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Editorial Policy

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 Previously unpublished articles and book reviews relevant to EFL teaching and research in Mexico and Latin America are accepted for publication.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

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

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

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

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

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

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Política Editorial

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Manuscript Guidelines Mextesol Journal

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

In-Text Citations:

References within the text should be cited in parentheses using the author's last name, year of publication and page numbers (shown below):

Rodgers (1994) compared performance on two test instruments.

or In a recent study of EFL writing (Rodgers, 1994)

Or for Direct Quotes:

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

Reference Page:

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

Books:

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

Journal Articles:

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

From the Editors

We have a variety of articles for you in this issue of the MEXTESOL Journal: Four articles in English and two articles in Spanish; Three articles from Mexico and three articles from other countries (Iran, Argentina and the United States); Two articles are about developing writing skills; one is about testing; one is about the use of technology, one is about social under-representation in pedagogical materials and one is about developing values in our students.

The first article in this issue has been submitted by three professors in Iran. They have undertaken to analyze the content of high school textbooks used in Iran in terms of social actors and social values. The results of their study are very revealing.

In "Language Testing: Some Problems and Solutions" the author reviews the main issues involved in testing and offers suggestions for solving some of the problems which arise in testing the listening skill.

In the third article, María Palmira Massi from Argentina presents a useful technique for guiding students in the exploration of values in readings while at the same time, guiding students in analyzing their own values.

A team of researchers at the University of Sonora has developed an exercise using Web Quests in the primary classroom. If you are unsure of what a Web Quest is, this article will provide an informative introduction to the topic.

Finally, we have two articles dealing with writing. Ken Levinson proposes using Error Diaries in order to focus students' attention on the frequent errors they make and thereby getting them to eradicate those errors. In a different vein, the article "El Desarrollo de las Habilidades Discursivas en la Escritura de los Alumnos del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera" suggests a technique for getting students to analyze literary texts and then writing their own similar texts.

We hope you find stimulating reading in these pages.

The Representation of Social Actors in the EFL High School Textbooks in Iran¹

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Abstract

The present study investigates how language as a social practice has been employed in EFL high school textbooks to expose the underlying ideology, representing certain social groups in Iran. More specifically, it aimed to find out how the representations used in the texts construct certain social and normative realities. As such, the study intended to know whether the curriculum developers or the authors of the textbooks, consciously or unconsciously, have given a special priority to a particular social group, such as a special gender, social class, or race in developing the content of the texts.

The analysis of the text materials showed that females are significantly under-represented, with the ratio of 6:1. Further, the frequency and type of activities males and females engage in are significantly different. Implications for curriculum developers and EFL students are discussed within a critical discourse theory perspective.

Introduction

A curriculum is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (1989) as "subjects included in a course of study..." (p.293). The definition implies that a curriculum is a preplanned program for the transmission of knowledge in a particular field of education; it is just a transmitter of the related knowledge. However, the critical linguistic perspective considers a curriculum to be "a representation: not only a site in which signs that are produced in other places circulate, but also a place of signs in its own right" (Tadeu Da Silva, 1999, p.1). In fact, signs do not just represent things; rather, they construct things, reality, etc. (Foucault, cited in Tadeu Da Silva, 1999). A curriculum, to Kress (1996), is never neutral: the creation or even the preservation of the status quo can be accomplished through the creation or development of the desired curriculum. A curriculum, by playing a role in shaping certain ideology, can no longer be

¹ This is a refereed article. The Editors would like to acknowledge Karen Englander of the Editorial Board for her important review work of this article.

considered an empty place for reflecting ideas from different perspectives. In this connection, Tadeu da Silva (1999) maintains that a curriculum "is always [an] authorized representation" (p.1), implicitly, legitimating and disseminating a certain ideology. The implicitly intended impact of a curriculum goes further to cover fields other than education, such as the relevant society as well. "A curriculum is a design for future social subject, and via that envisioned subject a design for a future society" (Kress, 1996, p.16). Accordingly, a curriculum is expected to construct the community of the future.

It is actually the authority behind the curriculum that intentionally manipulates it to achieve certain prefabricated objectives, and treats it as a means of fulfilling such ends. That's why Roberts (1998) indicates that "debates over changes in school curricula frequently provide a window from which to view larger political battles" (p.1). Therefore, exposing the ideology within a curriculum is a necessary task. Generally speaking, the critical perspective views the curriculum as a means through which the power relation in a society is constructed and preserved, leading to the oppression of one social class or sex by the other. The curriculum could pose a particular ideology, albeit not directly. "School recreate[s] the forms of consciousness necessary for social control to be maintained without dominant groups having to use explicit mechanisms of domination" (Skelton, 1997, p.181). Given that such assertions on the function of curriculum are valid, a critical linguist is justified in investigating the discursive causes of the domination/oppression and bringing them to the level of consciousness. Such an investigation is concerned with the curriculum as a place where signs are produced. Identifying the content of this production is a matter of concern in this study.

One of the relevant media of the curriculum where social control is exerted implicitly has been shown to be text materials and books forming the content of the courses offered to junior and senior high school students (McCoy 1997, Moughrabi 2001). Skill-based English textbooks are used for practice at different levels in the EFL courses offered to high school students (Junior and Senior) in Iran. It goes without saying that students are subjected to a range of other textbooks on different subject areas that are beyond the scope of this study. The textbooks, forming the content of the English courses nationwide, are developed and published in Iran, under the auspices of educational authorities and, hence, could be used as a proper medium of implicitly maintaining the type of social control indicated by the critical perspectives like Skelton (1997).

In this connection, this study investigates how language as a social practice has been employed in EFL textbooks to represent a particular society. Also, it investigates how the representations construct certain social and normative realities, such as subjectivity and identity. More specifically, the present study is intended to investigate whether the curriculum developers or the authors of the textbooks under study have, consciously or unconsciously valued a special gender, social class, or race over others in developing the content of the

texts. To do so, we identify the principal ways through which the texts employ social actors. These social actors are those who perform the active role in a social practice, whether they are linguistically realized as 'actor', passive 'agent', or otherwise.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study, in van Leeuwen's (1996) term, is to see "what [are] the principal ways in which social actors can be represented in discourse" (p.65). To accomplish this we:

- 1) identified the ways the English textbooks under study have been employed to represent social actors
- 2) investigated the extent of such representations in the curriculum designed to teach English as a foreign language in schools in Iran; and
- 3) analyzed the nature of such representations

Regarding the nature of materials under study, textbooks are assumed to be good representatives of the curriculum, and they are the most tangible, publicly accessible, curriculum-based productions which students are routinely subjected to. Moreover, text materials easily lend themselves to objective investigations.

Method

Sources of the Data

The present study examines English textbooks used in various levels of high schools in Iran. There are three sets of books employed at three levels of (a) junior high school (jhs), (b) senior high school (shs) and (c) pre-university high school (phs); each level is intended for subjects at different years of high school education. The numbers of the books used at each level are 2, 3, and 1, respectively. The English textbook, used at the third level, i.e. the pre-university high school textbook, comprises two parts, devoted to "pre-university one" and "pre-university two", and hence, is regarded as two books. The books that are written, printed and revised exclusively under the supervision of officially appointed educational authorities in Iran could serve as effective means of indirectly disseminating certain norms and views supported by such authorities. Content-wise the books under study seem to be highly culture specific as they mainly attempt to present Iranian life and culture in English.

The Procedure for data analysis

As part of data analysis procedure, inter/intra coder reliability was achieved by asking two colleagues (familiar with Van Leeuwen's framework) to score 20 percent of the whole data two weeks after the first coding session. The results indicated a high correlation for both the researcher and coders on the one hand and the first and second coding process on the other ($r = 8.5$ and $r = 8.9$, respectively). All the sentences in the reading passages of the books were individually coded to identify the social actors they represented and the type of actions they referred to. In addition, the gender of the social actor, as well as ethnicity and social class were analyzed. Further, the processes the social actors performed were identified. These representations were then analyzed quantitatively to determine the number and proportion in relation to other codings. The pictures in the textbooks were also analyzed separately to identify the type of social actors they represented and the nature of their representation.

Theoretical Basis for Analysis

The English textbooks were analyzed under the rubric of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using van Leeuwen's (1996) framework. He proposes a "network" by which one can categorize social actors. The network makes the systematic analysis of discourse possible. The textual representations in van Leeuwen's framework are classified into three linguistic transformations, namely deletion, rearrangement and substitution, each with a particular linguistic realization, as follows:

Deletion involves voice, and also nominalization and adjectivalisation, rearrangement principally involves transitivity, while substitution is initially realized by aspects of the structure of the nominal group..., the numerative... and then by lexis... (p. 67).

Concerning deletion, the social actors may be "excluded" (i. e. hidden in the text) or "included" (i.e. stated directly). Where they are included, they could be either in the form of activation or passivation. While in activation the subject of the clause is the 'doer' or the 'agent' of the action, in the passivated social actor it is not so. Concerning exclusion, the excluded social actor may be sent to the background or be completely suppressed. For example, the social actor is sent into the background in "The traffic violator was arrested" because the sentence implies the presence of the policeman who is backgrounded. A social actor may be suppressed through deletion or nominalization as in, "Traffic violation is condemned." Here no social actor is present so it is suppressed. Excluded actors whether suppressed or backgrounded are more difficult to interpret because by their nature they are hidden. Exclusion and inclusion can be very revealing of the ideology residing behind them, and their effects can be even more important when they are performed in a systematic way.

