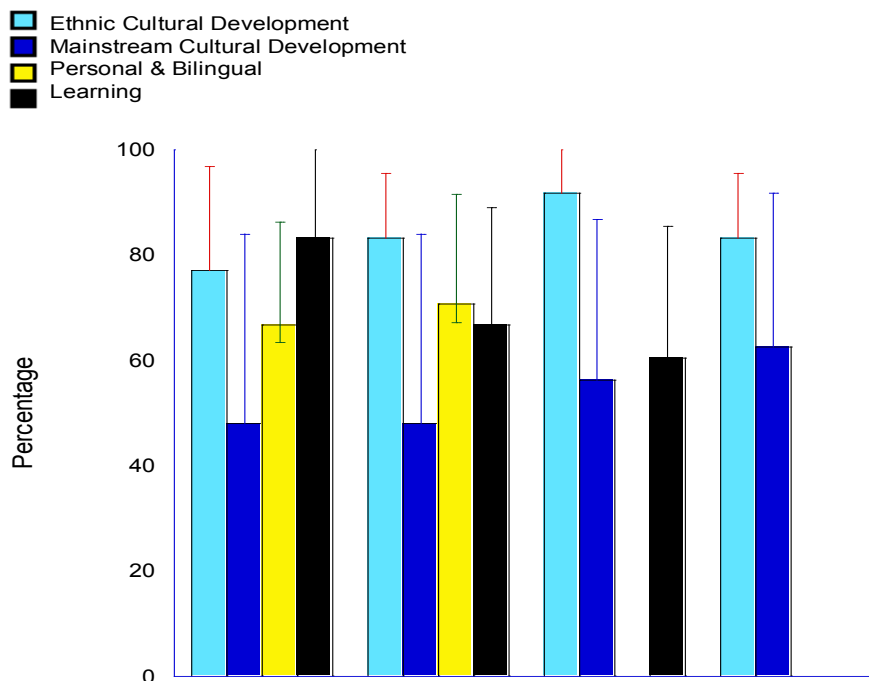
This section provides a brief description of the questionnaire results and finding themes. Some implications for ESL /dual language education will follow.

Summary of Questionnaire Results

Overall, the DI showed that participants in this study spent 6.04 hours using ethnic media on a daily basis. The media outlets that they preferred to use after moving to the United States were the Internet and TV. Ninety-two percent ($n=11$) of participants reported that they frequently used the Internet, while forty-two percent ($n=5$) of participants liked to watch Chinese language TV. However, Chinese language newspapers and magazines were not popular among participants in this study, approximately eight ($n=2$) percent of the participants reported that they read Chinese language newspapers, and none of them took Chinese language magazines into account when choosing the types of ethnic media they prefer.

In terms of ethnic media usage motives, participants answers ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The primary reading of the graph (see Graph 1) suggested that the strongest motives for using Chinese language media, as indicated by the mean scores, were ethnic cultural development ($M=3.35$, $SD=.40$), learning ($M=2.81$, $SD=.56$), personal and bicultural development ($M=2.75$, $SD=.35$), and mainstream cultural development ($M=2.15$, $SD=.55$).

GRAPH 1: MEAN OF CHINESE LANGUAGE MEDIA MOTIVES
n = 12



Qualitative Findings

Most of the participants indicated that they used ethnic media largely for creating, expanding, and exchanging knowledge of their ethnic culture. However, there were three interrelated findings of the qualitative data addressed here regarding how interviewees believed ethnic media affect their learning about themselves as well as others. In this section, we reviewed additional quantitative findings, along with patterns found in the qualitative analysis in order to address the research questions. Three major themes emerged; these were perceptions toward Chinese language media (CLM), the role of CLM in ethnic and mainstream cultures, and bicultural identity development.

The first research question was: what is foreign-born Chinese non-native English speaking professionals' perception toward the use of ethnic media one finding pattern emerged from the DII analysis.

Perceptions toward CLM

All of the participants in this study revealed positive perceptions toward the use of CLM in their daily lives as well as cultural development. For example, RP # 5 argued: *I will have positive attitudes toward my Chinese group and community or I will feel proud of being Taiwanese when I see successful stories shown on Chinese language media (quote from DII of December 5, 2009).*

A difference between Chinese immigrant minorities' responses to ethnic media messages between cultures also existed. The immigrant minority adults learn their ethnic background, values, and cultural practices, whereas they learn little American culture from ethnic media. RP # 5 said that: *I may be more prone to learn Chinese culture than American culture I can learn American culture if the news or movies include it (quote from DII of December 5, 2009).*

RP #5's experiences were widely shared by other interviewees. RP # 4 recalled learning about himself and others of diverse cultures. He expressed his ideas as follows: *With the aid of Chinese language media, I learn Chinese culture more than American culture. I believe that I have two cultures inside myself; however, I do not mix both cultures together into one, just as people may have dual personality. I still retain my origin, culture, and ethnicity while becoming a member of the new country. I embrace the great diversity of cultures because I not only retain my ethnic cultural aspects but also add some cultural aspects in mainstream society which I believe are good for myself or my children in the near future. Also, I will completely rule out some mainstream cultural aspects with which I do not agree. For example, I know that in American culture, parents are less likely to support their children to go to college; they may have to work in order to pay the tuition. I would not do that. In Chinese culture, parents often make sacrifices for their children; they will work hard to take care of everything for their children to go to schools without worry (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

The second research question was: how do ethnic media outlets influence adult Chinese immigrant bicultural identity development? Two finding patterns emerged from DII analysis.

The Role of CLM

Participants were able to consciously clarify the different roles CLM play in ethnic and mainstream cultural development. Ethnic media provide the Chinese immigrant minorities with opportunities to make a connection and communicate with their Chinese culture and society. On the other hand, in the mainstream cultural development, ethnic media provide useful tactics for living in and understanding the new environment.

Overall ethnic media function as information providers regarding the ethnic group and the mainstream cultural environment. RP # 4 stated: *I have to use Chinese language media, such as ePapers; otherwise, I feel that I lose connection with my country, and my Chinese language would regress. I need to know about the rapid change of Chinese culture and society. Otherwise, I would feel anxious and nostalgic. Using ethnic media makes me feel comfortable; listening to Chinese language music diminishes my feeling of homesickness. For example, when I browse world journal, normally, I seek news and events happening in Taiwan and Los Angeles, and then I check global and U.S. news superficially. However, I heavily depend on ePapers to comprehend some concerns of mine such as information regarding taxes, immigration and economic news. I just take advantage of my native language, which makes it easy for me to understand certain subject areas. Furthermore, I use Chinese newspapers to look for houses, jobs, restaurants, and airline tickets (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

Similarly, RP# 3 explained that being exposed to CLM was crucial to the development of her ethnic cultural knowledge. She argued that: *mainstream media is not going to cover what we see as small and local stories or events regarding our country; they only cover news headlines. Without ethnic media, we will not have certain issues on tables, and you cannot educate children about these issues. Also, without ethnic media, communication within our ethnic community will be lost (quote from DII of December 1, 2009).*

In addition, CLM not only eliminate the feelings of being uprooted from the ethnic/racial cultures, but also function as an agent of socialization that increase the opportunities to meet Chinese people locally, which helps them develop a sense of closeness and belonging to ethnic society. RP # 5 explained this idea in the following terms: *I became homesick after coming to the United States. CLM can help me alleviate the feelings of loneliness and alienation. CLM also are good for creating a social network, such as friendship. I do not have opportunities to meet other Chinese people except for Chinese church. However, I use some online sites to compensate for my lack of ethnic friends in the United States (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

In fact, RP #5 claim confirmed that the more a young Asian adult is associated with friends from his or her own ethnic group, the more likely he or she is to possess a strong ethnic identity (Xu, Shim, Lotz and Almeida 2004).

Bicultural Identity Development

Integrative awareness. All interviewees found it not easy to balance both Chinese and American cultures regardless of the aid of ethnic media. However, due to

different situations, they may have different cultural identifications of themselves. Participants in this study may self-designate different cultural identification and view issues from different cultural perspectives depending on different situations, yet they still feel comfortable in participating in both cultural spheres. Those minority adults appear to fit the final stage, integrative awareness described by Sue & Sue (1990 as cited in Yeh & Hwang 2000).

For example, RP # 5 stated: *When dealing with things, I tend to combine the American and Chinese ways. Every culture is unique and has its strengths and weakness. If I feel that my Chinese and American cultures are incompatible to some degree, I will create my own cultural framework which I try to remain neutral during the cross-cultural debate. Similarly, it may be hard to describe such thing as a pure state of being Chinese or a pure state of being American. When I go back to Taiwan, I feel that I have the American side of me, whereas I feel that I have the Chinese side of me when I am in the United States (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

RP # 4 assented to the above point, explaining: *When people crystallize their ethnic thoughts and cultures, they may not easily accept the second one. I am more American when I deal with car insurance agent because I cannot use my Chinese ways of problem solving, which I have to keep silent (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

Coherent bicultural identity. All interviewees stated that they can learn more Chinese cultural information than American via the use of ethnic media; however, when dealing with both cultures, they still combine their Chinese and Americans cultures as a whole. Following Schwartz, Pantin, Prado, Sullivan and Szapocznik's (2005) definition, our interviewees who may possess coherent identity are defined as individuals "having the ability to bring together disparate elements into an organized and well-functioning whole. This idea is well expressed by RP # 5 who argued: *I did not feel like holding a separate cultural identity, partitioned into two cultures, and experience cultural conflicts, especially concerning the use of ethnic media (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

Bicultural competence. Developing a coherent bicultural and/or intercultural identity requires strong bicultural and/or intercultural competence. Interview data revealed that participants used ethnic media to reinforce their personal and bicultural values. They seem to fit the model of the bicultural competence described by LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993 as cited in Stroink and Lalonde 2009). They suggested that the foundation of bicultural competence is that an individual develops a sense of both personal and cultural identities. Thus, bicultural individuals are proficient in two diverse cultures. LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton, cited in Stroink and Lalonde (2009), highlighted six factors of developing bicultural competence, including the following: (a) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, (b) positive attitude toward both groups, (c) belief that one is able to function effectively within both cultures, (d) ability to communicate within both cultures, (e) ability to behave appropriately within both cultures, and (f) secure social network within each culture.

In general, participants were positive about the use of ethnic media. Overall data analysis suggested that ethnic media help them to strengthen their ethnic background, values, and cultural practices, whereas learning minimally about American culture from CLM. Similarly, they identified themselves strongly with Chinese culture. However, they highlighted different roles CLM play in ethnic and mainstream American cultures. Ethnic media technologies help Chinese immigrant minorities (1) make a connection, socialize, and communicate with, (2) acquire their ethnic cultural information, and (3) eliminate the feelings of being uprooted from their Chinese culture and society.

In response to mainstream culture, ethnic media technologies help Chinese immigrant minorities to minimally (1) build up the understanding of American cultural background, (2) provide tactics for living in the United States, (3) integrate into the mainstream society, and (4) clarify important concerns of them.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although researchers have studied the impact of mainstream or ethnic media on children from culturally diverse background's identity development and other related topics, few studies have emphasized its impact on young adult immigrant minorities, involved in cross-cultural adaptation in predominantly monolingual-mono-cultural settings. This study analyzed Chinese ESL learners' preferences for ethnic media outlets, the amount of time they spend using ethnic media and the usage motives. From data analysis, we can infer some general postulates about the importance of ethnic media use for non-native English speaking individuals involved in bicultural identity developmental processes.

Ethnic Media Use

Results show that CLM play an important role in the cross-cultural adaptation and identity development processes among Chinese ESL learners. Participants spent 6.04 hours using CLM on a daily basis. The reasons for usage times varied among them based on their ages and occupations. Participants in their 20s (8.08 hours) spent more time using ethnic media than participants in their 30s (4 hours) in their daily lives. DI and DII from participants in their 20s were all collected from professionals who might have more free time and no family responsibilities than others. Overall, Chinese ESL learners spent great amounts of time with electronic media and less time with printed ones.

Electronic Internet media was the most popular among participants, whereas none of them spent time reading ethnic magazines. The difference in use may stem from the fact that participants have resided in predominantly Hispanic areas where Chinese-oriented print media were limited. Participants have little access to Chinese magazines, newspapers, television programs, and radio stations, etc. In general, the results clearly suggest that internet-based ethnic media is one of the best tools to reach Chinese immigrant minorities.

Similar to previous studies of ethnic and mainstream media habits (Yang, Wu, Zhu and Southwell 2004), Chinese ESL learners were found to spend less time listening to Chinese music, watching Chinese videos and moves, and reading

Chinese magazines and newspapers than they were in China. On the other hand, they spent a considerable amount of time using email, instant messenger programs, online news and literature after they moved to the United States. Research (Yang, Wu, Zhu, and Southwell 2004) suggested that new media technologies may be a driving force for the rise of electronic Chinese language media.

Ethnic Media Use and Intercultural Identity Development

Findings show that the influence of ethnic media on cultural identification differs from culture to culture. As discussed earlier, there is strong incentive for participants to use CLM. They retain their ethnic/cultural traditions, values, behaviors, and customs, but at the same time, they develop some cultural identification with the host society at some degree. Thus, CLM provide research participants with a sense of belonging to Chinese and American societies. However, emotional belonging feelings differ from one culture to another. This finding suggested that new immigrants should spend a constant amount of time using mainstream (Ballinger and King 1992; Kim, 2001; Miglietta and Tartaglia 2009) and ethnic media (Lam and Rosario-Ramos 2009; Lee 2004; Melkote and Liu 2000; Subervi-Velez 1986) in order to enhance their cross-cultural identities and values.

Moreover, CLM is used to help research participants remain cultural insiders of their heritage culture. Research data support Kim (2001)'s viewpoints when she argued that many new immigrants in the United States involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes, experience acculturation and deculturation effects. Therefore, mass communication and social interaction might help to soften these challenges.

Comparative data analysis also suggested that CLM improve linguistic and cultural fluencies. The more research participants maintain their heritage society's cultural insider status, the more vocabulary and cultural knowledge they get. Consequently, research findings support recent studies (Lam 2006; Lam and Rosario-Ramos 2009; Park, 2009; Raman and Harwood 2008) on how ethnic media technologies assist new immigrants in developing and strengthening their linguistic and cultural fluencies by helping them to (1) develop transnational relationship across countries, (2) affiliate and socialize with their racial/ethnic people and communities, (3) maintain their cultural identity and heritage, and (4) provide information which is not available in mainstream media.

At last, all interviewees believed that CLM helped them move from the periphery of their host culture to the center. There is no shortcut to becoming a full participant of the community. The move from the periphery to the center only takes place, in Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) terms, through active engagement in socio-cultural practices. Even interviewees, in this study who are proficient in English, seem to prefer associating themselves with Chinese immigrants.

In addition, findings from this study support the relationship between exposure to ethnic media and cross-cultural and intercultural identity development. It also provides insights on how ESL and dual language teachers might effectively use

ethnic media to strengthen bilingual, dual-language and non-native English speaking learners' (children and adults) intercultural identity development processes.

Implications for Bilingual (Dual-Language) Education

This study provides insights on how teachers can use ethnic media to strengthen bilingual, dual-language and non-native English speaking learners' (children and adults) intercultural identity development processes in multicultural settings. It targeted Chinese ESL learners; however teachers can easily adapt some of the findings to better serve dual-language students as follows:

Spend a constant amount of time using ethnic media. In this study, participants spent an average of 6.04 hours to remain cultural insider of their ethnic group. Thus, in dual-language classrooms, teachers might encourage students from the dominant culture who are learning the minority language and culture to wisely use exposure to quality ethnic media to help them move from the minority culture's periphery to the center.

Correspondingly, in subtractive bilingualism settings, one way and two ways dual-language teachers might motivate their non-dominant students who are learning the majority language and culture to wisely use exposure to quality media to help them become cultural insider of the mainstream society while using their respective ethnic media to strengthening their cultural insidership status in their ethnic group.

Moreover, research data suggested an explicit relationship between abundant exposure to ethnic media to oral fluency and vocabulary acquisition. Dual-language teachers should use wise criteria in recommending mainstream and ethnic media exposure to dual-language parents. Findings suggested that qualitative and abundant exposure to ethnic media has the power of boosting up linguistic and cultural fluencies in both cultures.

Developing teachers' cultural knowledge/awareness. Teachers need to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge to understand their students' ethnic culture to effectively include ethnic media into the curriculum. It may be difficult for teachers to form connections with students, from linguistically and culturally diverse background, if they do not understand the ethnic media language. Despite the language barriers, dual-language teachers need to be exposed to rich linguistic and cultural environments. They might do so through direct exposure (interaction with people of diverse cultural and linguistic background) and/or indirectly through readings and exposure to ethnic media technologies as suggested by McAllister and Irvine (2000). Ethnic media might help dual-language teachers increase their cultural knowledge, awareness and competence in order to be responsive towards diverse students' cultures.

Developing multicultural communities in classrooms. Dual-language teachers can provide ample opportunities for students to get involved in multicultural environments and be exposed to ethnic media. They can render opportunities for dual-language students to teach their racial/ethnic cultures or languages in classes, which may be win-win situations. With the help of ethnic media, minority

students may promote their cultural sharing and pride in ethnicity and particularly, in intercultural settings. In addition, mainstream students may learn about other cultures beyond superficial levels and may ascertain the ways people from different cultures think, believe and behave. For example, minority students can share their cultures in classes through showing their ethnic movies or music which offer cultural examples and trigger discussions on ethnicity, whereas, English-speaking students can use mainstream media to introduce American culture.

Help students develop a sense of synergy. Dual-language teachers can link students (native and non-native English speaking) with non-native English speaking students' community-based organizations in order to help them learn how to become cultural insiders of this ethnic group. Students might have opportunities to practice non-dominant language and cultural skills with experts and older immigrants who have preserved their cultural heritage. They might learn what types of media outlets they use in order to do so. Dual-language parents might be invited to join this kind of projects, which may result in increased parental involvement in their children's education.

As stated above, the main topic of inquiry of this paper consisted of informing MEXTESOL Journal readers and those teachers involved in dual-language and adult ESL education on the power of media technologies on learners' intercultural identity/personality development. At last, research findings suggested that media technologies provide venues for ESL and dual-language students to develop social relationships and produce a sense of belonging, and reinforce cultural identities (Tuftte 2001). Therefore, more in-depth exploration studies about the impact of media technologies (mainstream and ethnic) on ESL/EFL and dual-language learners' intercultural identity development are needed in order to better understand the dynamic of intercultural identity/personality in predominantly subtractive bilingualism settings.

