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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.

Narrow Listening and Audio-library: the Transitional Stage in the Process of Developing Listening Comprehension in a Foreign Language [1]

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Abstract

Narrow listening is an approach to developing listening skills at intermediate to advanced language levels. Narrow listening considers recent findings in L2 listening and reading research and is based on the concept of extensive listening and the principles of repetition, language authenticity, information, and topic familiarity. Drawing on the similarities that reading and listening seem to bear, this study proposes a three-stage sequence in the development of L2 listening competence: (1) Pedagogical material (intensive listening), (2) Authentic pedagogical material (Narrow listening), and (3) Authentic material (extensive listening). Current practice in language instruction has focused on the first and third stages, but the second, transitional phase, has been largely bypassed. It is argued here that narrow listening can fill this gap. Narrow listening can be implemented successfully as an audio-library which allows students to choose topics freely, to listen for content, to progress at their own pace, and to be exposed to the real personal experiences and linguistic diversity of various speakers. A description of the rationale and implementation guidelines for using narrow listening and an Audio-library are presented.

Introduction

All four language skills are necessary components of any foreign language program, but it is by means of the receptive skills, listening and reading, that language students are provided with meaningful language exposure for the development of a foreign language. Researchers in L2 acquisition have claimed that listening plays an essential role in the process of acquiring a foreign language (Asher, 1977; Krashen, 2003, 1982; Potovsky, 1975; Rost, 2002; Thompson, 1995; among others); convincingly, a positive correlation between listening ability and L2 acquisition has been suggested (Feyten, 1991; Vivas, 1996; Weyers, 1999). In teaching practice this claim should translate into a major focus on, or an increased interest in, listening activities in the foreign or second language setting. Many language teachers are convinced of the crucial role of listening in the process of L2 acquisition (Berne, 1998) and the need for teaching listening as a separate skill (Mendelsohn and Rubin, 1995).

The listening material currently available in the foreign language classroom usually consists of what may be referred to as *pedagogical* material and *real world* material. Pedagogical material is tailored specifically for students in a foreign language program. Examples of this material are the tapes, CDs, and videos that usually accompany language textbooks. Authentic or real world material (TV, video, and radio) is made by and for native speakers of the target language for purposes quite different from language instruction. Campana (1984) reports that the use of real world material in the classroom is restricted or almost non-existent, especially at the intermediate level. Although the situation nowadays has changed as com-

[1] This is a refereed article.

pared to twenty years ago, authentic material is not yet a regular component of the curriculum. The reasons could be a lack of material that is both authentic and interesting (Aston, 1980; Liskin-Gasparro and Veguez, 1990), a lack of ready-to-use material that actually satisfies students' needs, or the fact that providing authentic listening material and making it accessible for language students is complicated and time-consuming[2] (Weissenrieder, 1987). Thus, current practice in language instruction shows that language students are generally forced to jump from pedagogical material, here identified as stage 1, to real world material, stage 3, without a proper transition. In this paper I propose to bridge the gap by introducing narrow listening (from now on NL) as stage 2.

In the present article I will first review the definition and availability of listening material in a Foreign Language (FL) classroom. Then, I will elaborate on a narrow listening approach and its theoretical foundations. Finally, I will introduce a pedagogical proposal for developing listening skills at an intermediate level and its implementation in a foreign language program.

Types of listening material in an FL classroom

As mentioned above, the listening material used in a foreign language classroom usually falls into either of these two categories:

Listening material used in an FL setting	
Pedagogical	Unauthentic: textbook tapes or CDs
Non Pedagogical	Authentic: TV, radio, video

Unauthentic material is represented mostly by listening tapes or CDs that accompany foreign language textbooks and lab manuals. The target language used is often scripted and therefore not spontaneous. The language is generally aimed at what the students' language level is believed to be, for which it is also edited grammatically and lexically in order to introduce particular vocabulary and to comply with the objectives of a lesson plan. The speakers recording the listening passage are actors who read a prepared script. Listening practice is usually focused on specific information, the listening is 'intensive', and vagueness in interpreting a passage is not allowed. Classroom listening of the passage is likely to be interrupted several times by the teacher in order to search for specific information[3]. These are common features of the listening material tapes that accompany textbooks:

Textbook tapes or CDs	*Material*: pedagogical, unauthentic, edited, non-real. *Focus*: specific information. *Activities*: specific content (true/false, multiple choice, matching items) *Topic*: related to the textbook; selected by the teacher. *Strategy*: stop and listen during the passage. Intensive listening.

The other type of listening material is *authentic material* that comes with the use of the media: TV, radio and video. Glisan (2002) indicates that authentic texts run along a continuum between material that requires life experience and little

[2] Nowadays, the access to authentic material is easier due to the wide use of the Internet.
[3] This is just a report of how unauthentic listening material is generally exploited. The author does not necessarily endorse this practice.

knowledge of the language (e.g. commercials that are accompanied by contextual visual aids, conversations on familiar topics) to material, such as TV news programs and talk shows, in which the student needs to actually understand language more than simply to rely on supporting background knowledge. These samples of real world situations could entail a degree of comprehension as demanding as that regularly required of native speakers. In working with authentic material, the listening activities usually focus on content and information. The features of this material are:

TV, radio, video	• *Material*: authentic, unmodified, spontaneous. • *Focus*: general information. • *Activities:* get general information. personal reactions. • *Topic*: personal interest, usually selected by the teacher • *Strategy*: extensive listening

The use of the term 'authentic' requires clarification. 'Authentic text' has been defined in the literature in different ways. Galloway (1998) defines it as " written and oral communications produced *by* members of a language and culture group *for* members of the same language and culture group" (p. 133). Rogers and Medley (1988) state that authentic texts "reflect a naturalness of form and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers" (p. 468). Geddes and White (1978) define an authentic text in terms of its pedagogical purpose, distinguishing between (1) *unmodified authentic discourse*, which refers to language that occurs originally in a real act of communication, from (2) *simulated authentic discourse*, which is language produced for pedagogical purposes, but which exhibits features that have a high probability of occurrence in real communication (p. 137). The simulated authentic discourse mentioned by Geddes and Whites (1978) makes use of semi-scripts for which the speaker follows an outline of the information, vocabulary, and grammar structures he/she should incorporate in the discourse.

According to these definitions, then, the concept authentic has been used in terms of its source (produced by a native speaker or not), purpose (pedagogical or not), and quality of the target language (natural vs. unnatural). The three criteria for a characterization of authentic texts are shown in Table 1.

Text	**Source**	**Purpose**	**Quality of Language**
	Native	Pedagogical	Natural
Authentic	+	-	+
Pedagogical Authentic	+	+	+
Unauthentic	+/-	+	-

Table 1. Characteristics of a text regarding source, purpose, and quality of language.

Consequently, an *authentic text* is one that is prepared *for* and *by* native speakers, doesn't have a linguistic pedagogical purpose (the intended audience is native speakers or target language speakers) and whose language is considered natural. An *unauthentic text* could be prepared by either a native or non-native speaker of the target language but the intended audience is always L2 learners, and the language does not seem natural. In between these two types of texts, another possibility can be considered: a p*edagogical authentic text,* which is prepared by native speakers, and whose language is considered natural, but is still pedagogical because the intended audience is an FL learner. A good example of *pedagogical authentic material*[4] is an audio-library used with a narrow listening approach. Narrow listening combines a pedagogical purpose—the material is prepared for a non-native speaking audience—and speech authenticity, i.e. a sample of real, spontaneous speech produced by native speakers. The characteristics of a narrow listening approach implemented in an audio-library are:

Audio-library & narrow listening	• *Material*: pedagogical, authentic, spontaneous and brief. • *Focus*: general comprehension and practice in listening skills. • *Activities*: get general information; formulate a personal reaction. • *Topic*: personal interest; selected by the listener. • *Strategy*: rehearing a single segment. Extensive listening focused on a single topic.

We can conclude that the differences among these three types of material revolve around the quality of the listening material (authentic vs. unauthentic; edited vs. unedited; spontaneous vs. non-spontaneous), the focus of the listening (general vs. specific information; extensive vs. intensive), the selection of the topic (by the listener vs. by someone else, usually the teacher), the strategy followed when listening to the text (re-listening, repetitive listening or interrupted listening), and the length of the listening material (short, brief, or long). Table 2 introduces narrow listening in an FL setting with regard to the purpose, the kind of text, the primary strategy for listening and the type of material used.

Purpose	**Text**	**Focus & Strategy for listening**	**Material**
Pedagogical	Unauthentic	Intensive listening	Textbook tapes/CDs
	Authentic	Narrow listening	Audio-library, TV, radio,video
Non Pedagogical	Authentic	Extensive listening	TV, radio, video

Table 2. Listening material in an FL setting.

Since narrow listening is a novel concept and approach, I will now present what narrow listening entails and what its theoretical foundations are.

Narrow Listening And Its Theoretical Foundations

Narrow listening is an approach to developing listening skills at intermediate and advanced levels.[5] Narrow listening refers to listening to a single segment several times for the purpose of meaning (i.e. the focus of the listening activity is getting information). Narrow listening material consists of short samples of real speech by native speakers. The listening samples can be collected from TV, radio, and video sources, or contained in a collection of audio-library material in which speakers talk freely and spontaneously about a topic of interest. This approach can be defined by

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[4] Narrow listening material cannot be considered Simulated Authentic material (semi-scripted) since the speaker's speech does not follow an outline of the vocabulary or grammar structures to be used.

[5] For the distinction of the students' levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced) I am following practice as revealed in American college language programs (i.e. beginning: 1st - 2nd semesters; intermediate: 3rd to 6th semesters; advanced: 7th semester and up)

the responses to three primary questions: *Why listen?* (To get information, for the content); *How to listen*? (Extensively and by re-listening to the same passage non-stop, from beginning to end); and *What to listen to*? (Authentic speech samples of short duration about topics that are familiar and interesting to the learner).

The term narrow listening[6] is an extension of Krashen's (1981) narrow reading proposal. Narrow reading is defined as reading the work written by a single author or reading various texts about a single topic. The idea is simple, but, as shown by Lamme (1976) and Cho and Krashen (1994), it makes reading in the L2 highly effective. By focusing on a single author or topic, a reader becomes more familiar with a particular writing style and is exposed to contextual repetition that leads to a better understanding of meaning, and then ultimately to an awareness of form, in a very natural way.

Narrow listening is based on research findings on the receptive skills: listening and reading. It is based on the concept of extensive listening (listening in great amounts and for content) and the principles of repetition, authenticity, listening for information, and topic familiarity. In the narrow listening approach presented here, comprehension is enhanced because subjects can listen to the same input several times. *Repetitive exposure* to a listening passage has been found to be a very effective means for improving listening comprehension. Studies that have pointed out the value of repetitive exposure to language input are Blankenship, 1982; Pica, 1987; Lund, 1991; Cervantes and Gainer, 1992; Chiang and Dunkel, 1992; Terrell, 1993; Berne, 1995; Bygate, 1999; Krashen, 1996; and Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres, and Fernández, 1999. From a pedagogical point of view, Chambers (1996) points out that the repetition technique reduces the students' level of anxiety because the listener knows that he/she can listen to the segment as many times as desired. Moreover, subjects studied by Rodrigo and Krashen (1996) reported that, when rehearing a single listening passage several times, the speakers on the tape seemed to the listeners to be speaking more slowly, when in fact they, the students, were listening to the same, unaltered passage. They also appeared to distinguish sound sequences more efficiently into more and more meaningful words and chunks/phrases, thereby improving their level of comprehension with each rehearing.

Narrow listening also requires authentic listening material, which, as with all authentic texts, focuses on culture as a natural informational context facilitating the language acquisition process. The benefits are numerous. *Authentic material* provides adult learners with an opportunity to work at a higher cognitive level (Byrnes, 1984 and Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes, 1991) and, consequently, to develop target language skills in a more meaningful context. Authentic material, thus, leads to more effective listening skills and to cultural awareness. The use of authentic listening material, and hence of spontaneous speech by native speakers, has been recommended by several researchers (Meyer, 1984; Liskin-Gasparro and Veguez, 1990; Lund, 1991; Herron and Seay, 1991; Bacon, 1992; Harlow and Muyskens, 1994; and Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994; Omaggio, 2000).

Similarly, *topic familiarity* has been shown to aid listening comprehension by allowing language learners to more accurately predict the unknown content of a passage as they establish links between what is familiar, i.e. background knowledge, and what is new. Several researchers report that topic familiarity has a

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[6] The term narrow listening was coined by Stephen Krashen (1996).

positive effect on listening skills (Gass and Varonis, 1984; Glisan, 1988; Altman, 1990; Lund, 1991; Chiang and Dunkel, 1992; Dunkel, 1986; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994; Bygate, 1999; and Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres, and Fernandez, 1999). Finally, if a language teacher has succeeded in helping his or her students to *focus on meaning and information*, (i.e. listening for content, extensively and allowing for the possibility of not completely understanding every single word in the recorded passage), they will not be concerned about form, and consequently, they will be more likely to apply top-down strategies, as used by effective listeners. For a more detailed account of the benefits of a focus on information and general meaning in language acquisition see Cook, Dupuy and Tse (1994), Day and Bamford (2000), and Krashen (2003, 1993).

Pedagogical proposal: narrow listening as a transitional stage

The pedagogical proposal introduced in this section is a consequence of research on reading. Researchers have realized that the language decoding processes underlying the tasks of listening and reading in L2 are remarkably similar. Because of this, it has been suggested that the findings in research on reading be extended to the treatment of listening (Glisan, 1988; Lund, 1991; and Krashen, 1996). Cook, Dupuy and Tse (1994), Rodrigo (1995, 1997b), and Krashen (1997) suggest that the ability to read literary works effectively in L2 results from a gradual process comprising three stages: graded books or readers, light reading, and, finally, literature[7]. In this article, I extend this proposal to listening and introduce a three-stage model in the development of L2 listening skills. The model incorporates three stages in order to account for a noticeable gap between the two already existing levels: stage 1, with a focus on intensive listening[8] and controlled language exposure by means of pedagogical material; and stage 3, with a focus on extensive listening and real world material. The second stage of the model is based on narrow listening. Table 3 presents the three parallel stages in the development of reading and listening skills.

	Reading	**Listening**
Stage 1: Initiation	Graded books	Pedagogical
Stage 2: Transitional	Light reading	Pedagogical authentic, Narrow listening
Stage 3: Final	Literature	Authentic

Table 3: Stages in developing receptive skills: reading and listening in L2

Table 4 introduces the three stages in more detail. Although there is a sequence in the use of the material, there is actually no rigid dividing line separating them.[9]

[7] Graded books are those that have been edited and/or simplified so that they can be used at beginning levels. Graded books turn out to be an excellent reading source and help students build their reading competence. Light reading refers to unabridged reading that is not a piece of classical literature. Light reading consists of children's books, adolescent fiction, comics, magazines, and newspapers. Literature comprises more complex unabridged readings such as classical literature, books for adults, biographies, history, and technical books.

[8] The terms intensive/extensive/narrow make reference to the way a text is treated.

[9] The use of authentic listening material can be found in all three stages, depending on the simplicity of the segment and the task.

	Text Characteristics	Material
Stage 1: Initiation	Unauthentic	Textbook tapes, CDs and video
	Authentic	Video and audio with familiar and simple topics (i.e. commercials)
Stage 2: Transitional	Pedagogical authentic	Audio-library
	Authentic	TV, radio and video (short or edited for length)
Stage 3: Final	Authentic	TV, radio and video

Table 4: Continuum for developing listening skills in L2.

Next, I will introduce the characteristics of each stage on the continuum:

Stage 1: Initiation

The initiation stage primarily involves the use of pedagogical material. The initial stage is, obviously, ideal for beginners who need to build up basic comprehension skills in the target language. Examples of this material are the audio cassettes, CDs and videos that accompany language textbooks. Some authentic listening material can also be introduced at this level if the material is short and simple, such as cooking recipes, radio and TV commercials, headline news stories, music video clips, etc. The initiation stage needs material that is simple enough to prompt the beginning student to listen to the text and understand it. Understanding could involve just getting the main idea, knowing what the topic is, or matching pictures with objects or actions. In the initiation stage what is most important is that the student feels comfortable with the language and he/she builds confidence in dealing with it (Glisan 2002). It should be noted, nonetheless, that the language instructor has to be careful when using authentic material at beginning levels (Dunkel 1986) since it may result in far more difficult input than Krashen's recommended i + 1 provision (Krashen 1982), and, consequently, authentic language can create anxiety and frustration in the listener. It is well known that when students are frustrated due to lack of understanding, they are discouraged and quit their efforts to continue to learn.

Stage 2: Transitional

Narrow listening is introduced in stage 2. Narrow listening is ideal for students who have already acquired basic listening skills but who find casual, uncontrolled conversation too difficult to follow (Rodrigo and Krashen 1996). At this point, the students are certainly not yet ready to undertake listening of real world material by themselves without experiencing frustration and anxiety. However, they may be prepared to listen to unedited and spontaneous speech by native speakers of the target language by using the suggested narrow listening approach. An example of the material suitable at this stage is the use of an audio-library and media material, provided that the speech samples are short or edited for length (e.g. a segment of a movie, TV or radio program). Listening passages have to be carefully selected to be of interest to students. Although the speech samples in this stage of the listening process are unmodified and spontaneous, they are also controlled by a focus on a single topic and natural repetition of both content and form. Through repeated listening and topic familiarity, the listeners can cope with the passages and even become familiar with different speaking styles and accents, and get a glimpse of cultural diversity. As a result, students can be better prepared to deal with the target language in the real world.

The repetition principle is implemented in two ways: (a) the listening is usually not interrupted, especially the first few times the listening is done. Students listen to a passage from beginning to end without pauses. The process is repeated until students achieve a reasonable level of comprehension which will vary according to the students' level in the target language. Students also have the option of abandoning the passage entirely if it is too frustrating or boring. Thus, comprehension is achieved by means of rehearing rather than by translating, slowing down, or breaking the language input into many smaller segments.

In a linguistically diverse context such as this, the comprehension task must be undertaken *extensively*. When listening extensively, students listen as much as possible, and select their assignments according to their personal interests so that they can, ideally, listen for pleasure. The practice of an extensive listening modality provides an optimal situation for guessing meaning from the context; while vagueness is accepted and even encouraged. An extensive listening strategy will help language learners develop vocabulary[10], and an ability to cope with unfamiliar material. This is a more effective way to help students to deal with the real L2 world while preventing or reducing the levels of frustration.

Although narrow listening works optimally at the intermediate and advanced levels, it would not be wise, as mentioned above, to establish rigid limits between the three stages. After all, the degree of difficulty of a particular passage is variable, as it largely depends not only upon the task being carried out but also upon students' proficiency level in the target language as well as upon the topic, students' background knowledge, and the speaker's speaking style. For instance, a given topic will require specific vocabulary (concrete-abstract) and/or fairly specific structures (simple-complex), and, secondly, speaker diversity will result in a variety of speaking styles (individual rhetorical strategies, voice tone, enunciation, the speaker's nationality, and the like). Topic familiarity and interest—ensured when students are asked to choose the topics they want to listen to—guide a learner through a narrow listening experience in which he or she encounters authentic and spontaneous native speaker L2 speech.

Stage 3: Final

In stage 3, authentic and unmodified listening material is used. Students have had practice in the second stage and now they should be ready to cope with a wide range of situations in the target language, including samples of aural input from the media about a topic that they may not be familiar with. Also, in the final stage, the listening passages are samples of speech in real world situations; they entail a degree of comprehension ideally as demanding as that regularly required of native speakers: In addition, the listening passages are not edited for content, form, or duration. This is the last stage in the process of developing listening skills in L2. As in stage 2, the activities in stage 3 focus on content and information, the main difference being the way the listening itself is undertaken. For instance, in stage 2, a

[10] Elley (1997) presents evidence for incidental learning of vocabulary and grammar through the listening and reading material that is authentic and interesting for the learner. The study considers L1 and L2 as well as children and adult learners.

movie or a complete newscast are not suitable for use due to their length. However, in stage 3, the repetition principle should not be a concern[11] since students should be better prepared to view a movie with no *major* difficulty. They would just view it for content and enjoyment, very much in the same way native users of the target language would, and with a certain level of acceptance of ambiguity in their comprehension.

Implementing narrow listening in a language program

The value of theory, i.e. the previous sections, is its potential for enlightening practice. Consequently, in this section I will suggest guidelines for implementing narrow listening in a foreign language program or classroom setting. Certainly, almost any sample of authentic speech can be used in a narrow listening approach. However, the following methodological principles need to be considered. The guidelines below are intended as principles for generating material for classroom use within a narrow listening approach. For this, an audio-library modality—such as the one designed, classroom tested, and piloted by the author—is introduced.

The narrow listening audio-library is a collection of brief samples of speech produced by native speakers who speak freely and spontaneously about topics that are of interest to themselves and potentially to the language learner. Native speech is recorded and then arranged into one to three minute segments relating the speakers' opinions, points of view, and personal experiences. The segments are then grouped into topics the language instructor has determined will probably be of interest to his or her students.

The criteria underlying the audio-library described below have already been applied in a Spanish-as-a-foreign-language program. Needless to say, the recommended principles are not language-specific; they can be applied to the teaching of any foreign language.

Designing an audio-library

In designing an audio-library within a narrow listening approach, a language instructor should abide by the following criteria:

(a) The topics have to be relevant and interesting to the students, and the students have to be familiar with the topics. The students also have to have several options so that they can freely choose what they want to listen to. In order for a teacher to focus on the students' interests more adequately, it is advisable to survey the students about the topics that interest them before the recordings are made.

(b) Every topic needs to be dealt with by more than one speaker so that students can be exposed to differing points of view as well as to diverse accents and speaking styles. The most important feature of the audio-library is that it provides an ample range not only of topics but also of speakers. Students can thus have freedom to select the speakers that are more appealing to them.

In should be noted that the audio-library modality provides an exceptional opportunity for exposing students to the many variants of a particular language which are spread across considerable geographical areas (e.g. Arabic, French,

[11] It should be noted that full-length movies, documentaries, and the like are not rare components in language programs at intermediate level. Yet, most of the time students are not ready for such an experience–not uncommonly an overwhelmingly frustrating one-in the target language.

Spanish, and English). As for English, it would be ideal to have students hear native English as produced in different English-speaking countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, etc.)

Recording and gathering the listening passages requires some patience and time. But, through team effort, several teachers, and even their students, can get involved in such a task. For the logistics of locating native speakers of the target language, sometimes not easily available locally, teachers could apply for scholarship funds or grants that could allow them to travel abroad. If this is not a possibility, and as a way of taking advantage of the technology currently available, L2 teachers could look for contact sources through the worldwide web and ask native speakers to make recordings on selected topics through this medium, or have the contacts abroad record other native speakers. The L2 teacher could also offer to do the same for his or her contact abroad in the language his or her distant contact wishes. This would be a very outstanding example of international cooperation not only across borders and cultures but also across different varieties of the same language.

(c) The speech of the speakers on tape must be authentic and spontaneous; therefore the speaker should only be provided with rough guiding questions about the topic to be discussed. (Sample questions for the travel topic: Please, tell me about your last trip. Where did you go? When did you go there? Who did you go with? and What did you do there?) No mention of the use of specific vocabulary or grammar structures should be made.