While deletion involves exclusion in which the social actors can be represented by being suppressed or sent into the background, rearrangement tries to identify what role is allocated to which social actor through features such as activation, passivation, participation, etc., since the roles assigned to the social actors would be more meaningful if the activities they are engaged in are also identified. The notion of transitivity, used in van Leeuwen's framework, is an option that can be adopted to identify the activities that are associated with the roles in question.

Transitivity includes the wide range of roles and activities related to different social actors. Every clause contains a process (usually a verb or verbal group). Halliday (1989) offers six types of processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. Material processes indicate doing or happening, such as cooking, hitting, playing, and so on. Mental processes deal with sensation, such as feeling, thinking, perception, cognition, etc. Relational processes, the third type, are the processes of being and are often realized with the verbs *be*, *seem*, *like*, *have*, and so on. The verbal processes, as the name implies, are that of saying, reporting, or describing an entity. The processes dealing with the "physiological and psychological behavior", according to Halliday (1989: 128), are behavioral. Finally, the processes concerning the existence or occurrence of something are referred to as the existential ones, and occur linguistically as *there is*, *there are*, *it is*. The combination of who or what acts, through what process, and upon whom or what are the fundamental elements of transitivity. Rearrangement occurs in the text when the social actors, out of a myriad of roles and activities, are assigned certain roles. For instance, a passive, rather than an active role, may be attributed to a certain social actor systematically.

As for substitution, there are certain discursive structures, such as personalisation/impersonalisation, objectivation/abstraction, categorisation/nomination, etc., through which different aspects of nominal groups are depicted and a substitution relationship is present within each pair of features. The social actor can be represented either as a personalised or impersonalised one, or either as an abstracted feature or an objectivated one.

Using this framework of deletion, rearrangement, and substitution, to the extent that the textbooks under investigation represent the social actors in certain ways, they can be analyzed to reveal the underlying determining ideologies at work. So, having identified the determining effect of particular ideologies on the representation of social actors in the selected textbooks, the study continues to speculate about the nature of such ideologies.

Results and Discussion

1. Deletion

In the 'deletion' section, the researcher identified which social actors are included and which excluded.

Table 1: Exclusion / inclusion with social actors cross tabulation

	Social actors			Total	
	Male	Female	General	Thing	
Inclusion	379 (33%)	63 (5.4%)	290 (25.3%)	420 (36.3%)	1152 (91%)
Exclusion	2 (1.8%)	1 (0.9%)	16 (14%)	95 (83.3%)	114 (0.9%)
Total	381 (30%)	64 (5%)	306 (24.3%)	515 (40.7%)	1266

As shown in Table 1, statistically there is a significant difference ($P < .000$) in the presentation of social actors. The most frequently included and excluded social actors are 'things' (40.7%), of which 81% ($n=420$) belong to the included ones. 'Things', as particular types of social actors, were also taken into account in our scoring and computation since they had been used so frequently in the textbooks that their exclusion might have influenced the accuracy of the results. The first example below displays "things" as the "included" social actor and the rest are statements with "excluded" human social actors.

1. The buses are very slow nowadays. (shs2, L. 7, sent. 38)
2. In one country, a recent research showed that... (shs 3, L. 1, sent. 5)
3. The snowplow went down the road. (shs1, L. 4, sent. 31)
4. It was hard to see where the road was. (shs1, L4, sent. 10)
5. It's fun to see a monkey going to work (shs 1, L. 2, sent. 12)

Concerning male and female actors, though both are excluded from the text, the female is suppressed, while the male is sent to the background. That is, it is possible for the reader to identify the male character, while the identification of female characters is not easy, if not impossible. The books tend to represent males and females differently (Table 1). Under inclusion, male social actors are represented six times more than their female counterparts (i.e. 30% vs. 5.0%). Females in general are deemphasized if not radically excluded throughout the

books. When the book, for instance, is describing a family in which apparently a general term is used, considering the pictures accompanying the statements, females are mostly excluded. In the junior high school book, grade three, e.g., at the breakfast table, the father is portrayed at the breakfast table, with his face towards the readers, while the mother is shown from behind so that the reader cannot see her face, hence depicting her as a faceless being (10 pictures out of 18, depicting a family gathering, have shown females (mostly mothers) from behind). In the corpus, females are frequently portrayed from behind, contributing to their exclusion (there are 35 pictures depicting females from behind, compared to 17 presenting males). The father is usually in the middle of the photos, indicating the power relation existing in the family milieu. This seems to be in line with the social position of the father that is supposed to have a central role in the family, in addition to his socially well established position. The mother, in contrast, has, more often than not, the role of a caretaker, doing the chores, such as washing, cooking, or serving the family member in the pictures studied.

2. Role Allocation

Under 'rearrangement', van Leeuwen (1996) has discussed the roles allocated to different social actors. In this connection, following van Leeuwen's model, the current study analyzed the data to identify the type of roles considered for various social actors. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Activation and social actors in the textbooks

	No. of occurrences	% of total
Male	371	30
Female	63	5
General	282	22.3
Thing	401	31.7
Total	1117	89

Generally speaking, the books studied have used activation in about 89% of times. This may be attributed to the fact that these books are written for school students whose demand of English is supposed to be low. So, possibly owing to students' limited skill of English, the strategy of hiding, which requires better linguistic skills, is not carried out frequently. As Table 2 indicates, while 'things' comprise the most frequently activated social actors (31.7%). This could indicate the authors' inclination in generating impersonal texts. Activation, according to van Leeuwen (1996, p.43) refers to the social actor who is represented as the "active forces in an activity" and passivation refers to the social actor who is shown as "undergoing the activity". The term is defined briefly on page 6.

'Male' terms occupy the second position in terms of frequency of occurrence (30%). Concerning the appearance of male and female social actors, males manifest a frequency that was six times greater than that of females. The sort of activities assigned to each of male and female subjects were very different as well. The books extensively used gender bias with regard to their roles both at home and in the society. For instance, while *she* is activated with regards to having a *baby*, *he* is activated concerning having a *car* (Lesson 13, jhs 2). As another example, in jhs 3, lesson 1, the writer talks about the mother who is making breakfast and the father who is leaving home. Girls are mostly depicted as individuals sitting at home *studying*, *watching TV*, or *helping mother*. Boys are, generally, excluded from the home context, except when they are eating or getting up in the morning. For example, on page 11, grade 3, the boys are playing football while the girl is watching TV, and on page 41 in the same book another picture is showing a girl helping her mother in the kitchen. Mothers are commonly shown together with their daughters at home. Fathers are with sons, either at or out of the home. For instance, while the girl is in the kitchen helping out the mother, the son is sitting next to his father in the park. Such representations seem to indicate that texts are written with the underlying intention that girls belong in the home context, while boys are an out-of-house work force, with wider ranges of activities awaiting them. Hence, though both genders are the social actors of activated statements, the roles assigned to them are very different and ideologically meaningful.

2.1 Transitivity

Transitivity concerns the actors and the processes they are engaged in. The writers of the books employed general terms, such as *we*, *you*, *the family*, etc. in the material process in about 23% of the time. This would imply that the authors wish to prepare a gender neutral book. However, the gender-specific roles assigned to males and females are so strong that such an intention, if there is any, is not carried out effectively.

The books appear to represent male and female social actors differently; that is, males are represented as the social actors of material process as many as 209 times, while women are shown in only 28 cases. The difference in male versus female representation is statistically significant ($p < 0.000$). The type of role assigned to a particular gender or class is another interesting issue in the books, which is shown to be in line with 'role allocation' in van Leeuwen's (1996) framework. The role allocations show the tendency of the sponsoring institution to envisage a leading role for certain social groups.

Table 3. Transitivity in representing social actors

Process	Male	Female	Total
Material	209 (88%)	28 (12%)	237 (53%)
Mental	35 (79%)	9 (21%)	44 (10 %)
Relational	83 (80%)	19 (20%)	102 (23%)
Verbal	34 (85%)	6 (25%)	40 (9%)
Behavioral	16 (94%)	1 (6%)	17 (3.8%)
Existential	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5 (1.2%)
Total	381 (85%)	64 (15%)	445

The verbal process is that of saying, reporting or describing an entity; the processes dealing with the "physiological and psychological behavior", according to Halliday (1989: 128), are behavioral. You may compare 34 occasions in which males used verbals with that of females.

According to the results, male actors are represented as the actors in the material processes about seven times more than female ones. In analyzing the actors of material processes, the evidence available in the books shows that both females and males are depicted as actors, although the sense and nature of the act considered for each gender is of a very different nature. That is, while females are the actors of *cooking*, or *preparing breakfast*, males are actors of *reading*, *buying*, and *making*. Females are represented as actors of the verb *staying*, but males as those of *going*, with a dynamic character.

Furthermore, in terms of the mental process, females are shown to be the 'thinker' of *enjoying* and *liking* something, rather than subjects of deep and serious ventures, as observed in the following sentences:

1. She likes books with pictures in them. (jhs3, L.4, sent.9)
2. Nahid enjoyed her visit very much. (jhs3, L. 7, sent.14)

Based on such evidence, one may argue that the texts under study tend to present a gender bias. This ideology is overtly and sometimes covertly represented in the textbooks. These books seem to have some impact on making an active male / passive female dichotomy in the society. The following sentences bear witness to this claim:

1. **She stayed** in her grandfather's house. (jhs3, L.7, sent.11)
2. **He rides** on the back of the farmer's bicycle. (shs1, L.2, sent.13)

3. **He usually reads** after dinner. (jhs3, L.4, sent. 3)

4. **She went** to his room **with a pan** of water and an egg. (shs1, L.3, sent.8)

Such differences indicate the marginal social role assigned to women and would contribute to perpetuation of the traditional role of women as social actors acting as caregivers in the home context.