References

- Ballinger, J. R. & King, P. T. (1992). Alternative Media Use and Support for Multicultural Education. Retrieved from ERIC Clearinghouse database: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, on January, 21, 2010
- Chen, P., Haufler, A. & Taam, H. (1999). A Different World: Native American Children's Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media. A Serie of Focus Groups of Native American Children. Retrieved from ERIC Clearinghouse database: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, on January, 21, 2010
- Entman, R. & Rojecki, A. (2000). *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Faber, R. J., O'Guinn, T.C. & Meyer, T.P (1986). Diversity in the Ethnic Media Audience: A Study of Spanish Language Broadcast Preference in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*,10,347-359.
- Ferle, C. & Morimoto, M. (2009). The Impact of Life-stage on Asian American Females' Ethnic Media Use, Ethnic Identification, and Attitudes toward Ads. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 20(2), 147-166. doi:10.1080/10646170902869486
- Fujioka, Y. (2005). Black Media Images as a Perceived Threat to African American Ethnic Identity: Coping Responses, Perceived Public Perception, and Attitudes towards Affirmative Action. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 49(4), 450-467. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4904_6

- Godfried, N. (2002). Identity, Power, and Local Television: African Americans, Organized Labor and UHF-TV in Chicago, 1962–1968. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, 22(2), 117-134. doi:10.1080/01439680220133756.
- Heintz-Knowles, K., Chen, P., Miller, P. & Haufler, A. (2000). Fall Colors II: Exploring the Quality of Diverse Portrayals on Prime Time Television. Retrieved from ERIC Clearinghouse database: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, on January, 21, 2010
- Jeffres, L. W. (2000). Ethnicity and Ethnic Media Use: A Panel Study. *Communication Research*, 27(4), 496-535. doi:10.1177/009365000027004004
- Johnson, M. (2000). How Ethnic are U.S. Ethnic Media: The Case of Latina Magazines. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(2/3), 229. Retrieved from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.oasis.lib.tamuk.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&hid=113&sid=887defff-1c5a-4458-aa73-e4fb9faf19ad%40sessionmgr111> on December, 2009
- Keshishian, F. (2000). Acculturation, Communication, and the U.S. Mass Media: The Experience of an Iranian Immigrant. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 11(2), 93-106. doi:10.1080/106461700246643
- Kim, Y. (1977). Communication Patterns of Foreign Immigrants in the Process of Acculturation: A Survey among Korean Population in Chicago. Doctoral Dissertation: Northwestern University.
- Kim, Y. (1979). Mass Media and Acculturation: Toward Development of an Interactive Theory. Retrieved from ERIC Clearinghouse database: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, on December 5, 2009
- Kim, Y. (1988). Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation: An Integrative Theory. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Kim, Y. (1996). Identity Development: From Cultural to Intercultural. In H. Mokros (Ed.), *Interaction & Identity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Kim, Y. (2001). *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Kim, Y., Lujan, P. & Dixon, L. D. (1998). I Can Walk Both Ways. *Human Communication Research*, 25(2), 252-275.
- Lam, W.S.E. (2006). Re-envisioning Language, Literacy, and the Immigrant Subject in New Mediascapes. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 1(3), 171-195. doi:10.1207/s15544818ped0103_2
- Lam, W.S.E. & Rosario-Ramos, E. (2009). Multilingual Literacies in Transnational Digitally Mediated Contexts: An Exploratory Study of Immigrant Teens in the United States. *Language and Education*, 23(2), 171-190. doi:10.1080/09500780802152929
- Lee, C. (2004). Korean Immigrants' Viewing Patterns of Korean Satellite Television and its Role in their Lives. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 14(1), 68-80. doi:10.1080/0129298042000195161
- Lekgoathi, S. P. (2009). You are Listening to Radio Lebowa of the South African Broadcasting Corporation: Vernacular Radio, Bantustan Identity and Listenership, 1960-1994. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35(3), 575-594. doi:10.1080/03057070903101821
- Lubbers, M., Scheepers, P. & Vergeer, M. (2000). Exposure to Newspapers and Attitudes toward Ethnic Minorities: A Longitudinal Analysis. *Howard Journal of Communication*, 11, 127-143. doi:10.1080/106461700246661
- Mastro, D. E. & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2005). Latino Representation on Primetime Television. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(1), 110-130.
- Mastro, D., Behm-Morawitz, E., & Kopacz, M. (2008). Exposure to Television Portrayals of Latinos: The implications of Aversive Racism and Social Identity Theory.
- Mastro, D. E. & Greenberg, B. S. (2000). The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Primetime Television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 44(4), 690- 710. *Human Communication Research*, 34(1), 1-27. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2007.00311.x
- McAllister, G., & Irvine, J. (2000). Cross-cultural Competency and Multicultural Teacher Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1) 3. Retrieved from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.oasis.lib.tamuk.edu/ehost/detail?vid=5&hid=113&sid=887defff-1c5a-4458-aa73-> on March 15, 2010

- Melkote, S. R. & Liu, D. Z. (2000). The Role of the Internet in Forging a Pluralistic Integration: A Study of Chinese Intellectuals in the United States. *International Communication Gazette*, 62(6), 495-504. doi:10.1177/0016549200062006003
- Miglietta, A. & Tartaglia, S. (2009). The Influence of Length of Stay, Linguistic Competence, and Media Exposure in Immigrants' Adaptation. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 43(1), 46 - 61. doi:10.1177/1069397108326289
- Moon, S. & Park, C. (2007). Media Effects on Acculturation and Biculturalism: A Case Study of Korean Immigrants in Los Angeles' Korea Town. *Mass Communication & Society*, 10(3), 319-343. doi:10.1080/15205430701407330
- Neuendorf, K. (1982). Hispanic Youths' Cultural Identities: Prediction from Media Use and Perceptions. Retrieved from ERIC Clearinghouse database: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, on December 5, 2009
- New America Media, (2009). Ethnic Media Here to Stay and Growing: A National Study on the Penetration of Ethnic Media in America. Retrieved from http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=cef90deffc1b85bfb7_253499cd65040b on December 05, 2009.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1990). Minority Education in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Negro Education*, 59, 45-57.
- Park, S. (2009). Negotiating Identities and Re-acculturation of Second-generation Korean Americans: The Role of Ethnic Media and Peer Group Dynamics. *Korea Journal*, 49(1), 61-97. Retrieved from http://0-web.ebscohost.com.oasis.lib.tamuk.edu/ehost/detail?vid=7&hid=113&sid=887defff-1c5a-4458-aa73-e4fb9faf19ad%40sessionmgr111&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWVhc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9_h&AN=47197548, on March 15, 2010.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rada, J. (2000). A New Piece to the Puzzle: Examining Effects of Television Portrayals of African Americans. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 44(4), 704. Retrieved from Academic Search Complete database on March 15, 2010
- Raman, P. & Harwood, J. (2008). Acculturation of Asian Indian Sojourners in America: Application of the Cultivation Framework. *Southern Communication Journal*, 73(4), 295- 311. doi:10.1080/10417940802418809
- Reece, D. & Palmgreen, P. (2000). Coming to America: Need for Acculturation and Media Use Motives among Indian Sojourners in the US. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24, 807-824.
- Rivadeneira, R., Ward, L., & Gordon, M. (2007). Distorted Reflections: Media Exposure and Latino Adolescents' Conceptions of Self. *Media Psychology*, 9(2), 261-290. doi:10.1080/15213260701285926
- Schwartz, S., Pantin, H., Prado, G., Sullivan, S., & Szapocznik, J. (2005). Family Functioning, Identity, and Problem Behavior in Hispanic Immigrant Early Adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(4), 392-420. doi:10.1177/0272431605279843
- Stroink, M. L. & Lalonde, R. N. (2009). Bicultural Identity Conflict in Second Generation *Asian-Canadians*. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 149, 44-65.
- Subervi-Velez, F. A. (1986). The Mass Media and Ethnic Assimilation and Pluralism: A Review and Research Proposal with Special Focus Hispanics. *Communication Research*, 13(1), 71-96.
- Tisdell, E. J. & Thompson, P. M. (2007). Seeing from a Different Angle: The Role of Pop Culture in Teaching for Diversity and Critical Media Literacy in Adult Education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(6), 651-673. doi:10.1080/02601370701711349
- Tufte, T. (2001). Minority Youth, Media Uses and Identity Struggle: The Role of the Media in the Production of Locality. In K. Ross & P. Playdon (Eds.), *Black marks: Minority Ethnic Audiences and Media*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Viswanath, K. & Arora, P. (2000). Ethnic Media in the United States: An Essay on their Role in Integration, Assimilation, and Social Control. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), 39- 56.

- Retrieved from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.oasis.lib.tamuk.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=12&hid=113&sid=887defff-1c5a-4458-aa73-e4fb9faf19ad%40sessionmgr111>, on March 16, 2010
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.
- Xu, J., Shin, S., Lotz, S. & Almeida, D. (2004). Ethnic Identity, Socialization Factors, and Culture-specific Consumption Behavior. *Psychology & Marketing, 21*(2), 93-112.
- Yang, C., Wu, H., Zhu, M. & Southwell, B. G. (2004). Turning it to Fit in? Acculturation and Media Use among Chinese Students in the United States. *Asian Journal of Communication, 14*, 81-94. doi:10.1080/01292980420001951512
- Yeh, C. & Hwang, M. (2000). Interdependence in Ethnic Identity and Self: Implications for Theory and Practice. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*(4), 420-429. Retrieved from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.oasis.lib.tamuk.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=14&hid=113&sid=887defff-1c5a-4458-aa73-e4fb9faf19ad%40sessionmgr111>, on March 16, 2010
- Zhang, K. & Xiaoming, H. (1999). The Internet and the Ethnic Press: A Study of Electronic Chinese Publications. *Information Society, 15*(1), 21-30. doi:10.1080/019722499128646
- Zhou, M. & Cai, G. (2002). Chinese Language Media in the United States: Immigration and Assimilation in American life. *Qualitative Sociology, 25*(3), 419-441. Retrieved from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.oasis.lib.tamuk.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=15&hid=113&sid=887defff-1c5a-4458-aa73-e4fb9faf19ad%40sessionmgr111>, on March 17, 2010

Appendix I: Ethnic Media Survey

Upgraded from Reece and Palmgreen (2000)'s Television Viewing Motives Scale
(see full citation in references)

Background Information

- **Age:** 25-30 30-35 35-40
- **Gender:** M F
- **Your country of birth:** _____
- **If you were born in a country outside the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.?** _____ years _____ months
- **Are you currently living in the U.S. temporarily (e.g., for college)?** Yes No
- **How many hours do you use Chinese language media per day?** _____
(For example, Chinese radio, newspapers, magazines, Internet, videos, broadcast, and TV.)
- **What media outlets do you frequently use?** _____
(Please see the above media outlets)

Cultural Identification

Very Weak Weak Strong Very Strong

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. American | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 2. Chinese/Taiwanese | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5- |
| 3. Other | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |

Factor loadings on Chinese language media using motives

Scale: Strongly Disagree = 0 Disagree = 1 Undecided = 2 Agree = 3
Strongly Agree = 4

Please, react to the following statements: I use Chinese language media.....

1. So I can learn more about Chinese values and cultures

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

2. So I can see how Chinese/Taiwanese interact socially

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

3. So I can find out what is going on in my country (Taiwan/China)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

4. So I can learn about local events and issues (Taiwan/China)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

5. So I can learn more about American values and cultures

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

6. So I can see how Americans interact socially

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

7. So I can find out what is going on in the U.S. A.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

8. So I can learn about local events and issues (U.S.)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

9. Because I see my personal values reinforced

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

10. Because I see my bicultural values reinforced

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

11. So I can find out what is going on in the world

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

12. So I can learn about what could happen to me

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

13. So I can learn how to do things which I have never done

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

The Effect of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on Grammatical Accuracy of EFL Students¹

SASAN BALEGHIZADEH, SHAHID BEHESHTI UNIVERSITY, G.C., TEHRAN, IRAN²

ELNAZ OLADROSTAM, SHAHID BEHESHTI UNIVERSITY, G.C., TEHRAN, IRAN³

Abstract

The use of technology in teaching and learning environments is an important aspect which has received considerable attention in recent years. In a similar vein, the use of mobiles to increase effectiveness of instruction has been acknowledged through a number of experimental studies carried out so far. The following study was made to improve the grammatical knowledge of EFL students through using mobile phones. Forty pre-intermediate Iranian female students participated in this study. The participants in both experimental and control groups were provided with an opportunity to review and recycle six grammatical forms: present perfect versus simple past, direct versus indirect questions, and comparatives versus superlatives. During class discussions designed in such a way as to elicit the given grammatical items, the participants in the experimental group recorded their voice on their mobile phones and as an out-of-class assignment analyzed their spoken mistakes and commented on them in the subsequent session. The participants in the control group, however, received no extra treatment at all. The results showed that the participants who had benefited from mobile-assisted learning had a significantly better performance on a multiple-choice grammar posttest than the participants in the control group.

Resumen

Uno de los aspectos importantes que ha recibido considerable atención en los últimos años es el uso de la tecnología en los ambientes de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. En la misma línea se ha reconocido la utilización de los aparatos móviles para incrementar la efectividad en la enseñanza a través de un estudios experimentales llevado a cabo. El siguiente estudio se realizó para mejorar el conocimiento gramatical de estudiantes EFL mediante teléfonos móviles. En este estudio participaron cuarenta estudiantes femeninas iraníes del nivel pre-intermedio. A las participantes, en ambos grupos, experimental y de control, les fue proporcionada con la posibilidad de repasar y reciclar seis formas gramaticales: presente perfecto vs pasado simple, preguntas directas vs indirectas, y comparativos vs superlativos, durante las discusiones de clase, diseñadas de tal manera que se utilizara los tópicos gramaticales proporcionados, los participantes del grupo experimental grabaron sus voces en los aparatos portátiles y, como una tarea fuera del salón, analizaron sus errores orales y les comentaron en la siguiente sesión. Los participantes del grupo de control, sin embargo, no recibieron ningún trato en especial. Los resultados mostraron que los participantes que disfrutaron del beneficio del aprendizaje del apoyo de los móviles tuvieron un desempeño significativamente mejor en un examen ulterior de selección múltiple que los participantes del grupo de control.

¹ This is a refereed article.

² sasanbaleghizadeh@yahoo.com

³ elnaz_oladrostam@yahoo.com

Introduction

Several years ago, it was already being claimed that, at least in the UK, mobile technologies were "a familiar part of the lives of most teachers and students" (Facer 2004, p.1). Moreover, a review of mobile learning (m-learning) projects funded by the European Union since 2001 (Pechrzewska and Knot 2007) confirms the use of mobiles in many projects. Sharples (2006) defines mobile learning in various ways, one of which is concerned with using mobile technologies such as mobile phones. While according to Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) "Mobile learning includes the use of any portable learning materials including audio cassettes, audio CDs, portable radios and DVD players, m-learning now concentrates on more recent technologies" (p.273). Trifanova, Knapp, Ronchetti, and Gamper (2004) defined mobile devices as "Any device that is small, autonomous and unobtrusive enough to accompany us at every moment" (p.3). All in all, m-learning can be identified by the tools which are available anywhere, any time (Geddes, 2004).

A brief historical overview of technology and language learning

Usually any act of language learning and teaching involves the use of a particular type of technology (Warschaur and Meskill, 2000). For instance, language teachers who followed the grammar translation method in which the teacher elaborated on grammatical minutiae and the learners translated sentences from the L2 into their L1 relied on the earliest type of technology, i.e. blackboard. Later on, the use of overhead projectors, as well as early software computer programs, was responsible for provision of mechanical drilling. During the 1970s, when the Audio Lingual method was at its best, practitioners embarked on the use of audio-taped materials, which required obligatory trips to audio labs where students had to repeat monotonous pattern drills. By the late 1970s, due to incapability of language learners in responding to unrehearsed situations, the Audio Lingual method fell out of favor. Seen in another light, this method waned in popularity due to its lack of focus on communicative aspects of language use. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, due to the emergence of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches to language teaching along with an emphasis on student engagement with authentic, meaningful and contextualized discourse, there was a full-scale shift in the use of technology in the classrooms.

Cognitive approaches

Cognitive approaches tend to view learning as a psychological process through which learners strive for making a mental model of language system through active interactions of cognitive structures and comprehensible input (Chastain 1988). Therefore, errors are not seen as signs of bad habits which must be avoided but rather as natural by-products of this construction process. Technologies which are resonant with cognitive approaches are those which allow learners to have maximum opportunity of interaction within meaning-rich contexts so that learners can foster competence. Some of these technologies are text-reconstruction, concordancing, telecommunications and multimedia simulation software.

Text-reconstruction software such as *NewReader* or *TextTanagers* from research design association gives learners an opportunity to either put in the letters that are missing or arrange them in the right order. Concordancing software (e.g. *Monoconc*) allows learners to search through either small or large texts to see instances of real language use of some words. In this way, it acts as a fruitful supplement to dictionaries. Multimedia simulation software allows learners to enter into a so called "linguistic bath" environment to experience culture first. Examples include *A la rencontre de Philippe* developed by the Athena Language Learning Project at MIT Laboratory for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. *Philippe*, a game for intermediate and advanced French learners, incorporates full motion video, sound, graphics, and text, allowing learners to explore simulated environments by following street signs or floor plans (Warschaur and Meskill 2000).

Sociolinguistic approaches

These approaches see socialization and working with people as indispensable aspects of any act of language learning and teaching. Hence, learning a language is viewed as a process of apprenticeship or socialization into particular discourse communities (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). From this perspective students need to be given opportunities to practice social aspects not only to understand comprehensible input but also to be engaged in activities that are focused on developing output (Mackey 2007). This can be achieved through student collaboration on authentic tasks and projects (Prabhu 1987; Willis and Willis 2007) while simultaneously learning both content and language (Flowerdew 1993; Snow 1991). From this perspective the Internet is a type of technology which can be used in a myriad of ways in any act of teaching/learning. This, for example, can be achieved through computer-mediated communication for long-distance exchange by means of e-mail and web-based conferencing systems (Warschaur and Meskill 2000), which is particularly useful in settings where students have limited opportunities for authentic target language use.

Emergence of mobile assisted language learning (MALL)

As mentioned earlier, with the emergence of different methods there has always been a recurrent use of different forms of technology. For instance, the espousal of the Audio Lingual method brought about an enormous focus on language laboratories, which gradually became the fashion of the day (Salaberry 2001). Influenced by behaviorism, the language laboratories were equipped by drill-based computer assisted instruction in the 1960s, which then was progressively replaced by a more intelligent approach namely, computer assisted language learning (CALL) in the 1990s. As technologies continue to be used more extensively in teaching and learning settings, so does their propensity to shrink in size. "Other technologies that hold capacity for language learning include PDA, multimedia cellular phones, MP3 players, DVD players and digital dictionaries" (Zhao 2005, p.447).

As with other forms of technology, mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is a branch of technology-enhanced learning which can be implemented in numerous

forms including face-to face, distant or on-line modes. However, different scholars in the field have underscored that MALL should be implemented in the classroom, taking the presence of learners as a paramount factor into consideration. As Colpaert (2004) has rightly argued, before using mobile technologies a learning environment should be fostered. Likewise, Salaberry (2001) has argued against "technology- driven pedagogy" emphasizing the fact that despite their considerable benefits nothing to date has proved that any type of technology can necessarily act better than traditional forms of teaching. Finally, as Beatty (2003) has asserted, "Teachers need to be concerned about investigating time and money in unproven technology" (p.72). All in all, using any kind of technological device should be accompanied by developing an efficacious type of methodology because these devices are not instructors but rather instructional tools.

Review of some studies

In an attempt to study whether mobile phones were useful learning tools, Kiernan and Aizawa (2004) explored their utility in task-based learning. They argued that second language acquisition is best promoted through utilization of tasks, which require learners to bridge some sort of gap, thereby focusing their attention on meaning. In the traditional classroom, however, such activities are easily defeated by the close proximity of students. The use of mobile technologies would be one way to separate learners. In their study, upper and lower proficiency level Japanese university students were placed in three groups; PC mail users, mobile phone email users, and mobile phone speaking users (due to cost the latter group became face to face speaking users). They were given a pretest, three narrative tasks, three invitation tasks and a repeated posttest. The results generally showed that the face to face groups were superior in terms of communicative performance in comparison to the other two groups.

There were three more studies in Japan, which examined the use of cell phones in education (Thornton and Houser, 2005). In these studies students were surveyed regarding their use of mobile phones. English vocabulary lessons were sent to the learners' mobile phones using short text messages and a website was developed to explain the English idioms which students surfed using the 3G phones. The findings revealed that mobile phones are ubiquitous among students and learners were ready to read small texts on mobile screens. It was noted that mobile phones can effectively serve to educate a foreign language learner and short text messages is very useful in teaching vocabulary. One of these studies was made to investigate the use of short text messages for group discussions in school and business meetings. Text messages were received from the audience, stored in database and later displayed on the computer screen as posted notes. Presenters read these messages and gave feedback to the audience. It was found that this method can help those who are reluctant to ask questions due to their shyness. In a recent study, Sole, Calic, and Neijmann (2010) showed that mobiles can allow learners to express themselves in a variety of scenarios. This study included two case studies and was conducted over two years in one of the UK universities. Students were required to report on their work with mobile devices outside the classroom. It was shown that using mobile devices help

learners have a better engagement with learning and to have a better interaction. The results also showed that mobile devices also facilitate contextual learning and they resultantly allow the information to be captured in learner's own location in a way as to be resonant with students' needs.

In the MALL Research Project Report (2009), it was concluded that mobile phones have a considerable effect on boosting students' confidence in both listening and speaking. In this study, a group of students was asked to have some conversation in Indonesian on their mobile phones. The results obtained showed that all students were satisfied with the privacy and freedom that they had using their own mobile devices. Moreover, the teachers welcomed the facility of listening to their students' conversations because they could identify each student's difficulty better. In this study, students undertook a conversation test at the beginning of the project to quantify their initial conversational ability and a post-test to realize their progress. An 11% increase in their mean score from the pretest to the posttest showed the great effect that mobiles can have on improving language ability.

Finally, at the University of Lancaster, Mitchell, Race, McCaffery, Bryson, and Cai's (2006) study involved using short text messages as a way to make communications between teachers and students possible. They found that text messaging is a cost effective mechanism to convey the personalized information to learners' mobile phones in a trendy fashion.