(d) The listening passages must be short, ranging from one to three minutes per speaker. A short duration ensures the students' concentration and, crucially, allows for the principle of re-hearing, or repetitive listening. When working on a topic from the audio-library, students should be allowed to listen to every passage (or speaker) as many times as the students feel necessary.

(e) The rationale and guidelines for the audio-library as a narrow listening activity must be provided to the students so that they are aware of what they are supposed to be doing, how they are expected to do it, and why they are doing it. This is especially important if students are to be able to do narrow listening on their own. The criteria and guidelines[12] for narrow listening are presented in Appendix 1.

The use of an audio-library within a narrow listening approach

Among the advantages of starting a narrow listening audio-library is that the teacher(s) or the language teaching program or institution can acquire a permanent collection of audio-tapes about topics that are interesting to their students. The material is flexible and recyclable—recorded segments can be deleted or added at any time--and will continue to serve current and future students.

There are two modalities of use for an audio-library:

1. As self-instruction material. In this modality students use the audio-library at their own convenience and are exposed to the target language alone, outside class-time and without teacher supervision. Students freely select a topic and/or a speaker they want to listen to (for topic suggestions to include in an audio-library see Ap-

[12] The criteria and guidelines for narrow listening activities were developed by Rodrigo in 1996 and presented to an audience in Rodrigo (1997a). These guidelines were used by Dupuy (1999).

pendix 2). A language program could have a set of the audio-library CDs and/or tapes in the Language Lab for the students to check out as needed, for a specific period of time, or if they so choose, until they listen to the entire collection. In this modality of use, it is essential that students be made aware of, and follow, the narrow listening guidelines provided by the teacher or the lab staff. No report on the listening passage is required. Ideal users of the audio-library in this modality are the students who are really interested in improving their L2 skills or those who need additional exposure to the target language (for instance, for improving their listening skills and fluency) and do not have a chance to travel abroad or who do not come in frequent direct contact with native speakers of the language.

2. As class-support material. Though the inherent purpose of a narrow listening audio-library is the practice and development of listening comprehension skills, a teacher could also use a recorded passage for other goals. Listening to different speakers talking about a particular topic is, for instance, an ideal starting point for in-class discussion and for showing students how language is used in real and meaningful communicative contexts. However, when used as an activity for a whole class, teachers should not disregard students' individual differences (Galloway and Labarca, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Ellis, 1997; Omaggio, 2000). That is to say, teachers should realize that each student will understand the target language to the extent that is allowed by his or her language experience and level. A non-threatening environment should always be provided.

Conclusion

In light of current research in the field of the receptive skills, an alternative approach to the development of listening skills at the intermediate and advanced levels seems highly advisable. Narrow listening is proposed as such an approach. Researchers have suggested that extensive and narrow reading successfully guide language students through the process of acquiring linguistic reading competence in the target language. Additionally, it has been suggested that acquiring native-like reading comprehension skills in a second or foreign language is a gradual process comprising three sequential stages. In the present article, it is proposed that these same criteria be followed in dealing with listening. In this case, three sequential stages along a continuum are also distinguished as inherent to the process of developing the listening skill. Practice, however, shows that, most of the time, only two of the three stages prevail in foreign language classrooms. Students jump from stage 1 (edited, pedagogical material) to stage 3 (authentic, real world material: TV, video, and radio) without adequate preparation by way of a transition. I propose *narrow listening* as the second, transitional stage to bridge this noticeable gap.

A narrow listening approach is based on extensive listening and on the principles of repetitive exposure to L2 speech, L2 speech authenticity, topic unity and familiarity, and speaker diversity. This approach can be successfully implemented by using media products, such as segments of news programs, video clips, etc., or by creating narrow listening material such as an audio-library.

In creating an audio-library, the following general criteria should be included: appealing topics, speaker spontaneity, speaker variety, authentic language, passages of short-duration , and a focus on content. More specifically:

1. A narrow listening approach should be student-centered:

- Narrow listening provides students with an individualized learning experience; students practice and develop listening skills at their own pace.

- Listening is done in a low-anxiety, non-threatening environment. The activity is easily and naturally adapted to students' interests and linguistic level.

2. A narrow listening approach prepares students to undertake L2 listening in a real context:

- The students are better prepared to cope with the target language in the real world. Narrow listening is an optimal way of bringing the real world of the target language into the classroom because it exposes students to speech that naturally reflects diverse speaking styles and accents.

Students will be better prepared for future conversational situations with native speakers of the language. Since interaction in conversation requires understanding one's interlocutor, students who develop effective listening competence by listening to native L2 speakers should be better prepared to interact with and understand them in a real life situation. Greater comprehension of the input leads to greater language acquisition.

3. A narrow listening approach naturally introduces the target culture and information into the classroom setting:

- Students are provided with first-hand information about the target language's diverse culture. Students are exposed to L2 native speakers' real personal experiences.

4. Finally, a narrow listening approach can be used as a self-instruction tool:

- Narrow listening as self-instruction helps students improve foreign language competence without necessarily infringing upon class-time.

In sum, narrow listening provides students with the tools they need to initiate their contact with the L2 world, i.e. language and culture, without necessarily being in an L2 speaking country. Ultimately, narrow listening lays the foundations for a smooth transition from the foreign language classroom to the real world of the L2 culture.

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Appendix 1
Criteria for narrow listening activities

The effectiveness of narrow listening activities is enhanced when all the following criteria are met:

1. The listening activity is **for meaning**, not form. Students want to listen to a passage because they are curious about what the speakers on the tape have to say. Students should concentrate on the speakers' ideas and comments.

2. The more often students listen to a particular segment, the more they will understand.

3. Students should not expect to understand every word the speakers say. Students don't have to stop the tape to listen again to a part they missed. Indeed, they should be discouraged from doing so.

4. The listener can listen to the tapes at his/her convenience: while driving, when out for a walk, before going to bed, etc.

5. The listening passages represent **real** situations since native speakers talk spontaneously about their own experiences. These are not edited or graded conversations.

6. The listener will be exposed to **different accents** (in the case of Spanish: from Spain, North America, South America, and Central America) and different styles of speech.

7. The **degree of difficulty** will vary according to the topics and the speakers: some speakers' speech will be more comprehensible than others, some speakers will be more talkative than others, and some will be more interesting than others. Of course, some topics will also be more inherently interesting for the students than others.

8. Listeners should do the activity **for themselves**, for the improvement of their own communicative skills.

9. Listeners should not be discouraged if it is hard to understand the first time. They should **keep trying**. It takes time to train one's ears to understand speech in another language. However, if the narrow listening segment is clearly incomprehensible for the student then the student should switch to another topic or another speaker.

How to carry out the activity. Narrow listening guidelines for students

As suggested by research on L2 listening, students should be given clear guidelines on how to complete narrow listening activities. This will ensure the success of the activity. The following are some recommendations for students on how to complete a narrow listening activity:

1. **Select topics** that are interesting and/or familiar to you.
2. Listen to **one speaker at a time** and listen to whole segments. Do not stop the tape until the speaker finishes talking (at least during the first two listenings). Try to get the gist of the speakers' accounts.
3. **Repeat** a particular segment several times before moving on to the next segment. If the topic is interesting to you, listen to the other speakers that

talk about the same topic. If it is not interesting, find another topic, and follow the same procedure.

4. **Move on** to another speaker or topic if you understand almost everything, if you get to a point when you do not understand anything, or if you are getting bored or tired.
5. The **process** of understanding is **gradual**. Research shows that students usually increase their understanding of a listening passage each time they listen to it. At first, you will be able to recognize some words. Then try to pay attention to the words surrounding the words you already recognized in order to discover new words and to understand more of the utterance.
6. As you **become more familiar** with the activity and your auditory senses become accustomed to English or the foreign language, you will understand more.

Appendix 2
Sample List of Topics for an Audio-library

Personal topics

1. Personal descriptions
2. Your family
3. How do you spend your weekends?
4. Traveling
5. Your house
6. Movies and TV
7. University life

Speculative topics

1. Your ideal job
2. What three wishes would you ask the genie Aladdin?
3. What is your ideal man/woman like? Does a perfect date/partner exist?
4. What will life be like in the future?

Controversial topics

1. Is there life on other planets?
2. Is our environment in danger?
3. Bullfighting
4. Euthanasia

Informative topics about the speaker's home country or region

1. Our music
2. Our food
3. Traditions
4. Personal experiences of culture shock
5. Family values

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The Fourth Wall: Viewing an American Sitcom [1]

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According to Kammen (1999, p. 4), the term "mass culture" refers to products such as comic books, cartoons, sitcoms, films, and advertisements. These products have as their base American culture, and in the globalized world in which we now live at least most members of the middle-class are exposed in some degree to these products. As a teacher of American literature at a Brazilian university, I was aware that my students were consumers of mass culture. I noticed that the students at times used references to mass culture to try to understand the texts we were reading in class. For example, when we were working on the poem *The Farm on the Great Plain* by William Stafford, one of the students stated that the imagery reminded him of the Marlboro advertisements.

To determine how much my students were exposed to the various products of mass culture, I designed a simple questionnaire in which I asked them about their leisure activities, specifically those related to the use of the English language. Of the seventeen students, all stated that they went to the movies regularly and watched American films. They also watched American films dubbed into Portuguese on television as well as via video rentals. They listened to international pop music, though four stated that they only listened to it on the radio, and would not consider buying CDs of this kind of music. Only four students had cable TV and were able to watch American sitcoms in English. As far as the internet was concerned, six had access to the internet in their homes. The other students said they used the university's terminals or they used other means of getting on the internet. In other words, to a greater or lesser degree all were exposed to globalized mass culture. On the other hand, direct contact with English speaking people of any nationality was very rare.

These students were in their last year of the five-year "Letras" program at the Universidade Federal de Goiás, Brazil. At the end of the program of studies, the students graduate as accredited teachers of Portuguese, their mother tongue, and of one foreign language. The students can choose from among English, French or Spanish. The seventeen students in my class were those who had chosen English as their foreign language. In terms of language level, they were a mixed group ranging from intermediate to advanced. The students were adults ranging in age from twenty-one to thirty-five years of age. Most were already working as English language teachers in schools throughout the city of Goiânia, which is where the university is situated. Some were already married and had children. Two of the students had been on an exchange program in high school and had spent a year in the United States. One other student had been on a vacation trip to Disneyland. Another student's husband was an undocumented alien living and working in New England. She was planning on joining him there after graduation. The others had never left Brazil.

I decided to dedicate one class hour a week of the four we had available to discuss their understanding of mass culture and their understanding of themselves and American culture. We did this by watching American sitcoms and having an ensuing discussion, by reading texts about American culture written by Americans as well as by Brazilians, and by watching documentaries about topics ranging from

[1] This is a refereed article.

black – white race relations in the U.S.A. to biographies of American authors. My general purpose was to find out how my students were understanding and interpreting what they saw and heard. This study was a part of a larger research project which focused on the intercultural strategies used in the students' readings of American literature texts (Rees, 2003). To accomplish the goals of the research project, I observed and wrote up field notes and audio-taped my four-hour-a-week American literature class for a period of one school year. While doing this, I also analyzed the field notes and the audio-tapes using the concept of cultural domain. This is defined by the ethnographer Spradley (1980, p. 88) as "...a category of cultural meaning that includes other smaller categories". In the following year, I analyzed the field notes and the audio-tapes using the works of Gadamer (2000) and Iser (1978) as the theoretical basis. I also conducted and recorded interviews with volunteers from the class. These were also analyzed.

At the beginning of the school year, the students, who already knew me from previous years, were asked if they would be willing to participate in this research project. All seventeen agreed to participate and, in fact, were very eager to do so. As one student stated in an interview, "É bom ser ouvido" ("It's nice to be listened to").

In this article, I will present how my students constructed their interpretation of an episode of the American sitcom *Frasier*. This was just one of the many classes observed, audio-taped, and analyzed for the larger research project. I hope to show one way in which a product of mass culture is transformed in the process of understanding. Since students' understanding is "a shifting and emerging third place" (Kramsch, 1995, p. 90), it can serve as a rich basis for a discussion about intercultural comprehension. To this end, I will first present some basic notions about what sitcoms are and how they are organized, as well as ideas about how comprehension of these visual texts takes place. I will then present the episode that my students watched and interpreted.

To discuss how my students understood this sitcom, I will use the concept of the polarity of the "familiar" and the "strange". I have taken this concept from philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 2000). In this view, the "strange" is that which causes feelings of loss and disorientation, and the "familiar" is that which causes feelings of comfort and security. In this way, the concept refers to how events are experienced (Kerdeman, 1998). The two terms are linked to the concept of "horizon" which, according to Gadamer (2000, p. 302), is "…the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point". Thus events are experienced as "familiar" or "strange" within the limitations of a certain horizon. It is necessary to remember that the horizon is constantly in movement and forever changing because of the input from daily life. In this way, the experience of the "familiar" or "strange" can also change.

According to Gadamer (2000), we are hermeneutical beings, that is, at all times we are interpreting the sensory data that comes to us. This interpretation takes place within the hermeneutical conversation in which we question the data and based on the answers we receive, we ask more questions and so on. For example we can ask, "Is this pot too hot for me to touch?" We can answer, "Well, my hand's near it and feels heat, so yes, it probably is." Or in a conversation with someone, we can ask ourselves, "Why is this person talking to me in this tone? Did I say something wrong?" This aspect of the hermeneutical conversation occurs in an almost unconscious way. However, the hermeneutical conversation also takes place outwardly in the back and forth of dialogue with others where we can question, argue and demonstrate our point of view and be exposed to other points of view. It also takes place as we read texts or watch movies or television. In sum, we are hermeneutical or interpretive beings at all times.

For Gadamer (2000) when comprehension takes place, there is a "fusion of horizons". This is a self-transcendent moment when the "I" experiences the "other" as the "you" of the dialogue. This means the "I" listens to the other member of the dialogue and hears what this person or text is saying. In other words, the "other" is not treated as an object about which all can be previously known. Here we can see that to Gadamer (2000) stereotypes result when the "I" (the reader, the speaker) treats the "other" not as a "you" (a full-fledged participant in the dialogue), but as an "object" to be talked about.

When there is comprehension, that is, when there is a dialogue between the "I" and the "you", there is a movement in the horizons which leads to a change in perceptions about the world ant the "other". In other words, preconceptions are questioned, new opinions are heard and not just rejected outright, and as a result, new interpretations of life are arrived at. Philosophical hermeneutics deals with how life is lived and interpreted, though Gadamer (2000) and Iser (1978), also apply hermeneutics to the reading and interpretation of texts.

The sitcom and its interpretation

Situation comedies or sitcoms are usually about families or groups of people that act as a family. Their plots and themes come from the idealized American middle-class family which consists of a mother and father with two children, preferably a boy and a girl. This idealized family lives in a very nice house surrounded by a white picket fence on a shaded street somewhere in middle America. The sitcom works with this theme either by agreeing with it, in which case it can be played out in many variations, or by disagreeing with it and making it a target of criticism and satire (Taflinger, 1996).

The sitcom's plot is a vehicle for conflict and resolution. A problem is initially presented and is then resolved in the thirty minutes of the show. The action is presented along the fourth wall of the set which is never seen, yet is understood to exist. This fourth wall is invisible. Through it we see to what the members of the sitcom family are doing in their stage home. Even though this wall is invisible, it is my opinion that it exists symbolically for it is along this wall that the connection between the fictitious world and the real world takes place. It is here that the television family meets the real family. It is at this juncture, this plane that cleaves the vicarious from the real, that the viewer positions himself in relation to the visual narrative that is the sitcom. The position of the viewer is Janus-like for at one and the same time there is a look into the fictive world and a look into the real world (Tafflinger, 1996). In other words, one moment we are laughing at Frasier Crane, a character in the sitcom under study. We are emotionally involved, chuckling at the exaggerations of his personality. The next moment, we are talking to our daughter, telling her not to forget to walk the dog. There is a constant movement of our attention that takes place along the fourth wall which, in turn, becomes a symbolic place where the fictitious world and the real world intermingle. We turn, still laughing, from Frasier Crane and tell our daughter not to be late, the laughter colouring the tone in which we speak to her. So as we watch, we are not necessarily questioning the sitcom or our lives, but we are caught up in the experience of interpretation from which we can turn, at a moment's notice, to re-enter the real world, still touched by the fictitious world on the TV screen.

Frasier – The Wedding

Frasier is a sitcom that focuses on the Crane family that lives in the city of Seattle. The two brothers, Frasier and Niles, are psychiatrists and their father, Marty, is a retired police officer. The brothers are sophisticated, and love opera, classical music, wine, and fancy restaurants. The father, on the other hand, loves sports, beer, and hotdogs.

The episode of the sitcom under study, entitled *The Wedding*, involves a conflict within the wider Crane family. In the past, Frasier Crane gave advice to a young cousin which resulted in the cousin giving up higher education and becoming a street performer. Because of this there has been no contact between the two Crane families for five years. Frasier's aunt by marriage is Greek and has never forgiven Frasier for his advice to her son. The problem arises because the young cousin is getting married and Frasier and family have not been invited to the wedding. Frasier manages to patch things up with his aunt, but in doing so finds out that his cousin is not marrying for love. Thus the conflict that needs to be resolved within the thirty-minute show is whether Frasier will offer some more advice and alienate his aunt once again, or whether he will keep quiet in favour of family peace.

The episode is full of physical comedy. When Frasier visits his aunt in the kitchen of her Greek restaurant in order to apologize for his previous behaviour, she is busy cutting up meat with a huge cleaver which she waves around enthusiastically. Frasier ducks and bobs getting out of her way, looking nervously at the cleaver and swallowing with great difficulty as he talks to her. At the rehearsal dinner, Niles Crane, Frasier's brother, spends the evening running away from a very bosomy relative. He and she go repeatedly through the swinging doors of the kitchen while she pursues him with her bosoms and cleavage. He then hides behind the wine bottles to be later revealed by Frasier who is examining the vintage of the wines. And so it continues throughout the dinner scene.

The sitcom also has a more sophisticated aspect as it openly plays with stereotypes of all kinds for a humorous purpose. Frasier's Greek aunt, for example, is a composite of stereotypes about the Greek nationality. She is impulsive, loud, bordering on the ferocious, and given to suddenly smashing dishes on the floor. The Cranes, on the other hand, are contained and soft-spoken. From the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, to rely on stereotypes for understanding is to refuse to dialogue with the "other" as a "you", but rather to act as if the "other" is already known. Ottati and Lee (1996, p. 47) argue, from the point of view of psychologists, for the "kernel-of-truth" hypothesis by saying that stereotypes are not always negative and inaccurate. Rather, they are a quick means of processing information for action. The authors distinguish between two classes of stereotypes: heterostereotypes which are about other social groups; and autostereotypes which are about one's own social group. Thus stereotypes "…provide a starting point from which we can proceed toward understanding real cultural differences" (p. 51).

The analysis of the students' discussion

In this section I will present my analysis of how the students reacted and of what they stated about the characters in the sitcom. I will not quote from each student, but will choose quotes that illustrate the general reaction of the group to the sitcom. Thus the quotes are illustrative of how the group interpreted the sitcom.

Using the polarity of the "strange" and the "familiar" as a basis for analysis, it is possible to say that the students reacted to the physical comedy of the episode as something familiar to their cultural horizon. Physical comedy, with its element of play that uses the exaggeration of gestures and facial expressions, seem to transcend cultures. The sitcom, as such, and the fourth wall along which it was viewed became a space marked by laughter and enjoyment; a space outside of ordinary life in which it was possible to enjoy the ritual of play and of comedy. As Huizinga (1955, p. 1) points out, play is older than culture and human society. Thus when Frasier and his Greek aunt go through their physical ritual, in which they spar with each other as in a dance, the students participated, in this moment of play, through their laughter.

The stereotypes that are used in the sitcom are set within the cultural code of the United States and are a result of the immigrant experience of that country. That is, the United States initial cultural bearings were Anglo or Northern European. Immigrants from other settings were at best stereotyped, and at worst ostracized. The stereotypes of the Greeks as loud, emotional, passionate, and slightly irrational refer to an experience of Greek immigration in an Anglo setting. Frasier's aunt, in my opinion, becomes an embodiment of these stereotypes, and no doubt this is one of the causes of the humour in the scenes in which the aunt appears. However, the Brazilian students who watched this sitcom had no such stereotypes about Greeks. Their knowledge of modern day Greeks was nil and they therefore had no established stereotypes about them. Thus, the stereotypes presented in the sitcom were strange to the students' cultural horizon.

To deal with this strange element, some students attempted to make the stereotypes more familiar. As an example of this strategy, Marli (all students' names have been changed) states that the Greek aunt's actions "*remind me of Italian people*". The Italians are a large well-known community in Brazil. In this way, Marli connects her understanding of the group with which she is unfamiliar with the stereotypes about a group with which she is familiar.

Ester for her part identifies the aunt with "the Mediterranean". She says, "*The way Mediterranean people act is different from Americans. They are more noisy, warm, and sincere than Americans*". In this way, Ester also makes unfamiliar stereotypes about the Greeks more familiar by subsuming them in a larger group that is known to her, "*the Mediterranean people*". This group is in opposition to the Americans who act in a different way. In addition, by listing the descriptive words "*noisy*", "*warm*" and "*sincere*" together on the same axis of interpretation, it is possible to catch a glimpse of her conclusion about Americans. Americans are less noisy, less warm, and less sincere. Noisiness and warmth accompany sincerity. In this way, as far as the sitcom is concerned, the Crane family members would be considered less noisy, warm, and sincere than the Greek aunt because they are physically and verbally contained .

Other students, though not associating the Greek aunt with familiar groups nevertheless, described her in a positive way. Rúbia said, "*She was a very natural person. She hugged people a lot*". The word "*natural*" is on a par with the word "*sincere*". To be natural is to show who you are without subterfuge. The way the Greek aunt does this is by physical means – by hugs. Hence in this view, the physical outward actions show the internal state of the person. They are a window to what is happening within. Once again the Crane family members, by implication, are seen as not natural for they do not show clearly what is happening inside them. They are too contained, and for this reason they become opaque.

Miriam described the Greek aunt as "*energetic*" whereas Mara saw her as strong, "*Even though she is living in America which is a big killer of culture, she keeps all her cultural aspects because they are inside her*". In this statement, by referring to the United States as "*a big killer of culture*", there is a sense that the American culture is dominant, and in this position does not respect other cultures. Yet, the Greek aunt is totally herself whether it fits in with the American ethos or not. Once again a reference to outward actions reflecting inner emotional and psychological states is made, "*because they are inside her*". The Greek aunt is to be admired because she stays true to who she is within.

The Greek aunt in all the above descriptions is recognized as having many positive characteristics. The fact that she hugs and kisses a lot, uses grandiose gestures, and is loud is not interpreted in a negative way. Rather these elements are interpreted as familiar and seen in a positive light. They are presented in the sitcom as humorous, but for the students they are good qualities of the character, and in and of themselves not funny. Instead they show her as a person who is honest and true to her innermost self.