3. Substitution

There are different discursive features through which social actors can be represented, as shown below:

Table 4: A cross tabulation of male/female agents with substitution features

Impersonalisation/ Personalisation	Social actors				Total
	Male	Female	General	Thing	
Functionalisation	17 (60.7%)	3 (10.7%)	7 (25%)	1 (3.6%)	28(10.8%)
Classification	37 (41.5%)	9 (10.1%)	35 (39.4%)	8 (9%)	89 (34.3%)
Relational	17 (53.2%)	9 (28%)	5 (15.6)	1 (3.2%)	32 (12.4%)
Abstraction	0	0	0	21 (100%)	21(8.1%)
Formalisation	8 (89%)	1 (11%)	0	0	9(3.5%)
Informalisation	38 (90.5%)	4 (9.5%)	0	0	42 (16.2%)
Semiformalisation	13 (100%)	0	0	0	13 (5%)
Objectivation	0	0	0	25 (100%)	25 (9.7%)
Total	130 (49.5%)	26 (10%)	47 (19%)	56 (21.5%)	259

Table 4 presents a summary of the discursive structures used under substitution to represent the social actors. The most frequent discursive structure used is classification. According to van Leeuwen (1996) this structure is used to

give values to the social actors. Males, in this sense, are classified twice as frequently as females.

1. I am a student. (jhs2, L.5, sent. 1)
2. He's a dentist. (jhs 2, L. 6, sent. 9)
3. There are many people who do not seem to know. (shs3, L3, sent 7)

As the above Table shows, the male social actors are more frequently nominated and this can occur in three ways. Nomination according to van Leeuwen is 'formal' when only the surname of the social actor is used; 'semiformal' means the given name and the surname is used, and 'informal' occurs when only the given name is used. While there are eight cases of formal nomination (formalization) referring to males, there is only one instance referring to females. Furthermore, there is no reference to females through the semi-formal nomination. And concerning informal nomination, in contrast to four instances of females, there are 38 cases referring to males. The ideological implication of this obvious discriminatory use of nomination is that the males are represented as those having unique and independent characters. In other words, they are seen and known by the readers and the actions carried out by them are more probably assumed to be realistic, hence having more effects on the world.

Objectivation and abstractions are two discursive structures used to present the social actors in impersonal ways. While in the objectivation the social actor is turned into an inanimate one, in abstraction the agency and tense of the statement together are removed, as shown in the following examples:

1. Memory is the brain's ability to keep a record of past events. (shs3, L. 3, sent.9)
2. This is a competition among many nations of the world. (shs3, L.4, sent.2)

The social actors are functionalized and classified, using expressions such as father, brother, doctor, teacher, student, and the like. However, males are shown to have higher social status in the textbook coverage than females. That is, while males are generally functionalized as doctors, dentists, teachers, etc., females are rarely represented with such functions in the society. They are either shown as housewives, or at most as teachers and nurses.

One way of categorization is "relational" in which the kinship and personal relationship are concerned (van Leeuwen 1996). Regarding relational categorization, compared to females (28%), males are more frequently used (53.2%), which is again statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The relational categorization used in these textbooks represents females as more dependent actors. That is, females are mostly introduced as the mother, the sister or the wife of a male character, as the following examples illustrate:

1. My sister works in a library. (jhs2, L.16. sent5)
2. My mother cleans the room. (jhs2, L.16. sent6)

The other point worth noticing is related to the photographs accompanying the texts. Both the texts and the photographs try to present a particular image of femininity and masculinity which is consistent with the general norm practiced in the community. Males, as social actors, are involved in certain male-specific activities, which are not apparently considered so suitable or common for females.

Table 5: Photographs depicting male/female social actors and their social activities

Animate social actors	Teacher	Doctor / Dentist	Nurse	Farmer / Clerk	Sport / Playing	Total
Male	40 (42.5%)	17 (18%)	0	7 (7.5)	30 (32%)	94 (76%)
Female	16 (55%)	2 (7%)	8 (27.5%)	1 (3.5%)	2 (7%)	29 (24%)
Total	56 (45.5%)	19 (15.5%)	8 (6.5%)	8 (6.5%)	32 (26%)	123

Out of 689 photographs depicting animate social actors, about 58.5% have depicted males while only 29% depict females exclusively. The photographs (Table 5) show males engaged in various social activities, such as being teachers (40 cases in contrast with 16 female teachers), doctors or dentists (17 cases in contrast with 2 female doctors), mechanics, policemen, farmers, etc. Females, in contrast, apart from their traditional role as mothers and caregivers, are most commonly depicted as teachers (16 times) and nurses (8 times). Such representations causes Song (2001) to blame the educational system for contributing to gender inequality observed in the society and asserts that formal education is responsible for women's inability to view themselves in a career.

To sum up, in terms of both frequency and type, the aforementioned points seem to be sound enough to indicate that school textbooks attempt to represent males and females differently. Such a trend implicitly shows the nature of the ideology imposed on the curriculum. That is to say, the textbooks are formulated to shape a society in which social positions and opportunities are unequally distributed, in favor of male subjects.

Conclusion

To conclude, whatever the reasons that may lie behind representing the social actors this way, the books can be very effective in generating as well as maintaining the *status quo*. The ideological implication of such representations would ensure the construction of a male-dominated society since textbooks can act as a model for the readers to construct their worldview and eventually their world. They can impose certain effects on the learners who, in this case, are students that age-wise can be highly susceptible to psycho-social influences. In this connection, the data identify how the curriculum developers reconstruct a particular culture, serving as a medium for imposing certain ideologies in favor of certain gender or social class of their target population, i.e. the high school students. The results might further indicate that the ideologies disseminated via the medium of language might be quite influential, because language could be employed quite successfully this way to impart the intended message indirectly without getting the learner consciously involved in the process of decoding the message. Studies like the current work help to bring these invisible effects to the fore and identify the way textbook representation can contribute to the construction of a normative view on the issues of gender, race, or ethnicity, to name just a few.

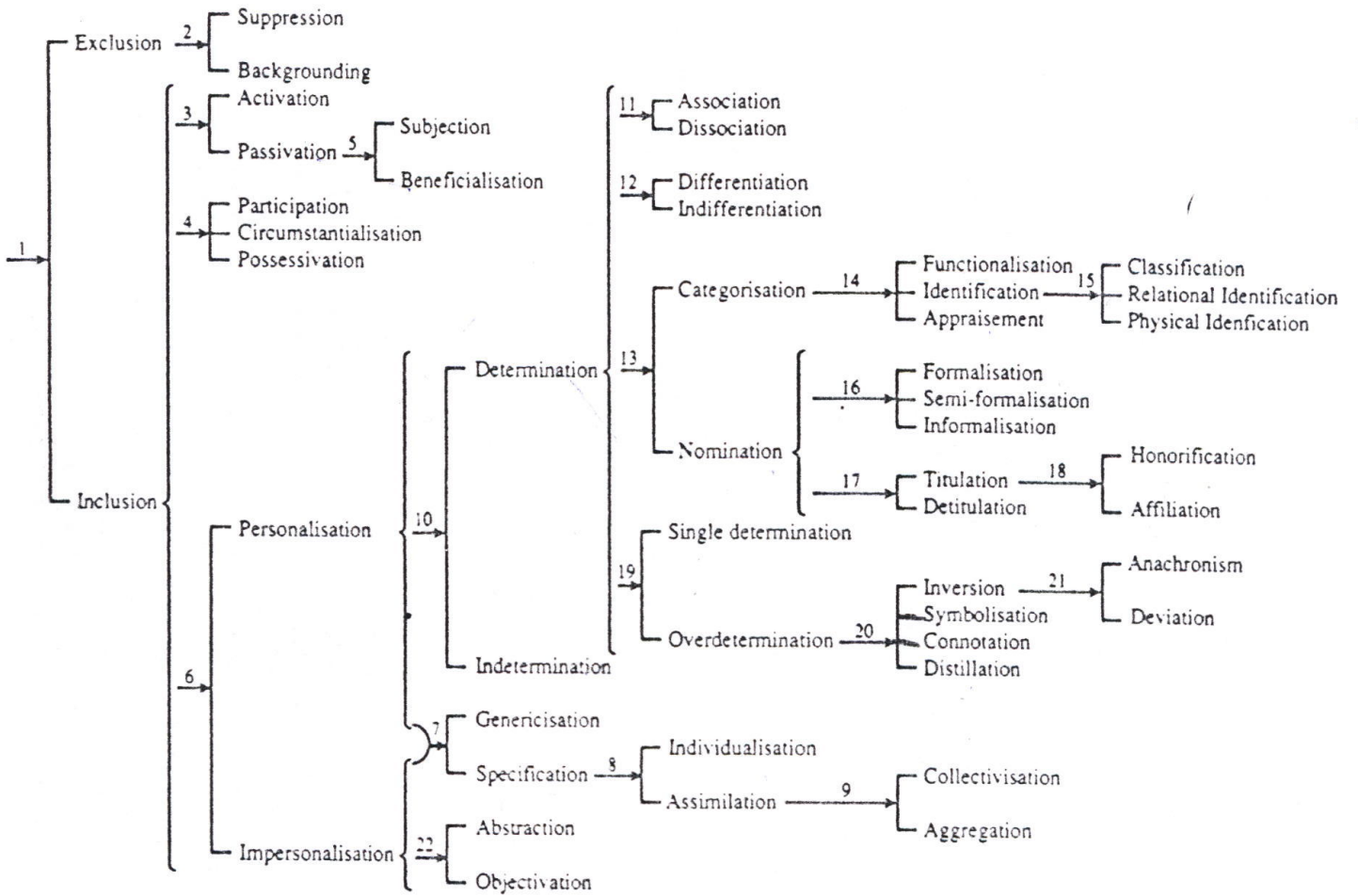
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APPENDIX 1: The representation of social actors in discourse: system network

(van Leeuwen, 1996)



Language Testing: Some Problems and Solutions²

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Introduction

As many language instructors and test creators can readily understand, it is often quite difficult to make appropriate foreign language tests for our students. This article will address some of the fundamental concepts of language testing such as reliability and validity. The main principles to consider for improving testing reliability and validity will be illustrated. In addition the article includes several practical considerations test creators need to keep in mind when going through the process of exam creation. There will also be a discussion of the important relationship between teachers and test writers in order to create more effective language exams. Finally the article will provide some examples of listening test items which were used for advanced English learners at the Language School of the University of Guanajuato.