The Present Study

This study was aimed at assessing the utility of mobile phones in improving grammatical accuracy of Iranian EFL students while speaking, which is a new dimension compared with previous experimental studies carried out on using mobile phones. In other words, the focus of most of the studies made in the past was on other dimensions like vocabulary, tests, conversation, etc. In contrast to these studies, the focus of the present paper is on improving grammatical accuracy of EFL students. Almost all of us as ELT practitioners know that making grammatical mistakes is a stumbling block that causes students to shy away from speaking. The main purpose of this study was to use an innovative yet simple way to improve grammatical accuracy of students. The main reason behind using mobile phones was that sometimes because of lack of time in oral communicative activities, mistakes that students make go by unnoticed and as a result some erroneous structures will remain in the learners' interlanguage system. Using mobile phones thus assists us to help our learners become analysts of their own developing linguistic system and foster their autonomy. Besides, the main rationale behind carrying out this study was that nearly most Iranian EFL learners, at least in the setting where the study was conducted, have accuracy problems while speaking. The reason might lie in the fact that they do not receive any systematic instruction or corrections on the mistakes they make. Generally speaking, this study was an effort to embark on giving corrections to students by using a rather innovative and systematic way to help them overcome their accuracy problems.

Method

Participants

The participants were 40 female pre-intermediate EFL students with an average age of 20 at Kish Language Institute in Isfahan, Iran. The reason for choosing these participants for the study was that despite being exposed to the grammatical patterns in Elementary level, students had major problems in using these forms. The reason behind the weaknesses that these students had in using these previously taught specific grammatical forms was that there was no focus on form on the grammatical mistakes that they would make during their fluency activities. In other words, these participants had very little chance of being corrected when they produced wrong utterances related these grammatical forms and thus the researchers felt that there might be a need to review them by designing some fluency-based activities which would let them analyze their mistakes and subsequently correct them. The researchers were firmly convinced that by using mobile phones and giving the chance to learners to correct themselves they could help them become conscious of their grammatical errors and thus learn these specific structures more accurately.

Instrument

In this study no pretest was used inasmuch as all the participants were at the pre-intermediate level as evidenced by their previous scores on standardized achievement tests. Thus, the only test used in this study was a post-test consisting of 20 multiple-choice items, which was administered at the end of the treatment period. The item facility and item discrimination indexes were 0.48 and 0.52 respectively, which are acceptable values (some sample items appear in Appendix A). Moreover, the reliability of the test calculated using Kuder-Richardson 21 formula was 0.84, which is an acceptable index.

Procedure

In order to accomplish its aims, this study used two groups, each consisting of 20 participants. The first group was the experimental group, which received six sessions of instruction on three grammatical categories, namely present perfect versus simple past, direct versus indirect questions, and comparatives versus superlatives. Related topics were chosen so that students could have lively discussions while caution was exercised to choose topics that included the already pre-selected grammatical forms. During class discussions, each student recorded her voice on her mobile phone for two or three minutes. The task assigned for students was to analyze their speech and detect their grammatical errors and to simultaneously comment on them and correct them the next session that they came to the class. The other thing done was that each student played her voice to the other students in the class so that if any types of errors went unnoticed by individual students, their classmates would help them identify them. Besides, due to the limitation of time in carrying out the experiment, some students were selected each time to report on their errors individually. In order to give equal attention to those students who could not report individually on each structure, their error sheets were analyzed and corrected by one of the researchers and were given back to them later. The second group was the control group, which

received the conventional way of grammar instruction, i.e. the inductive approach. At the end of the treatment period, a 20-item grammar test was administered to both groups to assess the efficacy of the treatment.

Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics obtained. The result of a *t*-test used to compare the difference between the two groups indicated that the mean score of the experimental group (16.6) is significantly higher than the mean score of the control group, $t(38) = 3.23, p = 0.003$.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

Groups	n	M	SD
Control	20	13.3	3.49
Experimental	20	16.6	1.96

In other words, it can be concluded that the treatment had an effect on boosting the grammatical accuracy of the students. This suggests that students who had used their mobile phones to record their voices for the sake of subsequent checking of their linguistic output had improved their grammatical accuracy more effectively than the students who were not offered this opportunity.

Discussion

The present study was an attempt to show the efficacy of using mobile phones for boosting the grammatical accuracy of a group of Iranian EFL students. The results obtained showed the effectiveness of using mobile phones in increasing grammatical ability of students. The results of the study further confirmed Sharples (2005), who has posited that mobile phones enable knowledge building. The results of this study were strongly at odds with the findings of Salaberry (2001), who pointed out that mobile phones are not effective tools for learning. Generally speaking, there are different factors that might have led to the above mentioned results. The concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) was first presented by Vygotsky (see Lantolf, 2000). According to this concept, learning is the result of a joint social collaboration between a more knowledgeable person (e.g. a teacher) and a less knowledgeable person (e.g. a student). Foley (1991) has offered a redefinition of ZPD. In addition to emphasizing the social nature of learning, he stated that though the classroom and teacher environment may function as mediators of second language learning, second language learning remains an ultimately self-regulating process, which cannot be controlled by the teacher or the syllabus. Moreover, according to Clifton (2006), for classroom interaction to be facilitative it must break from the traditional pattern of teachers having the power over discussions and offer language learners greater participation rights which give them the potential to take more initiative and hence responsibility for learning. As Reynolds (1990) has pointed out, this is basically achieved by the instructor letting go some of his or her power which, means sharing discursive resources. So giving the responsibility of learning to

students might be one of the reasons for the success of this study. Another reason might lie in the fact that extensive opportunities for producing output might have led to the noticing of specific structures on the part of the students. In her output hypothesis, Swain (1995) argued for three functions of output, one of which is the noticing function. When actively constructing L2 utterances, learners may be more likely to notice gaps in their interlanguage, since they are pushed to syntactic processing to a greater extent than is the case when they are attending to input. However, caution must be exercised to help students notice the gap in their interlanguage by raising their awareness of their linguistic flaws, which has been the target of this project. Another tentative reason for the success of this project could be attributed to the pattern of the speaking lesson adopted in the study. Speaking lessons can follow usual patterns of preparation, practice, and evaluation. The teacher can use preparation stage to establish a context for speaking (where, when, why, with whom it will occur). Practice involves producing the targeted structures, usually in a controlled or highly supportive manner. Evaluation involves directing attention to the skill being examined and asking learners to monitor and assess their own learning progress (Burns and Joyce 1997; Carter and McCarthy 1995).

Conclusion

This paper was generally an attempt to assess the effectiveness of using mobile phones for increasing the grammatical accuracy of a group of Iranian EFL students. The first part of the article dealt with reviewing the related literature on using technology and mobile phones in the classroom. The second part was an attempt to elaborate on the experiment and the results. It was finally concluded that due to the significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups, the treatment had been a successful one in fostering the grammatical accuracy of the students. Generally speaking, this study has a number of implications for both practitioners and applied linguists. First, this study showed that mobile phones can play a crucial part in improving the speaking quality of the students. Another aspect worth mentioning is that this study was an attempt to help practitioners, especially English teachers in developing countries who do not have enough opportunity to use sophisticated technologies in their classes. Another point to be considered is that this study was an effort to help those communicative-approach-oriented teachers who, more often than not, face the problem of dealing with fluent but inaccurate students. The technique offered in this study equips students with some type of indirect and unobtrusive error correction inasmuch as grammar is and has always been one of the indispensable parts of English classes. Finally, this technique could be used by teachers in large classes, where students do not get enough chance to speak, to record their voices on their mobile phones and hand in the devices to their teachers. This way, teachers would be able to give feedback to their students and comment on their speaking problems outside the classroom.

References

- Beatty, K. (2003). Teaching and researching computer assisted language learning. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Burns, A. and Joyce, H. (1997). Focus on speaking. Sydney: National Center for English Language Teaching and Research.
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (1995). Grammar and spoken language. *Applied Linguistics*, 16, 141-158.
- Chastain, K. (1988). Developing second language skills: Theory and practice. (Third Edition). Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Clifton, J. (2006). Facilitator talk. *ELT Journal*, 60, 142-150.
- Colpaert, J. (2004). From courseware to coursewear? *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 17, 261-266.
- Facer, K. (2004) Foreword to the literature in mobile technologies and learning. In L. Naismith, P. Lonsdale, G. Vavoula, and M. Sharples, (Eds.), Futurelab report 11. http://www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/lit_reviews/Mobile_Review.pdf
- Flowerdew, J. (1993). Content based language instruction in tertiary setting. *English for Specific Purposes*, 12, 121-138.
- Foley, A. (1991). A psycholinguistic framework for task-based approaches to language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 12, 62-75.
- Geddes, S.J. (2004). Mobile learning in the 21st century: benefit to learners. <http://knowledgetree.flexiblelearning.net.au/edition06/download/geddes.pdf>
- Kiernan, P.J. and Aizawa, K. (2004). Cell phones in task based learning: Are cell phones useful languages learning tools? *ReCALL*, 16, 71-84.
- Kukulska-Hulme, A. and Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: from content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. *ReCALL*, 20, 271-289.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp.1-26). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mackey, A. (2007). Interaction as practice. In R. M. DeKeyser (Ed.), *Practice in a second language: Perspectives from applied linguistics and cognitive psychology* (85-110). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MALL Research Project Report. (2009). Mobile application for language learning. Curriculum Corporation: The Learning Federation.
- Mitchell, K, Race, N, McCaffery, D, Bryson, M., and Cai, Z. (2006). Unified and personalized messaging to support E-learning. Proceedings of Fourth IEEE international workshop on wireless, mobile and ubiquitous technology in education (pp. 164-168). Los Alamitos: IEEE Computer Society.
- Pechrzewska, A. and Knot, S. (2007). Review of existing EU projects dedicated to dyslexia, gaming in education and m-learning. WR08 Report to CallDysc project.
- Prabhu, N.S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reynolds, M. (1990). Classroom power: some dynamics of classroom task. In R. Clark, N. Fairclough, R. Ivanic, N. McLeod, J. Thomas, and P. Meara (Eds.), *Language and power* (pp. 122-136). Clevedon, Avon: BAAL and CILT.
- Salaberry, M.R. (2001). The use of technology for second language learning and teaching: A retrospective. *Modern Language Journal*, 85, 39-56.
- Schieffelin B.B. and Ochs, E. (1986). Language socialization. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15, 163-191.
- Sharples, M. (2005). Learning as Conversation: Transforming education in the mobile age. In Proceedings of Conference on Seeing, Understanding, Learning in the Mobile Age (pp. 147-152). Budapest, Hungary.
- Sharples, M. (Ed.) (2006). Big issues in mobile learning: Report of a workshop by the Kaleidoscope network of excellence mobile learning initiative. Nottingham: University of Nottingham.
- Snow, M.A. (1991). Teaching language through content. In M.A. Snow (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. (pp.315-328). Boston: Newbury House.
- Sole, R.C, Calic, J., and Neijmann, D. (2010). A social and self-reflective approach to MALL. *ReCALL*, 22, 39-52.

- Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook and B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics: Studies in honor of H.G Widdowson* (125-144). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thornton, P. and Houser, C. (2005) Using mobile phones in English education in Japan. *Computer Assisted Learning*, 21, 217-228.
- Trifanova, A., Knapp, J., Ronchetti, M., and Gamper, J. (2004). *Mobile ELDIT: Challenges in the transitions from an e-learning to an m-learning system*. Trento, Italy: University of Trento. Retrieved July 24, 2005, from <http://eprints.biblio.unitn.it/archive/00000532/01/paper4911.pdf>
- Warschauer, M. and Meskill, C. (2000). Technology and second language teaching. In J. W. Rosenthal (Ed.), *Handbook of undergraduate second language education* (pp. 303-318). NJ, Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Willis, D. and Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zhao, Y. (2005). The future of research in technology and second language education. In Y. Zhao (Ed.), *Research in technology and second language learning: Developments and directions* (pp.445-457). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Appendix A (Sample items from the post-test)

1. Yesterday my friend and I.....to the movies.
a. go b. gone c. went d. have gone
2. He is the guy in the gym.
a. most strong b. stronger c. more strong d. strongest
3. Excuse me sir, could you tell me.....?
a. where the post office is b. where does the post office
c. where is the post office d. where the post office does
4. I think that Julia is..... than her sister.
a. most attractive b. more attractive
c. the most attractive d. the more attractive
5. Mom I..... the room for several times; it's Sarah's turn now!
a. cleaned b. had cleaned c. clean d. have cleaned

Learner Response to Oral Homework in Numbers and Words¹

ELBA MÉNDEZ GARCÍA, BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA²

Abstract

This paper presents the ways in which young adult learners responded to doing oral homework using basic technological resources. It discusses what learning benefits learners perceived in doing oral homework and explores how much access learners and teachers had to technology. The working-together component is found to be crucial and is emphasized throughout the article.

Resumen

El presente trabajo describe las distintas formas en que más de 20 grupos de alumnos universitarios respondieron a la posibilidad de realizar tarea oral haciendo uso de recursos tecnológicos no avanzados. A lo largo del artículo se discute y reflexiona sobre los beneficios al aprendizaje que los estudiantes percibieron al haber trabajado en colaboración con compañeros. Así mismo, se explora cuán relativo puede ser el acceso a la tecnología por parte de alumnos y profesores en el contexto de una Universidad pública, donde, habrá de enfatizarse, el trabajo colaborativo entre los mismos se torna imperativo.

Introduction

This article summarizes the challenges and issues from a 3.5-year oral homework project taking place from 2007 to early 2010 with elementary language learners at tertiary level. The overall objective of the project was to extend learner talking time outside the language classroom in groups of an average of 30 university students (Gibson 2004). Although techniques and procedures in class included pair/group work and constant interaction among learners, I still felt that there were many of these adult elementary learners who did not manage to catch up with the rhythm of the course.

This article will focus on presenting and discussing how learners at a large public university in central Mexico responded to doing oral homework in mostly off-line circumstances. It will discuss the learning benefits students perceived and what technological drawbacks they had to deal with. It is hoped that teachers who are in similar, limited circumstances find this article informative as to what they can expect out of assigning oral homework in terms of access-to-technology problems and potential learning benefits.

The project

Nowadays, there are many web pages that can help teachers extend their learners' oral language production time. Chinnery (2005) suggests web pages

¹ This is a refereed article.

² elba.mendez@fle.buap.mx , elba.mg@gmail.com

where students are able to not only listen to spoken English, but to speak, listen to themselves and to classmates. I have recently started exploring and opening accounts at Voxopop (<http://www.voxopop.com>), Voicethread (<http://voicethread.com>), and English Central (<http://www.englishcentral.com>) to see how I can use all of these resources with my classes. It is inevitable, nevertheless, that this exploratory phase will take some time, since existing circumstances may not be ideal to run all or any of these online resources smoothly. Access to technology, which will be discussed here, could be spread out unevenly and actually be surprisingly irregular.

It was my firm conviction that a project called *oral homework* could still be carried out even though access to on-line resources like the ones above mentioned was pretty scarce. The overall objective of such project is to give all students equal opportunities to say something in English and to be heard. With this principle in mind, and in an effort to cater to both eager-to-participate students and extremely shy, first-time-in-an-English-class-environment learners alike, I started exploring available technology and what could be done with it.

Available technology in 2007

There is a self-access language centre on campus. However, its main use is for students to do compulsory sessions and it is therefore completely booked from 7:00 to 20:00. Since there was not a specific building for language courses, lessons were and are still taught all over the campus in the same facilities where all the other university courses are taken. These classrooms had chairs, a board and a desk, but there was no a computer available in any of the language course classrooms. Projectors or PCs, if available at each of the schools, had to be booked in advance and carried two or three buildings to the assigned language course classroom.

University facilities were in a developing stage. Some schools on campus started to have a computer room for students use. However, downloading programs was prohibited, and these computer rooms were frequently booked for other uses. A newly started, frequently unstable Wi-Fi system was available on campus and students started to bring laptops along. However, the Wi-Fi system was not available in the classrooms. The teacher-researcher could use outdated office equipment at school when available and had a telephone line connection at home. It is in these circumstances that the *oral homework project* started.

Using already available technologies in new ways

At the beginning of 2007, my main objective was to explore how feasible it was to ask for oral homework. In other words, the aim was to try to determine if students had access to static and/or mobile technology to record voice and produce audio files that could be later "handed-in". It had been observed that many more students had a mobile phone than a laptop (Chinnery 2006). Most mobile phones that students took to college could play and/or record audio and/or video. Other observed devices were MP3 players and digital music players. In the absence of fully equipped classrooms, I decided to make use of the available mobile technology in the very hands of my students.

Type of recordings

In order to focus on students' access to technology, linguistic elements of the assignment were kept simple and straightforward. For instance, students were not asked for spontaneous speech. Instead, scripted language (Cáceres and Obilinovic 2000) was chosen to lessen the challenge of handing in their recorded oral production. This scripted language consisted of short texts from course books and ELT materials for students to read aloud or role-play.

FIGURE 1: SAMPLE TEXTS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND PAIR/GROUP RECORDINGS

Three sports people (Cutting Edge Series, Longman)	
Toshi, a nineteen-year-old from Nagasaki in Japan, wants to become a sumo wrestler. Toshi, who weighs over 175 kilos and is 1 meter 95 tall, lives in a special training camp, called a Heya, with thirty other sumo wrestlers. Their training is very hard. Even before breakfast, they normally practice for four and a half hours! It is important that Toshi doesn't lose weight, so he always has a large lunch of rice, meat, fish and vegetables with lots of beer, and sometimes he eats extra pizza and burgers. After lunch he goes to sleep for a few hours. One day, Toshi hopes to be famous – and rich – but at the moment he doesn't earn much money, so each month his parents send him money to help him.	
Company Interviewer:	Candidate:
_ Why did you choose this company?	_ I always support my colleagues and believe we should work towards a common goal.
_ What are your strengths and weaknesses?	_ My aim is to have a position in the Management Team.
_ How would your friends describe you?	_ I have excellent time management, but I can be impatient for results.
_ What is your greatest achievement?	_ People say I am sociable, organized and decisive.
_ How well do you work in a team?	_ Leading the University football team to the National Championships.
_ Where will you be in 5 years time?	
(Taken from BBC Learning English)	

Similarly, pairing up students was not fully considered for all of the assignments. Despite the benefits perceived by the teacher-researcher, it was also thought that having to meet after class could put off or at least pose some strain on university students who were very likely to have started working or already had a family. Nevertheless, since it was also believed that working closely with somebody else could be potentially helpful for learners, especially in case they had some difficulties with technology, at least one assignment that required working with peers was included in the final sets.

2007: Testing accessibility, systematizing procedures

Spring and summer terms:

Recordings were an optional assignment; doing them made up for missed written work, absences or for a maximum of 5 wrong answers in the final test (final test contains 45 questions in spring, 90 questions in summer). Recordings were distributed throughout the course, due dates were all given at the beginning of the course and strictly respected. Students handed in CDs and regular audio tapes. After informally asking students about the resources they used to prepare and hand in their assignments, it can be said that the available technology

consisted of students' mobile phones, rented PCs at nearby cybercafés and regular tape recorders.

Spring 2007

There were three groups and four recordings (three individual, one pair work) were asked for. Group A consisting of 25 students handed in assignments one, three and four. Six students did assignment 1, three did assignment 3 and five did assignment 4. Groups B and C, however, showed more interest in doing the oral assignments (see Figure 2). It is important to highlight that it was not always the same 13 or 10 students who did one or more recordings, but that delivery of recordings was distributed in the whole group. In group B, for instance, only 11 students did not do any of the four recordings.

FIGURE 2: SPRING 2007 GROUPS

A	1	2	3	4
1	1			
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7	1			1
8				
9				
10				
11				1
12				
13	1			
14				
15	1		1	1
16				
17				
18				
19				
20	1			1
21				
22			1	
23			1	1
24				
25				
	5	0	3	5

B	1	2	3	4
1	1	1	1	
2	1			
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	1			
6	1	1	1	
7	1	1	1	
8			1	1
9	1			
10				
11	1		1	
12				1
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18			1	1
19	1	1	1	
20				
21	1	1	1	1
22	1			
23	1	1	1	1
24				
25				
26				
27	1	1	1	1
28				
29	1	1	1	1
	13	11	13	9

C	1	2	3	4
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1		1
3	1	1	1	
4	1	1	1	1
5	1			
6				
7				
8				
9			1	
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15	1	1		
16				
17				
18	1	1	1	1
19	1	1	1	1
20	1	1	1	1
21	1	1		1
22		1	1	
23				
24	1	1	1	1
25	1	1		
26				
27		1	1	1
28				
29				
30	1			
31				
	13	13	10	9

Participation was unexpectedly enthusiastic. It could have been a result of the "great rewards" students would get out of doing the assignments, but this assumption was not enough for a good reason. In order to have a better grasp of the reasons for this phenomenon, I decided to repeat the procedures and to keep a record from students in order to understand the causes of such good response.