In the above situations the students found the stereotypes used in the sitcom strange to their cultural horizons and thus not very humorous. On the other hand in the following examples, they considered the situations to be familiar, yet at the same time not humorous. For example, Frasier's father, Marty, sees his brother, Walt, after five years of separation. He has been looking forward to this reunion, and has been actively looking for his brother at the rehearsal dinner. When the two brothers meet, an expected emotional scene does not take place. Instead the two shake hands smiling , and then have the following brief dialogue:

Walt: *Marty*!
Marty: *Walt*!
Walt: *What's new*?
Marty: *Oh, same old, same old. How's tricks*?
Walt: *Can't complain. They keeping you busy*?
Marty: *Oh, better believe it*.
Walt: *Well, what're you going to do*.
Marty: *Tell me about it*.
Frasier: *It's amazing how you two can pick up right where you left off*.

This scene is humorous exactly because of the restraint that the two older men show. They obviously are fond of each other, but they do not show it physically or verbally. The scene is a parody of the self- controlled Anglo, and because of this, funny. Frasier's line, "*It's amazing how you two can pick up right where you left off*", emphasizes the type of understated relationship the two brothers have because when your communication is so concise, it is easy to start up again even after a long separation.

To my students, however, this scene was not amusing. To them the scene was not an exaggeration or a parody, but rather it showed precisely how Americans would act. It became the expected action within their stereotype of "cold" American behaviour, in which Americans are "less noisy", "less warm" and thus "less sincere and natural". They made the behaviour fit into their own cultural horizon. Hence along the fourth wall through which the sitcom was being viewed, the fictive world became a confirmation of the opinions the students held in the real world, that is, Americans are cold and do not show their true selves.

Conclusion

Sitcoms can be used in many kinds of classes. As I showed in this article, I used them as a part of a literature class because I knew my students had contact with globalized mass culture that is American based. However, this type of sitcom can be used in a four-skills language class at the intermediate level and upward. The sitcom can be used to teach listening skills, to teach pragmatic language (see Washburn, 2001) and to initiate a discussion on intercultural comprehension.

I became aware as I used sitcoms in class that merely being exposed to mass culture does not lead automatically to a perception of the culture of either the sitcom or of the viewer. In the above situation, in which the students viewed an episode of *Frasier*, it became apparent that the stereotypes the students already had continued intact and helped create their interpretations of the scene. First, their sympathy and identification with Mediterranean/Italian/Greek behaviour was apparent. Physical and verbal gestures were interpreted as showing inner feelings and as being a sign of transparency and sincerity. On the other hand, more restrained behaviour was not seen as very favourable but rather interpreted as cold, and consequently as insincere. In this way, the stereotypes continued in place inasmuch as the viewing of the sitcom confirmed, in a fictitious setting, the opinions the students held of the real world.

Within philosophical hermeneutics, a stereotypical perception changes when a horizon moves, that is when the "I" dialogues with the "other" as a "you". For this to occur, a hermeneutical conversation needs to take place. However, watching a sitcom is not enough to initiate this conversation. For this reason, I suggest, based on my observation of the students in the class, that the classroom be used specifically as a place in which an understanding of the "other" be fostered. The students will not only grow in their understanding of another culture, but also grow in understanding themselves and their own culture. Applying this philosophical view to the class in which the above sitcom was seen, a discussion could be initiated on how different cultures link emotional and psychological states with outward manifestations. In other words, the discussion could consider when, how, and in what situations cultures permit outer manifestations of emotions, and to what point sincerity can be deduced from these outward manifestations. The stereotypes accepted by the students can be used as the basis of this discussion.

In conclusion, my students came to their understanding of the sitcom episode by using elements from their cultural horizons which led to an interpretation that was marked by their preconceptions. This interpretation is not "wrong" , but can be used as a basis for a discussion that could lead to a movement of horizons. This discussion, initiated by the teacher, can help the students ask questions of themselves and their presuppositions and can aid them in seeing in a critical way their own judgements and preconceptions. It is what Erickson (1986, p. 121) calls, "making strange the familiar". In addition, the discussion can help the students ask questions and seek answers for the behaviour of the "other". Through this type of conversation the students go beyond seeing other cultures as reduced to a list of facts about food, folklore, and festivals. In this way, a class is not just a place in which facts are taught, but a place in which the students are enabled to become active participants in an intercultural dialogue.

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Interacción y negociación del mensaje en el salón de lenguas: Panorámica crítica de la investigación actual y propuestas para el futuro [1]

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El comienzo de la Adquisición de Segunda Lengua (ASL) como campo de investigación autónomo se situa al inicio de la década de los setenta, con la aparición de los trabajos seminales de Corder y Selinker sobre la interlengua (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Desde esos comienzos iniciales y a lo largo de sus más de treinta años de historia, el campo de ASL se ha ido desarrollando en torno a cuatro orientaciones epistemológicas diferentes, explicadas esquemáticamente en una tabla en el Apéndice (véase también Ortega, 2001; Norris y Ortega, 2003). Dentro de ASL, la adquicisión de segundas lenguas en contextos formales de instrucción (lo que le conoce como "instructed second language acquisition" en inglés) es un campo de especialización relativamente joven que sin embargo ya ha producido aportaciones teóricas y empíricas con consecuencias importantes para la enseñaza de lenguas, incluyendo el inglés y el español como lenguas segundas y extranjeras. ASL en contextos de instrucción ha desarrollado la mayoría de sus temas de investigación dentro del marco cognitivo-social interaccionista (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, 1997; Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 1998), aunque recientemente la orientación sociocultural también ha dirigido atención sostenida la adquisición en el salón de lenguas (e.g., Hall y Verplaetse, 2000; Lantolf, 2000). A mi juicio, las tres contribuciones más sobresalientes, con implicaciones claras para la enseñanza de lenguas, aportadas por este campo responden a tres temas de investigación: la interacción y negociación del mensaje, el aprendizaje basado en tareas, y la atención hacia la forma.

Para los lectores de MEXTESOL que deseen embarcarse más a fondo en el estudio independiente de ASL en general, mi intención es que la caracterización de las cuatro orientaciones epistemológicas de ASL junto a la breve bibliografía esencial que se encuentra también en el Apéndice sean útiles. Mi objetivo en este artículo, sin embargo, es más modesto y se circumscribe a ofrecer a los lectores un esbozo crítico de la primera de las tres líneas de investigación principales mencionadas: la interacción y la negociación del mensaje. Este tema ha atraído gran atención de los investigadores así como de los docentes en el área, desde los comienzos de la disciplina de ASL, y continuará, sin duda siendo un programa central de investigación de ASL en contextos de instrucción en el futuro a mediano y largo plazo.

El presente artículo está organizado de la siguiente manera. Primero esbozaré una panorámica histórica de los beneficios teóricos para la adquisición de segunda lengua postulados a través de la interacción, seguido por un resumen de los hallazgos empíricos que apoyan tales postulados teóricos, con respecto al proceso (esto es, las características de interlocutores y tareas que influyen cuánto se negocia) y al producto de la interacción (particularmente, la relación de la interacción con la comprensión y con la adquisición). Los aciertos de la trayectoria de investigación durante la década de los noventa serán también examinados, y me extenderé en el caso especial de los contra-ejemplos, una línea de investigación de evidencia nega-

[1] This is a refereed article.

tiva provista durante la interacción que ha surgido con fuerza a finales de los noventa. A pesar de estos avances y aportaciones en la investigación de la interacción, en la tercera sección señalaré un número de limitaciones pedagógicas y de retos de la investigación que quedan por resolver. Finalmente, concluiré esta panorámica crítica destacando una serie de temas y esfuerzos que a mi juicio caracterizarán el programa de investigación de la interacción en segundas lenguas durante las décadas venideras. Mi deseo es que estas reflexiones estimulen el interés de lectores de MEXTESOL y que inspiren nuevos estudios de la interacción en contextos de la enseñanza de inglés y español en México.

1. ¿Cuáles son los beneficios de la negociación? Argumentos teóricos

Los inicios del programa de investigación de la interacción se remontan al trabajo pionero de Evelyn Hatch, quien ya en 1978 sugirió que la sintaxis en la segunda lengua se desarrolla por medio de la conversación, y no al revés (Hatch, 1978; y los estudios ya clásicos en Day, 1986). Sin embargo, los beneficios teóricos de la interacción fueron especificados por primera vez por Long en su disertación (véase Long, 1981). En esencia, Long sugirió que a través de episodios de negociación del mensaje que caracterizan la interacción en segundas lenguas, los aprendices reciben la mejor calidad posible de input comprensible, dado que la negociación es local y se ajusta de modo natural a las necesidades de comprensión reales que les surgen a los interlocutores durante encuentros interactivos concretos. En aquellos años iniciales, y bajo la influencia de las teorías de Krashen (e.g., Krashen, 1985), el input comprensible era considerado el elemento más importante de la adquisición, y se postulaba que cuanto más input comprensible se recibía más se aprendería también. Esto es, se asumía que si se podía demostrar que la oportunidad de negociar localmente el mensaje resultaba en una mejora radical de la cantidad y la calidad de input comprensible que el aprendiz recibía, entonces quedaría demostrado por implicación indirecta que la interacción facilita la adquisición, en virtud precisamente del input hecho comprensible durante la interacción. Los estudios inspirados en este argumento teórico típicamente se concentraron en examinar la cantidad de episodios de negociación que surgen a raíz de una situación interactiva concreta y el nivel de comprensión del contenido obtenido durante la tarea en cuestión (e.g., Pica, Young, & Doughty 1987).

La investigación de los programas de inmersión francesa en las escuelas canadienses (Harley, 1993; Swain, 1985) mostró pronto la insuficiencia del input comprensible como fuerza catalizadora principal de la adquisición en L2. Se constató que, a pesar de la situación de inmersión escolar, que aseguraba una rica dieta de input en segunda lengua a una edad bien temprana, los estudiantes canadienses no llegaban a niveles últimos de adquisición lingüística nativa. A mediados de la década de los ochenta, y en respuesta a las limitaciones obvias del input comprensible, Swain (1985) sugirió que la producción, tanto o más que la comprensión, era un proceso importante directamente involucrado en la adquisición óptima de la segunda lengua. Según esta investigadora, durante la producción de mensajes, el aprendiz se ve obligado a procesar la segunda lengua sintácticamente, algo que durante la comprensión le es posible evitar, por ejemplo si recurre a estrategias de comprensión global tales como adivinar del contexto. Swain, por consiguiente, sostenía que el beneficio principal de la negociación del mensaje durante la interacción estribaba en que forzaba al aprendiz a reformular el enunciado lingüístico en busca de entendimiento mutuo y expresión exacta del mensaje, con lo que los recursos lingüísticos del aprendiz se mobilizaban y expandían al máximo (de aquí viene el término hecho famoso por Swain de la *producción forzada*, a veces también conocido como la *producción comprensible*, en inglés pushed output y comprehensible output). Estudios inspirados en este argumento teórico típicamente examinan la calidad de la producción durante la interacción y prestan especial atención al análisis de modificación del enunciado por parte del aprendiz y los tipos de contribuciones del interlocutor durante la interacción que facilitan tales modificaciones (e.g., Pica et al., 1989; véase resumen en Shehadeh, 2002).

Durante la década de los noventa, los argumentos teóricos sobre los beneficios de la negociación cambiaron de orientación, haciéndose cada vez menos comunicativos y más cognitivos. Pica (1994), yendo más allá del input comprensible y de la producción forzada, señaló que durante la negociación del mensaje otro beneficio importante es que la atención de los interlocutores se dirige al código lingüístico en sí mismo. Esta intensificación de atención hacia aspectos formales de la lengua tiene lugar por medio de procesos de segmentación y modificación de la producción y a través de la provisión de retroalimentación negativa. Pica (1994), por lo tanto, conectó la teoría de la interacción con la noción psicológica de atención, que ha ido cobrando crecida importancia en ASL en años recientes (Schmidt, 2001). Tal reenfoque cognitivo se observa en el trabajo reciente de todos los investigadores de la interacción más prominentes: Long (1996), Pica (1994, 1997), y Gass (1997, 2002). Swain quizás sea la excepción, ya que ella se ha interesado recientemente en su trabajo más por aspectos de cognición social y socio-culturales (inspirados en el trabajo del psicólogo ruso Vygotsky) que puramente cognitivos (véase, por ejemplo, Swain et al., 2002).

En suma, el consenso hoy por hoy entre los especialistas es que la necesidad de negociar y establecer un entendimiento mutuo durante el uso interactivo de la L2, de manera natural y fructífera, orienta la atención de los interlocutores hacia la forma del enunciado, y que por lo tanto los beneficios teóricos de la negociación del mensaje deben ser buscados no tan sólo en la provisión de input comprensible de alta calidad y en el requerimiento de producción forzada, sino también y más principalmente en la oportunidad de orientar la atención hacia la forma del enunciado. En palabras de Pica (1994):

"Este doble potencial de la negociación, el ayudar a la comprensión de la L2 y el atraer atención hacia la forma, le brinda un papel mas relevante en el aprendizaje de la L2 que el que se le ha conferido hasta ahora" (Pica 1994, p. 508; traducción de la autora).

Asimismo, en su actualización de la hipótesis de la interacción, Long (1996) resalta esta reorientación cognitiva:

> "[La interacción] conecta el input, las capacidades internas del aprendiz, particularmente la atención selectiva, y el output de manera productiva." (Long 1996, p. 451-452; traducción de la autora)

2. Hallazgos empíricos principales sobre la interacción

La mayor parte de la investigación sobre la interacción durante los ochenta y principios de los noventa estuvo motivada por dos objetivos primordiales a investigar: (1) descubrir qué rasgos del contexto comunicativo (esto es, atributos de los interlocutores y de las tareas) favorecían episodios de negociación del mensaje y (2) demostrar beneficios de aprendizaje relacionados con la adquisición que se obtenían gracias a la negociación.

2.1 Hallazgos principales sobre el contexto comunicativo: Estudios de proceso

Varios son los principios que han sido establecidos con respecto a los rasgos del contexto comunicativo que favorecen la negociación. Es interesante destacar que todos los estudios que se mencionan en esta sección se ocupan de los parámetros comunicativos del contexto (características del interlocutor y de las tareas) y se centran en la documentación del proceso de interacción, es decir, en la cantidad y calidad de episodios de negociación que la interacción genera.

Primero, con respecto al papel de los interlocutores, se ha podido confirmar empíricamente que la comunicación en grupos favorece la negociación del mensaje en mayor grado que las interacciones dominadas por el maestro (Gaies, 1983; Long, et al., 1976; Pica y Doughty, 1985; Doughty y Pica, 1986) y que los interlocutores no-nativos son tan capaces de negociar el mensaje con otros aprendices como lo son los interlocutores nativo-hablantes (Porter, 1986; Varonis y Gass, 1985). Asimismo, Yule y sus colegas (Yule y Macdonald, 1990; y Yule, Power, y Macdonald, 1992) han demostrado que la interacción en parejas es óptima para la adquisición si el interlocutor menos avanzado lingüísticamente retiene la información necesaria para completar la tarea, ya que así el interlocutor más avanzado asume un papel de menor control sobre la información, pero a la vez ejerce mayor presión para negociar el mensaje hasta obtener la información pertinente.

En cuanto a los hallazgos con respecto a qué rasgos de tareas favorecen la negociación, Pica, Kanagy, y Falodun (1993) concluyen, en su panorámica de estudios, que es preferible que los interlocutores compartan el mínimo estrictamente necesario de información contextual (véase Crookes y Rulon, 1988; Pellettieri, 2000; Shortreed, 1993) en tareas que requieran comunicación bidireccional (Long, 1981; Gass y Varonis, 1985), comunicación obligatoria de información (Doughty y Pica, 1986; Pica, 1987), y objetivo de consenso (Duff, 1986) y con una única solución posible (Long, 1989). Esta última ventaja hipotética de las tareas de única solución sobre las tareas de solución múltiple (una distinción que en inglés se conoce como tareas "cerradas" y "abiertas") ha sido investigada en el español como lengua extranjera por Manheimer (1993), en un artículo que fue publicado por la *Revista de Lingüística Aplicada* en México. Tras analizar la complejidad y corrección de la producción oral de 10 parejas de aprendices en una tarea cerrada (esto es, con sólo una solución posible) y otra abierta, Manheimer concluye que el discurso producido por estos aprendices en la tarea cerrada era más complejo sintácticamente, e igual de correcto gramaticalmente, que el discurso que los mismos estudiantes produjeron en la tarea abierta.

En términos de implicaciones pedagógicas, los hallazgos obtenidos en estos estudios orientados al proceso de la negociación son valiosos porque sugieren que el diseño de la práctica interactiva en el aula debe asegurar un máximo nivel de negociación, y que esto puede ser conseguido si las características de interlocutores y tareas son cuidadosamente controladas a la hora de diseñar las actividades interactivas para el salón de lenguas.

2.2 Hallazgos principales relacionados con beneficios de aprendizaje: Estudios de producto

Demostrar qué beneficios de aprendizaje se obtienen gracias a la negociación es un objetivo importantísimo de los investigadores de la negociación del mensaje, pero también ha resultado ser muy difícil de implementar adecuadamente. La mayoría de los estudios iniciales de negociación enseguida establecieron una conexión entre la cantidad o la calidad de la negociación del mensaje, por una parte, y la facilitación de la comprensión, por otra (e.g., Gass y Varonis, 1994; Pica, Young, y Doughty, 1987). En esencia, estos estudios prueban que cuanto más se negocia, más se comprende. Sin embargo, la comprensión y la adquisición han mostrado ser procesos relativamente independientes, en el sentido de que es posible comprender más pero aprender lo mismo (por ejemplo, véanse los resultados en Doughty, 1991, y Loschky, 1994). Asimismo, el vínculo directo entre negociación y adquisición ha sido difícil de explorar, ya que demanda una orientación hacia el producto aprendido a través de la interacción. Para ello se requiere diseños experimentales que documenten cambios de una pre-prueba a una post-prueba atribuibles a las cualidades y procesos obtenidos durante la interacción.

Investigadores de ASL han empezado a investigar directamente los beneficios de la negociación con respecto a la adquisición sólo muy recientemente. Trabajos pioneros de este tipo son Loschky (1994), quien comparó mejoras en comprensión y adquisición por medio de pruebas experimentales antes y después de la interacción, y dos estudios llevados a cabo por Mackey (1999) y Mackey y Philp (1998) sobre el desarrollo evolutivo de los aprendices con respecto a su capacidad de construir preguntas sintácticamente avanzadas en inglés antes y después de la interacción (véase también la replicación de los mismos resultados en Mackey, Philp, et al., 2002). Los resultados de Loschky confirman que la oportunidad de negociar garantiza una mejor comprensión, pero sorprendentemente sugieren también que mejor comprensión no garantiza mejoras en el aprendizaje necesariamente. Los dos estudios de Mackey (Mackey, 1999; Mackey y Philp, 1998) sobre la adquisición de preguntas en inglés a través de la interacción, por su parte, ofrecen la primera evidencia empírica directa de que cuanto más negociación y retroalimentación negativa recibe el aprendiz, se tendrá más progreso en la adquisición de la lengua meta.

2.3 Refinamientos y logros desde los noventa

En general, los temas teóricos actuales de la investigación de procesos de negociación se centran en los movimientos discursivos del aprendiz, tales como la *modificación del enunciado*, que el aprendiz realiza en respuesta a una señal de que el mensaje no es comprendido o es problemático en algún sentido (Shehadeh, 2002), y la *incorporación del enunciado*, que se produce cuando el aprendiz incorpora en su turno formas todavía no adquiridas ofrecidas por un hablante lingüísticamente más competente (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001; Mackey y Philp, 1998). Más allá de cuánto o cómo se negocia, otras preguntas sobre el proceso de negociación que tomaron importancia a finales de los noventa incluyen sobre qué se negocia y quién inicia las negociaciones. Así, Ellis, Basturkmen, y Loewen (2001) y Williams (1999) han contribuido evidencia empírica independiente de que aprendices de lenguas inician interacción que se centran en el código lingüístico (o las formas), y ambos especulan que son precisamente estos episodios iniciados por los estudiantes y enfocados hacia la forma los que son particularmente útiles para la adquisición.

Desde mediados de la década de los noventa, una innovación saludable es que los estudios del proceso de la negociación se han ido alejando del análisis superficial de la cantidad de episodios de negociación (que era típico en los inicios de este programa de investigación) y se concentran en producir análisis detallados de episodios discursivos en busca de evidencia de beneficios. Por ejemplo, hoy en día es usual que los investigadores de la interacción analicen los turnos del habla en estos episodios distinguiendo entre cuatro movimientos establecidos inicialmente por Varonis y Gass (1985). Este es el *punto* que desencadena el problema de comprensión, la *señal* de que algo en el enunciado necesita ser negociado, la *respuesta* del interlocutor a la señal, y la *reacción* del interlocutor que produjo la señal requiriendo una negociación (en inglés, estos cuatro movimientos se conocen como trigger, signal, response, y reaction). Estos movimientos, a su vez, permiten la investigación de hipótesis especificas de beneficios. Por ejemplo, ante un enunciado no grammatical "*mi hermana está enfermera*", una señal que se realiza como una petición de clarificación ("*¿cómo dices?*") es más beneficiosa que una señal que es realizada como una petición de confirmación ("*¿dices que tu hermana es enfermera?*"), porque típicamente la primera conduce a una reformulación (e incluso puede que a una autocorrección del punto lingüístico que causó el problema) por parte del aprendiz, mientras que la segunda señal tiende a ser simplemente confirmada con un corto "*sí*" (Pica et al., 1991). Asimismo, una reacción potencialmente más beneficiosa para el interlocutor no-nativo sería si repite el modelo gramatical ofrecido por el interlocutor nativo a modo de corrección ("*sí, eso, mi hermana ES enfermera*"), en lo que se ha llamado incorporación del enunciado (en inglés "uptake"; Lyster & Ranta, 1997), en vez de simplemente confirmar el enunciado ofrecido ("*sí, eso*").

La provisión de información lingüística durante la interacción a través de retroalimentación negativa o corrección de errores ocupa un lugar especial en la teoría interaccionista y ha generado gran cantidad de estudios (véase Long, 1996, para un resumen). En particular, un tipo de corrección implícita que ha recibido considerable atención desde finales de los noventa es el contra-ejemplo [recast; también llamados reformulaciones en español], documentado inicialmente en la interacción en lengua materna entre el niño y el interlocutor adulto (Farrar, 1992; López-Ornat, 1994).

2.4 Un caso especial de la interacción: Los contra-ejemplos

Los contra-ejemplos son respuestas del interlocutor ofrecidas en el turno contiguo que sigue a una emisión del aprendiz que no es gramatical. El siguiente ejemplo ficticio ilustra una reformulación típica (la forma objeto de reformulación está en itálicas):

aprendiz: Y luego, para colmo, el banco *estuvo* cerrado

interlocutor: ¡Oh, El banco *estaba* cerrado, qué desastre!