An Overview of Validity and Reliability in Foreign Language Tests

There are many factors that influence the design of a foreign language test. In order to understand what happens with the language tests that are applied to our learners we first need to understand the two fundamental terms: reliability and validity. Reliability is a test-measuring instrument which attempts to determine if a particular test is given to the same respondent on a second occasion the results would be equal to those of the first occasion (Cohen, 1994). There are three sets of factors which influence the reliability of a test. They are: *test factors* (ambiguity, clarity of instructions, layout of the test, length and the familiarity the respondent has with the test's format), *situational factors* (qualities of the physical space, lighting, acoustics) and *individual factors* (the physical health and psychological state of the respondents, their cognitive abilities and motivation) (Cohen, 1994). Logically it is desirable for language tests to have a high reliability rate, but this is often difficult to measure because the reliability of a test depends on so many factors: for example, the type and length of the test, the similarity of the test items to each other and the ability level of the students who will take the test (Alderson, Clapham & Wall, 1995). Similarly, if the test questions are meant to test the same skill in the same way each of the test items should correlate highly and the test reliability should be high. One way of testing the reliability of a test is to use *parallel-form reliability* wherein the scores from two very similar tests that have been applied to the same students are compared (Alderson, Clapham & Wall, 1995). In order to determine their parallel-form reliability both tests should include identical instructions, the same

² This is a refereed article

response type and number of questions and the tests should be based on the same content.

Validity on the other hand, refers to how well the assessment instrument has, in fact, measured the original objectives of the test (Cohen, 1994). There are several terms often associated with validity: face validity (if the test looks legitimate to the respondent), criterion validity (verification of the functionality of the test in comparison with another language test of equal value), and construct validity (how a respondent's performance correlates on two different tests which are testing the same abilities) (Cohen, 1994). There are also several other issues related to validity that we must consider: the content validity (how well the test correlates with the objectives of the course being evaluated), the systematic validity (evidence of progress in the respondent's skills after the test is applied), the internal validity (the perceived content of the test by the respondents) and the external validity (comparison of a respondent's test results with their general language ability) (Cohen, 1994).

In theory, a successful test writer always attempts to produce a test which is reliable and valid; however, as previously mentioned, it can be quite difficult to achieve both in equal measure. We can never be completely confident that the tests we create are in fact, both reliable and valid (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). It has been suggested that in any language testing situation there will most likely be more than one measurement error or discrepancy (Bachman, 1990). For example, there could be a problem with the sound quality of the listening material, or perhaps the content of the test isn't as familiar to the test takers as we had thought. Nevertheless, we must strive to write exams which make a diligent effort to fulfill all of the aspects of reliability and validity mentioned above. If our tests have low reliability or validity rates they must be revised or discarded as they do not yield adequate results.

Validity and Reliability Concerns

There are a number of problems that can arise while attempting to write tests that are high in both reliability and validity. It has been my experience as a test writer that the following issues are significant in understanding potential testing complications. It is important to recognize that a test can only be as valid or invalid as the standards that are designated by the institution giving the test, prior to its application permit (Cohen, 1994). Thus a test that is considered valid in one situation may not be valid in another setting (Hughes, 1989).

There are several questions that the test writer needs to ask:

- Is the test measuring the intended purposes?
- Is the test consistent in the measurement format?
- Is the test unbiased (i.e. not favoring any specific group)?

(Garcia & Pearson, 1991 cited in Huerta-Macias 1995)

- Are the test instructions clear and concise?
- Is the task realistic? (Tasks that are too long or too short will not give accurate results.)
- Is the task of proper difficulty for the level of the students? (The questions should not be too difficult or too easy.)
- Is the task assessing only the skill being evaluated? (For example, if listening is being assessed there should be relatively little reading in the test.)
- Is the topic realistic or as authentic as possible? (Unrealistic testing topics may result in unrealistic answers from respondents.)
- Are all the questions based on the task and not on the learner's prior or common knowledge?
- Are the *distracters* (responses that are not the correct answer) of the same length or of the same grammatical arrangement as the correct option?
- Are the *distracters* uniformly challenging and realistic?
- Is there only one correct response possible to each question?
- Can the answer be found from only one source and not from the previous questions or from those that follow?
(Genesee & Upshur, 1996).

Designing More Valid and Reliable Language Tests

The answers to the questions posed in the previous section will be of great assistance to a test writer. In addition, a test writer should perhaps also consider several other general concepts. First, it is highly recommended that test writers try to view the test they are creating through the eyes of the test taker (Bormuth, 1970 cited in Cohen, 1994). This may help to avoid possible test problems and may contribute to making a test that is fairer. Second, the test writer needs to determine who the test takers are, what their language level is, the purpose of the test in relation to the institution, the use to which the results of the test will be put, and the time constraints of the test (Alderson, Clapham and Wall, 1995). It is therefore essential that a test writer understand the institutional objectives and the intended purpose of the specific test being created (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). Once all of these factors have been specified, the test writer should determine what language skills will be tested and by what means. Then the source of the exam material must be chosen: that is, whether the material will be taken from a textbook or from an authentic source (Alderson,

Clapham and Wall, 1995). A test writer must also consider whether the test will be discrete-point (focusing on one specific aspect of language) or integrative (focusing on a number of sub-skills for a holistic approach). Also, the test writer should consider the criteria for determining the test results (the grading per item and how the passing grade is determined) and how this information will be used or evaluated (Alderson, Clapham and Wall, 1995). In other words what (percentage) value the test has in the grading scheme for the course.

Factors to Consider after a Test has been Applied

In addition to considering all of these concepts regarding test reliability and validity, it is imperative to analyze the test after it has been applied. It is important to review the results of the test in order to be able to reflect on both the positive and negative aspects of the test. As a test writer I found that the careful revision of the various forms of feedback from a test is extremely useful in avoiding possible problems in future testing. I consider the following five points important sources of test feedback:

1. Item analysis of the test (using statistical support and raw data)
2. Evaluation/questionnaires applied to the students immediately after taking the test (making use of more qualitative data)
3. Evaluation/questionnaires given to the teachers of those students after they have taken the test and after the teachers have seen and analyzed the test scores (through the use of qualitative data)
4. Observation of any changes in teaching procedures after the test has been applied (both short term—immediate with the same group—and long term—the next generation of students)
5. Reflection by the test writer and/or group of teachers involved

Therefore, part of the process of reviewing the feedback of a test relates to the reactions of the students who took the test and those of their respective teachers; this is often referred to as *washback*, *backwash* or *impact* (it will be referred to in this article as *washback*). As Turner (2001) states 'It refers to the role that external tests play (i.e. tests external to the classroom such as provincial exams or standardized tests) in influencing classroom activity' (p. 140). This implies that the language tests that students take have a direct correlation to what occurs in the classroom and to the attitudes of both the students and the teachers involved

Unfortunately for language test writers, there is little factual research on the effects of washback (Turner, 2001 cited in Brown 2001, et. al). However, it does appear that the washback from a test is related to validity. If either test reliability or validity is low, there will probably also be negative washback from the students or possibly from the instructors who teach the particular level of the

test in question (Turner, 2001 cited in Brown, 2001 et. al). Examples of negative washback could be that the students feel de-motivated to continue studying; as a result they may drop the course or they may make complaints to their teachers or the administration regarding unfair aspects of the test. One possible way of preventing negative washback of a language test could be to invite the teachers who are directly involved in teaching the material of the test to provide their input. Indeed having teachers assist in test construction may help to improve the positive washback (the students might be more motivated and thus make general language improvements which may, in turn, improve their intrinsic motivation) of a test because these teachers have direct contact with the students who will be taking the test. In addition, it is advantageous for the test writer to have hands-on experience teaching the level for which the test is created (Turner, 2001 cited in Brown, 2001 et. al).

Consequently, it is important to learn more about the effects the test has on both the students and the teachers directly involved in the language tests we create. We must always reflect on the washback of the tests we produce through assessment regarding the functionality of the test. Reviewing each test individually through item analysis can prove to be extremely useful in improving objective language tests. Item analysis deals with two factors to determine the effectiveness of an exam: the facility value (F.V.) and the discrimination index (D.I.). According to Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995), 'F.V. measures the level of difficulty of an item, and the discrimination index measures the extent to which the results of an individual item correlate with results from the whole test' (p. 80). The difficulty of individual test items can be determined through the F.V., and the D.I. can be used to discriminate among the different levels of the students' language abilities. Thus the statistical feedback obtained from the item analysis helps us to develop more effective language tests for the future.