Summer 2007

There were two groups and three recordings (two individual, one pair work) were asked for. Delivery of recordings was distributed in the whole group in both groups A and B, both groups of 31 students. Participation, again, was unexpectedly enthusiastic: only seven people did not hand in any of the three assignments in group A whereas it was only 4 students in group B (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: SUMMER 2007 GROUPS

A	1	2	3	B	1	2	3
1				1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	4		1	1
5	1	1	1	5	1	1	1
6		1		6	1	1	1
7				7			
8	1	1	1	8	1	1	1
9	1	1		9		1	
10	1	1		10		1	
11	1	1	1	11	1	1	1
12	1	1	1	12	1	1	1
13				13	1	1	1
14	1	1	1	14	1	1	1
15		1		15			
16	1	1	1	16		1	1
17				17	1	1	
18	1	1		18	1		
19				19	1	1	
20			1	20	1	1	1
21	1	1	1	21	1	1	1
22	1	1	1	22	1	1	
23	1	1	1	23		1	
24				24	1	1	1
25	1	1		25			
26	1	1		26			
27	1	1		27		1	
28	1	1		28		1	
29	1	1	1	29		1	
30	1	1	1	30		1	
31				31		1	1
	21	23	15		17	26	16

All students who handed in at least one of the recordings in the summer 2007 courses were given a short open-ended feedback page to determine the reasons they would or would not want to do recorded oral assignments in the future.

FIGURE 4: SAMPLE FEEDBACK PAGE

Gracias por contestar las siguientes preguntas:

¿Cómo fue que decidiste realizar este trabajo opcional? ¿Te sentiste a gusto para realizarlo? ¿Hiciste la totalidad de las grabaciones o sólo algunas de ellas? ¿A que se debió? ¿Te gustaría volver a realizarlo? ¿Por qué? ¿Hay alguna otra cosa que me quieras comentar? ☺

Porque es un trabajo sencillo q' no ocupa mucho tiempo. Si me senti agusto. Hice el total de las conversaciones. Por lo mismo de la sencillas si lo volviera a hacer. fue interesante escucharme a mi mismo hablar en otro idioma.

It was confirmed that some students did the assignments because they were interested in the rewards. However, these students also acknowledged usefulness and learning benefits in the new experience. Those students who said they would do oral assignments again gave the following reasons:

Doing it was not complicated

Those students, who thought of the exercise as something that would not necessarily be painful or extremely difficult, mentioned they did the assignments out of curiosity. They wanted to see if they were as good as they thought they were, for instance, some said "I had never heard myself, and when I did I laughed and thought, my goodness, that's awful!" In addition, it seems that technology did not represent a major challenge to them either, and they concluded that they felt attracted by the innovative nature of the task.

Privacy

What many learners seemed to cherish most was the fact that they were able to articulate words in English privately (Tanner and Landon, 2009). There was no teacher, peer or classroom time pressure. They said and repeated sentences to themselves as many times as they felt necessary until they decided their speech was "ready to be heard."

Self-regulation and individual effort

Learners pointed out to the fact that they were "able to hear their own mistakes and correct themselves." An overwhelming majority said how "necessary and good for their learning" they realized it is to be aware of themselves.

Better integration with classmates

One of the elements students seemed to have enjoyed the most was the fact that they helped each other when they worked in the pair-tailored assignment.

Fall 2007

Three colleagues at the same university were invited to participate with their groups to do 1 or 2 oral assignments. A total of 13 groups handed in one, two or four oral assignments. Available technology still consisted of mainly learners' own mobile phones, rented and personal PCs, personal laptops and other handheld technology such as iPods and MP3 players. Teacher-researcher could still use outdated office equipment at school when available and functioning and had a telephone line connection at home.

Recordings for students of invited teachers were all pair-work format. Participation increased substantially as it can be seen in Figure 3. It is important to highlight that participation in invited groups was completely out of learners' own initiative and that learners worked out ways to hand in assignments in different formats such as their own MP3 players, files via Bluetooth, voice recording options in power point software, etc.

FIGURE 5: SAMPLE OF FALL 2007 GROUPS

I	1	2	J	1	2	K	1	2	L	1	2	M	1	2
1	1		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
2	1	1	2	1		2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	
3	1	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	1	1
4	1	1	4			4	1		4	1	1	4	1	
5	1	1	5			5	1	1	5	1	1	5	1	
6	1		6	1	1	6	1	1	6			6	1	
7	1	1	7			7	1		7			7	1	1
8	1		8			8			8	1		8	1	1
9	1	1	9			9	1		9	1	1	9	1	1
10	1	1	10			10			10			10		
11	1		11	1	1	11			11			11		
12	1		12			12	1		12	1	1	12	1	
13	1	1	13		1	13	1	1	13	1	1	13	1	
14	1	1	14			14	1	1	14	1	1	14	1	
15	1	1	15	1	1	15	1		15	1		15		1
16	1	1	16	1	1	16	1	1	16	1	1	16	1	1
17	1	1	17			17	1	1	17	1		17	1	
18	1		18			18	1	1	18	1	1	18	1	1
19	1	1	19	1	1	19			19	1	1	19		
20	1	1	20	1	1	20	1	1	20	1	1	20	1	1
21	1	1	21	1	1	21			21	1	1	21		
22	1	1	22	1	1	22		1	22	1	1	22	1	
23	1	1	23	1	1	23	1		23	1	1	23		
24	1	1	24	1	1	24	1	1	24	1		24	1	1
25	1		25		1	25			25	1		25	1	1
26			26			26	1	1	26	1		26		
27	1	1	27	1	1	27	1		27	1		27	1	
28	1	1	28	1	1	28	1		28	1		28		1
29	1	1	29			29	1	1	29	1		29	1	1
30	1	1	30	1	1		22	15	30	1	1		21	12
31			31											
	29	22		15	16					26	17			

Learners were asked to answer an open-ended questionnaire. Some of these learners were also asked to participate in group interviews/focus groups to learn about the technical problems they faced when producing their recordings and what learning benefits they could perceive in doing these.

Open ended questionnaires

The reasons learners who did not do assignments gave for not having done them were mainly technology related. Students may have a laptop but no internet connection at home, or may not have a computer at all. Students who did the assignments were classified in those who said they did not have technical problems and those who did. Those who did not have technical problems seemed to describe themselves as technologically skilful or updated. They acknowledged there are classmates who do not have access to as many resources as they do. Students who said they had technology related problems seemed to suggest they did not have regular access to technology (e.g. they use internet sporadically or for short periods of time either at school or in cybercafés). They also explain that there are unknown formats and that they are not familiar with programs or with their recently bought equipment/software.

FIGURE 6: REASONS FOR NOT HAVING DONE THE ASSIGNMENT

Gracias por contestar las siguientes preguntas:

¿Hubo algún problema de origen técnico que te impidió realizar las grabaciones? ¿(Sí) Cual(es)? ¿(No) De alguna otra índole?

Sí, la grabación del celular si se pudo, al momento de querer pasarlo a la computadora, ~~se~~ no se podía encontrar el archivo debido a la incorrecta instalación del hardware.

¿Crees que este tipo de tareas sean de utilidad para ti en cuanto al aprendizaje del idioma?

Sí, ya que aprendes a escuchar la pronunciación

¿Te gustaría entregar el trabajo si se presentara otra oportunidad?

Sí.

¿Tienes alguna recomendación que hacer?

Sí, es que muchas de las compañeras no cuentan con el material que se utilizó.

FIGURE 7: PROBLEMS FACED TO HAND IN ASSIGNMENT

Gracias por contestar las siguientes preguntas:

¿Tuviste algún problema técnico para entregar tus grabaciones en el formato solicitado? **Si**

¿(Si) Cuáles? ¿(No) Qué pasos seguiste para entregarlas en el formato? (utiliza el reverso)

no podíamos haber por telefono celular pero no contaba con el disco para bajar la grabación posteriormente quisimos utilizar un ipod pero no supimos grabar ya lo habia hecho la noche anterior pero ese dia no se pudo y al final lo pudimos hacer cuando me prestaron un MP3 y así lo transformaron en un cyber-

¿Cómo fue que te decidiste a realizar este trabajo

opcional? por que realmente vengo con muchas deficiencias en ingles y tambien no cumpli con una tarea entonces el objetivo era ganar unas decimas mas en mi calificación ya que sabia q' era muy probable q' saliera baja en mi examen

¿Te sentiste a gusto para realizarlo?

Si aunque no sabiamos bien la pronunciaciön y me quedaba ayada en varias ocaciones pero si tambien fue divertido.

¿Crees que este trabajo sea de utilidad para ti en cuanto al aprendizaje del idioma?

Si

¿Te gustaría ser tú quien eligiera qué grabar? ¿Qué grabarías? **No.**

¿Tienes alguna recomendación que hacer?

Realmente no se.

Group interviews

A total of 4 group interviews were carried out, one with 12 students, a second one with 10 (14 and 10 minutes) and two 8-to-10-minute more with 4 students each. Learners' response to oral assignments in these group interviews was mainly concerned with expanding the answers students gave in the questionnaires and resulted in the following topic areas:

Student talking time	"how can I say it.. you are actually asking us to do it, and I ... spoke" "well, I had never had to speak in my English course before..."
Self awareness and self evaluation	"when I... oh no, when I heard myself I said I sound terrible" "I didn't like my voice, that's not me..." "Like, I thought, I always thought I spoke English well, but I heard, I mispronounce so many words!"

Gaining self-confidence	"mmm, like, it is good to know that you know some English after all" "... many things we did not know, and practiced, like 10 times, now I can pronounce them"
Resourcefulness	"... I thought, well, I can't do it, I don't have a phone like that, like you close your mind to everything else, you don't think you can do it with something else, I used my MP3 player – I didn't know it could do that!" "we... well, one of us asked her brother, and he found a converter for us, and... I know how to Bluetooth files, and... we asked the people in the computer room how to burn it"
Practicality (no need of a special building or space for it)	"well, I recorded it (individual recording) in the kitchen / couch / my bedroom / the cubicle where I work part time" "it just takes you about 10 minutes, even if you didn't like how it came out first time"
Pair-work advantages and disadvantages	"well, this is the only class we take together so that complicated things a bit" "one of us didn't know but the other did (how to pronounce, how to convert files)"
Access to technological resources	"we talked to you... we were sorry we didn't give you a CD (handed in a tape), but none of us had a computer" "but it is good, if one does not have a CD burner maybe a friend of yours does, or we shared the cybercafé fee"
Expected product (technology available to the teacher)	Learners externalized their concern about their product reaching the other end. They thought the teacher would want to hear CDs on a regular tape recorder and that is why some of them prepare audio CDs instead of data CDs. Others handed in their work with little notes inside the CD case. These notes were concerned with the format that files came in and hoped the teacher's equipment could read those files.

Questionnaires and group interviews

Both instruments also gave information as to whether students could be asked to do this exercise as part of their course assignments and whether they would like to participate in the decision making about the characteristics of recordings.

Optional or compulsory	"Yes, compulsory. We need motivation/to be pushed" "No, because not all of us would have the technological resources"
Decision making about recordings	"Yes, there are things I would like / want to say" "No, I wouldn't know what to choose, or would not challenge myself enough. The teacher knows better"

2008: Proved accessibility, systematized procedures

Having confirmed that the majority of students had the means or were able to work out ways to do the assignments, the focus at the beginning of 2008 was to promote interaction and shared resourcefulness among learners. Therefore,

recordings were no longer an optional assignment, and they counted for a 10% of final grade. A total of five pair-tailored recordings were distributed throughout the course, a calendar of due dates was given on the first day of classes and it was strictly followed. Pair-work to be recorded consisted of conversations from learners' textbooks, role-play conversations and something of their choice.

Available technology still consisted of mainly learners' own mobile phones, rented and/or personal PCs, personal laptops and other handheld technology such as iPods and MP3 players. Students heavily relied on each other for the technology and linguistic issues of the assignment. Assignments were also accepted in USBs, but viruses were a major problem with this type of media. Teacher-researcher still used outdated office equipment with a high speed connection at school when available and had a telephone line connection at home. Some learners tried sending their audio files via email so I had to make room to use school equipment more often.

According to students, the advantages of sending audio files via email were: (1) they do not have to buy CDs, and (2) uploading AMR files is easy as these are less heavy than MP3 and other audio file formats. Uploading on campus was not a good option yet, for the Wi-Fi system was still pretty unstable. Computer rooms' rules are strict about allowing students access to their personal email addresses. Uploading is mostly done from nearby cybercafés or, in a very few cases, from students' high speed connections at home.

Spring 2008	4 groups, 5 recordings (pair work) were asked for A total of 85 students (23, 17, 20, 25): 75% of the whole population did all the assignments.
Summer 2008	2 groups, 5 recordings (pair work) were asked for A total of 62 students (32, 30): 85% of the whole population did all the assignments.
Fall 2008	4 groups, 5 recordings (pair work) were asked for A total of 123 students (21, 37, 34, 31): 85% of the whole population did all the assignments.

At the end of the year, learner participation in decision making and feedback for recordings were carefully looked at since peer evaluation and/or feedback started to be considered in the plans for 2009.

Avoiding pair-work

A curious learner response was the case of those students who figured out ways not to interact together or not to meet at all and still hand in their pair work assignments. In one of the cases, the two students were observed to have agreed to meet sometime before or after class to do the assignment. One of them brought his laptop, where his partner would record all of her lines, making a short pause between them. She would then go to class and he would start recording his lines following the same procedure. In his laptop, he had a program which allowed him to mix and edit audio recordings – it allowed him to cut a

single recording into pieces, and to insert pieces from another recording. They were never approached to know exactly which program they used or to be asked to really interact together. Instead, I decided not to intervene and let the phenomenon flow.

Earlier in the year, another pair of students did something similar: each of them recorded their lines separately and kept these individual lines in very small, a-few-seconds long Real One Player files (MP3 files). Then one of them put all these tiny files together on a single CD. The small files were numbered so that the teacher would know which one to click on first, which in fact, resulted in the conversation that was asked for. While the first pair of students figured out how to avoid interaction, the second one found out ways not to meet at all and still do the task.

Although at first it was a bit disappointing to see that students were not working together as the rest of them were, no intervention whatsoever to prevent it from happening was taken. The reason for not taking action was that it seemed to be an important aspect of learner response to doing this type of assignment – a likely scenario. This experience helped me unveil the beliefs and ideas I had about having learners do this type of task. For me, I realized, it was important they met and interacted in a pair-tailored exercise. It became very clear to me that I had to make interaction between learners explicit, or perhaps try to make it more difficult for them not to meet. Thus, this type of learner response had an effect on my planning.

2009: Proved accessibility, learner participation in decision making.

Very similar to the 2008 stage, the focus of this phase of the project was to promote interaction and shared resourcefulness among learners. Also, peer evaluation and/or feedback started to be considered. At the end of the Summer and Fall courses, students were asked to write about what it was for them to work with technology for their assignments. These short accounts were written in English as students said they were comfortable with it.

Recordings were no longer an optional assignment, and they counted for a 10% of final grade. A total of five pair-tailored recordings were distributed throughout the course and a calendar of due dates was given on the first day of classes. This calendar was strictly followed. Pair-work to be recorded consisted on conversations from learners' textbooks, role-played conversations and options to choose from. Freedom to choose what to record was extended to other options learners later in the course suggested: reading a poem together, singing a song together, and writing up their own stories.

Available technology still consisted of mainly learners' own mobile phones, rented and/or personal PCs, personal laptops and other handheld technology such as iPods and MP3 players. The Wi-Fi was much more stable, so several more learners had access to better bandwidth on campus. Some more students also had high speed connections at home, and so did the teacher-researcher towards the second half of the year. Students still relied on each other for technology, as samples from the reflections they wrote at the end of the course show:

"using technology was fun and interesting... I believe technology offers a wide variety of resources with a low cost which is very important for students in public universities like us"

"we had technology that was a challenge for me because I am not good at it. I thought "how I am supposed to do it" but I have to admit that my boyfriend helped me to convert the first recording... And I learned how to do it but as I do not have a burner in my computer my friend did it for me."

"perhaps it was kind of late when I understood how things worked in this technology environment, anyways I hope I can further use some of the things I learned about technology"

"I tried to buy a recording cassette player, however nowadays it does not record any cassette, this not exist anymore only plays the cassette! (really I felt devastate, because in that moment I felt that I was the older or the elder, elder, elder in your class)"

"So first, I learnt to use my husband's palm, after that the cell phone recording, and finally I could to bring you my last recording in CD. Yes, as you can imagine this, I had to ask to many, many persons in order to investigate how I could do my voice recording in CD"³

Creative work

Although there were always one or two assignments that went beyond just recording voices and incorporating creative elements such as background music, it was not until 2009 that learners' creativity boosted in several other examples. For instance, a couple of students from architecture and design studies wanted to sketch their version of a conversation they had to role-play. They handed in power point slides and inserted audio with their own voices instead of speech bubbles. Another pair of students from social studies chose to read Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech out loud and incorporated background applause to it. At the end of 2009, it was decided that having students listen to each other's creative work and react to it would be a natural step to take for the year to come.

FIGURE 8: SKETCHED VERSION OF ASSIGNED CONVERSATION



³ Taken from learners' written reflections at the end of the course.

2010: Learner participation in decision making and evaluation processes.

The focus of this year was to encourage learner involvement in decision making and evaluation processes via systematic group interaction and empathy from the very beginning (Shumin 1997). Since evaluation / assessment are quite a vast field, this section will be looked at as the beginning of another project. Learner response to oral homework here is concerned with how they dealt with getting feedback on their recordings, and giving feedback to other student's recordings. More than asking learners to grade their peers' work, they were asked to react to it as they would in listening exercises. They were asked to listen and to answer questions such as:

*Did you get the joke?
Was their plan better organized than yours?
How long did the trip take?*

A couple of sessions later, they took home other people's work to mark with evaluation sheets. At the end of the course, they were asked to write a short reflection about what it was like to have had oral homework that peers and teacher gave feedback on in the course. Most students were comfortable with writing these short reflections English. A few samples of learners' reflections, as they wrote them, are reproduced here:

"The Evaluations were helpful because when I recorded I did not realize of some aspects that I needed to improve because of nervousness and in that way my partners' comments helped me... I liked this part of the course"

"The bad thing is that some of the evaluations I received were so hard. Sometimes I got comments that made me feel so bad with myself. Some of them had reason but others were so exaggerated."

"In my point of view, one of the main factors of this subject was to give and receive feedback of our recordings. In this way we perceive our strengths and weaknesses we did not realize at the moment of recording."

"We can make observations to others in order to improve... Finally, something which is important for me when evaluating the performance of students is the effort they make to get a good job."⁴

From analyzing all the reflections, it can be said that learners did not feel very comfortable at the beginning and approached the evaluation with suspicion and fear. Little by little, however, they felt more relaxed, safer and willing to receive criticism from their peers.

Summarizing learners' response

Oral homework was found to be attractive; different from everything else students had done before in language learning. The fact that they were encouraged to use their mobile phones for an assignment (Chinnery 2006) in

⁴ Taken from learners' written reflections at the end of the course.

times when these were indeed being banned from classrooms (Diario EL PAÍS 2007) is a factor that could have well contributed to their curiosity. Reasons for not doing it, either when it was an optional assignment or when it was compulsory, may well relate to, as many learners expressed, access to technology. However, there could be other sources of resistance such as beliefs about language, about learning and/or personality traits (Littlewood 2001).

It has to be acknowledged that while some learners may be completely wired; there will always be a good number of them who may not be as connected as assumed (Thelmadatter 2008). They may in fact be economically or geographically unable to be on-line on a regular basis. These circumstances require planning that caters for average connectivity (Egbert 2005) so that less wired learners are not excluded from the learning experience. Similarly, teachers may not be as connected as they "should be." It is a very common case that, being digital natives (Prensky 2009), learners are much more likely to be familiar with those technologies that teachers are little by little digesting. Moreover, teachers may not even feel the need to increase their connectivity status and remain pretty much off-line.

In cases where learners are, in their own words, not very good with technology, it also has to be acknowledged that many people can take only one thing at a time. Otherwise, this turns people against the assignment due to technology-related frustration. Moreover, the fact that technological resources (e.g. computer rooms, free Wi-Fi) tend to become available rather slowly may also contribute to putting learners off trying.

Concluding Insights

As a whole, it could be said that learners responded fairly positively to oral homework. Possible reasons could include curiosity and feeling challenged to try something they were familiar with but in a different way. While newness may have been one of the most powerful factors to make them feel attracted to the task, it meant, however, that as their teacher, what I was asking them to do was also new to me. Early in the project, I realized I would have to be very flexible with my controlling the task – I constantly asked learners for *their* help, especially how they overcame minor problems with technology. I was lucky to have very helpful learners.

When working on the assignments, many learners expressed that they had to be patient with themselves and others to make effective use of whatever resources they had. Some students had to ask for help from other people in their household, others went to "more experienced" peers, and a few more came to me. Working with others as a way to develop resourcefulness increases the potential benefits of having oral homework in a language course, both for learners and teachers. Oral homework can indeed be a very attractive option to help learners and teachers to learn together.