En su respuesta, el interlocutor acepta el contenido previamente producido por el aprendiz a la vez que muestra la versión gramatical del mismo. El argumento teórico es que esta forma de corrección implícita presenta tres atributos importantes facilitadores de la adquisición: la reformulación (a) ofrece evidencia negativa porque implícitamente indica al aprendiz que la forma elegida para expresar un mensaje no es lícita o preferida en la lengua meta; (b) ofrece evidencia positiva al mostrar al aprendiz la forma gramatical del enunciado no gramatical que éste produjo; y (c) contiene un relieve añadido debido a la posición contigua en el discurso, que hace más fácil para el aprendiz el comparar su propia emisión y la reformulación del interlocutor y, en el mejor de los casos, le lleva a percibir la diferencia formal entre las dos versiones del mismo mensaje.

El primer artículo sobre contra-ejemplos fue publicado por Long, Inagaki, y Ortega (1998), e incluía los resultados de dos estudios con estudiantes universitarios de japonés y de español como lengua extranjera (para más detalles sobre el estudio en español, véase también Ortega y Long, 1997). Nuestro objetivo en estos dos estudios era comparar un número predeterminado de reformulaciones con el mismo número de otro tipo de movimiento en la interacción, y por lo tanto diseñamos tareas comunicativas pero altamente controladas que raramente serían posibles en el aula; ello introduce la duda de si la eficacia de los contra-ejemplos documentadas en Long et al. puede ser generalizada al salón de lenguas. Doughty y Varela (1998), no obstante, demostraron los beneficios de contra-ejemplos en el salón de lenguas, aunque es importante señalar aquí que la maestra investigada en el estudio de Doughty y Varela utilizó contra-ejemplos de manera sistemática y concentrándose en un único tipo de error durante un periodo sostenido de tiempo, y ambas características no siempre son posibles o naturales en el discurso pedagógico típico del maestro de lenguas. En contextos de inmersión o en lecciones puramente comunicativas cuyos objetivos son el aprendizaje de contenido, Lyster (1998) sostiene que los contra-ejemplos del maestro no pueden ser considerados eficaces porque son fundamentalmente ambiguos para el aprendiz, ya que éste puede interpretarlos como una reformulación, más que correctiva, simplemente alternativa.

Aunque desde la aparición de estos primeros estudios se ha publicado un número de investigaciones considerable (para un resumen, véase Nicholas et al., 2001; véase también Han, 2002; Iwashita, 2003; Leeman, 2003; Philp, 2003), la polémica sobre la eficacia de los contra-ejemplos continúa. El programa de investigación de contra-ejemplos y otras formas de evidencia negativa implícita típicamente ofrecida durante la interacción (p. ej., la petición de esclarecimiento en Nobuyoshi y Ellis, 1993) requerirá de refinamientos metodólogicos en el futuro antes de poder ofrecer hallazgos concluyentes. Primero, la cuestión de la eficacia de la provisión negativa implícita necesitará ser investigada con más consistencia en las definiciones a través de diferentes estudios. Asimismo, la fuente de datos a examinar como evidencia válida de eficacia deberá ser expandida para incluir no sólo evidencia discursiva observable (e.g., incorporación de contra-ejemplos), sino también evidencia introspectiva y de memoria implícita, ya que estos procesos causales postulados son de naturaleza tanto psicolingüística como metacognitiva y metalingüística.

3. Evaluación crítica del programa de investigación

A pesar de los avances y aportaciones que la investigación de la interacción y la negociación del mensaje ha ofrecido a lo largo de sus más de veinte años de existencia, es necesario reconocer algunos problemas de investigación sin resolver y también ciertas limitaciones pedagógicas. En esta sección, esbozaré primero las limitaciones pedagógicas y después el problema de investigación más fundamental que queda por resolver antes de alcanzar nuevos logros de investigación. Ello me permitirá finalizar el artículo con una propuesta de nuevas líneas de investigación para el futuro.

3.1 Limitaciones en las aplicaciones pedagógicas de la interacción

Una seria limitación pedagógica es que a veces la enseñanza de lenguas en el aula parece ofrecer pocas oportunidades de negociación. Sorprendentemente, esto es el caso de la enseñanza con filosofía xtremadamente comunicativa, esto es, en clases de lenguas donde la enseñanza es primordialmente comunicativa y basada en el contenido. Así, investigaciones llevadas a cabo por Lyster y Ranta (1997) en francés, Musumeci (1996) en italiano, y Pica (2002) en inglés, revelan que hay poca negociación porque el maestro típicamente se apresura a ofrecer reformulaciones de los enunciados del aprendiz, se acostumbra a la interlengua de sus estudiantes hasta el punto de entender lo que para un observador sería inenteligible, o simplemente simula haber comprendido para ahorrar humillación pública al estudiante que produce el enunciado dudoso. Asimismo, durante actividades de grupo, Foster (1998) demuestra que es también posible que la mayoría de los estudiantes no negocie, posiblemente por razones de manutención de armonía social (véase también Aston, 1986) o quizás por falta de interés personal cuando la tarea es de mero intercambio de información (Nakahama et al., 2001). En vista de estas limitaciones, la cuestión a decidir es si vale la pena invertir nuestros mejores esfuerzos pedagógicos en el diseño de tareas y el entrenamiento de maestros y estudiantes en estrategias de interacción de manera que sea posible promover más negociación del mensaje, y de mayor calidad, en los salones de lenguas. Naturalmente, esta inversión de esfuerzos tiene sentido sólo si tenemos la certeza de que los beneficios de la negociación para el aprendizaje de la L2 son rentables, y esto sólo puede ser dilucidado si en el futuro más estudios de producto producen evidencia contundente al respecto.

Otro reto pedagógico es que, incluso cuando la negociación ocurre en cantidades satisfactorias durante la interacción, se ha notado que los episodios suelen centrarse en problemas léxicos (Blake, 2000; Pica et al., 1991; Williams, 1999), cuando naturalmente el mayor beneficio para la adquisición sería si los aprendices negociaran aspectos morfosintácticos de la L2. Es más, Mackey, Gass, y McDonough (2000) descubrieron que los aprendices a veces tienden a interpretar erróneamente una parte considerable de la evidencia negativa que reciben durante la interacción, creyendo que las correcciones y negociaciones están relacionadas con problemas de vocabulario cuando en realidad el problema de comunicación ha surgido por cuestiones de pronunciación o morfosintaxis (véase también Slimani, 1991, y Roberts, 1995). Ante tales dificultades pedagógicas, algunos educadores de lenguas sostienen que tareas enfocadas en manipular explícitamente el lenguaje y la forma producen interacción que es más beneficiosa para el aprendizaje que tareas enfocadas en contenido. Por ejemplo, la atención del estudiante y los esfuerzos de negociación de los interlocutores serán dirigidos con más seguridad hacia aspectos formales de la lengua si las actividades de grupo tienen como objetivo reconstruir el texto de un dictado en grupo (el tipo de actividad acuñado *dictogloss* por Kowal y Swain, 1997), descubrir reglas gramaticales en ejemplos, a manera de detective (el tipo de actividad llamado *consciousness raising* en Fotos y Ellis, 1991), o simplemente resolver un ejercicio gramatical en pareja (estudiado desde este punto de vista, por ejemplo, por Storch, 1999) (para un resumen de investigación sobre esta propuesta desde un prisma socio-cultural, véase también Swain et al., 2002).

Es importante reconocer, sin embargo, que existe la posibilidad de que los beneficios de la interacción y la negociación del mensaje sean de naturaleza no sólo (o primordialmente) metalingüística consciente, sino también psicolingüística no consciente. Por ejemplo, Doughty (2001) señala un número de tradiciones de investigación empírica que apuntan a la posibilidad de que el aprendiz haga uso del input ofrecido por el interlocutor a nivel no consciente y dentro de límites de memoria muy cortos (de 10 segundos o menos). Si se llegara a establecer empíricamente que los beneficios principales de la negociación son psicolingüísticos, entonces sería posible concluir que no es importante el que el aprendiz indentifique correcta y conscientemente el potencial de aprendizaje obtenido durante la interacción. Esto es, si la contención teórica es que los beneficios de la interacción (incluyendo la negociación del mensaje, la corrección implícita, etc.) son aportados por medio de procesos psicolingüísticos a nivel no consciente, entonces no es necesario (o incluso posible) encontrar evidencia de atención consciente hacia las formas gramaticales a adquirir para poder concluir que el aprendiz ha hecho uso de ellas para el aprendizaje, ya que estas formas manipuladas naturalmente durante la interacción serían registradas en la memoria a corto plazo y procesadas hasta el punto de ser almacenadas como ejemplares en la memoria a largo plazo, dejando una huella que potencialmente facilita su aprendizaje eventual (Doughty, 2001; Robinson, 1995).

3.2 Estudios simultáneos de proceso y producto: Un reto para la investigación

Finalmente, la tradición de los interaccionistas se plantea un problema fundamental de investigación: la falta de evidencia cumulativa sólida con respecto a los beneficios directos que tiene la negociación en el aprendizaje. No sólo son necesarios muchos más estudios de producto similares a los de Loschky (1994), Mackey (1999), y Mackey y Philp (1998). Asimismo, estudios futuros de la negociación deberían esforzarse en investigar a la vez proceso y producto en sus diseños. Aunque los estudios de producto (Loschky, 1994; Mackey, 1999) son cruciales para establecer empíricamente los beneficios de aprendizaje asumidos por los interaccionistas, el problema de concentrarse exclusivamente en el producto es que las cualidades y procesos que de hecho tuvieron lugar durante el tratamiento de interacción no son explorados ni documentados. La interacción se convierte así en una caja negra del aprendizaje (Long, 1984). Es decir, cualesquiera que sean los beneficios observados en las pruebas experimentales después de la interacción, se desconoce la cantidad y calidad de las negociaciones que tuvieron lugar y, por lo tanto, no se puede saber exactamente qué tipos de movimientos interactivos (por ejemplo, de corrección explícita e implícita, negociación del mensaje, e incluso de evidencia positiva) durante la realización de las tareas son responsables de los resultados, y por lo tanto no se sabe qué elementos y cualidades de la interacción deberían ser estimulados en el salón de lenguas. Los efectos de aprendizaje de la negociación no podrán ser entendidos de manera satisfactoria hasta que no dispongamos de un número suficiente de estudios que examinen sistemáticamente, y en un mismo diseño, los procesos y productos de la interacción.

4. Propuesta de nuevas lineas de investigación para el futuro

Aunque el tono de la sección anterior pueda parecer un tanto pesimista, el futuro de la investigación de la interacción presenta varias novedades en el horizonte que son alentadoras. Varias líneas de innovación se pueden atisbar como determinantes del paisaje de futuros estudios de interacción.

Un estudio reciente, Iwashita (2003), ha aportado una orientación de proceso y producto simultáneamente, facilitando así el camino a futuras investigaciones de proceso-producto. Esta investigadora ha estudiado en un diseño experimental los efectos relativos de la evidencia tanto positiva como negativa relacionada con tres estructuras gramaticales y 24 palabras nuevas ofrecidas a través de la interacción por interlocutores nativos a 41 estudiantes de japonés como lengua extranjera en Australia. Al comparar las oportunidades de aprendizaje aportadas por la evidencia positiva y la evidencia negativa durante las tareas, Iwashita descubrió que la abundante evidencia positiva sobre las tres estructuras investigadas resultó en una mejora en las post-pruebas, pero sólo para los aprendices que estaban a un nivel más avanzado de desarrollo lingüístico al inicio del estudio. Por el contrario, la provisión de evidencia negativa, que era mucho más modesta en términos de frecuencia absoluta, resultó en una mejora estadísticamente significativa en relación con sólo una de las tres estructuras, pero la mejora se observó para todos los aprendices por igual, independientemente de su nivel de desarrollo lingüístico inicial. Como el lector podrá apreciar, estos resultados son muy complejos y son sólo posibles gracias a que Iwashita empleó un análisis de regresión multiple, que le permitió investigar simultáneamente los efectos derivados del tipo de movimiento en la interacción (evidencia positiva a través de modelos, y evidencia negativa a través de reformulaciones), los efectos atribuibles al nivel de proficiencia inicial de los aprendices, y las posibles interacciones entre ambas variables. La complejidad de los resultados de Iwashita (2003) y el grado de refinamiento interpretativo que conllevan serán sin duda características de la mejor investigación del futuro en el área de la interacción y la negociación del mensaje.

Un nuevo ímpetu de investigación continúa desde finales de los noventa en el estudio de los beneficios específicamente derivados de la producción empujada que la interacción facilita (Van den Branden, 1997; Shehadeh, 1999, 2001, y 2002). Algunas de las nuevas preguntas que otros estudios recientes se plantean tienen que ver con las aportaciones diferenciales de la negociación del mensaje y la evidencia negativa, como dos fenómenos que pueden y deben ser distinguidos, aunque ambos sean facilitados por la misma interacción (Oliver, 1995, 2000). Asimismo, todavía incipiente, pero sin duda importante en futuras investigaciones, es el estudio comparativo de la evidencia positiva y la evidencia negativa sobre una forma dada de la L2 que son aportadas en la misma interacción y que, sin embargo, puede que tengan efectos distinguibles en el aprendizaje (Iwashita, 2003).

Incluso más reciente es un nuevo énfasis en documentar los procesos de atención consciente que los interlocutores utilizan durante la interacción. Por ejemplo, estudios recientes de Gass y colegas (Mackey, Gass, y McDonough, 2000) intentan documentar estos procesos haciendo uso de metodologías introspectivas (véase Gass y Mackey, 2000). Adentrándose en territorio desconocido, Mackey y colegas han iniciado también un programa de investigación en el que intentan relacionar la cantidad de modificaciones de producción iniciada por estudiantes de inglés y la calidad de atención metalingüística con que los aprendices detectan las correcciones con la capacidad individual de memoria de los mismos (Mackey, Philp, Egi, Fujii, & Tatsumi, 2002; Mackey et al. 2002).

5. Conclusión

Considerando entonces la visión de conjunto que he tratado de ofrecer en este artículo sobre el estudio de la interacción en ASL, me gustaría proponer cuatro nuevas direcciones de investigación que a mi juicio deberían guiar los esfuerzos de los investigadores en el futuro:

1. *En el futuro, investigadores de la interacción deberían examinar el proceso y el producto de la negociación simultáneamente y asegurar que todas las variables explanatorias teóricas son incluidas en una investigación dada*.

En términos del estudio de la interacción y negociación, esto significa que los investigadores deberán incluir tanto descripciones detalladas del discurso interactivo y de los episodios de negociación producidos, como pre- y post-pruebas que documenten los beneficios de aprendizaje derivados de tal interacción y negociación (Iwashita, 2003). En tanto en cuanto que en el futuro refinamientos teóricos propongan nociones de atención y diferencias individuales (e.g., memoria, aptitude, motivación, etc.), los mismos estudios también necesitarán operacionalizar tales nociones teóricas en variables empíricas investigables (Mackey et al., 2000; Mackey et al., 2002).

2. *En el futuro, investigadores de la interacción deberían invertir esfuerzos en clarificar empíricamente la naturaleza psicolingüística o metalingüística de los beneficios teóricos postulados con respecto a la adquisición*.

La cuestión crucial aquí estriba en clarificar la naturaleza de la evidencia necesaria para hacer pronunciamientos sobre ganancias en el aprendizaje. Más específicamente, al hablar de ganacias de adquisición se necesita evaluar los méritos teóricos y empíricos de nociones tales como la incorporación del input (Lyster y Ranta, 1997) y la capacidad de 'notar' conscientemente aspectos nuevos del input (Schmidt, 2001). Si los beneficios putativos de la interacción son psicolingüísticos (véase Doughty, 2001), entonces la evidencia de incorporación inmediata en el discurso o la evidencia retrospectiva podrían ser consideradas innecesarias. Asimismo, la evidencia experimental del aprendizaje a corto plazo (por ejemplo, apenas días después de la interacción; Mackey, 1999) es insuficiente y en el futuro se necesitarán estudios longitudinales de proceso y producto para establecer los beneficios de la negociación de manera sólida.

3. *En el futuro, investigadores de la interacción deberían producir descripciones que informen propuestas sobre la magnitud y naturaleza de los beneficios de la interacción.*

Hasta la fecha presente, investigaciones cuantitativas en el campo de la lingüística aplicada en general han sido dominadas por la idea central de que los únicos hallazgos importantes son resultados que muestren diferencias estadísticas significativas (Norris y Ortega, 2000). Sin embargo, argumentos puramente cuantitativos y sin matizar fomentan una actitud de que "cuanto más negociación, mejor" que tiene poco sentido. Particularmente en el contexto de mejoras en la calidad de la enseñanza formal de lenguas, lo importante será establecer predicciones relevantes sobre las cantidades y calidades de negociación que están relacionadas con beneficios concretos para la adquisición, sobre todo con respecto a las características, necesidades, y aspiraciones de aprendices de L2 en diversos contextos de educación.

4. *El horizonte epistemológico del estudio de la interacción deberá ser ampliado para pasar de la orientación exclusivamente cognitiva a un interés en lo cognitivo-social y en el contexto local en futuras investigaciones*.

Como el lector habrá podido apreciar a lo largo de esta panorámica de la interacción, el futuro de investigación seguirá la línea cognitiva que tan fructífera ha probado ser desde finales de los noventa, y dentro de esta orientación cognitiva es posible que las investigaciones más innovadoras sean aquellas que sepan combinar el interés en la negociación con las metodologías introspectivas y el estudio de diferencias individuales (Robinson, 2002). Sin embargo, investigaciones recientes (Lindemann, 2002; Storch, 2002) han producido hallazgos importantes, que demuestran que la interacción no es una panacea para el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua, y que investigadores de la interacción en contextos formales de adquisición deberán comprender factores sociales e interpersonales si desean explicar con éxito la relación entre interacción y aprendizaje de L2. Específicamente, desequilibrios de poder y prejuicios entre los interlocutores pueden llevar a estrategias de comunicación contraproducentes que impiden la negociación del mensaje (Lindemann, 2002), y pautas de colaboración antagonísticas entre interlocutores pueden bloquear el aprendizaje de lo negociado en el salón de lenguas (Storch, 2002). En consecuencia, futuros investigadores interesados en un programa completo de la investigación de la interacción no deberán dejar de lado los aspectos socio-culturales y sociolingüísticos, ya que estos son tan importantes como los aspectos cognitivos para explicar los beneficios de aprendizaje de la negociación del mensaje.

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APENDICE:

Cuatro orientaciones epistemológicas en ASL y una bibliografía esencial

Tabla 1. Cuatro orientaciones epistemológicas en ASL

	Generativista	**Emergentista-conexionista**	**Cognitivo-social Interaccionista**	**Sociocultural**
Objeto de estudio:	Representaciones simbólicas y modulares	Conducta y actuación; procesos neurocognitivos	Conducta y actuación; procesos mentales	Conducta y actuación; procesos sociales e históricos
Inferencias:	Juicios lingüísticos	Procesamiento automático; simulaciones computacionales; actividad cerebral	Comunicación lingüística; procesamiento automático (discurso, introspección, juicios lingüísticos)	Comunicación; diálogo; valores; poder; estructuras sociales
Métodos:	Experimental, positivista	Experimental, positivista	Experimental, positivista	Natural, interpretivista
Tipo de datos:	Lingüísticos	Neurocognitivos	Cuantitativos y cualitativos	Cualitativos
Interés epistemológico:	Universal	Universal	Universal e individual	Social e individual
Teorías de ASL:	Nativistas, formales	Emergentes, funcionales	Mentalistas, funcionales	Constructivistas, funcionales
Preguntas esenciales:	Acceso a la Gramática Universal, naturaleza de representaciones lingüísticas	Establecimiento de conexiones en base a frecuencia de exposición a input	Desarrollo de representaciones lingüísticas y destrezas comunicativas	Co-constucción y apropiación de conocimiento y destrezas, negociación de identidad y poder

Breve bibliografía esencial de ASL:

1. Dos lecturas atractivas de iniciación y con énfasis en las temas y hallazgos de ASL que tienen relevancia especial para la enseñanza de lenguas son:

Scovel, T. (1999). *Learning new languages: A guide to second language acquisition*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned* (edición revisada). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Las siguientes dos referencias son esenciales y ofrecen, en conjunto, una excelente visión de las teorías más importantes propuestas a través de la historia de la disciplina de ASL:

McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of second language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Mitchell, R., & Myles, F. (1998). *Second language learning theories*. New York: Arnold.

3- Para lectores más avanzados, dos referencias seminales presentan resúmenes detallados y críticos de los principales hallazgos de ASL, la primera con un regusto disciplinario más afín a las ciencias sociales y la segunda con afinidad más claramente lingüística:

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Long, M. H. (1991). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. London and New York: Longman.

Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2001). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (edición revisada). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

4- El lector que ya conozca ASL a fondo encontrará tratamientos especializados sobre temas específicos, cada uno escrito por un reconocido investigador en el área, en dos colecciones editadas:

Ritchie, W. C., & Bhatia, T. K. (Eds.). (1996). *Handbook of second language acquisition*. San Diego: Academic Press.

Doughty, C., & Long, M. H. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of second language acquisition*. Malden, Massachussetts: Blackwell.

5- Finalmente, un libro que se presta más a uso de enciclopedia que a la lectura completa, aunque también muy útil, es:

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

La Auto-Evaluación en los Cursos Universitarios de Literatura en Inglés: ¿Qué y Cómo Aprendimos? [1]

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Resumen

En este artículo se describe un estudio de casos realizado en los cursos universitarios de literatura en inglés que fueron impartidos por la investigadora. El propósito fue observar el grado de concientización por los estudiantes acerca de sus procesos de aprendizaje, así como la relación entre la enseñanza de literatura en inglés y la adquisición de esta lengua por los estudiantes. El estudio involucró dos cursos: Literatura Americana y Literatura Inglesa, y el número total de estudiantes participantes fue 43. Los estudiantes fueron entrenados para evaluar su propio desempeño en dos aspectos: participación en clase y presentaciones orales. Al final, los estudiantes escribieron un ensayo discutiendo diversos aspectos del curso, y sugirieron la calificación que, en su opinión, deberían obtener. Las calificaciones sugeridas por los estudiantes fueron comparadas con las asignadas por la maestra-investigadora. Los resultados del estudio indican que los estudiantes fueron capaces de juzgar objetivamente su propio desempeño en el curso, mencionando logros alcanzados y retos pendientes. Asimismo, los estudiantes pudieron identificar éxitos, así como dificultades, en la conducción del curso por parte de la maestra. Respecto a la relación entre los objetivos de aprendizaje planteados en un curso de literatura y los de adquisición de inglés como segunda lengua, los estudiantes observaron avances en su adquisición del inglés en la medida que se involucraron en la lectura, análisis y discusión de los textos seleccionados.

Introducción

En el contexto de las propuestas para el aprendizaje auto-dirigido de segundas lenguas, se ha planteado la necesidad de promover en los estudiantes la habilidad para monitorear y evaluar su propio desempeño (Morín, 2002). Para lograr tal entrenamiento, se requiere definir con claridad los objetivos de aprendizaje que se plantean, así como los criterios bajo los que se evaluará el logro de tales objetivos. Asimismo, se requiere la flexibilidad que permita a los estudiantes decidir por sí mismos acerca de por lo menos algunos de estos objetivos de aprendizaje y se debe otorgar a los mismos un poder relativo en la asignación de su propia calificación.