Background Information on the Advanced Students and Courses Taught at the Language School

The objective of the English Department of the Language School of the University of Guanajuato is to develop a high level of communicative ability in English in the students. As this goal focuses on a holistic concept of the four language skills, an integrative approach to testing is used. The tests are used to assess general proficiency in order to give an estimate of the communicative language ability of the student. (The term communicative competence at the Language School is used, generally speaking, as the ability to use English in a communicative setting successfully.)

At the time this study was undertaken (from August to December 2002) test creation at the Language School was a joint effort between the advanced level teachers and me. Although I was directly responsible for the creation and production of the tests, the teachers did have a significant influence on the

decisions made regarding the tests. As a test writer I found that this factor of directly involving the teachers in the test writing process helped to create more valid and unbiased tests because the tests were the result of several opinions combined. The diverse experiences and beliefs each teacher contributed during the test creation stage provided useful insights that perhaps would not have otherwise arisen. Including the teachers may also improve the positive washback of the test (Bachman, 2001 cited in Brown, 2001 et. al). Because the teachers that were involved in creating the test were also the instructors of the students who were taking the tests, we were able to receive direct feedback on the kinds of problems their students had. This information led to the search for finding solutions to the problems. This had a positive effect on the students because they felt that, through their teachers, their opinions were taken into consideration in order to improve subsequent tests that utilized similar types of activities. Therefore, this improved the positive washback of these particular tests as it may have helped to increase the students' motivation.

The students for whom we created these exams were advanced learners and they had a relatively high level of communicative competence. The majority were between the ages of 18 and 24. There were also several high school (preparatory school) students and a few non-traditional students (students older than 25). Most of the students were studying English for various extrinsic reasons; to comply with individual degree requirements or in order to be able to study abroad, and for intrinsic (personal) reasons, such as to understand popular culture in English.

The students who took the tests had at least five semesters (450 hours) of English or the equivalent language level as determined through a placement exam prior to enrolling in these advanced levels. The students had seen most of the major grammatical structures of English and had been exposed to a wide range of topics, such as current issues and popular culture. At the time these tests were applied all of the advanced levels promoted classroom activities focusing on both accuracy and fluency. All of the advanced levels included practice in all four skills: speaking, reading, writing and listening and each skill was assessed separately.

The exams in this article address the assessment of listening abilities through the use of video documentaries. These documentaries were taken from authentic television programs intended for native English speakers. There were several reasons why this video option was chosen. It is believed that it may be helpful to have visual paralinguistic aids when listening in a foreign language, as it is more realistic and true to normal conversations (Pratt, Bates, Wickers & Mueller 1980, cited in Anderson & Lynch, 1988). The acoustic sound quality of simple audio cassettes was frequently poor, and it was often difficult to find appropriate material. Furthermore, the teachers and I decided that the listening tests needed to be more authentic than they had been in the past. Also, the previous audio listening exams were often viewed by the students as unfair,

extremely difficult and unrelated to their classroom activities. According to Bachman (2001) cited in Brown, 2001 et. al, tests must have the right balance between usefulness, authenticity, and practicality. In light of these considerations, it was then decided that video listening tests would perhaps be more inspiring and realistic for the students than the more traditional audio method alone.

Listening Test Examples

It is important to mention that prior to the application of the video listening tests the teachers and I created similar classroom video listening activities (with true, false or no-information-given and/or multiple-choice questions). The purpose of this material was to prepare the students for the particular video testing format that would be used on the midterm and final examinations. The purpose was not to teach to the test (i.e. only getting the students to pass the test), but rather to prepare the students for a more realistic type of listening. This specific example could also be considered an example of positive washback as it took into account what was occurring in the classroom activities.

Questionnaires and surveys are believed to be very useful means of receiving feedback on a test (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001 cited in Brown, 2001 et. al). Therefore, in order to receive some additional feedback on the new test format, I asked the students to fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) after the first video test was applied. One of the results of the analysis of the responses was that there were some students who stated that it was difficult to adjust to this new test format. Obviously their familiarity with the test format increased considerably once they had taken more exams and practice activities of this nature. In fact, several of the students mentioned this in subsequent questionnaires given after the following exams. More importantly, however, was that the majority of the students who filled out the questionnaire stated that they found it easier to take the video listening test in comparison to the audio-only test with which they were already familiar. Several students also mentioned that they found the video format much more motivating and less intimidating. A high percentage (78%) of the students who answered the questionnaire stated that they would like to continue using video listening for future tests, and would therefore prefer not to take an audio-only test (see Appendix 1, questions 5 and 6). The majority of the results were quite positive, although the students mentioned that there were some technical difficulties regarding the acoustics in certain rooms that were used for the tests. As a result of these comments we made adjustments regarding the locations of where future tests were applied in order to assure more reliable testing conditions.

In addition to analyzing the results of the student questionnaire, I then examined the actual test scores and answers from the students. As mentioned previously, item analysis of test answers was carried out in order to gain a better

understanding of the results of the test. After reviewing some of these results, it seemed evident that there were some problems which needed to be resolved. For example, the multiple-choice test (see Appendix 2) presented several difficulties. First of all, it was sometimes difficult to create three sufficiently valid distracters for each question, in addition to the correct answer. Because of the lengthy nature of the multiple-choice format, it was problematic to create answers that were not too long for the students to read while listening. The length factor created listening assessment problems because reading was inadvertently being tested as well. Also, some of the possible answers to the questions may not have been really viable options (in Appendix 2 see the distracters for 2d, 3d, 6d and 10c). These distracters may have seemed too comical or strange and therefore could easily be discounted as unrealistic answers by the students. Furthermore, one of the questions (see Appendix 2, question 7 option c) had only one negative option, which perhaps made the correct answer too obvious. Also, one of the answers in one of the options is a little longer than the others, (see Appendix 2, question 9 option b) which may have excluded it as a possible correct answer.

Therefore, as a result of this item analysis of the multiple-choice test, it was decided that we needed to make the test shorter in order to assess listening more efficiently. We then decided to create true, false, or no-information-given questions for the new set of listening tests. Although this second test (see Appendix 3) was used for a different language level than the first test discussed above, this test seemed to be much more effective in evaluating the actual objective of listening. The feedback from the students on the questionnaires for this exam was more positive on this second test, perhaps because they felt more confident with the overall shorter format. The true, false and no-information-given statements also required less reading comprehension on the part of the test taker. Moreover, several of the statements have the same meaning as statements spoken on the video but they are worded differently from the original video (see Appendix 3, questions 2, 3, 5, 7, and 13). This may have helped to test the actual listening skill we were attempting to assess. Other questions (see Appendix 3, questions 4, 11, and 14) may indeed have tested true listening comprehension, as they required the students to listen carefully for inferred details that were not explicitly mentioned on the video. Lastly, there were more questions for the students to answer, which helped to make a fairer exam.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was not to resolve all of the complicated aspects that are involved in language testing, but rather to stimulate an awareness of the complications and possible solutions regarding test creation. As test writers we must diligently reflect on each aspect of each test before it is actually given, and then to observe carefully what happens after the test is applied. Finally, we must analyze the results of the exam and any feedback we

may have obtained from our students and teachers. It is also vitally important to reiterate that there is still much to be learned about language testing, such as the issues of reliability, validity, the washback of a test, and item analysis all of which were mentioned in this article. However, if we are open to the possibility of constant revision of our language exams, then we can surely be more successful in creating exams that are more effective.

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Appendix 1

Student Questionnaire Applied After the First New Listening Exam

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions regarding listening through video. The English Department greatly appreciates your assistance in helping us create more effective and fairer exams. Thank you.

1. Was the sound quality of the video acceptable? If not, please state what the problem was.

2. Was the visual quality of the video acceptable? If not, please state what the problem was.

3. Was the time sufficient to complete the task?

4. Was the speed of the video in relation to the questions appropriate?

5. Would you like to continue taking video listening exams? Why?

6. Would you rather take a listening exam only using audio? Why?

7. Did you feel the video activities that you did in class prior to the actual test helped you or not? If not, please explain what you think would have helped you.

8. If you have any further comments or suggestions regarding the video listening exam please use the space below.

Appendix 2

Multiple-Choice Video Listening/Midterm Exam September 2002
Level 800 (approximately 630 hours of English)

You are going to watch a video about the singer, Sting. Circle the best answer for each question according to what you hear in the video. You will see the video twice.