Finally, exploring what your available resources are and the flexibility that is needed from the teacher and the students may be a phase that cannot be skipped. It may be a good idea to start small and keep focused. For example, if

you just learned how to attach or download audio files to and from emails, keep doing it until you feel you manage it. If you are *not* the kind of person who can easily incorporate something new without feeling overwhelmed, do not force yourself to absorb technology all at once. Technology is an ever-changing entity. However, teachers and learners could share what they have learned when solving minor problems and teach and learn from each other. In other words, embarking in an oral homework project could be the ideal scenario to start and keep exploring technology together.

References

- Cáceres, L. I., and K. Obilinovic. 2000. The Script-based Approach: Early Oral Production in Language Teaching. *English Teaching Forum* 38 (4): 16-19
<http://eca.state.gov/forum/vols/vol38/no4/p16.htm> (accessed November 9, 2009)
- Chinnery, G. M. 2005. Speaking and listening online: A survey of internet resources. *English Teaching Forum* 43 (3): 10-17
<http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/forum/archives/2005/05-43-3.html> (accessed October 18, 2010)
- Chinnery, G. M. 2006. Going to the MALL: Mobile Assisted Language Learning. *Language Learning and Technology* 10 (1): 9-16. <http://llt.msu.edu/vol10num1/emerging/default.html> (accessed October 18, 2010)
- Diario EL PAÍS S.L* 2007. Una región de India estudia prohibir el móvil a los menores de 16 años. EFE - Nueva Delhi - 12/09/2007 ©.
- Egbert, J. 2005. *CALL essentials: Principles and Practice in CALL classrooms*. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. TESOL
- Gibson, G. 2004. Facilitating English Conversation Development in Large Classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal* 10 (9, September). <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Gibson-Conversation.html> (accessed October 14, 2009)
- Littlewood, W. 2001. Students' attitudes to classroom English learning: A cross-cultural study. *Language Teaching Research* 5 (1): 3-28
- Prensky, M. 2009. H. sapiens digital: From digital immigrants and digital natives to digital wisdom. *Innovate* 5 (3). <http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=705> (accessed April 17, 2009)
- Shumin, K. 1997. Developing Adult EFL Students' Speaking Abilities: Factors to Consider. *English Teaching Forum* 35 (3, July-September): 8-13.
<http://eca.state.gov/forum/vols/vol35/no3/p8.htm> (accessed November 9, 2009)
- Tanner, M. W. and M. M. Landon. 2009. The effects of computer-assisted pronunciation readings on ESL learners' use of pausing, stress, intonation, and overall comprehensibility. *Language Learning & Technology* 13 (3, October): 51-65 <http://llt.msu.edu/vol13num3/tannerlandon.pdf> (accessed October 1, 2009)
- Thelmadatter, L. 2008. Becoming part of a "community" online in order to acquire language skills. *MEXTESOL Journal* 32 (1): 47-68

Wii Want Interaction–WiiMote Board: Una Alternativa Económica Para un Pizarrón Interactivo y sus Aplicaciones en la Enseñanza del Inglés

TESSIFONTE LÓPEZ REYNOSO, DEPTO. LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS UNIVERSIDAD DE SONORA ¹

JOSÉ LUIS RAMÍREZ-ROMERO, DEPTO. LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS, UNIVERSIDAD DE SONORA ²

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to describe and demonstrate an inexpensive alternative for the creation of an interactive whiteboard and its application in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language.

Resumen

En el presente trabajo se describe y demuestra una alternativa económica para la creación de un pizarrón interactivo y sus aplicaciones en la enseñanza del inglés.

Introducción

El pizarrón interactivo, entendido como una pantalla táctil que trabaja en conjunto con un cañón de proyección y una computadora (Smart Technologies Inc. 2004) es uno de los múltiples recursos que pueden ser utilizados para la creación de ambientes de aprendizaje enriquecidos con tecnologías. Sin embargo, pese a su gran potencial ha sido hasta el momento poco utilizado en la enseñanza del inglés en las escuelas mexicanas, especialmente en aquellas que no cuentan con el programa de *enciclomedia*, debido a su alto costo y falta de portabilidad. Conscientes de lo anterior, en el presente trabajo se describe y demuestra una alternativa económica para la creación de un pizarrón interactivo y sus aplicaciones en la enseñanza del inglés.

Antecedentes

Los antecedentes inmediatos del pizarrón interactivo son el pizarrón tradicional y el cañón de proyección. Al combinar ambos recursos educativos, tenemos como resultado un pizarrón interactivo, el cual concentra todas las ventajas de ambos recursos. Así, el pizarrón interactivo provee el atractivo visual que una computadora con cañón puede ofrecer junto con la versatilidad y la interactividad del pizarrón convencional con el objetivo de mejorar el aprendizaje en el salón de clases.

¹ tessi_lopez04@hotmail.com

² jlrmrz@golfo.uson.mx

Desgraciadamente, existen también diversas razones para que un docente lo considere como un material poco accesible, entre las cuales destacan las siguientes:

- Es caro: los precios estándares de los pizarrones interactivos giran alrededor de los \$20,000.00 pesos.
- Es muy frágil y requiere manejarse con extremo cuidado tanto por el alumno como por el maestro, lo cual ocasiona que los maestros no lo quieran utilizar o las instituciones educativas no permitan a los alumnos utilizarlo por temor a que lo dañen.
- Es difícil y caro de mantener.
- Es estacionario: una vez instalado, es muy difícil cambiarlo de lugar, por lo tanto solo es funcional para un salón de clases, lo cual es una gran limitante especialmente para los maestros de inglés que tienden a trabajar en varias instituciones o salones de clases a lo largo del día.

Afortunadamente, las desventajas anteriores pueden ser fácilmente resueltas mediante la utilización de una alternativa igual de efectiva que sobrepasa las limitantes previamente mencionadas: El *WiiMote-Board*.

WiiMote Board

El *WiiMote-Board* es una alternativa económica a los pizarrones interactivos comerciales que aprovecha la tecnología del *Nintendo WiiMote* (control de mando de la consola de videojuegos *Nintendo Wii*) para crear una pizarra interactiva virtual y así proporcionar todas las ventajas y utilidades que una pizarra interactiva convencional nos puede proveer, especialmente el poder manipular una computadora desde una superficie plana donde, por medio de un cañón, se proyecta la pantalla de la computadora en uso. Partiendo de esto el maestro tiene una infinidad de recursos disponibles para mostrar en sus lecciones o permitir a los alumnos interactuar con ellos. Aprovechando estas ventajas, las actividades y estrategias de aprendizaje que el maestro implemente con esta tecnología pueden incrementar la participación de los alumnos y aumentar el nivel de motivación de estos.

Para comprender como funciona el *WiiMote-Board*, es necesario conocer 5 aspectos básicos que lo conforman:

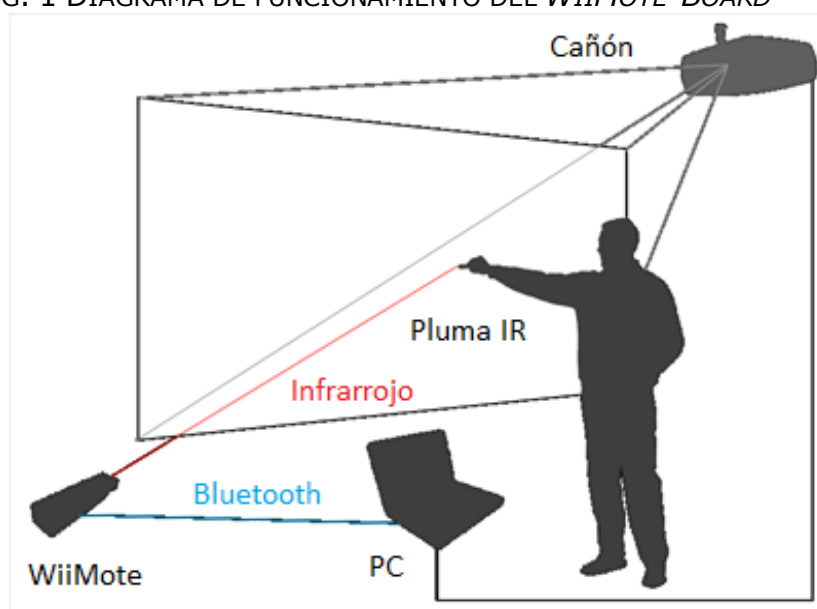
- El *Bluetooth* del *WiiMote*: El control de mando *WiiMote* se conecta por medio de *Bluetooth* a la plataforma en la que se va a utilizar (normalmente la consola *Wii*). Por este mismo medio se conecta el *WiiMote* a la computadora que se planea manipular como pizarrón interactivo.
- El *software*: La computadora debe contar con una versión de los diferentes programas que se encuentran disponibles para relacionar las funciones del *WiiMote* y decodificarlas a fin de crear un pizarrón interactivo.
- La cámara infrarroja del *WiiMote*: En la parte frontal del *WiiMote* se encuentra una cámara que detecta fuentes de luz infrarroja. Esta cámara

combinada con el software indicado y un dispositivo que emita luz infrarroja pueden determinar un área virtual para que esta trabaje como un pizarrón interactivo según la localización de los puntos de luz infrarrojos que el *WiiMote* detecte.

- La calibración de los 4 puntos: Al momento de tener el control conectado a la computadora y con el software corriendo, se puede activar la opción de calibración. Con esta opción el *WiiMote* buscará 4 puntos consecutivos de luz infrarroja para determinar el área del pizarrón interactivo virtual, mismos que se mostrarán en la pantalla de la computadora o del cañón como referencia para marcarlos con la pluma infrarroja.
- La pluma infrarroja: Es un dispositivo que emite una luz infrarroja al momento de presionar un interruptor. Con este dispositivo se manipula la pizarra virtual al momento de que la cámara infrarroja del *WiiMote* detecta el punto de origen de la luz infrarroja emitida por la pluma en base a la calibración de los 4 puntos hecha en un principio. No es una pluma propiamente dicha, pero lo ideal es que se asemeje a una para facilitar su manejo.

La siguiente ilustración demuestra gráficamente lo anterior.

FIG. 1 DIAGRAMA DE FUNCIONAMIENTO DEL *WIIMOTE-BOARD*



Razones por las cuales es recomendable utilizar esta tecnología en clases

Existen múltiples razones por las cuales es recomendable utilizar esta tecnología en clases, entre las cuales destacan las siguientes:

1. Es barata: El costo total de los componentes del *WiiMote-Board* es hasta 20 veces menor que el de un pizarrón interactivo ordinario.

2. Es portátil : Sus componentes caben fácilmente en una mochila o en un maletín, por lo cual es muy fácil llevarlos consigo al siguiente salón o escuela.
3. Es práctico: El uso del WiiMote-Board no se limita al de una pizarra convencional, puede funcionar como una tableta digital o convertir en Touch-Screen cualquier pantalla de computadora.
4. Es fácil de usar: Una vez comprendida la fase técnica del WiiMote-Board, su uso es sencillo y lógico.
5. Bajos costos de mantenimiento: Siendo que el WiiMote-Board está compuesto por el propio WiiMote y la pluma infrarroja, en caso de fallar estos es fácil y económico encontrar alguien que pueda darles mantenimiento.
6. Es efectivo: Es tan efectivo como cualquier pizarra interactiva convencional.
7. Es ideal para maestros independientes: El costo y la portabilidad ~~del WiiMote-Board~~ hacen posible que prácticamente cualquier profesor pueda utilizarlo sin grandes esfuerzos tanto económicos como físicos.

Requerimientos:

A continuación, se enlistan los componentes necesarios para poder armar un WiiMote-Board:

- *Nintendo WiiMote*: Puede ser adquirido en la mayoría de los supermercados, tiendas de videojuegos o incluso en algunas tiendas de electrónica. No es necesario que sea nuevo o que se modifique para que funcione como un *WiiMote-Board*.

FIG. 2. NINTENDO WIIMOTE



- Cañón: Cualquier cañón convencional puede servir.
- Una zona plana de proyección: Es el área donde se proyectará la imagen del cañón y por ende, donde se establecerá el *WiiMote-Board*. Puede ser cualquier superficie plana opaca que no refleje luz tal como una pantalla, una pared, una sabana, etc.
- Una computadora con conexión de *Bluetooth*: Algunas computadoras recientes ya cuentan con el *hardware* necesario para hacer conexiones vía

Bluetooth. En caso que una computadora no cuente con dicha conexión se puede adquirir un dispositivo USB que permite establecerla.

FIG. 3. DISPOSITIVO USB QUE PERMITE ESTABLECER UNA CONEXIÓN TIPO *BLUETOOTH*



- Una versión disponible del *software*: Hay diferentes versiones del *software*, una de ellas es la versión original de Johnny Chung Lee, el genio detrás de esta idea, el cual es gratuito (para descargarlo ir a: <http://johnnylee.net/projects/wii/>). Además está disponible *WiiMote Whiteboard* de Uwe Schmidt, el cual también es gratuito y cuenta con *Wiimote Connect*, que facilita la conexión de *Bluetooth* y del *WiiMote* a unos simples *clics* (para descargarlo ir a <http://www.uweschmidt.org/wiimote-whiteboard>). Finalmente está *Smoothboard* de Goh Boon Jin, el cual además incluye una barra de herramientas de navegación y anotación para uso del maestro. *Smoothboard* requiere que se pague una licencia de uso para poder utilizar la versión completa del *software* (para descargarlo ir a: <http://www.smoothboard.net/>)
- Una pluma infrarroja: Estos dispositivos pueden ser fabricados por uno mismo o por un taller de electrónica. Otra opción es comprar por internet plumas fabricadas específicamente para el *WiiMote Board*.

FIG. 4. PLUMA INFRARROJA



- Un tripié (opcional): Cualquier tripié o superficie que ayude a sostener el *WiiMote* y apuntarlo a la zona de proyección puede funcionar. Una base para micrófono también es recomendada para este fin.

Procedimientos Técnicos:

Para poder poner en marcha un *WiiMote Board*, hay que seguir los siguientes pasos:

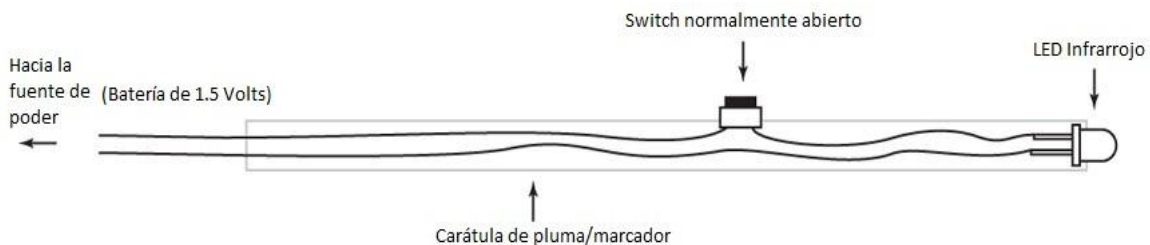
- Construir una pluma infrarroja: Este puede ser el paso más complejo para aquellos que no tienen conocimientos de electrónica. Sin embargo, no hay que alarmarse, pues se requieren solamente los conocimientos más

básicos de electrónica para construirla y contar con los siguientes materiales:

- *Un LED infrarrojo*
- *Un switch normalmente abierto*
- *La carátula de una pluma o un marcador*
- *Cable para circuitos electrónicos*
- *Soldadura*
- *Cautín*
- *Una batería de 1.5 V (preferentemente de reloj)*

Los materiales (exceptuando por la carátula de la pluma) pueden ser comprados en cualquier tienda de electrónica. Una vez adquiridos, hay que soldar las piezas siguiendo el siguiente diagrama:

FIG.5. DIAGRAMA QUE MUESTRA LAS CONEXIONES A REALIZAR PARA CONSTRUIR LA PLUMA INFRARROJA (IMAGEN TOMADA Y MODIFICADA DE [HTTP://JOHNNYLEE.NET/PROJECTS/WII/PEN.JPG](http://johnnylee.net/projects/wii/pen.jpg))



Si lo anterior parece muy complejo, simplemente hay que pedir a cualquier electrónico que nos arme el circuito. Se debe decir para qué se necesita y cómo va a funcionar para evitar confusiones. Lo más difícil en la construcción de la pluma es idear como dejar el *switch* expuesto mientras los demás componentes del circuito se encuentran dentro de la carátula.

En caso de no encontrar ayuda para construir la pluma infrarroja, se puede adquirir una a través de *internet*.

Una vez que se tenga la pluma, se puede comprobar su funcionamiento al accionarla y observar el LED por medio de cualquier cámara convencional (incluso una cámara de celular). Esto se debe a que la luz infrarroja es imperceptible para el ojo humano, pero cualquier cámara puede confirmar si el LED está emitiendo la luz infrarroja deseada.

1. Conectar el WiiMote a la computadora: Para conectar el WiiMote hay dos opciones. La primera es siguiendo los pasos normales para conectar cualquier dispositivo Bluetooth a la computadora. En el programa de Bluetooth que se esté utilizando se debe correr la opción de buscar dispositivos y simultáneamente presionar los botones 1 y 2 del WiiMote para que este pueda ser reconocido por el software de la computadora como "Dispositivo de Interface Humana". Una vez que el software lo

reconozca se deben aparear para que el WiiMote se mantenga conectado a la computadora³.

2. La segunda opción es utilizando el software incluido en Smoothboard o WiiMote Whiteboard de WiiMote Connect para buscar y conectar automáticamente cualquier WiiMote cercano que esté en modo de reconocimiento (al presionar simultáneamente los botones 1 y 2).
3. Proyectar y correr el software: Una vez conectado el WiiMote a la Computadora, la imagen de la PC se proyecta por medio del cañón al área destinada para el WiiMote Board y se corre el software de WiiMote-Board seleccionado.
4. Posicionar el WiiMote: Se posiciona el WiiMote de manera que la cámara infrarroja pueda ver toda el área destinada para el WiiMote-Board. La cámara infrarroja tiene un campo de visión de 45° aproximadamente. Es importante que no haya ninguna otra fuente de luz infrarroja que haga interferencia (como la luz solar por ejemplo).
5. Calibrar: Se activa la opción de calibrado en el software para que el WiiMote pueda determinar el área donde se creará el pizarrón interactivo virtual. Una vez activada aparecerán 4 puntos alternados consecutivamente para marcar con la pluma infrarroja. Cuando estos estén marcados correctamente, el WiiMote-Board estará listo para empezar a funcionar.

Comparación de precios

A continuación se muestra una tabla de comparación de precios entre los componentes del *WiiMote Board* y las opciones de varios pizarrones interactivos que se encuentran en el mercado.

Componentes de WiiMote-Board	Pizarras Interactivas convencionales
WiiMote: \$500.00MX Pluma infrarroja hecha en casa: \$50.00MX Pluma infrarroja comprada por internet: Desde \$120.00MX <i>Bluetooth USB Dongle</i> : Desde \$100.00 MX Licencia de <i>Smoothboard</i> (Opcional): \$360.00 MX Total = \$ 1010.00 - \$1080.00 MX	Enciclomedia I-board: \$17,000.00MX. Polyvision Interactive Whiteboard: \$23,940.00 MX Capax Virtual Interactive Whiteboard Projector Stylus Pen: 7,416.00\$MX (Interface similar a la de WiiMote Board, crea una pizarra interactiva virtual.)

³ Para más referencia de sobre este paso consulte el manual de su dispositivo de conexión Bluetooth.

Ventajas de su utilización en la enseñanza del inglés

Algunas de las principales ventajas de utilizar el *WiiMote-Board* en las clases de inglés son las siguientes (Red.es 2006; Torres, Gutiérrez, Cárdenas 2003):

- Las lecciones son más atractivas: combinado con ayudas visuales apropiadas los alumnos se enganchan en la lección.
- Incrementa las oportunidades de participación en clase: los alumnos pueden pasar al frente de la clase y participar en diferentes actividades y ejercicios de aprendizaje utilizando la computadora.
- Provee nuevas fuentes de material educativo: el poder utilizar la computadora e interactuar con ella abre las puertas a un sinfín de fuentes de información, actividades, juegos, y videos para reforzar el contenido de la lección.
- Optimiza el tiempo de enseñanza: el uso adecuado del *WiiMote-Board* permite que el tiempo de clase se aproveche más al poder abarcar más contenido, práctica y atención de parte de los alumnos.
- Es adecuado para todo tipo de contexto: el *WiiMote-Board* puede ser utilizado con alumnos de todas las edades. Es bastante resistente y los costos de reparación del *WiiMote* y de la pluma infrarroja en caso de daño son bajos.
- Aumenta la motivación de los estudiantes, tanto por su atractivo visual como por sus posibilidades interactivas.
- Facilita la implementación de un cambio de perspectiva de una clase centrada en el maestro a una centrada en los alumnos.