Auto-evaluación y Autonomía

El uso de la auto-evaluación contribuye a motivar a los estudiantes a involucrarse en su propio aprendizaje, y los ayuda a tomar conciencia del papel activo que deben jugar en el mismo (Blanche, 1988). De esta forma, los estudiantes se vuelven más autónomos y responsables, al plantear sus propias metas de aprendizaje, y evaluar su desempeño. Por ende, la auto-evaluación ha sido un tema importante en la literatura sobre autonomía y evaluación del aprendizaje de una lengua. Desde esta perspectiva, los aspectos formativos de la evaluación interna son de mayor importancia que la habilidad por los estudiantes de igualar sus propias evaluaciones de su capacidad con evaluaciones externas. La auto-evaluación es un proceso permanente que influye en la planeación. En este sentido, la auto-evaluación incluye una

[1] This is a refereed article.

reflexión acerca de las metas, actividades de aprendizaje, y criterios de evaluación apropiados.

Beneficios de la Auto-Evaluación Para los Estudiantes

Desde la perspectiva del estudiante, la evaluación es valiosa porque el estudiante necesita saber en todo momento si su desempeño corresponde con el objetivo que persigue, y si ha alcanzado algún progreso en esa dirección. Por ende, el fin de la auto-evaluación es proporcionar al estudiante toda la información que requiere para controlar su proceso de aprendizaje, así como sus progresos Holec (1985: 142). Con el fin de lograr esta meta, los procedimientos de auto-evaluación deben ser relevantes para el estudiante en cuestión y para el aprendizaje en particular en el cual se involucra. Tales procedimientos deben realizarse sobre desempeños relevantes, utilizando criterios y estándares relevantes. Es por esta necesidad de relevancia que la evaluación del aprendizaje auto-dirigido debe realizarse por los mismos estudiantes.

Confiabilidad de la Auto-Evaluación

Varios estudios han demostrado que la correlación entre los juicios de los estudiantes y los de sus maestros puede ser alta, especialmente cuando los alumnos han recibido entrenamiento (Bachman y Palmer, 1989; Oscarson, 1989; Rolfe, 1990). En una revisión de estudios sobre auto-evaluación, Cram (1995: 273) observó que la "exactitud" de la auto-evaluación varía de acuerdo con diversos factores, incluyendo el tipo de evaluación, el nivel de competencia en el idioma, historial académico, aspiraciones profesionales, y grado de entrenamiento. Finalmente, la revisión de investigaciones sobre auto-aprendizaje hecha por Oscarson (1997) sugiere asimismo que los estudiantes son capaces de evaluar sus propias habilidades lingüísticas en condiciones apropiadas.

Entrenando para la Auto-Evaluación

Nunan (1994 – reportado en 1996) investigó lo que ocurrió cuando se pidió a un grupo de estudiantes de Inglés de Nivel Avanzado monitorearse y evaluarse a sí mismos utilizando diarios de aprendizaje guiado. Nunan observó que, con el tiempo, las oportunidades para reflexionar llevaron a una mayor sensibilidad al proceso de aprendizaje. Sin embargo, el estudio por Lor (1998) de las anotaciones de los alumnos en los diarios de reflexión sugiere que muchos estudiantes tienen dificultades para reflexionar al respecto y evaluar sus aprendizajes espontáneamente, y con frecuencia no encuentran ningún valor en la auto-evaluación. En un estudio anterior sobre diarios de aprendizaje, Schärer observó asimismo que los estudiantes necesitaban ayuda considerable, y que los diarios de aprendizaje podían incluso tener un efecto desalentador en los estudiantes más débiles (1983).

Los estudios arriba mencionados apuntan a la necesidad de entrenar a los estudiantes con el fin de que sean capaces y se sientan cómodos evaluando su propio aprendizaje. La revisión de literatura hecha por Cram (1995) concluyó que la disposición y habilidad de los estudiantes para involucrarse en prácticas de auto-evaluación se incrementan con el entrenamiento. Asimismo, Cram argumenta que la auto-evaluación funciona mejor en un ambiente positivo y predecible, en el que 'los maestros valoren altamente el pensamiento y las acciones independientes; se acepten las opiniones de los estudiantes sin juzgarlos, y los reforzadores externos sean mínimos' (p. 295). Cram enfatiza la preparación del maestro como factor crucial en el éxito de la auto-evaluación.

Medios de Auto-Evaluación

Se ha desarrollado un buen número de instrumentos para la auto-evaluación, los cuales incluyen las pruebas auto-calificadas, tarjetas de avance en las cuales los estudiantes pueden apuntar si alcanzaron los objetivos predeterminados, escalas de auto-evaluación en las cuales los estudiantes calculan su capacidad en diversas áreas de la lengua o su habilidad para realizar tareas comunicativas, y diarios o registros (por ejemplo, ver Ellis y Sinclair, 1989; Lewis, 1990); McNamara y Deane, 1995; Oscarson, 1989). Los portafolios también han sido considerados como una herramienta útil para el auto-monitoreo y la auto-evaluación (Gottlieb, 1995; Smolen et al., 1995). Desde la perspectiva de la autonomía, parece ser especialmente importante que los instrumentos de auto-evaluación estimulen el auto-monitoreo formativo y un enfoque cíclico en la reevaluación de metas y planes.

La Literatura como Input de la Lengua Estudiada

Los textos escritos son probablemente la fuente más consistente y confiable de inglés para los estudiantes (Morín, 2001a). Esto sugiere un papel que los maestros deben desempeñar para ayudar a los estudiantes a comprender tales textos. Si bien es cierto que los lectores que tienen un buen conocimiento de la lengua usada en el texto pueden descifrar el significado de las palabras que no conocen en base al contexto en que éstas se usan (Stenberg y Powell, 1983), existe un límite en el número de palabras que pueden ser desconocidas sin afectar la comprensión del texto. Cuando el porcentaje de palabras desconocidas es muy alto, los lectores tendrán una mayor dificultad de utilizar el contexto para descifrar el significado de nuevas palabras. Por ende, les resultará difícil utilizar los textos como *input* para el aprendizaje de la lengua sin ayuda. Esto es especialmente cierto si los estudiantes tienen un conocimiento poco sólido del papel que juegan las formas gramaticales tales como *from, should*, y *before*, para indicar relaciones y significados en oraciones y textos (Fillmore 1997). Para que un texto sirva de *input* para el aprendizaje de la lengua, tiene que ser un texto coherente y cohesivo, bien estructurado e interesante. El contenido debe ser interesante, atraer la atención de los estudiantes de lengua, y representar un reto suficientemente grande que valga la pena el esfuerzo de leer un texto difícil de comprender. Los mejores ejemplos de tales textos se encuentran en la literatura.

El Papel del Maestro de Literatura en Inglés

De lo mencionado anteriormente se desprende que los maestros deben proporcionan el apoyo que los estudiantes requieren para comprender el texto; invitarlos a observar la forma en que se usa el lenguaje en el texto; discutir con ellos el significado e interpretación de oraciones y frases dentro del texto; ayudarlos a observar que las palabras que encuentran en un texto pueden haber sido usadas en otro texto leído; y ayudarlos a descubrir la gramática que indica relaciones tales como causa y efecto, antecedente y consecuencia, comparación y contraste, en el texto (Fillmore, 1997).

En suma, los maestros ayudan a que los textos escritos se conviertan en *input* utilizable por los estudiantes, no sólo ayudándolos a comprender el texto, sino enfocando su atención sobre la forma en que se usa la lengua en los materiales leídos.

Método de Investigación

El estudio de casos se realizó durante el semestre de otoño de 2002, e involucró dos cursos impartidos por la investigadora: Literatura Inglesa y Literatura Americana. El número total de participantes fue de 43, quienes eran estudiantes de octavo y noveno semestre de la Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada en una universidad mexicana, y cuyas edades promediaban los 22 años. Los participantes tenían un nivel de dominio del inglés como lengua extranjera que variaba de alto-intermedio a avanzado.

Durante el estudio, se pidió a los estudiantes que llenaran una forma de auto-evaluación mensual para evaluar su participación en clase, y otra para evaluar cada una de sus presentaciones orales (ver Anexos A y B). Las formas contenían los criterios sugeridos por los estudiantes de los cursos impartidos el semestre anterior. El propósito principal de llenar tales formas fue que los estudiantes adquirieran conciencia de los criterios que se usarían para su evaluación, así como ayudarlos a adquirir el hábito de observar su propio desempeño a lo largo del semestre. A este respecto, los estudiantes fueron informados de que sus auto-evaluaciones en los dos aspectos mencionados serían respetadas, excepto en los casos en que la maestra discrepara sustancialmente respecto a tales calificaciones auto-asignadas. Creo que el uso de la auto-evaluación fue importante, pues los estudiantes con frecuencia trabajan para complacer a sus maestros, raras veces preguntándose si sus esfuerzos contribuyeron a lograr metas relevantes para ellos mismos.

Los contenidos de los cursos incluyeron tanto la lista de lecturas proporcionada por la investigadora como materiales seleccionados por los propios estudiantes. Las actividades de clase consistieron principalmente en presentaciones orales de los textos asignados por la investigadora, o seleccionados por los estudiantes, y discusiones en grupo, las cuales con frecuencia se basaron en las preguntas sugeridas en el libro de texto. Asimismo, las tareas extra-clase consistieron en composiciones formuladas siguiendo sugerencias del libro de texto, a través de las cuales los estudiantes plantearon sus reflexiones acerca de temas relacionados con los textos leídos.

Al final del curso, se incluyó en el examen una pregunta-ensayo, con la que se pretendió recoger las reflexiones de los estudiantes acerca de su aprendizaje, su desempeño en el curso, y el curso en general (ver Anexo C). Tal ensayo sirvió como síntesis de todo el proceso de auto-evaluación implementado en el curso. Los ensayos fueron analizados en términos de los tres aspectos mencionados en la pregunta-ensayo (aprendizaje, desempeño, y curso). Los comentarios referidos al primer aspecto (aprendizaje) fueron analizados utilizando las categorías de aprendizaje de literatura propuesto por Purves et al. (Ver Tabla 1). Sobre este punto, se pretendió analizar los comentarios de los estudiantes en términos de aprendizajes relacionados con la literatura y aprendizaje de inglés como segunda lengua. Sin embargo, esto no fue posible, ya que, como se verá abajo, el aprendizaje de inglés se vio inmerso en el proceso de lectura, análisis y discusión de textos literarios, por lo que se consideró innecesario pretender separar ambos.

Los comentarios referidos al segundo aspecto (desempeño en el curso) fueron analizados buscando identificar los criterios de evaluación mencionados, independiente de que éstos coincidieran con los criterios explícitamente planteados en las formas de auto-evaluación proporcionadas a los estudiantes, o fueran propuestos por los propios estudiantes. Respecto al tercer aspecto (comentarios acerca del curso en general), los comentarios de los estudiantes sirvieron para identificar aciertos en la conducción del curso, dificultades y formas en que éstas pueden ser solucionadas.

Como se observará, existieron dificultades al analizar los ensayos de los participantes, debido a que con frecuencia fue difícil determinar si sus comentarios se referían a su aprendizaje, su desempeño, o el curso en general. De hecho, con frecuencia los comentarios enlazaban los tres aspectos de la pregunta.

Preguntas de Investigación

Las preguntas específicas que el estudio buscó responder fueron las siguientes:

1. ¿Cómo puede la auto-evaluación ayudar a los estudiantes universitarios de literatura en inglés a ser más conscientes y responsables de sus procesos de aprendizaje y su desempeño en el curso?
2. ¿En qué grado pueden considerarse confiables las auto-evaluaciones por los estudiantes?
3. ¿Qué tipos de tareas son más útiles para el aprendizaje de inglés en los cursos de literatura en esta lengua?
4. ¿Cómo se pueden integrar los objetivos de aprendizaje de inglés a los objetivos de aprendizaje de literatura?
5. ¿Cómo pueden los maestros de literatura en inglés ayudar a los estudiantes a usar los textos literarios como *input* para el aprendizaje de la lengua?

Resultados

Purves et al. (1995) proponen que la enseñanza de literatura se puede dividir en tres aspectos interrelacionados: conocimientos, prácticas, y hábitos (ver Tabla 1). Las interrelaciones son complejas, ya que los conocimientos de los lectores influyen en sus prácticas y preferencias, al igual que las prácticas y preferencias pueden influir en sus conocimientos. Sin embargo, los conceptos propuestos fueron útiles para analizar los comentarios expresados por los estudiantes.

Conocimiento		**Práctica**		**Hábitos**	
Textual	**Extra-textual**	**Respuestas**	**Articulación de hábitos**	**Estético**	**Opción**
Texto específico (estructuras, tema, lenguaje)	Historia y trasfondo cultural	Decodificar	Re-narrar	Evaluar	leer
Vínculos intertextuales	Vida del autor	Resumir	Criticar obras específicas	seleccionar	criticar
	Géneros, estilos	Analizar	Valorar	valorar	
	Términos críticos	Personalizar	Generalizar acerca de varias obras		
	Enfoques de respuesta	Interpretar	Recrear		

Tabla 1: Aspectos de la Enseñanza de Literatura (Purves et al. 1995)

Conocimiento Textual y Extra-textual

La mayoría de los estudiantes comentó haber mejorado sus conocimientos sobre la forma en que personas de otras culturas u otras épocas vivían, sentían o pensaban. Asimismo, los estudiantes comentaron frecuentemente haber aumentado su conocimiento de palabras, frases y expresiones a través de la lectura. En menor grado, algunos estudiantes mencionaron haber aprendido acerca de diversos autores, así como sobre los diversos estilos y géneros existentes, y las estructuras con las que se construyen los textos (ver Tabla 2).

Aspectos Mencionados	Número de Menciones
Historia y trasfondo cultural (T* y ET**)	17
Lenguaje (T)	10
Vida del Autor (ET)	3
Estructuras del texto (T)	1
Estilos y Géneros (ET)	1
Total Menciones	32

* T = textual ** ET = extratextual

Tabla 2: Conocimiento Textual y Extra-textual

Práctica de Respuestas y Articulación de Hábitos

La acción de *decodificar* fue mencionada por los alumnos como la práctica de leer, escuchar, y lograr una comprensión básica. *Resumir* fue ejemplificado como la práctica de mencionar sólo los puntos principales de un texto. Se considera que los estudiantes *analizaron* textos cuando mencionaron haber explorado diversos detalles de los mismos y ponderado su relevancia dentro del texto en su conjunto. La *personalización* resultó ser una práctica común, pues fue el medio por el que los estudiantes encontraron la relevancia del texto en sus vidas; es decir, poniéndose en el lugar de algún personaje para reflexionar sobre su situación.

Se consideró que los estudiantes *interpretaron* los textos leídos cuando comentaron haber buscado el punto más profundo sobre él, y haber formulado una opinión acerca del mismo. *Re-narrar* fue una práctica común, ya que los estudiantes hicieron esto a través de sus presentaciones orales y reportes escritos basados en sus lecturas independientes. Los estudiantes mencionaron frecuentemente haber adquirido conciencia acerca de diversos *valores* humanos reflejados en los textos. Sin embargo, como se verá abajo, el término *valorar* rara vez se refirió a aspectos estéticos de los textos leídos.

Finalmente, los estudiantes tuvieron que *recrear* los textos leídos a través de algunas tareas de composición que requerían, por ejemplo,, inventar un diálogo imaginario entre dos personajes en una situación no contemplada en el texto, o cuando agregaron detalles al texto que no estaban presentes originalmente. Considero que tales tareas fueron útiles, pues ayudaron a los estudiantes a hacer conciencia acerca de las dificultades que representa la creación literaria. Los estudiantes mencionaron asimismo que las tareas de composición los ayudaron a comprender mejor los textos leídos (ver Tabla 3).

Aspectos Mencionados	Menciones
Decodificar (leer, escuchar)	7
Resumir	2
Analizar	5
Personalizar	5
Interpretar	3
Re-narrar	6
Valorar	9
Recrear	3
Total Menciones	40

Tabla 3: Práctica de Respuestas y Articulación de Hábitos

Hábitos Estéticos y de Opción

Solamente tres estudiantes mencionaron haber leído más o haber desarrollado el gusto por la lectura como resultado del curso. Lo anterior significa que los conocimientos adquiridos por los estudiantes y las prácticas realizadas fueron insuficientes para desarrollar en ellos hábitos estéticos o de opción. Es posible que la duración del curso haya sido insuficiente para alcanzar tales metas. Sin embargo, como mencionaré abajo, es posible que se requiera asimismo una intervención pedagógica que promueva un desarrollo más efectivo de estrategias de lectura activa.

Respecto al conocimiento de historia y trasfondo cultural que fue mencionado frecuentemente, considero que esto señala la importancia de que los maestros se aseguren de crear el contexto de conocimientos previos que permitan a los estudiantes comprender la relevancia de los textos leídos. En este respecto, un enfoque multidisciplinario, que conecte el estudio de las ciencias y las humanidades con la lectura de textos literarios puede ser muy valioso (ver Tabla 4).

Estéticos		**De Opción**	
Aspectos Mencionados	**Menciones**	**Aspectos Mencionados**	**Menciones**
Evaluar	0	Leer	3
Seleccionar	0	Criticar	0
Valorar	0		
Total Menciones	0	Total Menciones	3

Tabla 4: Hábitos estéticos y de opción

Comentarios Acerca de su Propio Desempeño

Considerando que se trataba de una pregunta de examen, no es extraño que los estudiantes hicieran más comentarios positivos que negativos acerca de su desempeño (ver Tabla 5). Los estudiantes opinaron principalmente haber tenido una buena *participación* en clase, si bien, como se discutirá abajo, hubo divergencias respecto a lo que se consideraba una buena participación. De este modo, mientras algunos expresaron que limitarse a contestar las preguntas que se les formulaban era muestra de una buena participación, otros opinaron que los propios estudiantes deberían formular sus propias preguntas, con el fin de que juntos construyeran nuevas ideas a través de discusiones grupales.

Otro aspecto mencionado frecuentemente como signo de un buen desempeño en el curso fue haber cumplido con tarea de *leer* los textos asignados. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los estudiantes no dieron muchos detalles cerca de la forma en que realizaron tal actividad. Como excepción, una estudiante reportó haber re-leído varias veces los textos que fueron de su agrado. Sobre este particular, es posible que el curso no haya proporcionado a los estudiantes suficiente ayuda par desarrollar una lectura estratégica más eficaz.

Un tercer aspecto importante de su desempeño mencionado por los estudiantes fueron las *presentaciones* orales, las cuales, en su opinión, les ayudaron a aumentar su fluidez, al expresarse en sus propias palabras, a perder el miedo de hablar en público, y sintetizar un texto para presentar sólo los puntos principales. En menor grado, los estudiantes mencionaron la asistencia, puntualidad, y realización de tareas extra-clase, entre otros, como aspectos positivos de su desempeño en el curso.

Respecto a los aspectos negativos de su propio desempeño, los estudiantes mencionaron principalmente *inasistencias* y *retardos* como factores que afectaron negativamente su desempeño. Asimismo, algunos reconocieron no haber dedicado al curso la *atención* debida. En uno de estos casos, una estudiante reconoció no haber dedicado el tiempo necesario al seleccionar un texto adecuado para su tarea de lectura independiente, lo cual había resultado en una presentación poco interesante. En otros casos, los estudiantes reconocieron haber tenido una pobre participación, y no haber realizado las tareas extra-clase asignadas.

Comentarios Positivos		**Auto-Crítica**	
Aspectos Mencionados	**Menciones**	**Aspecto Mencionado**	**Menciones**
Buena participación	17	Inasistencias	8
Lectura	13	Retardos	7
Presentaciones orales	12	Participación deficiente	6
Puntualidad	6	No entregar tareas	4
Asistencia	5	Falta de tiempo, dedicación	5
Uso del Diccionario	4	Problemas con el grupo	1
Hacer las tareas	3	No leer	1
Escuchar a los demás	2		
Tener el material	1		
Total Menciones	64	Total Menciones	32

Tabla 5: Comentarios Acerca de su Desempeño en el Curso

Comentarios Acerca del Curso

Los estudiantes comentaron principalmente haber encontrado el *curso interesante*, al igual que los textos leídos. Lo anterior, a pesar de que, como se verá, existieron inconformidades acerca de algunos textos, además de objeciones por la *cantidad* de material de lectura asignado. La segunda mención positiva sobre el curso se refirió a diversos aspectos del trabajo de la *maestra*, de quien muchos estudiantes señalaron había aportado valiosa información que les permitió comprender y apreciar los textos. Otros aspectos del curso mencionados frecuentemente como positivos para su aprendizaje fueron las presentaciones orales, y las discusiones grupales, así como el ambiente relajado en el que se realizó el curso. En menor grado, los estudiantes opinaron que el uso de la auto-evaluación y la buena organización del curso habían influido positivamente en su desempeño en el curso.

Como ya mencioné, algunos participantes consideraron que la cantidad o extensión del material de lectura asignado había sido excesiva, y que algunas lecturas no habían resultado de su interés, mientras que otras (poemas) eran difíciles de comprender. En menor grado, los participantes de un grupo en particular consideraron que éste era demasiado numeroso (30 estudiantes), y que algunos estudiantes no había observado muy buena conducta; ni tenido una buena participación en clase, por lo que se requería que fuesen más activos, y la clase más dinámica. Finalmente, dos estudiantes estuvieron en desacuerdo con los criterios de evaluación utilizados, pues en un caso la estudiante consideraba que la discusión grupal de los temas leídos era innecesaria, mientras que en el otro ésta consideraba que la opinión más importante era la de la maestra. Solamente una estudiante se quejó por la necesidad de utilizar su imaginación creativa para realizar las tareas de composición, y otra propuso como un medio alternativo de presentar los textos el uso de *skits* o *role play*, lo cual representó la propuesta de utilizar *enfoques de respuesta* alternativos (Purves 1995).

Aspectos Positivos		**Críticas y Sugerencias**	
Aspectos Mencionados	**Menciones**	**Aspectos Mencionados**	**Menciones**
Lecturas interesantes, relevantes	14	Demasiadas lecturas	6
Maestra (conocimiento, paciencia, etc)	10	Poemas difíciles de comprender	4
Participación en clase (discutir, etc.)	9	Lecturas no interesantes	4
Ambiente agradable	7	Grupo muy numeroso	3
Presentaciones orales	7	Criterios de evaluación no-relevantes	2
Auto-evaluación	4	Pobre conducta del grupo	2
Buena organización	3	Estudiantes poco activos	2
Retroalimentación	1	Clase más dinámica (sugerencia)	2
Aprendizaje independiente	1	Vocabulario difícil	1
Uso del diccionario	1	Composiciones requieren imaginación	1
Tareas de composición	1	Horario muy tarde	1
Reto, dificultad	1	Más tiempo para lectura independiente (sugerencia)	1
		Crear *skits* para comprender mejor (sugerencia)	1
		Alumnos deberían formular preguntas	1
Total Menciones	59	Total Menciones	31

Tabla 6: Comentarios Acerca del Curso

Auto-Calificaciones y Calificaciones por la Investigadora

Como indica la Tabla 7, sólo 33 del total de 43 participantes se asignó una calificación. Sin embargo, otros valoraron su desempeño cualitativamente, opinando que merecían una "alta" calificación. Tales casos no fueron incluidos debido a la imposibilidad de traducir tal apreciación a un término numérico. Como se puede observar, el promedio de auto-calificaciones es muy similar al promedio de calificaciones asignadas por la maestra al grupo, lo cual probablemente refleja el conocimiento por los participantes de los criterios utilizados, además del grado de honestidad con la que observaron y calificaron su propio desempeño. Sobre este punto, como ya indiqué arriba, las calificaciones asignadas por la maestra tomaron en consideración las auto-evaluaciones hechas por los estudiantes respecto de sus presentaciones orales y participación en clase, las cuales representaron un 50% de su calificación global. Sin embargo, los estudiantes fueron conscientes de que la maestra conservó siempre la prerrogativa de modificar tales calificaciones según su propio criterio.