1. Sting and his wife originally wanted to buy
 - a) a mansion
 - b) a small house
 - c) a small hotel
 - d) an enormous place
2. Sting says that the hills close to his house look like
 - a) they are coming out of the snow
 - b) a picturesque painting
 - c) an Asian painting
 - d) they are really spooky
3. One of the uses for Sting's studio used to be
 - a) a big patio where they ate olives
 - b) just a big empty industrial room
 - c) an industrial area where they made wine
 - d) a room where they drank a lot of wine
4. The purpose of the studio in his house now is to
 - a) rejuvenate his friends with music
 - b) have parties with his friends
 - c) listen to his friends' new records
 - d) feel like he did when he was young
5. Sting likes to work at home so that his children
 - a) can understand what he does
 - b) will become as creative as him
 - c) will have a good impression of him
 - d) can travel with him on his tours
6. He likes to write songs about love because he wants to
 - a) share other people's experiences
 - b) share his life experiences
 - c) express typical feelings
 - d) show others that he can still love
7. According to Sting songs must
 - a) be complex
 - b) be about issues
 - c) not be complex
 - d) be about journalism

8. Sting thinks writing a song is
 - a) similar to painting on a canvas
 - b) telling a story in a few lines
 - c) similar to writing a novel.
 - d) not influenced by nature
9. This project for Sting is
 - a) to celebrate his fortieth birthday
 - b) an opportunity to sing other people's songs
 - c) an opportunity to sing tango songs
 - d) a time to think about his life
10. Sting
 - a) likes to change his famous old songs
 - b) doesn't like to reinterpret his old songs
 - c) wants his songs to be popular for a short time
 - d) never changes anything in his favorite songs

Video transcript/interview with Sting. Taken from Sting's DVD *All this time* (2001) (Sting is the only person speaking throughout the entire video). Approximate length: 7 minutes.

Trudy and I bought this house about four years ago. We had been in love with Italy for about ten years, then we found this. (camera shows the house) It was kind of funky and broken down, sofas outside... it seemed like us. This is on the route from Milan to Rome. There is a lot of history here.

(pause)

Originally Trudy and I were looking to buy a little house somewhere, something, somewhere to go, you know? We never imagined we'd buy this great enormous place.

(pause, new scene)

Very early in the morning sometimes there is a mist in these hills, (camera shot of hills) they look like they are coming out of the sea. It's like a Japanese painting. Then at this time of night the light on the mountains changes. It is absolutely beautiful. I could just sit here all night. (fade out)

(new scene/piano being played in Sting's studio)

We have this big industrial building across the way where they used to make the wine, dried the grain and um...we built a studio on the top floor. It was just a big empty room really. So, we decided to put my portable studio up there. So, I started working and messing around...bringing a friend to play with me, Dominique or Kipper. So, I wanted to recreate that feeling when I was a kid you know...playing music because I liked the sound of it, because it was fun.

(pause, new scene)

A lot of kids are brought up with Dad doing this mysterious thing in the city. You know? But I like to work at home. If I can work at home that's the best situation for me. But you know, it's important what they see and they believe about what I do. They can also see me doing something I love and that hopefully explains to them why I'm away so much, cause I spend a long time at sea.

(singing in background/new scene)

Most of the best songs are written about love, it's an important thing to write about, particularly in my position and stage in life, the experience I've had as a man, as a boy or there...it's what I want to talk about. (singing in background) Songs have to be simple. Um... they can have a sub-text that you can find, but you shouldn't be singing about an issue, you shouldn't be saying damn with this and damn with that. That's just journalism. (singing) Art is something else, something veiled. I often feel that song writing is something like putting yourself in a state of receptivity or you know... to be more cosmic about it, a state of grace where the song can reveal itself to you. If you can be in a beautiful place, because you know nature is full of stories, it is full of images, powerful images, healing images. (camera shot of nature)

(singing in background/new scene)

It's not like you have a huge canvas to paint on, or a novel length to fill, you know... you've got to tell the story in a...two verses, a bridge and a quota. That's a skill, it's stories in miniature and I like that. Sometimes you have to tell a huge amount of information in one line. You have an idea of what songwriting is and what is right and what seems to be wrong. You just follow that instinct. So, songwriting is a kind of therapy for both the songwriter and the listener. If you choose to use it that way (singing in background). When you see that your music helps other people, great, wonderful. It means you are doing the right thing. That's what music is for.

(pause/new scene)

Well, it's an interesting time in my life to be making this project. You know, I'll be fifty in a month's time and um it's a time of reflection for me, looking back on my life... What have we got here? To revisit songs and breathe new life into rejuvenation for both the songs and myself. You know, it's kind of...yeah I think they are good songs and I want them to have as long of a life as they can. Cause you know, I'm rejuvenating myself through this process. It's a very interesting process to play a song for almost two years and you know it inside out and then suddenly change it and then a whole new song suddenly appears. Sometimes you have to go back to the old way. You know, uh, hopefully even and the place itself will create something new. I don't want to force the issue but if something happens naturally, organically and if it's a different arrangement then that is fine. If it doesn't work..

(end of transcript)

Appendix 3

T/F/NI Video Listening/Final Exam November 2002
Level 600 (approximately 450 hours of English)

You are going to watch the video “Paris: A Fun Visit” twice. Answer T for True, F for false, or NI for No information according to what you hear in the video.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|
| 1. There are well over 2 million people who visit Paris every year. | T | F | NI |
| 2. The Luxembourg Gardens often look and feel overpopulated. | T | F | NI |
| 3. The Palace of Queen Mary di Medici is currently used for governmental purposes. | T | F | NI |
| 4. In the Luxembourg Gardens Tai Chi is practiced everyday from 7 am to 8 am. | T | F | NI |
| 5. The French game Petánque is only played by the elderly. | T | F | NI |
| 6. The money earned from the honey the bees produce does not benefit the Luxembourg Gardens. | T | F | NI |
| 7. There is no charge to enter the Luxembourg Gardens. | T | F | NI |
| 8. Reservations for the Tour d’Argent should be made well in advance. | T | F | NI |
| 9. The owner of the Tour d’Argent is not well known. | T | F | NI |
| 10. Tour d’Argent customers are always welcome to enter the wine cellar that is below the restaurant. | T | F | NI |
| 11. The Tour d’Argent wine cellar is always inspected in June. | T | F | NI |
| 12. The Tour d’Argent was rated a little lower because it is very expensive. | T | F | NI |
| 13. Inline skaters skate the same streets every Friday night. | T | F | NI |
| 14. The skaters must have a skating license in order to participate. | T | F | NI |

Video transcript “Paris: A Fun Visit” (2002). Taken from satellite television, The People and Arts Channel. There is only one narrator throughout the video. Approximate length: 8 minutes.

Full of wonderful architecture, great views, open spaces and towering monuments. Paris, with hundreds of fascinating attractions what do you put on your itinerary to make sure you get the very best out of your vacation. We’ve taken the guesswork and the legwork out of that process. We’ve narrowed it down to the top ten attractions, the must sees on any visit here. Then, to make sure the countdown really does work for you we judge the countdown against the same strict criteria. First we rated them for the wow, the must see factor, accessibility and value for money. Finally as the climate here can get rainy we asked: Is it still fun in the wet? So watch as we reveal our top ten Paris Hot spots.

(pause)

First up is the place to watch Parisians go by. It scored high on the must see factor but it can be a wash out on a rainy day. Number 10, The Luxembourg Gardens. Paris is a busy city, over two million people live here and over ten times that number come here each year as tourists. So it’s little wonder that sometimes it can feel a bit crowded. The elegant boulevards may be wide and lined with a hundred thousands trees but if you do need to find a real oasis of greenery within the city, then you should head for the Parisians’ favorite: the Luxembourg Gardens. (scene of the park with background music) The park never seems crowded even though up to a hundred thousand people can visit the 118 acres of the Luxembourg gardens. In the seventeenth century it was the private residence of Queen Mary di Medici. Her palace is now home to the Paris senate. And the gardens have become a haven for lovers.

There are other less sedentary activities going on here as well. People come here to play sports like tennis and basketball, to practice the ancient Chinese art of Tai Chi or to play the equally ancient French game of Petánque. Petánque is a French form of pool, but knowing how to play is the best way of being adopted as an honorary Parisian. Here is what you do...first you need to draw a circle in the center and then keep both of your feet inside of it as you throw the ball. The aim of the game is to get your ball as close as possible to the wooden marker ball at the other end. The closer you get the higher you score. The first player to get thirteen points wins the game. There are over half a million Petánque players in France, aged eight to over eighty. It is the favorite pastime of French film star Gérard Depardieu. It’s taken very seriously. (music playing/new scene)

A team of seventy gardeners keep the grounds mowed but they aren’t the only ones who are busy in the gardens, over a million honeybees live in the Luxembourg Garden’s apiary. Here you can learn to take care of bees under the watchful eye of beekeeper Gilbert Provère. He’s looked after bees for over forty years and is not surprisingly an expert on how to avoid getting stung. Gilbert’s honey goes on sale each year on the third weekend of September and contributes over three and a half thousand dollars towards the upkeep of the apiary. Bees aren’t the only animals in the park there are also ponies and donkeys. In fact the Luxembourg Gardens has plenty of activities to entertain children. Cost wise the gardens are a great value for the money, in fact entrance is free. We rated The Luxembourg gardens at number ten, as

the park is an oasis of calm in a busy city. But to enjoy it at its best you really need the sun to shine.

(new scene)

Next on our list is one of the oldest restaurants in Paris, which always gets top marks from the critics for its food and service, number 9 on the Tour d'Argent. Dining out is a key part of any vacation and Paris is a gastronomical heaven and a dieter's hell. The streets of Paris are crammed with fabulous cafes and bistros. The only problem you'll have here is choosing where to go. For a real treat we recommend the restaurant known as Tour d'Argent. Its number 9 on our list as it has one of the best views of the city, overlooking the Cathedral of Notre Dam. Try and book at least three weeks ahead to avoid disappointment. The prestigious Tour d'Argent is still the place to be seen and see the celebrities. Claude T erin is almost as famous as his clientele. Equally as famous as the celebrity diners are the Tour d'Argent's special duck dishes. A unique recipe and a meat crusher known as a duck presser make this meal so special. At a hundred dollars a head it is a bit of a squeeze on the wallet. After all you are buying into a century old tradition when you order it. We went behind the scenes into the famous kitchens where fifty thousand high class meals a year are prepared by head chef Jean Fran oise, working with him are 22 cooks, 6 pastry chefs and 8 apprentices. Another 10 employees are there just to clean up after them.