Actividades que se pueden realizar con el *WiiMote* en la enseñanza del inglés

Gerard y Widener (1999) proponen seis tipos de actividades que se pueden realizar con los pizarrones interactivos y las separan en dos rubros:

Actividades de apoyo a la enseñanza:

- Actividades que apoyen la conversación y la interacción del maestro con el alumno: gracias a que el maestro no tiene que enfocarse en el uso de la tecnología al estar parado frente al grupo, el maestro se puede concentrar más en el proceso de aprendizaje de los alumnos y conversar con ellos con el fin de mantener una atmosfera más relajada. De este modo se abren más oportunidades de entablar conversaciones en la lengua meta. Una recomendación es incluir un teclado inalámbrico para que los estudiantes puedan participar en actividades de escritura en el *WiiMote Board* desde sus lugares sin necesidad de ir a la computadora.
- Actividades que apoyen la incursión de un nuevo elemento gramatical o cultural: por ejemplo, el maestro puede preparar su clase en un documento *Word* y presentarla a su clase. Al momento de encontrar aspectos importantes éstos se pueden remarcar, subrayar o circular para facilitar su comprensión por parte de los estudiantes. Una vez terminada

la lección se puede imprimir o enviar al correo de los estudiantes para su disposición.

- Actividades que apoyen la organización del maestro: Una recomendación muy útil es el tener un documento *Word* donde se agregue el vocabulario visto en clase. Este documento se puede guardar e ir complementando en clases futuras y el maestro puede rastrear todo vocabulario previamente visto que no estaba en sus planeaciones. Esta lista de vocabulario igual puede ser compartida con los estudiantes como material de estudio. Otra ventaja es que el material de apoyo de clase utilizado puede ser reciclado, modificado y guardado fácilmente.

Actividades de apoyo al proceso de aprendizaje:

- Actividades que apoyen la habilidad el desarrollo de la expresión oral: Se puede presentar un documento *Word*, página *web* o *wiki* a la clase para discutir y navegar entre las ligas que éstos proveen para aportar más contenido a la discusión. Otra opción es que los mismos alumnos presenten los resultados de una *Web-Quest* o simplemente que hablen de su página *web* favorita, al tiempo que la muestran al grupo.
- Actividades que apoyen los procesos cognitivos: El maestro puede facilitar una gran cantidad de actividades de aprendizaje nuevas tales como: ejercicios con *Hot Potatoes*, *Web-Quest* grupales o individuales, o simplemente interactuar con los materiales de apoyo de sus presentaciones para hacer mas entendible el contenido concentrándose en los puntos clave.
- Actividades que apoyen la motivación y emulación de los estudiantes: Es de esperarse que los estudiantes se sientan atraídos hacia el *WiiMote Board*, lo cual incentivará su interés por participar por el simple hecho de querer utilizarlo. Se recomienda complementar esto con actividades interactivas o juegos para incrementar la motivación de los alumnos y promover una actitud positiva hacia el aprendizaje.

Conclusiones

A manera de conclusión es necesario enfatizar que el *WiiMote-Board*, así como cualquier pizarrón interactivo u otro recurso educativo, no es el centro de la clase ni el utilizarlo garantiza el aprendizaje. El *WiiMote-Board* es solo una herramienta más para facilitar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, por tanto al utilizar el *WiiMote-Board* es necesario recordar que la interacción de los alumnos es imprescindible si se quiere sacar provecho de todas las ventajas que éste provee. Fuera de esas precauciones se puede concluir que el *WiiMote-Board* es un material educativo accesible, cuyas aplicaciones a la enseñanza están limitadas solamente por la imaginación de los maestros. Corresponde pues a nosotros como maestros empezar a generar nuevas aplicaciones creativas para seguir apoyando nuestra causa: que los alumnos aprendan.

Para saber más:

Para descarga de software y más información de la parte técnica visite:

- <http://johnnylee.net/projects/wii/>
- <http://esltech.wordpress.com/2008/10/23/infrared-pen-construction-demo/>

Para mayor referencia sobre cómo construir una pluma infrarroja ir a:

- <http://www.smoothboard.net/>
- <http://www.uweschmidt.org/wiimote-whiteboard>
- <http://smartboards.typepad.com/smartboard/>

Para descarga de material didáctico, actividades y planeaciones de clase utilizando el WiiMote Board visite:

- <http://www.mrshurleyesl.com/smartboards/smartboardfavorites.html>
- <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~lfried/>
- <http://katiechristo.pbworks.com/SMARTBoard-for-MS-and-HS-ESL-Teachers>
- <http://www.sandfields.co.uk/games/>
- <http://www.manythings.org/>
- <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/>

Referencias

- Gerard, F. y Widener, J. (1999). "A SMARTer Way to Teach Foreign Language: The SMART Board Interactive Whiteboard as a Language Learning Tool." Cary Academy, North Carolina. First presented at SITE 99 Conference. Disponible en: <http://edcompass.smarttech.com/en/learning/research/SBforeignlanguageclass.pdf> Consultado el 2 de mayo del 2010.
- SMART Technologies Inc. (2004). "Interactive Whiteboards and Learning: A Review of Classroom Case Studies and Research Literature." White Paper. Disponible en: <http://dewey.uab.es/pmarques/pdigital/es/docs/Research%20White%20Paper.pdf>
- Red.es (2006) La pizarra interactiva como recurso en el aula (en línea) Ministerio de Industria, comercio y turismo. Disponible en: http://dim.pangea.org/docs/Redes_InformePizarrasInteractivas_250506.pdf
- Torres, A., Gutiérrez, J., Cárdenas, D. (2003). El pizarrón electrónico interactivo, otra tecnología para incorporar a la educación. Disponible en: <http://bibliotecadigital.conevyt.org.mx/colecciones/documentos/somece/02.pdf>

Using Web 2.0 Tools for English as a Foreign Language Teacher Reflective Practice

RUTH BAN, BARRY UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE AGUASCALIENTES ¹
ROBERT SUMMERS, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA ²

Abstract

This narrative tells the story of how an in-service teacher examined Web 2.0 tools to collaboratively reflect on her practice. Situated in Sociocultural theory (SCT) and a Community of Practice (CoP) framework this teacher was able to better understand how different Web 2.0 tools can provide options that tradition self-reflection does not offer.

Resumen

Esta narrativa nos cuenta la historia de cómo un profesor en servicio examinó las herramientas del Web 2.0 para reflejar colaborativamente en su experiencia. Ubicadas en la teoría sociocultural (SCT) y un marco de referencia de comunidad de practica (CoP), este profesora fue capaz de comprender mejor como las diferentes herramientas Web 2.0 pueden proporcionar opciones que las formas de auto-reflexión no ofrecen.

Elizabeth is a novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in a metropolitan area of Mexico. She recently graduated from a very good teacher education program where her professors went to great lengths to help her become a good teacher. In all of her classes they made a distinction between two aspects of teacher education: teacher training and teacher development (Richards and Farrell 2005). Teacher training refers to teacher learning focused on a teachers immediate goals. Teacher development activities are related to overall professional growth. These activities are more related to long term goals. Teacher development is what Elizabeth is concerned with at this point in her teaching career.

As she had been an excellent student, she was concerned with being an excellent teacher. But, still, she was unsure of how she could do that. She knew that the most recent ideas surrounding teacher education (Shulman 1986, Richards 1998) were based on what teachers must know. Shulman introduced the concept of teacher knowledge by proposing three areas of knowledge which including content area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge. Richards (1998) was more specific to Elizabeth's area of EFL; he proposed the following six domains or areas of knowledge that teachers must possess.

¹ rban@mail.barry.edu

² rsummers@bamaed.ua.edu

FIGURE 1: SIX DOMAINS OF KNOWLEDGE THAT A TEACHER MUST POSSESS

1. Theories of teaching or how teachers understand classroom practices,
2. Teaching skills or the similarity between teaching a foreign language and other subjects. More specifically the teacher knowledge surrounding how to achieve a balance of fluency and accuracy, organization and facilitation of communicative interaction, errors and error treatment,
3. Communication skills including pedagogical reasoning, decision-making, contextual knowledge, ability to communicate and language skills that foreign language teachers need. This domain questioned which is more important for foreign language teachers: pedagogy or language skills,
4. Subject matter knowledge which refers to concepts and theories of SLA, disciplinary knowledge such as: phonetics and phonology, English syntax, curriculum and syllabus design, sociolinguistics, TESOL methods, testing and evaluation. Subject matter knowledge referred to the content that is shared between areas, but is only characteristic to foreign language teaching,
5. Pedagogical skills and reasoning that are comprised of the cognitive skills that underlie teaching skills and techniques. The applications of these skills include: preparation, representation, selection of texts and materials and making of instructional decisions,
6. Conceptual knowledge refers to the understanding of the role of context in the teaching and learning process.

Another concept that her professors always emphasized in her teacher education courses was the importance of reflective teaching. Based on the work of Schön (1983) educators around the world began to realize that it was important to reflect on what one does in the classroom in order to improve one's practice. For Elizabeth, Bartlett's (1990) reflective cycle resonated with her views of teaching. Bartlett's concept consists of five stages of reflection. The first stage, mapping involves examining the teaching episodes or asking what one did as a language teacher. In the informing phase the teacher seeks meaning, reasons, or principles related to what had happened in the mapping stage. The contesting stage of the cycle allows the teacher to reflect on the actual happening and ways in which the teaching experience could have been better. This examination of the teacher practice and how it could improve leads to the appraisal phase. The final or appraisal stage involves the implementation of the teacher's re-constructed ideas about her practice. Bartlett advocates a continuous application of the reflective cycle to teaching.

Elizabeth had created teaching portfolios as part of her teacher education program and while she was creating them they were instrumental in helping her to examine her reflective practice. However, now that she is an in-service teacher, she has discontinued her reflective practices. She feels guilty when she takes time from her lesson planning and material development to contemplate what she has done in the classroom. Moreover, she is bothered by the excessive use of paper and ink to create portfolios in binders that end up in her car trunk or under her bed. She has decided she must find a more efficient and collaborative manner of implementing her reflective practice.

She has decided that she needs to be collaborative in her reflective practice because recently she has read about theories of social learning or Sociocultural Theory (SCT) as she has heard it referred to by prominent language learning theorists and teacher educators (Johnson 2009; Lantolf & Thorne 2006; Lantolf 2000). She likes how this manner of looking at language learning, which finds its roots in Vygotskian cognitive psychology, views social context as the most important factor in individual transformation and development. The idea that it is through social interaction that mental processes become controlled entirely by the learner and that higher order thinking skills are developed resonates with her thinking.

In her reading about SCT, she has come to understand that when one adopts a social view of learning, one accepts the belief that development occurs first intermentally and is next internalized intramentally. One theorist, Valsiner (1987) explains this phenomenon when he states development appears "first in the social, later in the psychological, first in relations between people as an intrapsychological category, afterwards within the child as an intrapsychological category" (p. 67). Elizabeth understands that in this theoretical approach, knowledge is not static waiting to be transmitted to an individual; instead it is fluid, created in the social milieu and a product of shared interaction.

Elizabeth's reading and understanding has brought her to the conclusion that the two most well-known concepts born out of Vygotskian theory are scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). She was also surprised to find out that the notion of scaffolding finds its roots in the work of Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976). She had always attributed the ZPD to Vygotsky, but they put forth scaffolding as an instructional strategy by which the teacher provides only the assistance that is necessary for a student to complete a task. In Elizabeth's own words, the teacher provides assistance that is contingent on the needs of the learner.

There is other research that Elizabeth has read about. For example, Aljaarfreh and Lantolf (1994) established guidelines for providing assistance, or mediation in the ZPD. She understood that their work is based on Vygotskian theory and that their suggestions mirror the best practices of scaffolding. Her understanding of their work also points to the fact that the, assistance that a teacher provides to a learner should be contingent on the learner's needs and feedback should never be too explicit. In her own classroom, Elizabeth could see how this would allow the learners to reach the correct answer or conclusion on their own.

When reading Vygotsky's original work, Elizabeth understood the ZPD to be "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978, p. 86). As a result, she could easily see how the ZPD plays an integral part in understanding how to provide instruction that is properly scaffolded. As a novice teacher, Elizabeth is concerned with providing scaffolding in the manner that will most benefit a learner, she has learned that she be aware of two developmental components; actual and potential development. In the theoretical explanations, actual development is what a student can do

autonomously or without assistance; potential development is what a student can do with the help of a more capable peer. The ZPD offers novice teachers such as Elizabeth a description of a learner, taking into account their actual and potential development. As she acquires a more robust understanding of the ZPDs of each of her students Elizabeth will scaffold classroom and individual interactions.

As she works to understand the factors that play out in her classroom, Elizabeth remembers Richards' (2001) domains second language teaching. In her reflective practice, she would like to contemplate second language learning theories as well her pedagogical practice.

In her search for a more efficient manner to become more collaboratively reflective, Elizabeth has wanted to try to implement new technological tools that are available to her via the Internet. Although she is not considered 'techy' she thinks she could apply the tools she has heard described as Web 2.0 tools. As in most parts of Mexico, she has access to the Internet at school and on her desktop computer at home. She uses email regularly with her students to remind them of assignments and mediate their understanding of particular concepts. As a result, she is interested in learning how she could use collaborative Internet tools to augment her reflective practice.

Here is a description of the information that Elizabeth found when she began to investigate Web 2.0 technologies. She has found that the term web 2.0 is used to describe a number of Internet based applications that are in some manner different from Internet based applications from the web 1.0 era. Generally, web 2.0 technologies have a focus on the social and collaborative use of technology. Although she has heard of these tools, she was never aware that some of the most canonical examples of these technologies are blogs and wikis.

In her life, Elizabeth has used Web 2.0 technologies to promote the understanding that the way that we view the world and she understands that the knowledge that we derive from it is jointly constructed. Elizabeth understands the difference between these technologies that can be contrasted with more traditional technologies that promote the one-way transmission of knowledge, or the view that knowledge is something that is transferred to a student through a teacher. Basically, Elizabeth understands that Web 2.0 technologies can be said to represent a socially constructed view of knowledge and learning, while web 1.0 technologies can be said to represent a more binary or Cartesian view of knowledge and learning.

In her reading, Elizabeth also discovered that the term web 2.0 is relatively new one. It was first used to describe the evolution of Internet technologies from distributors of knowledge to vehicles of interactivity. She read that DiNucci (1999), when describing web 2.0 stated "The Web will be understood, not as screenfuls of text and graphics but as a transport mechanism, the ether through which interactivity happens". Web 2.0 technologies facilitate interaction and web 1.0 technologies transmit knowledge.

Elizabeth was surprised to discover that there is a myriad of tools available that can be said to belong to web 2.0, there are many options for her to use. But it seems like every day there are some new Web 2.0 tools. As a result, attempts to

codify them will soon be antiquated. Elizabeth was happy when she found that in response to this challenge McGee and Diaz (2007) attempt to delimit and more precisely define web 2.0 technologies by providing a five-part classification scheme. Their scheme groups technologies according to their function. They emphasize that as with all web 2.0 technologies, interactivity is at the core of their use and are at the same time consider to be communicative, collaborative, documentaries, generative and interactive. She read a brief discussion of these technology types and has tried to understand the differences between each tool. .

Here are the ways that the tools were explained by McGee and Diaz (2007) The function of a communicative technology is to facilitate communication among person or groups. More specifically, she found that they are tasked with finding ways "to share ideas, information and creations" (McGee and Diaz 2007, p. 4). Examples of communicative technologies would be blogs (text, audio and video), and instant messaging tools (textual, audio and video based).

The second category that Elizabeth read about was a collaborative technology which is used to jointly with another individual or group of individuals. She understood that, a collaborative technology is used "to work with others for a specific purpose in a shared work area" (McGee and Diaz 2007 p. 4). The examples that she found for collaborative technologies would be wikis and virtual communities of practice.

Elizabeth understood that a documentative technology is a one that documents information with the aim of sharing it with others. She felt strongly that since the purpose of these technologies is "to collect and/or present evidence of experiences, thinking over time, productions, etc" (McGee and Diaz 2007, p. 4) she would like to include this technology in her repertoire. Examples of these technologies include blogs (text, audio and video), as well as electronic portfolios.

Generative technologies are those that generate something that is otherwise inaccessible in a real world context. It was easy for Elizabeth to understand this concept because her students were always asking her about new words they found online or in the video games they play. She had already read McGee and Diaz's definition of a generative technology as one that is used "to create something that can be seen and/or used by others" (p. 4). Most the examples they offered, such as immersive gaming environments, virtual worlds, and virtual communities of practice she had either seen herself, or her students had described for her.

The last category that Elizabeth read about was the interactive technologies that provide users with the opportunity to collaborate with other individuals. In McGee and Diaz's (2007) words, they exist in order "to exchange information, ideas, resources and materials" (p. 4). She already had a Facebook page, which is an example of an interactive technology; these technologies include social networking, virtual communities of practice and virtual worlds. To help her further understand the concepts, Elizabeth created the following table (see Appendix A), which she adapted from McGee and Diaz, 2007.

FIGURE 2: WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Web 2.0 classification	Web 2.0 tools	Specific technology examples
Communicative	blogs (text, audio and video)	Blogger
	instant messaging tools (text, audio and video based)	Skype Google talk
Collaborative	WikiS	Pb wiki
	virtual communities of practice	Google docs NING
Documentative	Blogs	blogger
	Electronic portfolios	NING
Generative	Immersive gaming environments	World of Warcraft
	virtual worlds	Second life
	Virtual communities of practice	NING
Interactive	social networking	Facebook myspace LinkedIn
	virtual communities of practice	NING
	virtual worlds	Second life

After Elizabeth had finished her research into Web 2.0 tools for reflective practice, she had to consider which tools she would use for different phases of Bartlett's reflective cycle. In addition, she had to begin to think about how she would invite collaboration from her peers or other teachers she knew. Her first task at hand was to think of ways to apply the technological tools to the creation of her reflective community of practice.

She realized that her first step would be to create a site that could store documents, video, audio, and text that could be accessed collaboratively by her colleagues. As this would be a virtual community of practice, she decided to create a NING. At its inception in 2004, NING was a free Web 2.0 tool that has been used by a myriad of individuals and groups to network socially via the Internet. However at the time that this article was written this is no longer the case. Presently creators must pay hosting of a NING community.

The better understand how she could network with and benefit from her peers, Elizabeth wanted to understand more fully the concept of a Community of Practice (CoP). She found Wenger, McDermott and Snyder's (2002) work where they outline the concept. They define a community of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and

who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area on an ongoing basis (p.4). This is just what she wanted to do; interact, learn with and from her EFL teaching peers in Mexico and abroad.

As she read more she began to learn about the parts of a community of practice, she found Wenger (1998) where he discusses the three elements that should be present in a CoP. First is *domain* or the topic that the CoP is centered around. Second is *community* or the social cohesion that binds the group members together. The last element is *practice*, or the collaboratively created artifacts and shared resources that the CoP has created over time.

Elizabeth knew that she could create the domain by targeting her NING to EFL teachers who were interested in ongoing professional development. These teachers would be her audience and at the same time give them a shared interest that would build bind the group together. Elizabeth examined the tools that could be included in the NING and discovered that as the group owner she could determine the appearance and features that her NING would have. She also learned that she could later add feature if she wanted to increase the functionality of the group. Initially she created a *collaboration, media and events* space to be included on the toolbar on her main page. These spaces would house the tools that would be displayed on the main page of the community page. She realized that she would have to spend more time designing and organizing the available spaces. She based her decisions on what she thought the group would like to use to share ideas and interact through this Web 2.0 tool. Here is a more complete description of each space that Elizabeth decided to include in her social networking space.

Main page

The main page displays all of the Web 2.0 tools available to members. It shows the same tools that are embedded in a tool bar that is at the top of the main page. The main page also can include an introductory statement or welcome that offers a description of the community and explains how to join or become a member. In this way the main page can be used to create the domain aspect of a CoP. That is to say, the topic and purpose would be clearly displayed on the main page.

Discussion forum

The discussion forum will be used as a space where the participating teachers can discuss their practice and use writing as a means of reflection on what they planned, what they did, and the resulting events in the classroom. They will be able to share their thoughts with the other members of the community and comment on what has been published by other teachers. The use of the discussion board will help to build the community aspect of the CoP by helping to create ties that bind the group members together. Additionally it provides a space for the creation of shared artifacts and resources. In this way, the discussion board contributes to the practice aspect of a CoP.

Members page

The members page shows the members' names and displays a photo if they provided one when they joined. When one clicks on the member profile, it links to the member's page. It also links the individual member's most recent activity on NING. The member page aspect of NING helps to create the domain and community aspects of a CoP by clarifying each group members' interests and providing a manner to directly interact with them.