Finalmente, considero satisfactorio que la mayoría de los estudiantes haya aceptado evaluar su desempeño, así como opinar acerca de la calificación que creían merecer. El hecho de que se hayan referido a sus aciertos y errores muestra el grado de conciencia alcanzado acerca del papel que les corresponde asumir, lo cual los hace estudiantes más responsables y autónomos.

Promedio de Auto-Calificaciones	Promedio Calificaciones Asignadas
88.33*	90.35**

* Sólo 33 estudiantes se asignaron calificación.

** El total de estudiantes evaluados fue 43.

Tabla 7: Auto-Calificaciones y Calificaciones por la Investigadora

Discusión

Como indiqué arriba, la mayoría de los estudiantes aludieron a la participación en clase como un factor positivo en su aprendizaje. Sin embargo, no todos coincidieron respecto a lo que podría considerarse una buena participación. Mientras que algunos estudiantes consideraron que habían tenido una buena participación por haber contestado las preguntas que en lo particular se les formularan, limitándose de este modo a una actitud reactiva; otros pensaban que juntos habían construido nuevas ideas, al aprender a aceptar las de otros y desarrollar nuevos puntos de vista. Además, un estudiante propuso que eran éstos quienes debían formular las preguntas a discutir, en vez de limitarse a responder o discutir preguntas predeterminadas. Esto último se relaciona con el desarrollo de la práctica y posterior hábito de valorar. Si bien fueron muchos los estudiantes que dijeron haber adquirido conciencia acerca de los valores reflejados en los textos leídos, debe tenerse en cuenta que tales respuestas probablemente fueron influidas por la pregunta 1 del examen final, la cual requería precisamente la reflexión acerca de los valores humanos reflejados en los textos leídos.

Sin embargo, considero que no se alcanzó la meta de adquirir el hábito estético de valorar una obra, del mismo modo que no se lograron desarrollar los hábitos de leer y criticar pues, como se mencionó arriba, sólo tres estudiantes indicaron haber desarrollado el gusto por la lectura, o haber leído más de lo requerido como consecuencia de la experiencia del curso.

Considero que el principal obstáculo que impidió desarrollar tales hábitos fue el hecho de que el curso se apoyó pedagógicamente en materiales preestablecidos, tales como los cuestionarios para discusión que aparecían en los libros de texto, al grado de que con frecuencia los estudiantes se preocuparon más por conocer las notas que aparecían como posibles respuestas en las ediciones del maestro, a las cuales tuvieron libre acceso en la biblioteca. El resultado de tal situación fue que los estudiantes, al realizar las actividades en clase, se enfocaron con demasiada frecuencia en reproducir las respuestas dadas a las preguntas formuladas previamente, evitando en muchos casos la interacción directa con los textos, sin la interferencia de los medios pedagógicos usados.

De esta forma, la interacción de los estudiantes en clase en muchos casos no fue realmente con el texto, sino con otros estudiantes y la maestra. Como resultado, es posible que haya ocurrido una sensibilización por los estudiantes acerca de diversos temas y valores. Sin embargo, con excepción de algunos casos, una sensibilización acerca de los valores estéticos de los textos no ocurrió. Evidencia de lo anterior fue el número importante de estudiantes que se quejaron por las serias dificultades que tuvieron para comprender poemas, además de otros textos que, por su antigüedad, carecieron en su opinión de la relevancia suficiente que los motivara a realizar el esfuerzo de leerlos.

Lo anterior nos lleva a coincidir con Fillmore (1997), quien sugiere que, si bien la literatura puede ser una fuente importante de *input* de la lengua estudiada, es necesario realizar una selección cuidadosa de los textos, teniendo en cuenta su posible relevancia para los estudiantes. Esto es especialmente importante cuando el número de palabras desconocidas en los textos seleccionados es alto, en cuyo caso se requiere prestar especial atención a tal problema con el fin de auxiliar a los lectores, no sólo en la comprensión del texto, sino asimismo en el desarrollo de estrategias que les permitan analizar e interpretar el texto en su conjunto (Morín, 2001b).

Conclusiones

La auto-evaluación ayuda a los estudiantes de literatura en inglés a ser más conscientes y responsables de sus aprendizajes, quienes deben buscar las respuestas sobre su desempeño en sus propios conocimientos, prácticas y hábitos. La auto-evaluación puede ser una práctica confiable, en la medida de que se planteen explícitamente los criterios que se usarán como referencia, y se invite a los estudiantes a participar en la formulación de sus metas de aprendizaje.

Las tareas de aprendizaje más útiles para los estudiantes de literatura en inglés son aquéllas que les permiten interactuar con la literatura, sus compañeros y maestros, para construir sus propias interpretaciones de los textos leídos. Los maestros pueden ayudar a sus estudiantes a utilizar los textos literarios como *input* de la lengua estudiada seleccionando textos relevantes para los estudiantes; y ayudándolos a comprender el contexto en el cual éstos fueron escritos y a desarrollar estrategias efectivas de lectura que les permitan identificar las estructuras de los textos, y aprender nuevas palabras.

Considero que el hecho de que los participantes fueron estudiantes de literatura en la lengua que buscaban aprender (inglés) los llevó a adquirir conciencia de la utilidad de leer textos en inglés, así como hablar y escribir sobre ellos, como medios para desarrollar sus conocimientos y habilidades en esa lengua. Por otro lado, la auto-evaluación llevó a los estudiantes a reflexionar asimismo acerca de conocimientos, habilidades, y hábitos más específicos; los cuales igualmente contribuyen al doble propósito de la apreciación literaria y la adquisición de una lengua. Los objetivos de aprendizaje de inglés no sólo son compatibles con los de los cursos de literatura, sino que ésta proporciona el contexto ideal en el que se pueden desarrollar las artes del lenguaje: hablar, escuchar, leer y escribir.

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Anexo A
Self-Assessment Form for Class Participation

Name ____Month ___________Total Score _______

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Student attended class regularly and arrived on time.					
2. Student read assigned materials carefully and thoroughly prior to coming to class.					
3. Student used a dictionary to check the meaning of unfamiliar words found in reading texts assigned.					
4. Student listened to classmates' and teacher's comments/presentations attentively.					
5. Student contributed to class discussions with comments and/or questions.					

How to score: Excellent = 100 Very Good = 85 Good = 70 Fair = 55 Poor = 0
Add all your scores, and divide by five.

Comments

____

____

Anexo B
Self-Assessment Sheet for Oral Presentations

Name ___________________ Date ___________ Total Score ____________

Title of Presentation _________________________ Duration _______ minutes

Summary of Presentation

____

____

____

Comments

____

____

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Presenter spoke loudly.					
2. Presenter demonstrated knowledge of the topic.					
3. Presenter arranged class in a circle.					
4. Presenter engaged audience in discussion of topic.					
5. Presenter arrived on time.					
6. Presenter spoke, not read (proceeded from general to specific details).					
7. Presenter is dynamic, energizes audience.					
8. Presenter is succinct and direct; doesn't ramble.					
9. Presenter explained all the main points.					
10. Presenter ensured that everyone in the audience paid attention.					

How to score: Excellent = 100 Very Good = 85 Good = 70 Fair = 55
Poor = 0 Add all your scores, and divide by ten.

Anexo C

Examen Final de los Cursos de Literatura (Americana e Inglesa)

1. Louise M. Rosenblatt (1995) wrote:

> When we are helping students to better techniques of reading through sensitivity to diction, tone, structure, image, symbol, narrative movement, we are also helping them make the more refined responses that are ultimately the source of human understanding and sensitivity to human values. (1995, p. 276)

Think about the texts read in this course and write a 1000-word essay (approx. 2 pages) discussing how such texts might help readers "make the more refined responses that are ultimately the source of human understanding and sensitivity to human values." In other words, discuss how the texts read might contribute to making readers more understanding and sensitive people. Give examples from the texts read whenever possible.

2. Write a short essay (3-5 paragraphs) discussing the following:

- Your learning processes in this course: your successes and failures.
- Your work in this course. Refer to the aspects listed in the Self-Assessment Forms for Oral Presentations and Class Participation.
- General comments about the course.
- Based on all of the above, mention what grade you think you deserve to get in this course.

Use of Peer Revision and Editing in ESL / EFL Writing [1]

MARY MEINECKE, UNIVERSITY OF MONTERREY

Introduction

The concept of peer editing is not new. In Dunning and Redd's (1976) summary of their fifty years of writing research, they identify six tenets of writing instruction. One of these tenets is: 'Students need help during the writing process' (p. 2). This help may come in the form of feedback to the students on their writing. It may seem that having to write feedback to the thirty or forty students we have in each class is a titanic task, but feedback does not necessarily have to come exclusively from the teacher; it can also come from other students in the form of peer revision and editing. By implementing peer revision and editing, the teacher is encouraging the students to give, solicit, and respond to feedback in their writing. Additionally, peer editing can be used for any level of English; this is not a tool for exclusive use at the advanced level (Byrd 1994). Obviously, the tasks done by the students in this activity will vary according to their level and fluency in English.

This article aims to address the following points:

- The nature of peer revision and editing
- Advantages of peer revision and editing
- Some practical tips for classroom use
- Keys for making peer revision and editing work in the classroom

Peer Revision and Editing

Writing is a process of starting out with an idea, writing it down on paper, and then revising, editing, and correcting the written work to make it clearer and more understandable. The process involves continuously writing, reading and rewriting until in the end you have the draft which best expresses your original idea as closely as possible. Indeed, this process of improvement and correction is true of any language learning activity. Accepting the widespread idea in education and ESL that the teacher has the role of a facilitator, teachers can turn their classrooms into collaborative communities of self-sufficient learners. Grant-Davie and Shapiro (1987) suggest that the teachers need to re-evaluate their role as examiners who spend great amounts of time evaluating each students' writing, and to assume that of facilitators who help and encourage students to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and then improve upon their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. In addition, many respected teachers and writing experts have recommended the use of peer revision and editing in teaching writing in both L1 and L2. According to Villamil and de Guerrero's study (1998) on the impact of peer revision at the university level, 74% of the writers incorporated the comments and changes from peer revision in their final drafts. Additionally, Joyce (1997), in her study evaluating the use of specific teaching techniques for improving the writing of 7th grade ESL stu-

[1] This is a refereed article.

dents, found significant improvement in students' writing due to the use of peer editing.

However, while many investigators mention only peer editing, I will take the process one step further and call it peer revision and editing. Why? Because in the revision stage the editor offers comments and additional information or examples that could be included to clarify and support the main idea, looks at unclear sections, and offers comments about the organization and sequence of ideas in the written work. Once the writer has read the editor's comments and rewritten the work, the editor checks the writing again and corrects the spelling, punctuation, grammar, and transition and signal words. This review of the text is the editing stage of the process. In other words, revision checks the content while editing checks the mechanics or syntax of the writing (Gaudiana 1981). In each stage of revision or editing, the editor will review or read the text several times to look at specific areas.

I define peer revision and editing as the correction and feedback of written work carried out among classmates. Students can simply exchange their own texts or the teacher can give out an anonymous sample for students to revise and edit. In this paper, the student who wrote the piece of writing is referred to as the "writer" and the student who will be revising and editing, as the "editor". The revision and editing part of the writing process is done in class under the supervision of the teacher while the rewriting of the text can be done outside of class.

Advantages of Peer Revision and Editing

The advantages that editors, writers, and teachers receive from this process are:

The Editors:

1. Develop tools for the evaluation of written work
2. Learn critical thinking skills
3. Learn to recognize errors such as misspelled words, grammar errors (e.g. subject-verb agreement), etc.
4. Learn to correct errors and identify problems in their peers' writing as well as to transfer these skills to their own writing.
5. Learn how to evaluate both the form and the content of the writing, thus giving the students a much more developed sense of the writing process, and a better awareness of spelling and punctuation rules, etc. This, in turn, helps the students understand how they, themselves, will be evaluated later on by the teacher.
6. Are made more sensitive to the grading process.
7. Can use their peers' work as a source of ideas and vocabulary.

The Writers:

1. Receive feedback on the form and content of their work
2. Are given an opportunity to correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes, clarify unclear language and improve their writing.
3. Get ideas and suggestions for content.

4. Are made aware that other students have similar writing problems (Hafernik 1983).
5. Are made more sensitive to the grading process.
6. Can use their peers' revisions as a source of ideas and vocabulary.
7. Are helped with their language acquisition and development.
8. Learn to deal with and accept constructive criticism and suggestions.

The Teachers:

1. Play their role of facilitator by providing the students with practice to fully develop their writing and language skills.
2. Save time with their own revision of students' work because many errors will be corrected before the final written draft reaches them.
3. Allow their students to become more self-sufficient learners and writers.
4. Receive fewer student disputes over the grade assigned to their written work (Johnson 2001).
5. May see an improvement in the classroom atmosphere because students learn to depend on each other for help and support (Hafernik 1983).

As can be seen, this approach is beneficial for both the teacher and the students, "because the process teaches [students] many things better than [teachers] can" (Kirby and Liner, 1988: 230), and it allows students to become more self-sufficient and not to have to depend on the teacher to correct every error.

Some practical tips for classroom use

1. Have the students bring a rough or first draft of their written work to class. It is preferable that the rough draft be handwritten to avoid problems with plagiarism and to encourage creativity. Have the student-authors write their names on the texts.
2. Have the editors write their names on the written work too. Explain to the students that all great writers give their rough drafts to their editors for correction and feedback several times before the manuscript is published and the same will be true in this class.
3. Have students exchange papers. Tell the students they will be the editors of the particular written work they have received. The teacher may need to supervise the appropriate exchange of papers.
4. Give specific instructions as to what the students are revising or editing for. First comes revision, then the editing. The editors check for things the writers should already know or have specifically learned in the class. A clear focus is central to the process so that the students know exactly what they should be concentrating on.
5. In addition, students should use all available resources, i.e. other students, the teacher, a dictionary, a grammar book, a guide to punctuation rules, etc., to achieve better, clearer, more coherent, and more comprehensible writing.

For example, with beginner students who have written a paragraph about what they did the previous weekend, the editor would be checking for, in the first phase of revision, the organization and sequence of ideas and the clarity of the content (See Appendix A). In the second, editing phase, the editor would circle and correct any misspelled words and check that all verbs are in the appropriate tense. (See Appendix B) Students should have access to an English-only dictionary during the editing process. By using an English-only dictionary, students are forced to think in English which is actually the idea or point of the class. Many times when students use an English-Spanish dictionary, they try to directly translate from Spanish to English with the end result being a text that sounds strange and in addition, the author's original idea has been changed or lost. There are clear differences between written work in Spanish and in English, e.g., the length of sentences in written Spanish is much longer than in written English.

With an advanced group that has written a five-paragraph essay on "the effect of movies and television on people's behaviour," the editor would underline all the topic sentences in the first stage of the revision; second, verify that all supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence of each paragraph; and third, give suggestions on any details or specific experiences that could help make the essay more convincing and complete. In the fourth reading of the text, the editor would circle and correct any misspelled words. In the fifth stage, the editor would circle the signal words (e.g., in addition, on the other hand, etc.) and would suggest any other signal words that could be included. Once again, students should have access to an English-only dictionary and a list of signal words during this editing phase.

At the end of the revision or editing period, have the editors return the written texts to the writers. Then the writers read the comments and take them home for a rewrite. At the end of several rounds of peer revision, editing, and rewrites, the writers turn in all their revisions or copies for evaluation by the teacher. The teacher only glances at the revisions to verify that the student has been constantly working on the written text. Only the final revision is looked at in detail.

Variation

Omaggio has suggested that "the class editing process may be most effective if students work on anonymous writing samples provided from outside their own group, thus eliminating any reluctance to critique the samples for fear of hurting someone's feelings" (1993:339). Hafernik (1983) has also recommended using anonymous writing samples. These samples can come from previous semesters or from another group in the same semester. The teacher could identify the writer by assigning random numbers to the papers or by using the students' identification or student numbers. Thus, the editors only see a number instead of a name. Using this approach, each student works with a different text.

Another option, which is excellent for first-time practice in the classroom, is for the teacher to choose one written work and mask the student's name. The sample can come from the teacher's classes of previous years or another class. The teacher photocopies the sample and gives it out to the class to revise and edit together. This is an excellent activity for the students to get training in using the peer revision and editing process. If the teacher has access to an overhead projector, I highly recommend making an overhead transparency of the written sample, as this truly facilitates the process, because the students can clearly see the specific suggestions for changes they decide on as a class.

Keys for Making Peer Revision and Editing Work in the Classroom

1. Present the peer revision and editing activity in a positive way to the class.

2. Students need to understand that all edited drafts and rewrites will be turned in and evaluated by the teacher on a specified date.
3. Students need to feel comfortable knowing that they will be exchanging, revising, and editing each others' work throughout the semester. Think of your classroom as a collaborative learning environment.
4. Designate a time each week for this activity, as feedback and correction are an essential part of the writing process.
5. Students must be coached on the methods (Hafernik, 1983).
6. Students should be encouraged to pay particular attention to edit what they should already know or have studied in class.
7. Give students a checklist or specific questions to help them focus on specific points.
8. The teacher needs to direct, guide, help, and answer students' questions during the peer revision and editing process. Several students will probably need help with editing. It is most helpful if the teacher randomly checks the editors' work during and after the editing phase.

From my experience, when first implementing this activity in the classroom, students usually feel self-conscious and possibly threatened by the criticisms and suggestions of their fellow students. Some students will not be critical enough at the beginning to avoid hurting other students' feelings. However, as the students gain more experience and learn that the criticism and suggestions actually improve their writing and also their grades, they loosen up and become more comfortable and accepting of the peer revision and editing activities. I have even had students demand peer revision and editing. They do not just want to turn in their writing to the teacher directly without having received some feedback from their classmates first.

In addition, the practice of changing editing partners every week or month allows the students the opportunity to work with editors with different skills and fluency levels in English and in writing. Secondly, each new editing partner brings a new perspective and ideas for improving the content. Furthermore, some students tend to work well together while others do not. In conclusion, by rotating the pairs of writers and editors, the student has the opportunity to receive different ideas and perspectives on topics, be exposed to a larger variety of English skill levels, and get to know more of their fellow students.

Conclusion

Peer revision and editing can be beneficial for both teachers and students in the language learning process. Application of this approach in the classroom shows that peer editors help their classmates detect problems in order for them to improve their writing. Moreover, this approach helps teachers save time and allows their students to become self-sufficient writers and learners, which is actually the "true goal" of teaching and learning a language.

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Appendix A

List of Possible Peer Revision Tasks (Content)

1. Underline topic sentences
2. Check clarity
3. Check coherence
4. Check logical order
5. Check that all supporting sentences relate to the topic sentences.
6. Offer suggestions for improvement
7. Circle any parts that are not clear or understandable
8. Give feedback on …….
9. Write comments on ….
10. Offer suggestions on…..

Appendix B

List of Possible Peer Editing Tasks (Syntax)

1. Correct misspelled words
2. Check subject-verb agreement
3. Check for appropriate verb tense
4. Check transition words (first, second, then, after, before)
5. Check signal words (for example, in addition, on the other hand)
6. Check format (format given by teacher)
7. Correct run-on sentences
8. Correct punctuation

The Effect of a Language Learning Strategy Component in an English Course at the University of Quintana Roo

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Introduction

The following study reflects the effect which the implementation of particular learning strategies in an English course had on a group of students at the University of Quintana Roo. The rationale for undertaking this study was the observation that those students who seemed to make a great effort in their studies were not obtaining the results they desired. As pointed out by Brown, "A language is probably the most complex set of skills one could ever seek to acquire; therefore, an investment is necessary in the form of developing multiple layers of strategies for getting that language into one's brain" (Brown 1994:190).

In order to help students face the complex and demanding process of learning a second language, I implemented a Basic Training Programme (BTP) during the 1998 spring semester. The objectives of this programme were to give students the opportunity (1) to become aware of their learning styles, (2) to know what a learning strategy is, (3) to understand how strategies can help them in the learning process, (4) to know how to apply the strategies to specific learning activities and to know how to transfer a strategy from one activity to another so as to enhance their ability to self-direct the use of strategies in the future, and finally (5) to reflect on the effectiveness of a strategy for their particular needs.

Previous Studies on Learning Strategies

The first studies in the area of learning strategies were carried out by Stern (1975), Rubin (1975) and Naiman et al. (1978). These three studies established the general characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLL). These characteristics are presented in the following table in a comparative way to show how the findings of the studies relate to each other.

Stern 1975	Rubin 1975	Naiman et al. 1978
Have a personal learning style or positive learning strategy		Find a learning style that suits them
Have an active approach to the learning task		Involve themselves in the language learning process
Have a tolerant and out-going approach to the target language and its speakers	Are willing and accurate guessers	
Have technical know-how of how to tackle a language		Take into account the demands that L2 learning imposes
Have a methodical but flexible approach, developing the new language into an ordered system and constantly revising it.	Are prepared to attend to form	Develop an awareness of language both as system and as communication
Are constantly searching for meaning	Attend to meaning	
Are willing to practise	Practise	
Are willing to use the language in real communication.	Have a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from communication	Are not inhibited.
Self-monitor and have a critical sensitivity to language use	Monitor their own speech and that of others	Pay constant attention to expanding their language knowledge
Develop the second language more and more as a separate reference system and learn to think in it		Develop the L2 as a separate system

Table 1: Characteristics of Good Language Learners in the Early Studies Compared

These initial studies created an interest in knowing more about learning strategies and their influence on the second-language and foreign-language learning processes. With these studies as a basis, different research studies have been carried out over the years. The importance of motivation, the use of strategies and the need for strategy training are especially reflected in the work that has been done since then.

Strategies are defined as "a choice that the learner makes while learning or using the second language that affects learning" (Cook 1996:103). Students consciously apply strategies; strategies are a choice they make in order to get the best results from their language learning experience.

Learning styles differ from learning strategies in that styles are unconscious, stable preferences which perceive and process information, whereas strategies are conscious measures taken to improve an individual's day-to-day learning activities.

Strategy research has led to a distinction between strategies employed for different purposes: to communicate; to perform in the language; to retrieve information; and to be used in the processes of speaking, listening, reading and writing, etc. Thus, we find Cohen (1998) categorising strategies as 1) those for the use of language and 2) those for learning the language. He concludes that:

> Second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together they constitute the steps or actions consciously selected by learners either to improve the learning, the use of it or both (Cohen 1998:5).