(new scene)

Hand in hand with France's love of food goes its love of wine. Hidden deep below the restaurant are the famous and heavily guarded wine cellars. We were privileged, because they don't often let visitors in. In fact as David Ridgeway explained, with 16 million dollars worth of wine down here they are more concerned with keeping people out. There are half a million bottles of wine in the Tour d'Argent's Cellar, vintages range from as far back as 1788 to the present day. With the top of the range setting you back almost \$8000 a bottle. They uncork 22 thousand bottles a year here and if the restaurant never restocked again it would take 20 years to drink the cellar dry.

(new scene)

We rated the Tour d'Argent as number nine in our Paris hotspots countdown. Here you can get a taste for what has made French cooking so famous the world over, but with those prices we had to mark the restaurant down on expense but if you can work your vacation budget around it, it is a fantastic dining experience.

(new scene/camera shot of in-line skaters)

In at number 8 is a pastime that will really get your pulse racing by day or by night. If you want to act like a Parisian you have to get your skates on, number 8 is the in-line skating on the streets of Paris. Paris is famous for its nightlife. So when the sun goes down the city comes alive. From the colorful cabaret iconic Moulin Rouge to the trendy Bastille area where more time is spent outside the bars than inside, there is a huge range on offer. Friday night there really is only one place to be and that's in the company of hundreds of other in-line skaters. Friday night fever is the way to kick off the weekend. Up to 20 thousand people of all ages descend on the Plaza Vitale from all over Paris to skate. The route they take is a secret,

changing every week. One thing that doesn't change is that the skaters will bring the Paris traffic to a standstill as they are given right of way. In just 2 hours they cover distances of over 16 miles.

(end of transcript)

Exploring Stories and Discovering Values³

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Introduction

This paper reports on a qualitative case study carried out with twenty-six intermediate-level EFL learners at Comahue University and it discusses the implementation of a discovery approach to their value systems through the analysis of fictional and non-fictional works. The original idea was to introduce a combination of methods that would engage the learners and stimulate their involvement in the exploration of their value systems as an innovative alternative to the usually scant connection found between students' real needs and interests in the context of an English course at university level and the actual content of the course. In conventional models, it is common practice to use a core textbook with a compilation of additional texts for intensive and extensive oral and reading practice. Little or no attention is paid to the learners' preferences and needs as individuals, as the focus is on furnishing them with the perceived necessary linguistic tools to guarantee their successful professional practice once they have formally completed their skill-getting and skill-using training in English.

In an attempt to explore an alternative course of action, and in the belief that we are teaching more than just English to our students, a framework was proposed in order to introduce value-laden texts as initial input and to promote the development of values. The results of the project revealed an increase in students' self-awareness and appreciation of others, and the consideration of differences as positive. Additionally, the learners' oral and written production exhibited significant qualitative differences in the display of lexical options and grammar patterns, as well as in the generation of elaborated ideas and the ability to establish connections among them. Likewise, the results highlight the relevance of a constructivist approach that considers learning as an interpretive building process by active human beings interacting with the physical and social world.

Brief description of the educational context

At the Escuela Superior de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Patagonia Argentina, English is taught as a foreign language to students who are planning to become either EFL teachers or translators. The basis of this study, the English II course taught in the second year, focuses on the development of both receptive and productive skills in an integrated way with the overall objective of providing a solid foundation in the linguistic skills the students will need in their

³ This is a refereed article

academic and vocational endeavours. The multi-layered syllabus has a theme component, a macroconcept with sub-topics that serve as the backbone of the course and provide contextualisation and significance; a grammatical component in that the content material provides loop input for focus on form and language analysis; a lexical component which tackles vocabulary related to each of the themes; and a task component with open-ended activities which provide ample opportunities for the contribution of the students' own ideas and personal experiences. This alternation of content, grammar, lexis and tasks allows the systematic coverage of the most important situations or contexts in which the learners are likely to use the foreign language at an upper-intermediate level of proficiency, which is the expected standard to be achieved on completion of the course. The core textbook used is *Cutting Edge* (Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate levels), plus a set of complementary readings selected on the basis of the students' preferences and choices.

Values in English Language Teaching

Our present globalised world offers a bewildering array of possibilities and alternatives for interaction with heterogeneous groups of people. In this scenario, life continuously challenges us and confronts us with situations that call for careful thinking and constant decision-making. Everything we do or say is, consciously or unconsciously, based on our beliefs, attitudes and values. In this respect, some typical areas where human beings—and teenagers in particular—may experience confusion or conflict in values are friendship, work, love, family, looks, religion and politics, just to name a few. This confusion may, if not delved into and cleared up, eventually develop into prejudice. Confronted with this latent possibility, one of our tasks as university teachers is to help future professionals adopt a non-judgmental attitudinal change and develop strategies for overcoming resistance to diversity and promoting pluralism through classroom practice.

This topic has not been widely explored in the English language classroom, as attested to by the scarce literature concerning research on values. Johnston (2003) concentrates on this issue from the perspective of the teacher, who he defines as "a moral agent," and contends that "it is only by confronting the moral complexity and ambiguity of our teaching that we can hope to identify the good and right things to do in any given set of circumstances, that is, to know the right way to teach" (Johnston 2003:21). This paper reports on an attempt to delineate a course of action and to assess its outcome from the learners' perspective. The philosophical framework of our proposal is based on Paulo Freire's principle of transforming present structures to create an inclusive climate in the classroom with the ultimate objective of fostering understanding and appreciation of differences which will later transcend to the outside world.

Theoretical framework

The objective of this article is to share a set of strategies which were implemented to deal with values by using ethically-rich content for reflection and discussion. As all action is based on theory, a brief description of the underpinnings of the course we designed will provide the foundation for each of the activities and methodological decisions that have been adopted. Our framework draws on some premises and focal concepts provided by the different, yet highly-compatible pedagogical approaches outlined below.

1. Learner-Centred Teaching

One of the distinctive tenets of this perspective is that the curriculum is “a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, who are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught” (Nunan 1988:2). The focus of attention is on the learner, who participates actively in the construction of a negotiated curriculum model whose content should be flexible since it may need to be modified as the course progresses. Such adjustments will be motivated by the learners as they experience different kinds of activities and by teachers as they obtain more information about the students’ subjective needs and expectations (Nunan 1988). Self-evaluation by both teachers and learners is highly promoted.

2. Whole Language

This approach puts forward the idea that language should not be broken up into abstract bits and pieces. In order to facilitate learning, the language is to be kept whole and involve the learners in using it functionally and purposefully to meet their own needs. This top-down view of learning entails the psychological premise that individuals learn from the whole to parts. In this line of reasoning, the language becomes meaningful and easy to learn when it is relevant to the students, when they use it for their own purposes and when the focus is on the meaning being communicated. Even though this approach is an attempt to account for the cognitive development of literacy programs with school children (Goodman 1986), its philosophical base seems to hold true and can thus be extrapolated to our own teaching-learning context since our goal is to work with the foreign language to meet a functional need in our students. The target language thus becomes a means to an end, not an end in itself, as the focus is on the construction of effective meanings.

3. Content-Based Instruction

The rationale underlying content-based teaching is that a foreign language is learned most effectively when used as the medium to convey information of

interest and relevance to the learner. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989:vii) define content-based instruction as “the integration of content learning with language teaching aims. More specifically, it refers to the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material.” This approach aims to develop students’ academic language competencies, so it provides them with study skills and a familiarity with scholarly discourse which they can transfer to other academic tasks they encounter. The use of authentic texts which are relevant to the learners’ foreign language needs is emphasized, i.e. written or oral pieces which were not originally created for language teaching purposes, as they contextualise the lessons by providing the structures, functions and discourse features to be taught (Brinton, Snow and Wesche 1989, Snow and Brinton 1997). At Comahue University, we have implemented a theme-based language model, which lends itself particularly well to heterogeneous groups of young adults who share common areas of interest. For example, a typical intermediate-to-upper-intermediate-level course would consist of three to four broad thematic units or ‘content modules’—e.g. sex roles, language learning, technology and media, environmental concerns—with sub-units on derived issues such as air pollution control, toxic waste disposal, land conservation, advertising and so on when dealing with the thematic unit “the environment.”²

4. Humanistic practices

Our views are closely related to humanistic theories which engage the whole person in the learning experience, including the emotions and feelings—the affective realm—as well as linguistic knowledge and behavioural skills. Moskowitz (1978:2) defines humanistic techniques as those that “blend what the students feel, think and know with what they are learning in the target language.” Her techniques pursue the development of self-actualization; that is, the acceptance of oneself and others, and self-esteem, concepts that were coined by Maslow, who is considered the father of humanistic psychology. In a similar vein, the Reflective Model (Richards and Lockhart 1996), though mainly focused on the teacher, is an inquiry-oriented constructivist approach in which the learners are given a significant role and are viewed as active creators of meanings. Cooperative learning and the exploration of both teachers’ and learners’ belief systems are also strongly encouraged. Likewise, Rinvoluceri is an experienced practitioner of the humanistic approach and his main concern is to consider students as individuals rather than as “the class,” recognizing their affective as well as their cognitive nature, thus educating the whole person. This concern is clearly

² Brinton and Master (1997) offer a collection of detailed in-class activities to accompany theme-based courses in which language and content are taught in tandem.

manifested in his collection of creative activities in the framework of the humanistic approach (Rinvoluceri 2002) ³

In keeping with this train of thought, the content of our English II course relates to the learners' experiences, memories, hopes, beliefs, values and needs, which are thus integrated into the curriculum. A base of humanistic principles is used for choosing materials, planning instruction, organising classroom discussions and evaluating student progress and the course itself. The ideal is to pursue growth in the target language in tandem with personal development integrating the intellectual and emotional dimensions. Likewise, we aim at creating learning environments that are caring and supportive, and which we hope will then be reproduced in the real world outside the classroom.