Sub-groups

Within the sub-group space members can provide links to other groups that would be of interest to the members of the community. In addition, the members of this NING can create groups. For example, if a small group of teachers worked at a particular school, they could form a sub-group for their school. Another example would be a sub-group related to a particular interest, such as teaching EFL in primary schools. Sub groups help to create the practice element that must be present in a community of practice by providing a space, in much the same way that discussion boards do, for the shared creation of artifacts.

Media

The media space allows community members to share media-based information. For example, if one of the group members wanted to video record her classroom practice and request feedback from the community of practice the video could be uploaded to the NING. If the video is too large to upload to the NING, another option would be to upload it to YouTube and provide the link via the NING. YouTube is one of the applications included as a design feature on NING. The media space of NING is useful in establishing the practice element of a CoP because it provides a repository for materials that can be used in EFL teaching.

Events

Finally, the events tab allows members to post information about events in their preview. For example, news about upcoming conferences and calls for participation in the events could be posted in this space. When used in this manner, the events element of NING creates the community aspect of a CoP by providing opportunities for members to interact outside of the virtual group.

As soon as Elizabeth finished designing her NING, she became very excited about using it. She began to talk to her colleagues and asked them to participate. She soon realized that she did not need to restrict participation to people in her immediate geography area. She therefore began to think of ways to invite people into her virtual community of practice on a larger scale. She spoke with colleagues at conferences, both national and international, and asked them to suggest people who would like to join. However, for the moment, she would begin with her colleagues at school and from her educational experience. At any rate, she had set the membership so that she would have to approve anyone who wanted to join the community, as this is one of the security features that NING provides.

Conclusion

Elizabeth's story allows us to reflect on how an electronic, Web 2.0 community of practice can be created to mediate professional development. We were able to understand how social learning theories facilitated Elizabeth's understanding of interaction and collaboration in such a community. Finally, her hands on experience with creating the NING gave her a real feeling of how it worked and how it could be a community of practice.

References

- Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4) 465-483.
- Bartlett, L. (1990). Teacher development through reflective teaching. In J. C. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 202-214). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DiNucci, D. (1999). Fragmented future. *Print*, 53(4), 32, 221-222.
- Johnson, K.E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Lantolf, J. P. (Ed.)(2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of L2 development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGee, P., & Diaz, V. (2007). Wikis and podcasts and blogs! Oh my! What is a faculty member to do? *EDUCAUSE Review*, 42(5), 1-11.
- Richards, J. C. (1998). *Beyond training: perspectives on language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schön , D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. London: Temple Smith.
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Valsiner, J. (1987). *Culture and the development of children's action: A cultural-historical theory of the developmental psychology*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practices: Learning as a social system. *System Thinker*, 9(5), 1-10.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W.M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and psychiatry*, 17(2), 89-100.

Appendix A

Blogger	www.blogger.com
Skype	www.skype.com
Google talk	http://www.google.com/talk
Pb wiki	http://pbworks.com
Google docs	https://docs.google.com
NING	http://www.ning.com
World of Warcraft	http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/index.xml
Second life	http://secondlife.com
Facebook	www.facebook.com
myspace	http://www.myspace.com
LinkedIn	http://www.linkedin.com

Getting them to Read Outside of Class: Let Moodle be the Enforcer!

THOMAS N. ROBB, KYOTO SANGYO UNIVERSITY, JAPAN ¹

Abstract

Extensive Reading has long been considered to be an ideal way for students in a non-English speaking milieu to gain extra practice with English. Through the reading of texts with controlled vocabulary and syntax, students can read volumes of material with relative ease while enjoying the material they read. As with any outside work, of course, comes the problem of holding them accountable for actually doing it. This article presents one method involving a module on Moodle, a freeware course management system, that is easy on the teachers and fun for the students.

Resumen

Se ha considerado desde hace tiempo que las lecturas extensas son como una forma ideal para que los estudiantes que no hablen inglés ganen practica con su inglés. A través de la lectura de textos con vocabulario y sintaxis controlados los estudiantes leen una gran cantidad de material con relativa facilidad, mientras disfrutan el material que leen. Como en cualquier trabajo externo, por supuesto, se presenta el problema de comprobar la actividad del alumno. Este artículo presenta un método que concierne un módulo en Moodle, un sistema de manejo de freeware, que es sencillo para el profesor y que disfrutan los estudiantes.

Introduction

Extensive reading is an approach to, not just reading, but language learning that emphasizes the reading of large quantities of material which is usually graded in both the lexis and syntax used, so that students can read quickly without the use of a dictionary. The basic purpose of ER is to allow the students to practice the language in order to build up automaticity, to make the vocabulary and syntax that they already know more familiar and to expose them to additional contexts where it is used. See Day & Bamford (1998) for a comprehensive definition. [1]

Extensive reading has long sat in the doldrums of language pedagogy. While many respected scholars over the years have acknowledged its utility, few teachers have, in fact, implemented ER in their classrooms. According to the Annotated Bibliography of Works on Extensive Reading in a Second Language (Extensive Reading Foundation) , an ER approach was espoused by German and French teachers in the United States as early as 1919 (Handschin 1919; Hagboldt 1925), but the pedagogy failed to attract a following due to one important deficiency: no graded or simplified texts. This was recognized by Bagster-Collins (1933) "We need a number of texts all on the same level, all employing largely the same basic vocabulary." (p. 156). The 1940s was the "Army method" era concentrating on basic communication, while the 1950's and 1960's was mired in the audio-lingual approach with its structuralist roots and emphasis on automatic production of uncontextualized syntactic patterns.

¹ trobb@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp

Towards the end of the 60s Longman launched the *Longman Structural Readers*, with Macmillan *Ranger* series following shortly afterward. Even with the surge in publications, however, ER attracted only a small following. David R Hill, with the EPER (Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading 1992) Project was responsible for its popularization in Malaysia and Tanzania (Hill & Thomas (1998). Day & Bamford (1998) surveyed the many reasons why the ER route is "less traveled":

- The work required to set up a program, and,
- The difficulty of finding time for it in an already crowded curriculum
- The dominance of the reading skills approach...
- The believe that reading should be delayed until students can speak and understand the second language
- Confusion between extensive reading and class readers. (p. 46)

Research in the effectiveness of ER

The Annotated Bibliography of Works on Extensive Reading in a Second Language lists over 500 articles related to the theory and implementation of Extensive Reading. As is the case with much SLA research, it has been difficult to assess the effectiveness ER since it is normally used as additional means of language study outside of class, which means that the students in-class study confounds the research, thus making it difficult to attribute gains to the outside reading alone. Studies such as Stokes et al. (1998), Renandya et al. (1999), Mason (2006) and Lee (2007), however, have empirically demonstrated the effectiveness of reading large volumes of text as an aid to language acquisition.

MoodleReader for tracking student reading

The MoodleReader software described in this article helps to overcome one of the major stumbling blocks to ER implementation by providing a solid mechanism for students to demonstrate that they have read their graded readers, while at the same time obviating the need to squeeze ER into a crowded curriculum or to "sell" the approach to a cohort of resistant teachers. The program is currently being used by over 50 schools, from elementary level through adult/university which are mainly in eastern Asia, but with a smattering of schools on all continents.

Assuming that a sufficient number of graded readers are available and that it is implemented in a course that is required for graduation, the program allows curriculum-wide implementation by fiat – read, or else! Naturally, the overall result will be enhanced if the instructors are familiar with ER and pre-disposed to use it, but our experience has been that teachers are slowly won over as they start to implement the approach and see the resulting change in attitude among their students.

What I offer below did not come about by plan, but rather as a fortuitous side effect of the efforts of the English Department in the Faculty of Foreign Languages to find a better way to assess whether its students had done their assigned graded reading. The software we developed was intended to replace

"Accelerated Reader" which we had been using, but which had become increasingly unworkable.[2]

The MoodleReader program worked well with our 120 first year English majors in 2008 when I slowly came to the realization that the same system would probably work equally well with our 3000 non-majors, virtually all of whom were required to study English in their first year at the university. Since one of my "hats" was Chair of the General Education English Curriculum Committee, it was easy to get the committee, all of whom are ELT specialists, to agree to my suggestion of curriculum-wide implementation. I suggested the following plan:

6. Require all instructors to include a uniform Extensive Reading requirement in their course descriptions,
7. Have them pass out information to their students in the first week of classes that described the purpose of ER, the course requirement and how they were to go about it, and
8. Supply each instructor, at the end of the term, with a full report of the ER performance of their students, with a grade to be factored into their class evaluations.

The plan was carried out in the April 2009-March 2010 academic year and went relatively smoothly. While only about 60% of the students actually read one or more books, some students far exceeded our modest goal of 5 books per term. Nevertheless, pre/post-test comparisons for the April 2009-March 2010 and the previous April 2008-March 2009 which contained a cohort of students of identical ability, showed a very significant gain in their reading proficiency. A forthcoming article will describe the experimental statistics in depth.

Description of the MoodleReader Software

MoodleReader is, strictly speaking, a "module" that can be easily integrated into a Moodle site. The module, once installed, allows the site manager to download quizzes from a central server (<http://moodlereader.org>) where there are currently about 850 quizzes available for graded readers, basal readers (used with native speaking children) and popular "Youth Literature" such as Judy Blume's books, the *Baby-Sitters*, the *Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew*.

The module offers short, timed quizzes, usually with just 10 questions that take most students between 2-5 minutes to answer. The quizzes are not designed to test memory but simply to allow the students to prove that they have read the book. Quiz items vary from book to book, but generally include some multiple choice, some "who said this?", some true/false and finally a drag and drop question where the student has to place some events in the story into the correct order. The quizzes can be taken "open book" with a time limit preventing an answer-as-you-read approach.

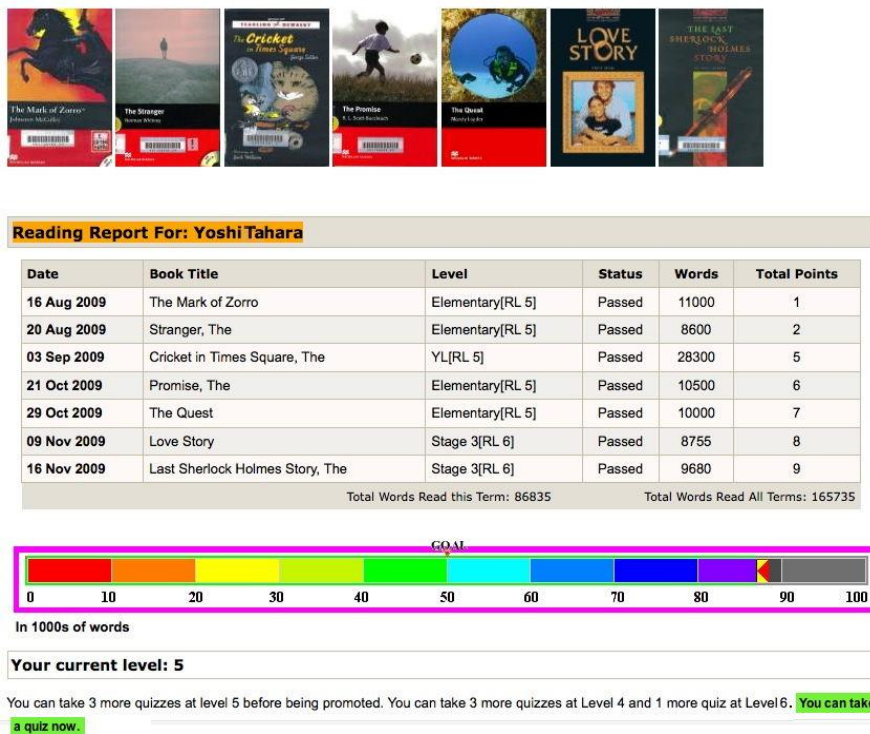
Features of MoodleReader

While we could have tailored MoodleReader exactly to the requirements of our particular curriculum, we realized from its inception that the tool could be shared with other schools, where ER was implemented in various forms. We therefore

made virtually all of the parameters that control the module configurable by the local administrator or teacher. These include,

- The maximum length of time allowed to take a specific quiz. We have this set at 15 minutes although for non-fiction texts such as the excellent Cengage Footprints series, based on National Geographic stories, we have experimentally lowered this to 6 minutes.
- How often students can take quizzes – useful if you wish them to read regularly throughout the term. Without such a control many students might try to fulfill their reading requirement in the last few days of the term, which is not only pedagogically unsound, it is an invitation to cheat, as well.
- The difficulty level of books that each student may read which prevents students from reading material which is much too easy for them, or reading material which is much too difficult, which would slow down their reading pace and force frequent dictionary consultation.[3]
- The method of counting progress –total number books, pages or words read.
- When the module is used in a voluntary ER program, teachers often turn off the level and frequency restrictions in order for students to read whatever they want, whenever they want to. In the case of KSU, where ER is implemented as part of the curriculum, the level is controlled, with students being promoted to the next level after having read a specific number of books at their current level. [4]

FIG. 1: A STUDENT REPORT SCREEN



Improving on the “ER by Fiat” model

As alluded to earlier, the "ER by Fiat" model has its drawbacks. In the case of KSU some instructors had never heard of the extensive reading approach prior to being asked to incorporate it in their syllabus. With most of the instructors being adjunct teachers, who are on campus for half a day twice a week, there was also no chance to provide any comprehensive information prior to the launch of the program.

The MoodleReader program does, however, allow the progress of individual classes to be tracked, which provided us with the opportunity to counsel instructors of classes with a low rate of compliance. This helped to some degree.

In the second academic year, currently underway, we have taken further steps to familiarize both students and instructors with the approach. "Class sets" of books consisting of up to 35 copies of the same title, at various reading levels have been made available for instructors to take into class for an orientation. Instructors have been advised to bring in a set that is one level lower than the level of their (streamed) class. Students read the books in class while the instructor observes their reading style, commenting on such aspects as overuse of the dictionary, using a finger or other pointer while reading line by line, etc. This experience in class is, for many, their first time to read a complete book in English, and has helped to encourage more to read. Some teachers have taken to printing out the class-by-class comparison or displaying it on the classroom projection screen in order to build a sense of inter-class competition. Finally, an evening get-together with a free meal afforded an opportunity to meet instructors face to face and give a brief presentation on the ER approach.

Student Reaction

While there will always be students who have other priorities or who hate to read, we have found that many students discover that they can actually enjoy reading in English. In the general education program, approximately 40% of the students didn't take a single quiz during the two semesters, but that means that 60% of the students did. This is additional contact with English that they would not have otherwise received. Some students soared, one reading 61 books when the goal was set at just a mere 5 per term. A full 10% of the 2500 students read 20 books or more. This student comment might be considered representative of those who enjoyed ER.

"I love extensive reading!! . . . the extensive reading books are really interesting and i can finish reading most books within 1 hour and there is a goal. I can have fun reading!"

Access to MoodleReader

From the inception of MoodleReader the staff of the KSU Department of English realized that we were developing a tool that could also be used in other schools around the world. While we created a set of quizzes to cover the books that we had available in the library, we had hoped that others would also adopt the software, and subsequently add their own quizzes to the system for those books

which lacked them. While the uptake was slow at first, contributions have started to snowball. While the KSU library holds only about 500 titles, over 1050 quizzes are currently available, many created by teachers using the system elsewhere, and increasingly by publishers who are having the quizzes created in-house for the system. Oxford University Press was the first, completing Stages 4, 5 and 6 of the Bookworms series to add to the lower levels which the KSU staff had created. Other major publishers have also joined in.

The software can be downloaded from <http://moodlereader.org> and easily integrated into most Moodle installations. Alternately, a course can be hosted on the MoodleReader site free of charge, with students registered in individual classes within the course. The quizzes themselves can be downloaded from the central server once the module has been set in place.

Future Plans

To date, development of MoodleReader has been supported by KSU research funds as well as a grant from the Japan Ministry of Science and Education. As the number of schools using the module grows, funding will be required to provide even a minimum level of support. It is our hope that the Extensive Reading Foundation (<http://erfoundation.org>) might take the project under its wing once the number of users has grown convincingly large.

Caveats

Naturally, ER can only be required for all students if the reading material is equally available to all. In locations where graded readers are expensive or for other reasons inaccessible, it may be difficult to implement a program that is fair to all students. Many teachers solve the book access problem by purchasing a small number themselves, or having the students purchase one each, which are then pooled for everyone to read.

The same caveat goes for areas where universal access to computers and the Internet is problematic. The MoodleReader program, however, can be implemented on a single, shared computer if need be – without Internet access once the quizzes have been loaded.

Finally, Extensive Reading should be part of a balanced program without shunning *intensive reading*, which has its own set of merits. Students with certain learning styles and motivations may find the ER affords a huge jump in proficiency, while some may find it less useful.

Notes

- [1] Robb (2002) and others have argued against the “orthodox” definition, which cannot easily be applied to many learner-types and learning contexts. All agree however, that ER must involve the reading of large quantities of text with a concomitant de-emphasis on full comprehension.
- [2] Accelerated Reader, by Renaissance Learning, is reading quiz software that is commonly used in American schools. Problems ranged from the inability to add quizzes for books in our growing library of graded readers, to the profusion of “cheatsheets” with the answers to the questions for many books. (There were only 10 questions per book and the content never varied.)

- [3] When the target goal was determined by the number of books read, students often asked for their own reading level to be lowered. (Shorter, easier books allow them to get more points.) Now that the goal is set in terms of "total words read" students are clamoring to have their level raised. (More difficult books generally have more running words.)
- [4] The initial level of students is determined by the school-wide KSU placement test. Teachers are free to adjust the level for students who find their assigned level too easy or too difficult.

References

- Bagster-Collins, E.W. (1933). Observations on reading. *The German Quarterly*, 6(4), 153-162.
- Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading. (1992). *EPER guide to organising programmes of extensive reading*. Edinburgh: Institute for Applied Language Studies, University of Edinburgh.
- Extensive Reading Foundation. The Annotated Bibliography of Works on Extensive Reading in a Second Language. Available online at: <http://erfoundation.org/bib/biblio2.php>
- Hagboldt, P. (1925). Experimenting with first year college German. *The Modern Language Journal*, 9 (5), 293-305.
- Handschin, C. H. (1919). Individual differences and supervised study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 3(4), 158-173.
- Hill, D. R. & Thomas, H.R. (1988). Graded Readers (Part 1). *ELT Journal*, 41(1), 44-52.
- Lee, S. (2007). Revelations from three consecutive studies on extensive reading. *RELC Journal*, 38, 150-170.
- Mason, B. (2006). Free voluntary reading and autonomy in second language acquisition: Improving TOEFL scores from reading alone. *The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 2(1), 2-5. Retrieved October 22, 2007, from <http://www.tprstories.com/ijflt/IJFLTWinter06.pdf>
- Renaissance Learning, *Accelerated Reader* (software), <http://renlearn.com>.
- Renandya, W. A., Rajan, B. R. S., & Jacobs, G. M. (1999). Extensive reading with adult learners of English as a second language. *RELC Journal*, 30, 39-61.
- Robb, T. (2002). Extensive reading in the Asian context -- An alternative view. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 14(2). Available online at <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/October2002/discussion/robb.pdf>
- Stokes, J., Krashen, S., & Kartchner, J. (1998). Factors in the acquisition of the present subjunctive in Spanish: The role of reading and study. *I.T.L. Review of Applied Linguistics*, 121-122, 19-25.

WIKIS + TECH = WIN-WIN COMBINATION

VALERIA GUERRA AND WILLIAM MACHADO, ALIANZA CULTURAL URUGUAY ESTADOS UNIDOS, URUGUAY ¹

Abstract

It is undeniable that most students are immersed in a world that is full of technology. From smart phones to I-pods our students are exposed to technology 24/7; therefore, it's clear that our teaching practices have to be updated in order to fulfill all the expectations brought about by these new technologies. Have you been wondering what you could do to update and not die trying? In this article you will find all the very simple steps of a project on the adaptation of traditional classroom activities into their digital—era version and the use of Wikis -one of the most powerful free and easy-to-use Web 2.0 applications—as a tool to integrate these activities.

Resumen

Es innegable que la mayoría de los estudiantes están inmersos en un mundo lleno de tecnología. Desde los teléfonos inteligentes hasta los I-pods nuestros estudiantes están expuestos a la tecnología 24 horas al día, siete días a la semana. Por lo tanto, está claro que nuestras prácticas de enseñanza tienen que ser actualizadas con el fin de cumplir con todas las expectativas provocadas por estas nuevas tecnologías. Te has preguntado qué hacer para alcanzar tal actualización en tu práctica docente y no morir en el intento? En este artículo encontrarás todos los sencillos pasos seguidos en un proyecto sobre la adaptación de actividades tradicionales a su versión de la era digital y el uso de las wikis - una de las aplicaciones gratuitas, fáciles de usar y más poderosas de la Web 2.0- como una herramienta para integrar estas actividades.