The use of strategies is affected by different factors (Oxford and Crookall 1989; Oxford 1989; Rubin 1975). Oxford (1989) reported a study that researched the effect of different variables on the use of strategies such as the language being learnt, duration of study, degree of awareness, age, gender, attitudes, motivation, language learning goals, personal characteristics, learning style, aptitude, career orientation, national origin, language teaching methods and task requirements. All of these variables play a role in the use of learning strategies by students.

Motivation is considered to be the key to success not only in the use of strategies but also in all aspects of language learning. Beliefs about the success or failure in different human behaviours are related to individualised assumptions of how much control a person has over the situation (Schunk 1991; Rotter 1982). Therefore, the amount of individual involvement in the activities for learning a language may enhance motivation to practise strategies. Also, it is important to make students aware that learning is a process which *can* be modified by their active influence. Students can be motivated to use strategies by being knowledgeable about the effect they can have on the learning process, and by making an effort and actively applying strategies to their learning. Learners may put any strategy into practice because they have decided to do so, and not because a teacher has insisted that they do so. This is also related to the desire to be autonomous as learners. Students who are given the opportunity to know a variety of strategies can choose to practise those they feel best motivated by.

Various taxonomies of learning strategies have been designed; (Rubin 1981; O'Malley and Chamot 1990; and Oxford 1990). The taxonomy elaborated by Oxford incorporates most of the findings of previous research.

These findings have made people in the field of language learning aware of strategy use and its potential and shown that it is important that all professionals of second- and foreign-language learning be conscious of the useful tool which strategies represent for our students. Teachers around the world can explore the usefulness of strategies with pertinent adaptations to particular teaching contexts. Even though strategies may not be the solution to all the problems in a specific teaching environment, they can help our students to be aware of the effort that is necessary in the process of learning a language. By making learners aware of the benefits of strategy use, we are training them to be more self-directed with regard to what to practise and how to practise, and this can motivate them to seek new and different experiences during the learning process. Cook emphasises the need for learners' awareness and self-direction through learner training:

> The students must be encouraged to develop independence inside and outside the classroom. Partly this can be achieved through 'learner training': equipping the students with the means to guide themselves by explaining strategies to them. The idea of learner training shades over into self-directed learning, in which the students take on responsibility for their learning (Cook 2001:129-130).

Subjects

The sample consisted of 22 students, 5 men and 17 women, with an age range from 18 to 26 years. The average length of time these students had been learning English was 9 years. Although all 22 students were studying to become English language teachers, not all had the same desire to become teachers, since some were studying the undergraduate degree programme in English language teaching simply because this was the only option open to them for studying at the university.

Instruments

For the purposes of this study, four different instruments were used:

1. The first instrument was a background questionnaire which provided general information about the participants in the study such as: age, gender, number of years studying English, and the activity they enjoyed the most when studying English (see Appendix 1).
2. The second instrument was the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Rebecca Oxford (Oxford, 1990). The SILL was applied twice: once before and once after the strategy training programme in order to compare the results for the four groups of strategies included in the BTP programme.
3. The third instrument was a learning diary in which students recorded their strategy use and wrote freely about the way they felt while employing a specific strategy or group of strategies. This instrument was most revealing because students expressed their feelings openly.
4. The fourth instrument was a final questionnaire in which students answered three closed questions and one open question. The closed questions were designed to determine whether students knew about a particular strategy before the programme, if they had actually used that strategy, and if the BTP had helped them in any way, as well as to know their specific opinions about the BTP. (see Appendix 2).

Procedure

The first step in developing this programme was to put together a required reference reading list which included readings, articles and activities in English and Spanish regarding learning styles and strategy practice. I decided to give students this material so that they could become familiarised with the topic before asking them to practise a specific strategy. These references were very helpful for the students during the BTP.

The Oxford typology of strategies was used as a basis for the training programme. According to the information obtained from the first application of the SILL, the strategies that needed particular attention were the 1) metacognitive, 2) affective, 3) cognitive and 4) memory groups. Thus, the BTP focused on practicing these four groups.

During the first two weeks of the semester, an introduction to the programme was given by providing explanations, readings, discussions and activities concerning learning styles and strategies. Students were encouraged to analyse their learning behaviour in order to identify their own learning styles. They were then introduced to the use of learning strategies through an explanation and demonstration of the classification employed by Oxford. Students were shown the subgroups of strategies for each of the groups included in the training programme. Some strategies from each group were practised in order to give students an idea of what would be expected of them in the following months.

After the two introductory weeks, students were instructed to use any strategy from the four groups already specified and to apply them to any activity while inside or outside of the classroom. Students were encouraged to practise the strategy of their choice during the lessons and also outside of the language class, and for two weeks they had to report about their practice in a diary entry.

Guidelines for the entries in the students' diaries were established. Students were responsible for handing in their diaries every two weeks, and were asked to focus their writing on the following questions:

1. What did you do?
2. What did you learn?
3. How did you feel?
4. What would you like to do (for the following two weeks) ?

The first question was designed to establish what students had been doing. The second aimed at discovering whether they had found the strategy helpful or not. The third question was designed to elicit their feelings about practising the strategy, while the fourth aimed at guiding students toward the use of another, usually different strategy in the following two weeks. Finally, students answered the SILL for the second time at the end of the term.

Results

Students were given the option of marking different reasons as the rationale for learning the foreign language. Table 2 shows the results of Question Number 12 of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) regarding the reasons why the students were studying English

Reason	Times marked
To make friends	11 students
Culture	13 students
Travel	15 students
Interest in the Foreign Language	19 students
Future career	21 students
To graduate	22 students

Table 2: Options marked by students as their reason for learning English. (Total number of subjects: 22)

All of the respondents stated that they enjoyed learning English (which is the language all of them reported studying). Only four had studied another foreign language previously. Of the 22 students who participated in the study, 22 considered their English language learning to be a means to graduate, and 21 considered it to be useful for their future careers. Although students had different levels of motivation for studying for a degree, they all considered English important for their future careers. This was because, despite the fact that some students were only enrolled in the undergraduate programme in English in order to transfer to their first choice of study in their second year, they would eventually need to pass a Cambridge-recognised examination in order to graduate. This explains the importance of English for all of them. They realised that they were engaged in something productive in that gap year that would help them to graduate, whatever their degree choice ultimately might be. So, even though they did not all want to become English teachers, they all considered English important.

The first application of the SILL showed that this group of students scored the lowest in the affective group of strategies (3.31%). It was important, then, to develop those affective abilities to help the students cope with the demands, frustrations and anxieties involved in the learning of a foreign-language. The affective aspect in the learning process should be very carefully addressed. If we as facilitators of the language learning process inspire our students to feel confident, trusting, and safe, they will be willing to do the different activities asked of them and, gradually, will become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The social strategies group received the highest percentage of the students' responses. This result suggests that students already used co-operation with classmates, teachers and native speakers when the opportunity arose. Compared with some of the other categories, memory strategies scored relatively low (3.40%); This fact can be explained by the students' tendency to focus only on rote memorisation, to the exclusion of any other memory technique for recalling information. It was therefore important to show students a variety of techniques for committing language items to memory.

Cognitive strategies, which are usually considered most important in foreign-language learning (Wenden and Rubin 1987; Oxford 1990; O'Malley and Chamot 1990), were also represented by a low score (3.55%). It was therefore necessary to reinforce this group of strategies with this particular sample of students. Metacognitive strategies were also included in the BTP because students needed to be instructed in ways of organising their study. Mexican students in general assume that studying means memorisation, so they tend to study almost exclusively for examination purposes and are not used to establishing a regular study schedule that would allow them to investigate further what was explained by the teacher in class. It was therefore fundamental to start fostering in them the need to invest time in the learning process by means of a timetable they themselves could design which would include some specific time for further exploring particular topics that were not clear to them, or for practising skills they were not proficient in. Finally, compensation strategies achieved a fair rating (3.47%) in relation to the other five groups of strategies. This demonstrated that students were making use of some strategies to compensate for the unfamiliar meanings of words or even of entire topics.

The Basic Training Programme allowed students to choose the particular strategies which they considered to be beneficial for them through an analysis of their learning styles and goals for the course. One of the first tasks they performed was an analysis to find out their own preferred learning style. This was important because I wanted students to see the close relationship between styles and strategies. After finding out their preferred learning styles, students were asked to determine if the strategies they already practised were, in fact, in accordance with their learning styles. Not surprisingly, some were and some were not; in both instances students had the opportunity to reflect upon the helpfulness of those strategies and to experiment with different ones every two weeks. The activity of choosing strategies was aimed at developing student responsibility and self-direction so that students could decide for themselves what to do, without the teacher directing them to use a particular strategy for a specific activity. Also, through their journal entries the students had an opportunity to reflect on whether they found the chosen strategies to be effective, enjoyable and useful for the purpose they had in mind when selecting them. As a result, the students were simultaneously reflecting on and becoming aware of the different aspects involved in the language-learning process. I considered this factor a very important one since sometimes English teaching and learning are considered "easy" and students can benefit by becoming more aware of what English teaching and learning realistically involve.

At the beginning of the programme, some students were reluctant to participate, so I had to convince them through individual tutorials of the benefits they would achieve from it, not only for my course but also for courses in their field of study in general. I had to make a great effort during the first two weeks of the semester to arouse students' interest and encourage their involvement. As the programme progressed, students changed their views. Some who were initially reluctant even suggested modifications of the strategies in order to better suit their particular purposes. Also, through the comments in their diaries I could verify that they were indeed reflecting on their learning.

> *During these two weeks, I continued practicing the strategy: Using imagery. I read different kind of articles for having many vocabulary. I read articles like: The truth story of Nancy Nelson, it's about a woman who was very strong when she knew that she has a tumor. The goal of reading this type of articles it's increase my vocabulary from different articles. I think I have achieved to learnt many vocabulary without any notice, because when I talk with foreign people or with my English teacher I use new words. That makes me feel happy because it means that I'm improving.* (Extract from a student journal)

From the comments expressed in the final questionnaire, I could verify that, in spite of the short duration of this programme, students experienced a change in their attitude and developed a sense of responsibility in conducting the planned activities with a specific strategy. I also did a follow-up through the three subsequent language courses which they took in the following 18 months. All 22 students did continue in the degree programme and passed the three English levels with good grades. This was significant because enrolment in the ELT programme generally drops by 50% after the first year; and additional students may withdraw each semester.

A very important aspect of the BTP was the individualised attention which each student received through tutorials and via the feedback about their journals every two weeks. I feel that these two factors increased the students' motivation by enhancing their belief that they were being taken seriously as individuals. Although the journals focused on strategy practice, students also used them to express their feelings about other aspects of their learning experiences. Furthermore, during the tutorial sessions, students brought up not only their educational concerns but some of their personal worries as well. The time and effort given to each of the students made them feel they were important to me as students, and this undoubtedly contributed to the study's positive results.

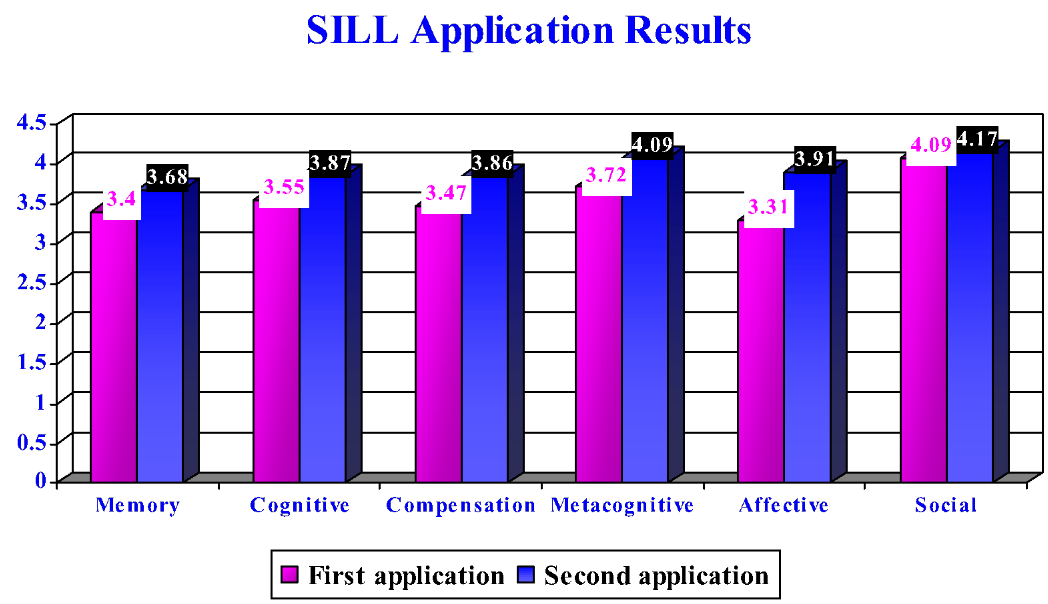

Table 3: Results of the first and second applications of the SILL

The results of the second SILL showed that the use of the four groups of strategies students worked on increased. The increment in strategy-use by students can be considered fair if we keep in mind that students were practicing the chosen strategies for a period of only four months. As commented before, students exercised self-choice and this led some of them to practise the same strategy longer if they found it useful for their particular purposes. Thus, the same group of strategies was practised for some weeks by different students. The strategies that proved to be most useful for students were: structured reviewing, using imagery, taking notes, paying attention, organizing, repeating, practicing, using music and discussing their feelings with someone else.

Conclusions

The first reaction students had towards the programme was not very positive, but the results showed that they were using more strategies by the end of the programme; they practised between 9 and 15 strategies during the BTP. This was significant because most students initially recognized that they were not using strategies to help them in the learning process except for the strategy of rote memorization. I believe the purposes of the study were accomplished since students were able to 1) recognise their learning styles, 2) use strategies for the different activities of the course, 3) exercise self-choice and 4) reflect on the learning process.

A programme in which teachers can help learners become aware of their learning styles and of the practical use of strategies can help teachers know more about their students and lead students to better approach their learning experiences. Thus, the opportunity to approach teaching and learning in a different way could be beneficial for both teachers and learners.

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Appendix 1

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name____ 2. Date___________

3. Age______________ 4. Sex _____________ 5. Mother tongue _____________

6. Language(s) you speak at home
____

7. Language you are now learning (or have most recently learned) List one language only
____

8. How long have you been studying the language in question 7 ?

9. How do you rate your overall proficiency in the language listed in number 7 as compared with the proficiency of other students in your class ? (circle one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor

10. How do you rate your over all proficiency in the language listed in number 7 as compared with the proficiency of native speakers of the language ? (circle one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor

11.How important is it for you to become proficient in the language listed in number 7? (circle one)

Very important Important Not so important

12. Why do you want to learn the language listed in number 7 ? (check all that apply)

__________ interested in the language

__________ interested in the culture

__________ have friends who speak the language

__________ required to take a language course to graduate

__________ need it for my future career

__________ need it for travel

__________other(list) ____

13. Do you enjoy language learning ? (circle one) Yes No

14. What other languages have you studied ?

15. What has been your favourite experience in language learning ?

____

Appendix 2

UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO

CUESTIONARIO

Investigación: Estrategias para el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa.

Nombre:_________________________________ Fecha:________

Con el propósito de ayudarte a aprender diversas estrategias de aprendizaje para un mejor desarrollo como estudiante se ha diseñado el taller que ya tuviste oportunidad de experimentar. Agradecería contestaras las siguientes preguntas para conocer tu opinión y mejorarlo.

1. ¿Conocías algún tipo de estrategia antes de llevar el taller ?

    SÍ NO

2. ¿Usabas algún tipo de estrategia antes de llevar el taller ?

    SÍ NO

3. ¿Te ha ayudado en tu aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa el taller de estrategias ?

    SÍ NO

4. Agradecería me comentaras detalladamente de que forma o en que manera te ha ayudado el taller si es que te ha ayudado a aprender mejor y tu experiencia a lo largo de este proceso.

Meeting professional needs: Teaching English to two medical doctors[1]

DAVID CAMPS, ITESM-CCM

Abstract

In this article I share the experience of meeting the needs of two Mexican medical doctors. Colleagues facing similar situations may learn about these two cases' needs and incorporate some of my teaching practices to meet these needs into their own teaching experience. Moreover, they may also take into account the issues of identity and tolerance brought up during these lessons.

Introduction

My experience as an EFL teacher has been in general English and in academic writing. My interest in teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) came about when I had the opportunity to work with two medical doctors who wanted to improve their English. This experience became unique and relevant for my growth as a teacher. Thus, I deemed it important to share my experiences in this article with the intention that colleagues in similar situations incorporate into their teaching practice those features which they find relevant. Firstly, I discuss the methodological approach and techniques I used to find out what these students needed, their professional backgrounds and their experiences with studying English previously. Secondly, I write about what I did in order to satisfy these needs as well as discuss several additional issues raised during the lessons. Finally, I include my considerations and conclusions.

The main concern of both doctors was not really to learn general English per se, i. e. communicative grammar or listening practices for everyday situations (for instance, how to order in a restaurant; how to express agreement or disagreement; how to make requests, etc.). On the contrary, they asked for more specific lessons related to their professional development--the pronunciation of medical terms and expressions used in a formal presentation, and for lessons related to writing for academic purposes. I felt that a textbook would not be necessary to help cover both of the students' needs. Rather, I thought it would be useful to prepare material and activities based on my observations of the doctors' needs as the course developed during the lessons.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) indicate that we have an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course when there are particular needs in the students for learning a foreign language. Teachers base their course on the needs that they have previously identified in their students in order to adequately satisfy these needs. Another aspect of an ESP course is that its objective may revolve around developing specific "skills." The teachers believe students have to learn reading or writing skills, for instance, so they may plan lessons to develop these particular skills. An ESP course is also associated with the homogeneity of a class group within a certain specialty. In this case, a group may be formed with students interested in Business English, or Academic English, or TOEFL preparation, or students in similar disciplines, such as engineering, medicine, finance, or accounting (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) may form a group.

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[1] This article is based on the paper "Enseñando lenguas para necesidades específicas" presented at the XI Congrès AMIFRAM, in Acapulco, Guerrero, March 2002.

However, I find it difficult to categorize my lessons as ESP in the strict sense although they may possibly fall into the first type mentioned above. Both of my students stated their specific needs, but as I carried out the lessons and from my observations I realized that the students also had needs which may be categorized as general English. For example, as I will discuss later in this paper, one of the students felt she needed to learn some formulaic expressions for making polite requests (*Could you please…? I was wondering if…?*). In my experience these are taught in a general course of English. In this sense, I can say that my lessons were partly focused on lessons related to ESP and partly related to general English as well.

Methodological approach

The idea of undertaking a study to identify specific needs and providing for them came about when the two doctors contacted me for tutoring. When I realized the relevant aspects that these private classes and the interpretation of the data would provide about the usefulness of teaching for specific purposes, I asked the two doctors if I could more fully explore their needs for learning specific English. In this way, I would be able to make a contribution of my reflections to the field of ESL/EFL teaching.

What I found led me to reflect on my teaching practice. This is what Allwright (1991) calls a "horizontal approach to professional development" in which, in this case, other teachers can decide the usefulness of my findings by discussing them and working together so that they can make the most of them for their own classes. Moreover, what I did may be called "practitioner research" in that I sought to incorporate my findings into my own teaching practice and development of teaching EFL (Allwright 1997). I thought it useful to look at both doctors as case studies because I could learn about their specific needs, beliefs, problems, concerns, and language proficiency in a real-life context (i.e. giving oral presentations and preparing for study abroad), find ways to meet those needs, and share this experience with other colleagues.

My main concerns were:

1. What specific needs do both doctors have for learning English?
2. What kinds of lessons can help them to meet those needs?

These two questions were the primary focus of my study. As I was learning about the students' needs, I planned lessons which targeted those needs. For example, one of the doctors expressed the need for giving oral presentations, so I asked the student to prepare several short oral presentations. These would help me see what further specific needs she had and what useful feedback I could give her.

The medical doctors' backgrounds and learning needs

The two medical doctors worked for Conasida (The National AIDS Institute) which is the Mexican government's public institution for research on HIV, and both attended HIV-positive patients. The two of them had carried out research, treated patients and held prominent administrative positions in that institution. In addition, both doctors had worked collaboratively with doctors from the United States on research. Hence, these students were not ordinary students wanting to learn everyday English. They were professionals with solid foundations in medical science. They had considerable experience and expertise in their field and had a clear view of what they needed in relation to their English lessons.

My first student[2], Martha, had studied English about 3 years previously at a language school for only a short time, but with little success.

> Tomé un par de niveles... Y no me gustó mucho porque iban muchos jóvenes que nada más iban a echar relajo. Y era mucho el esfuerzo para lo que yo obtenía, y no me convenció, porque el beneficio era poco...
>
> *I took a couple of levels.... and I didn't like them much because young people attended and were only there to have fun. The effort was too much from what I got and it didn't convince me because the benefit was little...*

The reason was that the students in the group were younger and did not take the class seriously. This made her feel uncomfortable so she decided to quit after taking only two levels. According to Martha, what had really contributed to her learning of the language was her reading of medical literature in English.

> Yo pienso que básicamente leyendo los documentos de la carrera de medicina que la mayoría está en inglés y durante la residencia todo está en inglés, lo que usamos de soporte, y nosotros tenemos que traducirla, resumirla y presentarla...
>
> *I think that basically reading documents of medicine because most of them are in English and during the internship everything is in English, what we use as support, and we have to translate it, summarize it and present it...*

Another contribution was the joint research she had undertaken on the HIV population in Mexico with her US colleagues. She and her US colleagues would exchange information, discuss aspects related to the research, and email each other in English. As a consequence of this joint participation she was asked to present the results of the research at an international congress on HIV in Berlin, Germany and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Yet, she felt she needed to improve her speaking abilities for giving oral presentations before actually going abroad. This was going to be her first time to give a talk in English.

> Yo nunca había dado una exposición en inglés ... obtener una fluidez en la conversación en inglés para poder yo estar en condiciones de hacer una presentación en Berlín, evidentemente para esto se necesitan de una serie de elementos de vocabulario y de construcción de frases.
>
> *I have never given a presentation in English... to obtain fluidity in conversation in English to be able to give a presentation in Berlin. Of course for this you need a series of vocabulary elements and phrase construction.*

My second student, Pedro, was accepted into a graduate degree program at Emory University in the United States. He was going to pursue a Master's Degree in Science, so he felt that he needed to improve his academic writing. He did have experience in academic writing in Spanish as he had written a book on AIDS. He also had 25 years of teaching experience at the UNAM (National University of Mexico). His principal experience with English was through reading specialized literature in the medical field. He had taken courses in general English at a well-known language institute in Mexico City but had not taken any courses related to specific medical English. When applying to Emory University to study for the Master's program in Science and Research, he took the TOEFL on which he obtained the required minimum score of 500 to be accepted into the program. Yet, he had done poorly on the

[2] The students' real names are not used in this article.

writing section, obtaining a score of only 2.5 out of a possible 6.0; therefore, he wanted to have more preparation in writing before going to study abroad.

> Mi mayor expectativa es aprender a redactar mejor, es muy importante para el profesionista, tanto en español como en inglés. Secundariamente hablar el inglés. Pero creo que hablar y aprender a escuchar el inglés es solamente cuestión de práctica si uno tiene nada más las bases fundamentales, la gramática, la estructura, pero escribir el inglés es la habilidad más difícil... Saqué 500 puntos en el TOEFL, mi mejor área es reading, y el área más débil era listening, en writing saqué 2.5 de 6 que no es nada bueno yo considero que lo sereno es un 4 y también considero que no iba específicamente preparado para el writing porque yo insisto, esto me parece que es lo más difícil, y grammar...
>
> *My main expectation is to learn to write better, it's important for a professional, both in Spanish and English. Secondly, speak in English. But I think that speaking and learning to listen in English is a matter of practice, if you have the basic foundation, the grammar, the structure, but writing in English is the most difficult skill... I had 500 points on the TOEFL, my best area is reading and the weakest area was listening. In writing I had 2.5 of 6 which is not good. I think that middle ground is 4 and I also think that I was not prepared for the writing [section] because I insist it's the most difficult and grammar...*

As we can see, each of the two students had specific needs. On the one hand, Martha, had to give oral presentations, so she wanted to develop some abilities related to oral academic presentations, such as the pronunciation of medical terms, and the construction of phrases or sentences used in starting and concluding presentations as well as in asking questions. On the other hand, Pedro wanted to improve his academic writing. The ideal teaching situation would have been to give each of them separate lessons, but due to the students' time constraints I was not able to do this. The problem then was to balance the lessons in order to provide equally for both of the students. What I did was to focus the first part of the lessons on Martha's needs and the second part on Pedro's since both were medical doctors, colleagues, acquainted with each other's work and they also wanted to take the class together.

Hence, in summary their needs were:

a. to pronounce specific medical terms, such as *treponema pallidum* or *neisseria gonorrhoeae*, or *chlamydia trachomatis.*[3]
b. to learn useful formulaic expressions for oral presentations, such as *could you...* or *sorry I didn't...*
c. to develop more self-confidence when giving oral presentations
d. to become familiar with academic writing conventions and vocabulary for academic papers
e. to write ideas clearly in academic papers.

[3] I took these words from Martha's handouts. Unlike Spanish, these words keep the original Latin pronunciation in English. For example, when reading chlamydia the ch is read as if we had a k in English. So my criterion for teaching pronunciation was based on the rules of Latin pronunciation (see Herrera Zapién (1984) for more on these rules.

The techniques involved

I carried out class observations to help me understand the students' needs and prepare my lessons. In each class I observed the students by writing down their comments about what they wanted to learn and what I thought they needed. These observations enabled me to focus on the students' specific needs, decide the content of the following class and identify any other needs different from those mentioned by the students. These observations also helped me to address some of the issues raised during the lessons, such as identity and tolerance, which I write about in each of the parts of the lesson sections below.

Another technique I used to gather additional information was an interview session. The reason for using this technique was that I wanted to have a clear understanding of my students' backgrounds, experiences, previous English learning, and the fulfillment of their expectations from the course. I also wanted to clarify and complement any information obtained from my observations. The interview with each of the students was between 20 and 30 minutes long and carried out at the end of class. The reason for interviewing the participants at the end was that their multiple activities did not allow time for an earlier interview. This factor did not affect the data collection process nor the research as the information to be obtained was only complementary.

The last data-gathering technique I used was the collection of some of the students' written texts. As we progressed in the lessons, I asked Martha to give me the handouts, the abstract and the templates of her oral presentations prepared by her US colleagues so that I could have a better understanding of what she was going to do. When Martha and I read these handouts together we only concentrated on oral aspects of the language to help her give a clear oral presentation. I did not specifically focus on written aspects of the language. On the contrary, for Pedro I did focus on written aspects. I asked him to give me copies of his email correspondence with the admissions officer. I also asked him to write two compositions in order to see his paragraph structure. All of these different texts provided me with an understanding of what both students were doing and what they needed. I was able to see the way Pedro engaged in writing and Martha in speaking, and plan lessons based on these texts.

The lessons

The students and I agreed on one-and-a-half-hour sessions twice a week for two months (24 hours total). These lessons had obvious time constraints, so I did not engage in more ambitious goals, such as trying to improve Martha's overall pronunciation, or expecting Pedro to improve mechanical aspects of his writing.

Lessons for providing pronunciation of specific medical terms

Martha expressed the need for acquiring clear pronunciation of words commonly used in the medical field. The purpose of working with teaching this aspect was not to eliminate the students' Mexican-Spanish influence in their accents, but rather to achieve reasonable clarity in uttering the words. For that reason, I worked with Martha by first asking her to read aloud the handouts of the presentation she had prepared for her conference in Berlin. Pedro and I would listen and provide feedback or ask questions in English. Pedro would ask questions related to content-specific aspects. I would focus on the language aspects. I repeated the words that she found hard to say and asked her to repeat them slowly. In this way, her pronunciation would be as clear as possible without forcing herself too much to obtain a native-like standard accent. I think this view of not trying to emulate a native-speaker accent helped her to become more confident and feel less frustrated. I also suggested that Martha watch programs and documentaries in English related to science or medicine, such as *ER, Presidio Med, or Discovery Science*, so that she could listen to how some technical words are said. Yet, she had to keep in mind that she didn't need to pronounce them exactly as they were said in those programs/documentaries.

Lessons for learning useful expressions to help Martha with the oral presentation

Martha had also asked me to teach her some expressions to help her during the talk. For example, she wanted to know how to ask someone to repeat a question she might not understand during the question-and-answer session following her presentation. I showed her the use of modals like *could you…please* for polite questioning. I also taught her expressions such as *sorry /sorry I didn't…* which could be used for clarification, or *I'm afraid I…* which may be applied for communicating apologetically something that the listener may not like. In all of these cases I stressed the communicative use and purpose of each expression and the way these could work in different situations. I wrote them down for her and we went through them until I thought she could say them easily and that she was certain of their usefulness and communicative purpose.

Lessons for developing more self-confidence when giving presentations

Martha felt insecure about her English. She said that she didn't know how to speak "well." In other words, she found it difficult to construct some formulaic expressions or sentences or pronounce words clearly.

> Para hablarlo tengo muchas limitaciones, porque trato de construir todo en español y luego traducirlo en inglés y me tardo mucho tiempo.
>
> *To speak it I have lots of limitations because I try to construct everything in Spanish and then translate into English and it takes time.*

Most of the English she knew she had learnt through reading literature in her field, so she was able to handle the technical words and phrases used in medical English. However, she said it might be hard for her to be able to understand someone asking her a question or to be in a situation where she wouldn't be able to find the right means of expressing her thoughts at the moment of talking. Therefore, I asked her to give several talks about anything related to her field. By doing so, I believed she could take advantage of knowing the topic well and be able to handle the subject matter confidently. Any unclear sentence or expression would be dealt with at that very moment. In addition, I told her we would rehearse the actual talk she would give in Berlin. At the end of each talk, Pedro and I would ask questions. All of this practice would help her to feel more self-confident during the real presentation. What also helped her to feel more self-confident was her identity as a doctor because, as she explained, in her experience as a doctor she has had to show confidence and assurance to her patients.

Lessons for becoming familiar with academic writing conventions and vocabulary for writing papers

Pedro felt that he needed to improve his vocabulary in academic English. What I did to meet this need was to make a list of verbs and nouns commonly used in academic settings. The list included verbs such as *demonstrate, undertake, hold,* *assess, claim, outline,* and nouns like *assessment, demonstration, research,* and *findings*. Then I asked my two students to choose ten verbs, look for a noun for these verbs and make sentences with them. After this we would look at the sentences and discuss them. This collocation activity helped the students to become familiar with vocabulary and learn how to combine verbs with other, related words.

We also discussed the view of writing as social interaction. In other words, we talked about the formalities and conventions that may exist in academic composition. Every time students write something there is always a social purpose (Camps 2000). By having this discussion, the students would understand the demands and conventions used in writing and would learn to recognize them (for instance, the organization of an essay, the utilization of headings or titles, the presentation of sources, and the structure of paragraphs) in order to be able to apply them in their own writing (Camps 2000).

Lessons for writing ideas clearly in essays and reports

Pedro expressed the necessity of writing his ideas clearly, so we went through some of the emails he had sent to the admissions office at Emory University. While doing the paperwork for enrollment, he was in constant contact with the admissions officer by email and we thought it useful to look at his email correspondence. As I went through the messages with Pedro, I was able to see that at first his emails sounded as if he were writing Mexican-English, i.e. using words, expressions and sentence structures commonly found in Mexican-Spanish, but transferred to English and these could have caused confusion in understanding the content. As we looked them over I showed him other means of expressing his ideas. For example, when writing an email to the admissions officer to advise her that he had asked for the transcripts from the university he had studied at in Mexico City, he wrote, "I have solicited the transcript to La Salle." I told him it would be better to say "I have requested the transcript…" I did feel, however, that his identity as a Mexican could and should be reflected in his texts yet, at the same time he also needed to be aware of the importance of clarity in communicating what he wanted (Ivanič and Camps 2001).

In all of this correspondence the admissions officer never mentioned that she was unable to understand Pedro's emails. It may be the case that she knew Spanish; therefore, she would have understood the Mexican-Spanish influence in Pedro's writing. Or it may also be the case that she had tolerance for Pedro's writing as is the case with many tertiary teachers of other non-native students' writing in English-speaking universities (see Santos, 1988 or Vann, Meyer and Lorenz, 1984 for further discussion of this point on tolerance). Or it may be the case that the admissions officer felt that she was not in the position of signaling mistakes to Pedro. Nevertheless, the feedback I provided Pedro when reviewing his emails helped him to understand the different options to "sound" like a Mexican and yet to express his ideas clearly enough.

I also asked Pedro to write two compositions about anything he considered interesting. I wanted to see how he structured his paragraphs, so his two compositions helped me to see the organization he used. To help him to have better paragraph structure (topic sentences, developing and concluding sentences, coherence and development), I first taught both students the structure of paragraphs in English. Then we looked at some medical readings taken from an ESP book on medicine and identified the topic sentences and we discussed the structure of the paragraphs found there. Unfortunately, there was no additional time to ask Pedro to write more discipline-related compositions and see how he would structure his paragraphs.

Considerations

When teaching we need to take into account our students' own individual identities. It is important to learn about the students' background and professional development when teaching students with a college education. They may bring to their class a solid professional foundation which will undoubtedly influence the way they learn the language. It is also worth considering the issue of nationality. Teachers may not want their students to "sound" like native speakers of English, or the students may not want to "sound" like native speakers either, since the students' identity as nationals could be confused (Ivanič and Camps, 2001). Or they may be frustrated if they cannot speak or write like a native speaker. In writing, their identity as nationals may be reflected in the type of vocabulary or sentence structure they use. In the case of Mexican writers it is usually reflected in the combination of different types of long sentences or the use of "Anglicized" Spanish words such as the ones we discussed above. Another aspect to take into account is tolerance in real life situations. My experience in living abroad and the experiences shared by others show us that native listeners or readers of English are often more tolerant of a non-native speaker/writer than perhaps an EFL/ESL teacher. This could lead us to reflect on how often we need to really emphasize error correction in class.

Conclusion

I would say it is too soon to "measure" or determine the achievement of the objectives of the lessons given, but I believe the lessons were useful for the two students. I was able to cover the immediate needs they had in spite of the fact that the duration of the lessons was relatively short (8 weeks). I did not engage in more ambitious goals, such as trying to get Martha to obtain a more native-like pronunciation, or expecting Pedro to have written compositions with "perfect" grammar. I do believe I gave Martha enough input for her to be able to give an oral presentation in English. After coming back from Berlin, she told me that the presentation had been a success. The pronunciation lessons had been helpful for expressing the technical words clearly. However, she had not really been able to apply the lessons on formulaic expressions because she actually did not have enough time for the question-and-answer part of the talk. Pedro left to continue his studies abroad with at least an awareness of the different conventions used in academic writing and with a basis of how to structure a paragraph. It would be very useful and ideal to have a follow-up to see how useful these lessons on writing were for him. Unfortunately, this is not likely to happen at the moment, as he has just begun his Master's program and there has not been any contact with him since our last lesson.

This experience of identifying the needs of students may contribute to the teaching experience of colleagues who face a similar situation when teaching students with particular needs and may help them plan in accordance with those needs. It may also encourage the teachers to carry out similar observations for a particular teaching situation and, based on what they may find, to plan suitable lessons to improve the English of their students.

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Spice up your Classes with Haiku

ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ – EFL TEACHER

Being an EFL teacher in Uruguay for 27 years now has given me the chance to see lots of different teaching trends and techniques, but I must confess, I have not all too often seen suggestions or ideas on using poetry in class. Moreover, I am sure that most teachers in my country feel somewhat reluctant, when the time does come, to include poetry in their class planning. However, as in many other aspects of the English language teaching/learning process we have for a long time underestimated our students' capabilities, preventing them from using and writing poetry in our classes, for we have considered it to be too demanding for them and maybe, too time-consuming and not very profitable for our teaching purposes. This is the way things have been for a long time and I'm pretty sure that this is still the way things are in many English language classrooms around the world.

However, from sixteenth century Japan to the present time we have a unique form of Japanese poetry available to us: haiku verses — simple and easy to write, yet filled with emotion and at the same time educational. "Too elementary," some would say. But, like it or not, haiku verses such as the following:

Covered with the flowers,
Instantly I'd like to die
In this dream of ours. [1] (Toyomasu 2001)

have become popular worldwide, spreading throughout the world mainly during the past century. They have become one of the most popular forms of poetry today and an important manifestation of universal culture.

Unfortunately, they seem a bit ignored in Latin America. Colleagues from Uruguay and Argentina taking part in an on-going EFL Interest Section e-mail conference report very little usage of haiku in their writing classes or even knowledge about them. Due to the fact that colleagues teaching in countries neighboring Japan, such as EFL teacher Susan Babcock in Taiwan, among others, use them on a regular basis for writing purposes and include haiku verses in their class planning, there seems to be an "area of influence" explanation for their awareness and usage—principally eastern Asia.

Nevertheless, thousands of people publish outstanding examples of haiku in books and magazines devoted to this art in many countries (*Writing and Enjoying Haiku*, *The Sound of Water*). There are even worldwide contests for Haiku writers, the most remarkable contest held recently was the "World Haiku Festival 2000" held in London. Haiku is said to be like a photograph of some specific moment of nature or of an event in life. The precise nature of Japanese haiku strongly influenced the early 20th century Anglo-American poetic movement (1912) known as ***imagism***, represented by Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and others. This movement aimed at clarity of expression through the use of precise visual images. Imagism is considered to be a successor of the French Symbolist movement. Haiku is said to be written to transcend the limitations imposed by normal language use and the linear/scientific thinking that treat nature and human beings like machines.

Traditionally and ideally, haiku presents a pair of contrasting images, one suggestive of time and place, the other, a generally vivid but fleeting observation.

[1] By Etsujin**.** Japanese poet. Matsuo Bashô's disciple.

Working together, the verses must register a sensation, impression or dramatic moment of a specific event or fact of nature. The poet does not comment on the connection, but rather leaves the relationship of the two images for the reader to determine.

Little butterflies
Floating over the flowers,
Spring is beginning.
(Student sample)

What is haiku in English?

Haiku is a small poem with an oriental metric pattern which originated in the linked verse of 14th century Japan. This Japanese verse form, notable for its compression and suggestiveness is, in principle, a powerful tool to bring Emotional Intelligence Learning (i.e. the student's capacity to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, motivations and desires of other people, as well as to access one's own feelings, discriminate among them and draw upon them to guide behavior) into the classroom, for it generally evokes certain moods and emotions. Haiku consists of three unrhymed lines of five, seven and five syllables, although some flexibility regarding the number of syllables is accepted, particularly when a Japanese haiku is translated into English.

Gold, brown and red leaves (5 syllables)
All twirling and scattering, (7 syllables)
As the children play. (5 syllables) [2] (Henderson 1967, p. 41)

Haiku is contemplative poetry which aims at enhancing the value of nature, colors, the seasons, contrasts and surprises. An old example of haiku written by the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashô, (1644-94) and considered the finest writer of Japanese haiku during the formative years of the genre, reads:

Old pond …
a frog leaps in
water's sound.[3] (Carnagie, Grunow 1998)

The Japanese concept of "cutting" divides the Haiku into two parts, with a certain imaginary distance between the two sections. Yet the two sections must remain, to a degree, independent of each other. Each section must enrich the understanding of the other. To show this "cutting" in English, either the first or the second line normally ends in a colon, dash or ellipsis.

Haiku verses usually refer to nature and the seasons:

Summer school every day
Walking, walking with hot sun . . .
Melting ice-cream feeling. (Svendson 2002)

The main reason for bringing haiku verses into the classroom is that, as with other techniques, it favors Emotional Intelligence Learning and helps our students develop and discover their Naturalistic intelligence—the students' capacity to relate to their surroundings and to be concerned about everyday environmental problems.

[2] By Gay Weiner.

[3] Translated by William J. Higginson (1985). Used with permission.

It favors Existential Intelligence Learning as well[4]. It is an effective and easy way for our students to connect to their inner memories, emotions and feelings from the past; feelings that they might have thought were lost. Students seem to enjoy recalling these feelings a lot. We should be well aware of the relevant role Emotional Intelligence plays in the learning process and how it leads to successful learning when students are hooked emotionally to their learning environment. As socially responsible educators in our profession, teachers can use haikus, for they provide everything they need to bring emotions successfully into the classroom in a simple way.

Sunset: carrying
a red balloon, he looks back . . .
a child leaves the zoo. [5](Henderson 1967, p. 30)

Working with Haiku in the classroom

You can teach your students how to write and share haiku verses in class by explaining the basic 3-line poem and the 5-7-5 syllable pattern. The haiku should aim at expressing moving events in their lives, the seasons or nature. Help them generate their own ideas in writing simple, line-by-line verses. Later, you can help them revise and polish their work, further engage the students' minds and even move the imagery toward the depth that can make a poem memorable. Have your students share their verses, and help them understand they are taking a glimpse into other students' precious life moments. This will help them understand how similar or different their perception of life can be. In this way students also learn a little more about their classmates.

When commenting on the relevance of Haiku verses, leading authority, translator and poet William J. Higginson (1938) reflected, "The primary purpose of reading and writing haiku is sharing moments of our lives that have moved us, pieces of experience and perception that we offer or receive as gifts. At the deepest level, this is the one great purpose of all art, and specially of literature." (Higginson, Harter 1989)

Getting Started

As a getting-started activity, teachers can have their students brainstorm words, colors, objects, activities, food and pleasant/appealing things related to each season that come to their minds and write them on the board. These could even work as a word bank for future reference.

Prior to the actual writing, you can introduce sample haikus to students on posters, on the blackboard, or on overhead transparencies.

At the same time, haiku is an interesting activity for pre-teaching syllable separation, which seems so difficult for the students in our region to master because of the notable difference in syllable separation from Spanish. English pronunciation does not directly reflect the way a word is written, whereas Spanish does (e.g. in-tel-li-gent / in-te-li-gen-te). It might therefore be useful for the students to

[4] Carolyn Chapman (1999) says that in Gardner's latest book, he names existentialism as a possible intelligence among others (humor/ culinary/ spiritual/sexual). This places emphasis on individual existence, freedom and choice. Although existentialism has not officially been named, Gardner presents an interesting new view.

[5] By W. F. O'Rourke, 1964.

have access to a dictionary to check syllabification. Access to a thesaurus may also be useful to find synonyms for the words they use to express their ideas.

Follow-up Activities

As a follow-up activity, teachers can have their students add another creative touch to their writing by having them illustrate their verses with an accompanying drawing or by designing borders related to the event described. Students can also come up with a simple title for the poem. As an alternative, we suggest displaying the poems on boards in the classroom without a title, and allow the students to move around the class reading one another's haikus and suggesting a title on an adjoining piece of paper.

Haiku can also be used as a means of reviewing grammatical structures by using, for example, adjectives in the first line, verbs in the second and a clause in the last line.

White, pink and bright clouds –
Floating, playing against the sky,
Autumn is beginning.
(Student sample)

Conclusion

When teachers succeed in creating a relaxed atmosphere in order to favor inward reflection, students find writing haikus relaxing and rewarding. They seem to be happy discovering their inner poet and they gain considerable self-confidence. So, regardless of the season, wherever you are, spice up your classes with haiku!

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Tasks for Teacher Education:

A Reflective Approach Coursebook (pp. 134) and Trainer's Book (pp. 96) Rosie Tanner and Catherine Green, Longman, 1998

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As teacher trainers, we have used *Tasks for Teacher Education: A Reflective Approach* to complement our input sessions in a number of teacher training programs offered at our university. It is one of our favorite books, and a frequently-used resource for planning a teacher training program. *Tasks for Teacher Education* is one of the few books available that promotes the reflective approach in teacher training.

We have been using both the Coursebook and the Trainer's Book for several years and feel that the tasks are interactive and dynamic, as well as thought provoking for both the trainer and the trainees. The tasks promote the ideas of using communicative activities and reflection in the classroom. Another plus point is that the set of books saves the trainer time in the planning and production of materials.

Tasks for Teacher Education consists of two books: the Coursebook and the Trainer's Book. The Coursebook contains 16 units which include lesson planning, observation, grammar presentations, the four skills, error correction techniques, classroom management, vocabulary, materials, learning styles and classroom interaction. The scope of these topics represents the basic components of most teacher training programs. Each unit contains varied tasks and focus questions which guide the trainee through experiencing, discovering, and reflecting in individual, pair, or group activities. Suggestions for further reading on the topic are also provided at the end of each unit. Where appropriate, microteaching tasks with feedback questions are also given. The Coursebook explains the authors' teaching and learning beliefs in the introduction, and there is also a useful glossary and bibliography. We recommend that the teacher and trainees take time to read this introduction. The Coursebook is attractive and well-organized, with many graphics and examples from EFL/ESL textbooks. These examples are taken from a wide variety of EFL/ESL textbooks, and are a valuable tool for clarifying and examining teaching principles and practices. They have saved us from hours of work searching through textbooks for relevant sample material to use in our training sessions.

The Trainer's Book provides the aims, step-by-step instructions, an answer key, and suggested timing for each task. It is easy to follow and concise. Adequate guidance for the veteran or novice trainer is given. There are many pages of photocopiable masters which reduce the time that teachers usually spend on preparing handouts. These masters include role cards, questionnaires, games, jigsaw activities, charts, and observation tasks. The photocopiable masters involve the trainees in motivating activities which are similar to those a teacher would use in an EFL/ESL classroom.

You can use each unit as it is or pick and choose and add the activities to your lesson for the trainees. These books are great for pre-service or in-service groups, and we recommend them without reservation.. We have supplemented *Tasks for Teacher Education* with more readings and in-depth materials related to theory and practice depending on the needs of our trainees. This flexibility is another positive point.

We highly recommend these books to anyone who is training teachers, or anyone who is interested in this area. Many of the trainers in our programs have their own copies. We think *Tasks for Teacher Education* is an essential addition to a trainer's personal or school library. Tanner and Green have given us new ideas and helped us to facilitate sessions that are more experiential, practical, trainee-centered, and which reflect our beliefs about learning.