Background

In the last ten to fifteen years, the world has gone through many changes which have shaped it geographically, socially, and intellectually. One of the most important and relevant changes, has been the accelerated development of technology. This exponential development in technology has changed communications, health, businesses, human interaction and even the wiring of our brains. Such has been the change in the wiring of the brain that it has created a division between those who were born before the technological boom, digital immigrants, and those who are still being born within it, digital natives. There is no need to clarify that most EFL/ESL teachers, fall under the category of digital immigrants and there is a gap that we must overcome in order to fully reach our students. Now, seeing our students as digital natives, it is undeniable and evident that most of them are immersed in a rapidly changing digital world. From smart phones to I-pods our students are exposed to technology 24/7; therefore, it's clear that our teaching practices have to be updated in order to fulfill all the expectations brought about by these new technologies. As a consequence, we carried out a project on the adaptation of traditional activities into their digital-era version and used Wikis as a tool to integrate these activities.

¹ valeria.guerra@alianza.edu.uy, william.machado@alianza.edu.uy

Thus, it is the objective of this article to give practical ideas on how to use the technological tools we have at hand creatively by shedding some light on how we could adapt traditional activities to their 21st century version. Moreover, we will briefly show how much richness and accessibility Wikis, as a free collaborative website, can bring to those digital versions of the traditional activities.

Why should we use digital tech?

In the world that we live in our students have a very active digital life and it involves being updated with what goes on around their world. Besides, what we have once seen as magical and incredible, like Professor Dumbledore, in Harry Potter movies, taking his memories from his head with his magic wand, depositing them in a pensieve and living his memories once and again, has become a reality. Gadgets like cellphones, smart phones, cameras, and camcorders have made that magic possible and an everyday thing. In fact, such has been the impact of these gadgets that they have redefined the way in which our students see the world up to the point that the use of words has become old fashioned and boring when using them to tell someone about what happened at a party, at a meeting, or the like. Hence, this modernistic way of perceiving life, like an endless news channel which broadcasts the latest news from all over the world, has led our students to find in the web the necessary tools to fulfill the needs created by this new tech era. So, why should teachers keep seeing technology as a set of neoteric gizmos? Why should teachers keep seeing the web just as a source of authentic materials? and what is more, why should our students keep seeing the web as something completely unrelated to learning? Throughout our experience using digital tools to give a twist to traditional ways of carrying out activities, we discovered significant advantages that led us to continue the research and to find ways of redefining our practice.

Implementation of technology in the classroom

Digital Publications

As if technology hadn't changed our lives enough already, it is a fact that most of the time that our students spend outside of the classroom, they invest it in activities that challenge them. These activities range from playing video games to designing their own avatars and virtual worlds. Additionally, these activities that our students are so much into are not only related to technology, but they also are carried out online. Nonetheless, even if these activities take place in the virtual world they perceive them as real. Therefore, it is evident that our classroom needs activities that are engaging and meaningful to our students and to their innate over-excited creativity. In fact, such creativity cannot be restrained just to drafting and using the materials that our budget can afford such as canvas, alphabet tracers, and graphic markers. As a matter of fact, our main objective relied on giving our students the chance to let their creativity flow as they used the language to find their own voice. Despite how hard it might seem to achieve this, we did and with flying colors just by using the web and the power of Wikis as a tool for collaboration.

It all started on a day when we were preparing the plan for our class. We had been puzzled looking for and considering different types of activities that could attract students more than the typical opinion essay. We knew that the topic was as attractive and thought provoking as making your shopping list, so we were almost compelled to find the way. Fortunately, it came to us as a flash of creativity that we could have our students write an article expanding their opinion about the topic, including pictures from our old magazines and using different types of cardboard to create a nice layout. However, we were doing the same thing as always, we were binding our digital native students to the last century classroom, not the one they were entitled to have. Hence, we decided to do the same activity, but digitalized using Wiki pages instead of papers, Google images instead of magazines and videos from YouTube to give it that special touch.

Having envisioned the elements of the project, the procedure was as simple as ABC from there. First, in class we set the topic on the whiteboard and let our students discuss about it in order to generate ideas. Second, we worked on the structure of the article and we presented the idea of doing a digital one in our Wiki. Third, we set the requirements in terms of the language that had to be included in the article. Before we let them put their hands on, we elicited which kinds of things they would include in the article and suddenly, as if we had struck an oil well, amazing ideas started to burst from our students in terms of how to do it, what to include, how it should look, etc. After that, we directed our students to the computer lab, we let their magic flow, and we suddenly became facilitators of their own autonomous learning.

After 100 minutes, we had in our hands not only a bunch of upbeat students but we also had semi-professional looking magazine articles. What is more, these students were so enthusiastic that they had included all the required language aspects in the project and had made it look their best. They showed a true commitment to the activity and to their final outcome. As the creative process went along, they did peer editing helping each other give the best they could. By the end, they actually voted online to choose the best article and gave critical and constructive feedback to each other. Just imagine the sense of pride and achievement when they found their work published in the institutional Wiki, which meant that all members of the institute could appreciate their work. As if it weren't rewarding enough, our students could read and comment online on the articles of other students who they had never seen due to schedule reasons. Additionally, since they had a profile as members of the wiki with picture and some personal information they could actually run into each other in the hallways and recognize each other by their work.

TV shows

Another direct implication that arises out of the use of technology is the possibility of accessing the media with just one click. Such immediate access to the media has drastically changed the flow of information, and it has given the possibility to anyone with a recording device and an Internet connection to broadcast whatever they want. Even further, our students have become active users of sites like YouTube, and Google videos, in which they post their videos and replies to videos from other people whenever they want. Bearing all this in

mind, wouldn't it be logical that our students find dull and old-fashioned the typical role-play activities that we carry out in class? As a matter of fact, they do. Nonetheless, these old fashioned role-plays can be easily adapted, enhanced and exploited by using Wikis and any of the technological gadgets that reside in our students' pockets capable of recording a video.

When we set ourselves to adapt the traditional role-plays to something more current for our students, we didn't come up with the idea of using vodcasts (video podcasts) and recording a TV show right from the beginning. In fact, there were certain elements that we had to bear in mind such as the resources available, pedagogical implications, learning outcomes, our students' interests and the compatibility with the topic being covered. It was not until then, that the idea came to us naturally to have students create their own vodcasts in the form of a TV show since with proper planning they would cater to our needs and our students'.

Before we could yell: "Action!" and start shooting as in a Hollywood production, we had to consider the technology that we had at hand and especially the technological resources that our students were familiar with. To our surprise, we realized that we had all the essential components at our disposal with little or no expense to us. The first item that we needed was a device of any kind that could record video and audio with a decent quality. To suffice the need of such recording device, we had a standard web cam and microphone plugged to our class computer and all our students' cellphones, which by now are 10.000 times more sophisticated than any of the computers in the Apollo 11. Then, we needed to solve the problems of storage and editing software which in fact could thwart the project since paying for software licenses and web servers was out of the question. Nevertheless, we came up with an array of possible free solutions for the video editing by using sites like www.cuts.com and solutions for the storage by using www.youtube.com, Google docs or even the storage room provided by our wiki server.

Though we had sorted out all those minor details, we weren't ready to start rolling yet; we still had to carefully ponder how to carry out the activity, the pedagogical implications and the learning outcomes that these TV shows would have. Since we were adapting the traditional role-plays, part of the road had already been paved in terms of the pedagogical implications. Additionally, designing how to carry out the activity wasn't such a feat. Basically, we set on the whiteboard the kind and topic of the TV show. The theme delved deeper into what we had been working on for several classes, the language that students had to include and some general guidelines to follow in terms of organization. Then, since we had students of different age groups we formed groups mixing young, digital native students with older, digital immigrant ones. Nevertheless, we were flabbergasted not only by the richness in terms of learning outcomes but also by all the windows that the use of Wikis opened in this activity. For instance, we could easily appreciate that our students had gone the extra mile in terms of language since they not only used the vocabulary and grammatical expressions that we requested, but they also added connectors that would help them organize

and clearly transmit their ideas. What's more we were thrilled by the enthusiasm that was imprinted in the TV shows.

All in all, after completing such an ambitious project together, we teachers and students, discovered truly amazing and somehow unexpected outcomes from it. To begin with, students showed an amazingly increased responsibility towards their language production. Besides, it created a sense of self-awareness that no other speaking activity could have done before. It is common for us teachers to correct pronunciation or grammar mistakes during oral activities over and over with different students and not seeing the expected change. Now with this kind of twist to the activities students could see their performance from another perspective and therefore work on self-correction at a deeper level. Another aspect of this project was the opportunity it provided for reflection upon their performance and from a starring role; they became TV hosts for a while and were able to impersonate their own versions of Oprah and Larry King while working on their language. Together with this came the publication of the final project in our Wiki which as we have mentioned before gives students the chance of sharing their work and progress with family and friends and in the most realistic way possible.

Conclusion

Generally, ESL/EFL class teachers deal with topics that are current, interesting, controversial and thought-provoking. Consequently, the spark of critical thinking is kindled inside our students, and finding the best way to keep this spark alive becomes a tough job for the teacher. Two factors that make it difficult to keep that spark burning is first, the generational gap there is to bridge between teachers and students. Second, the lack of means to spread students' voices and engage other students to share their own views. Nevertheless, the new WEB 2.0 technologies offer students the chance to interact with the world by the development of projects and to expose their ideas. Otherwise, the traditional speaking class activities are gone with the wind and the papers of written activities are lost in oblivion. On the one hand, the technological tools such as podcasts, vodcasts, cellphones, and mp3s fall short in fulfilling all our needs. Consequently, in order to provide the twist to the traditional class activities and shorten the gap between them and the interests of the new audience in our classes we chose Wikis. Successfully enough, Wikis have been the most innovative Web 2.0 tool to centralize all students' work and open them as a window to the world, having access to their work WHEREVER, WHENEVER, WITH WHOMEVER, they want. With a combination like this we cannot say anything else but that it is a win-win situation. Students' creativity, motivation, and critical thinking are boosted by being able to use the tools they handle every day to connect to the world as part of their lessons and without losing their social skills for being in front of a computer. At the same time, their products are posted online and they become eternal, open to the world and unquestionable evidence of their learning process.

Suggested Reading

Sandifer, S. (2009). *Wikified Schools: Using Wikis to Improve Collaboration and Communication*. Houston, TX: Wakefield Publishing.

Woods, D. (2007). *Wikis for Dummies*. Indianapolis: IN: Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Bell, A. (2009). *Exploring Web 2.0: Second generation interactive tools – Blogs, Podcasts, Wikis, Networking, Virtual Worlds and more*. Georgetown: TX: Katy Crossing Press.

The Skype Advantage: An Anecdote of a Teacher's Journey to Discover a Tool that Allows Students to Reach Their Learning Objectives Despite Their Busy Schedules

FABIANA HERNÁNDEZ, ALIANZA CULTURAL URUGUAY-EEUU, POCITOS-PUNTA CARRETAS BRANCH ¹

Abstract

Have you ever been concerned about your students' absences? Have you ever noticed the expressions on their faces when not following an explanation? Have you ever been worried that they might be falling behind? This probably sounds familiar to many of us. Unfortunately, we do not seem to find the time to go back and recap because we work with the constant pressure of following a syllabus against the clock. This had certainly been happening to me until I came across Skype; a software that made my job lighter and my students' learning richer.

Resumen

¿Te han preocupado las ausencias de tus alumnos a clase? ¿Has notado las expresiones en sus rostros cuando no comprenden una explicación? ¿Te ha preocupado que se pudiera estar enlenteciendo su proceso de aprendizaje? Probablemente, esto nos suena familiar a muchos de nosotros. Desafortunadamente, el tiempo para revisar y repasar no es suficiente ya que trabajamos en el cumplimiento de la currícula contra reloj. Ciertamente, esto me ha pasado a mí, hasta que descubrí Skype; una aplicación de internet que hizo mi trabajo más sencillo y enriqueció el aprendizaje de mis alumnos.

Background

Our institute, Alianza Pocitos-Punta Carretas, whose mission is the exchange of cultural knowledge through the teaching of English to foreign language learners, is a franchise of the Uruguayan-American bi-national center. We offer courses for all levels within the Common European Framework. In the pursuit of excellence in our everyday practice, we work towards success, helping our students by employing all means available. It was within this spirit that the tutoring service came alive in 2006. A few teachers were allotted a specific number of hours for this endeavor; I was one of them. For two years, this service was offered on a face to face basis. Students would register for a forty-five-minute session outside their class schedule with the goal of reviewing topics learned in class, or improving a specific skill. The sole purpose of the service was to give students a helping hand in order to catch up whenever they missed classes, or when they needed some sort of support to keep on learning.

The tutoring practice exceeded institutional, teachers', and students' expectations, since the service had a higher demand than what we originally envisioned, and students' improvement was evident according to their own teachers: their participation in class increased, and their grades on the tests were

¹ fabiana.hernandez@alianza.edu.uy

better. Nevertheless, students' busy schedules were preventing us from offering a top-notch service; one in which every student who needs help is reached and not a single minute of teacher's time or practice is wasted. In today's hectic world, time is a valuable asset. It was difficult for students to find the time within their busy schedules to come to our institution for an extra class. Because of this, students ended up canceling their tutoring sessions due to last minute appointments, or sickness, or in the best case scenario, arriving twenty minutes late. Hence, faced with the challenge of improving the service despite the fact that we couldn't control the most impacting variable "modern life style," we came to the conclusion that in a digital world we could not miss the opportunity to offer this service online.

Emphasizing creativity, building cooperation, developing communication and fostering critical thinking skills in our students have always been our priorities. In 2008, we started looking for new ways to enhance students' learning experiences through the use of technology. We wanted a better way to make technology part of the teaching process, not an extra or an add-on, but a means to enforce our priorities. Therefore, we came up with the idea of using a free and simple tool, Skype, to help us help students reach their learning objectives despite their busy schedules.

The Tool

Around 2008 in Uruguay, the buzz about Skype, an application that allows you to have a "telephone conversation" via Internet, had started to grow all around us. To be honest, I'm not computer savvy, but I really like to experiment in order to learn more; so I thought to myself: "This is it!" Knowing absolutely nothing about the workings of the application, I started experimenting with it. It is clear that Google all-mighty helped me in my quest. Firstly, I browsed the net to find out about the application and its features. Downloading the program was just a click away. I created an account, I looked for acquaintances and friends who might also have accounts and, finally, I got to the point where I could experience Skype!

I have to say that the feeling was fantastic! Not having to type in order to chat was so comfortable and relaxing! I could use a camera to have a much more meaningful conversation, and I could even make conference calls in order to talk to more than one friend at the same time. So far, there were very enticing possibilities to apply to my teaching.

Challenges

Students and teachers were used to having a face to face session, where they could both stop and ask questions as many times as they wanted. Understanding the concept of having a tutoring session via Internet was not easy. Many were the challenges to overcome. Skype was completely new, for both teachers and students. Few students were actually using it at that time, and none of the teachers had a single clue about it. Therefore, the first step was to teach both sides how to create an account and how to use it. Secondly, since human beings

in general are afraid of change, and we had been offering the tutoring service in a certain way for quite a long time already, we did not want to go radical.

Consequently, we decided to start by offering only a quarter of the weekly tutoring time via Skype. It was truly hard to convince people to register for the online sessions, so during the first months the regular schedule was packed and the online one was not. However, some brave students decided to give it a try and little by little the online tutoring service started rolling until the point when we soon found that there were more students taking advantage of the Skype option than the face to face one.

Apart from this, yet another challenge was for teachers and students to meet online. Picture this: I had my user name as a teacher; I had a student registered for a specific time; now I had to find him or her. This was not always easy. I had to try to find the student by searching his or her first name, last name, nick name, full name or e-mail account. Second, I had to call the person through Skype. If the student had done everything correctly and everything was working fine with the Internet connection, he or she answered the call and we immediately started talking. Sometimes, one of the following things went wrong: either the connection was not working properly, the teachers could not find the students, or the students forgot the time of the online appointment and the teachers were stood up. With more and more practice, we all gained more experience and things improved. For instance, we started asking students for their Skype usernames or email accounts when they registered for the online service so that teachers could have this information beforehand. Also, we learned that we had to be in front of the computer and already connected five to ten minutes before the scheduled appointment, so as not to waste time waiting for the connection to take place.

Teaching Experiences

On the positive side, the tool itself gave us a great number of advantages. From the very first moment we said "hi!" everything was excitement. Many times, students did not know personally the teachers with whom they were chatting "in person," but in some strange way they hit it off right away. Using cameras in order to see each other's faces had a lot to do with the creation of such a special bond. Moreover, having the possibility to type messages gave us the opportunity to clarify certain doubts as if we were in regular classrooms writing on the boards. Probably, because of the excitement of experimenting with a new tool and having fun with it, students were learning in a relaxed, comfortable way; and this had a huge pay off when it came to language production. Both students and teachers were given unimaginable possibilities up to that moment to learn and practice English in a digital environment.

Students were having tutoring sessions in more comfortable and relaxed atmospheres. Teachers had more flexibility in their working schedules. For instance, once a teacher was having an online tutoring early in the morning with a student who had just woken up, was in her pajamas, with a cup of hot coffee in her hands and her fireplace blazing in the background. She got so enthused about her session that she decided to grab her camera and show her house to the

teacher. There is no doubt that this gave the teacher the perfect excuse to have the student practice English in the most meaningful way. In my case, I had many students who decided to register for the online session during their only free time in their day: lunch time. They could forget about finding a moment in their busy schedules to ride a bus or drive their cars to our institute; instead they would be having lunch in their offices and talking to me at the same time. As a result of the natural, relaxed environment, we ended up practicing the language in those most unexpected ways.

Skype And The Different Skills

The tutoring sessions must meet all sorts of language needs. Bearing in mind that this was our first approach to online tutoring, oral performance, listening comprehension, and writing production seemed logical options to start experimenting the use of Skype with. I had students who needed to improve their speaking skills, so we talked about a number of topics for forty five minutes. An interesting thing about chatting on Skype, just like being on the phone, is that you need to keep on talking in order to avoid uncomfortable pauses. This need to communicate in a fluid way usually improved students' fluency. Instead of interrupting the normal flow of speech, I would write any correction or new word in the chat box, and when the student stopped, we would go over the mistakes and explanations together. This was excellent, since the student could learn a new word, its spelling, pronunciation, and use all at once without disrupting the natural flow of conversation.

If a student had been absent and he or she needed to catch up with the tasks done in class, during a tutoring session, I could play a CD on my computer and place the microphone next to the computer speakers so that the student could do the exercise in his or her book. If a student needed to enhance his or her pronunciation, I could work not only with basic drilling exercises, but also with songs. I took advantage of the fact that when working with a computer one can have many windows open at the same time. Thus, I would simply look for the video of a song in YouTube and copy paste the link in the chat box so that the student could easily access it. Then, I would look for the lyrics of the song in www.lyrics.com so that the student could both listen to the song and read the lyrics at the same time that he or she was singing it. It goes without saying that it was lots of fun!

If a student needed to work on writing, he or she could send a file while on Skype and then get immediate feedback from the teacher. He or she would simply click on the button: "send files" and I would instantly see an icon in my chat box showing the type of file and the button: "save file" I would choose where to save the file in my computer and open it right away. I would make corrections by highlighting areas to improve, send it back and together we would talk about the possible corrections while the student worked on the document. This not only facilitated the editing process, but also enriched it, since the student was trying to discover what his or her mistake was at the same time a teacher was helping him or her.

I also experienced tutoring two students at the same time because they were attending the same course and needed some extra help. In order to make the online service efficient for the institute, we had conference calls on Skype. This meant that I could be working with two or more students at the same time. This was excellent for speaking purposes, since students engaged in active discussions and were focusing on listening while they spoke. I never tried working with reading or writing with more than one student at a time, but I am sure this is an area which we teachers can experiment in.

Overall Result

With time, hard work and patience the project has had a very good response. Little by little, students became less afraid of changes and new technologies, and more intrigued about the new service and its advantages. By the same token, I could witness the development of learners' independence and autonomy: two learners' characteristics most teachers are constantly trying to boost. All in all, these tutoring sessions through Skype are a great idea not only to exploit as an extra service as we did, but also to offer as a complementary component of a face to face course with a tool that is absolutely free. Both students and teachers enjoyed the experience and made learning possible despite time or distance, two paramount reasons to get everyone involved. Skype became the tool that made it feasible for teachers to combine education and technology, and for students to get more engaged in their own learning without being slaves to their schedules or commuting.