The stages of the study

From the outset, our intention was not to instil any particular set of shoulds and should nots but to foster a discovery approach to each student's value system through an analysis of fictional and non-fictional works. In other words, the overall objective of the project was twofold: on the one hand, to explore the possibility of developing values in our university lessons by leading students to examine their own systems of beliefs and assumptions, and to enable them to give shape to those that are still emerging; on the other hand, to put materials and tasks to the test in order to assess their potential to develop values, and to stimulate oral and written language development while promoting affective involvement and active participation in class.

The reading material was used as a tool for learning about conflicting situations—such as discrimination, lack of justice in society, obsessive love relationships—that would allow our students to apply a set of problem-solving strategies in order to understand and overcome these contemporary dilemmas. The ultimate aim was to foster the development of a sense of identity (Who am I?) and alterity (Who is the other?) by examining certain 'facts of life' as they unravelled in the lives of real and imaginary heroes and villains.

◆ Stage 1: Planning and organizing the project on values

³ The humanistic movement has several exponents nowadays, represented by their contributions to *Humanising Language Teaching*, an on-line magazine for teachers and teacher trainers which provides a wide variety of articles and resources to become familiar with this approach (Editor: Mario Rinvoluceri. The Pilgrims Group of Canterbury. University of Kent). Also, Curran's method, known as Community Language Learning, is considered an example of a humanistic approach within the language teaching tradition. In recent years and in a similar vein, *Global Education*, *Peace Education*, *Human Rights Education*, *Development Education* and *Environmental Education* have become frequently-used labels in the language teaching world.

The English II course lasts for a whole academic year (thirty weeks) with meetings of three hours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. During the first lesson, the students (N=26) were asked to get into small groups, to brainstorm and to provide a list of six broad topics or themes they would like to tackle. As expected, each group produced their own list of topics.⁴ The teacher's task was to analyse the students' choices and select the most frequent ones, which were then discussed in class and agreed on collectively during the following meeting.⁵ These topics were organised into three thematic units, broadly termed 'discrimination,' 'love' and 'justice'. Since stories are an integral part of our EFL curriculum⁶ as they provide the springboard for the discussion of value-related issues, the material used was a selection of first-person narratives taken from the Chicken Soup Series, which was then complemented with a set of fictional short stories written by contemporary writers. The criterion for selection of the autobiographical accounts was that the texts were written by or addressed to teenagers; besides, they are informative and inspirational, relatively short and manageable for the students' level of proficiency. Learners of English in their second year at the university have not yet been confronted with many authentic texts⁷, thus this material seemed to be a good starting point for our purposes. As to the fictional stories, they were selected principally on the basis of their contents which offer interesting data of contextualised uses of language. Following Jane Austen, "fiction offers the most thorough knowledge of human nature [...] conveyed to the world in the best chosen language," thus it may contribute to the development of sensitivity and exploration of human qualities and relationships. The texts in our compilation dealt with controversial topics such as the resistance to differences, the non-acceptance of change and the intolerance of diversity, the lack of or the excess of love, and the questionable notion of justice as it is conceived by some human beings (See Appendix 1 for a brief summary of the

⁴ The activities in the organizational stage described above were not time-consuming and were easily accommodated among the usual tasks related to the other components of the course.

⁵ It is interesting to note some of the recurrent topics that emerged, which may be considered for future development depending, naturally, on the students' preferences. One area was related to 'teenage problems:' eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia), teenage pregnancy, stress, depression and phobias in teenagers, teenage suicide, addictions (smoking, alcohol, drugs), family relationships, appearances and looks. Another area dealt with broad topics that relate the individual to the society (s)he lives in, such as sex education, friendship, marriage, gay couples, gay parenting, organ donation, assisted death, abortion, the influence of TV on teenagers, role models, human rights, freedom of thought and expression in society, violence and sexual abuse.

⁶ Massi (1997) and Massi and Benvenuto (2001) discuss the relevance of using stories and fairy tales in the ELT classroom for text analysis and critical thinking. Massi and Scruggs (2000) present a rationale and a set of class activities for the exploitation of the potential of stories as retold in films.

⁷ Due to the heterogeneity of the students' linguistic competencies during the first year at university, the materials used are mainly a coursebook (e.g. *Cutting-Edge, Pre-Intermediate*. Pearson) and a list of simplified novels (*Penguin Readers*. Longman) to develop the habit of reading, to encourage vocabulary growth and to consolidate grammar patterns. Though highly suited to our needs, these texts are not considered 'authentic' as they have been abridged for language teaching purposes.

content of these texts). Although the selection of the stories for the project was organized by the teacher on the basis of the learners' preliminary choices, most of the decisions in the stages that follow were made by the students in an interactive and collaborative fashion.

◆ Stage 2: Analysing the texts

Approximately two weeks after the course started, the students were asked to obtain the reading material for the first thematic unit. The methodological approach consisted of assigning the first set of three stories⁸ for home-reading and organising in-class talking circles based on ideas derived from a pool of the students' exploratory work and initial conclusions. First, they organized themselves in trios and chose one story to read at home. Each of the different groups had to read the same story for the next meeting. Specific activities were assigned to get the students familiar with the content as well as with the vocabulary and language structures (Appendix 2 presents a scheme with guidelines). In the following session, they were re-grouped into different trios, that is, one student from each of the previous groups became part of a new one, so that each of them had a different story to present and share. They explained their story to the other members of the group and once they had presented their stories, they worked on the similarities and differences among them. Finally, they drew some general conclusions on the main issues at stake. These learner-centred group discussions helped them get to know each other a bit more, reach a consensus on the different topics and develop a collaborative team-building attitude.

The teacher kept a list of the groups and their stories, so that on subsequent sessions, new trios were formed and each student had a story to share with his/her new group. The purpose of organizing trios was to foster group interaction and to maximize student speaking time. The 'group swap' was meant to increase the students' level of interest in each other's story: each of them had something 'new' to present, and this encouraged them to establish points in common, differences and so on. Eventually, some of them got interested in their peers' stories and accessed them as they were bound together in a booklet for the students to copy.

After the preliminary analysis, all the students knew the contents of all the stories. Generally, during the following session, the learners got into different trios organized by the teacher. A handout with some basic leading questions was provided for developing strategies to carry out an in-depth interpretation of the characters' conflicts (See Appendix 3 for sample activities on one of the stories).

⁸ The discriminatory practices set was made up of the following stories: *Betty Ann* (Ina Hughs), *One Friday Morning* (Langston Hughes) and *All Summer in a Day* (Ray Bradbury). Appendix 1 offers a short list of alternative options.

After directing the students' attention to the descriptive level of analysis (Who are the characters involved in this story? Where does the action take place? What are the main events in the story?) Further questions were posed in order to focus on the events that generated the conflict and the feelings of the people involved: What event caused the conflict? Why did the main character feel different from the other people? How did the other people treat her/him? -- the explanatory level.

Gradually, the focus was shifted to issues addressed to the students themselves by means of a set of you-questions such as the following: How do you feel about the character? Have you ever felt like him/her? Have you ever had a similar experience? How did you feel? Did you manage to overcome the problem? By leaving aside the conflict of the main character(s) and gradually conducting a meaningful exploration of similar problems that had an impact on the learners' own lives, we passed on to the transition level, in which students verbalized their feelings about the issue. At this stage, they positioned themselves as the people portrayed in the stories and reflected on the conflict from their own perspectives to better assess the situation and the reasonableness of the characters' actions.

Then, with the help of why-questions like Why do you think that problems like this exist? Why do people discriminate against other people?, we moved to the exploration of the causes of the problem—the projection level—and to its generalisation to the social context. Why-questions are interesting for developing critical thinking skills since they allow the learners to move out of their personal experiences into a broader understanding of the issue and the consideration of similar and dissenting opinions. These projective questions can turn out to be too difficult for starting discussions in EFL classes, especially for students who are not used to freely expressing opinions or who are restricted by their language competence. Therefore, they should be posed after a good deal of debate over the topic has already taken place. Finally, after the evaluation of different situations, the emphasis was laid on generating possible solutions—the action level—by means of prompts that shifted from the oppositional you to the inclusive we, as in this sequence: What can you do to prevent people experiencing upsetting events? How can we reduce the effect of negative situations? This framework attempts to bring students to a closer understanding of the everyday problems of society and to assess how their beliefs and assumptions influence their own perceptions of reality. At the same time, it allows them to draw on their own experiences and points of view in order to address those problems.

The tasks outlined thus far were carried out in a relaxed atmosphere, in which students interacted with their peers freely and enthusiastically. While working on the transition-level questions, several learners provided very personal cathartic accounts of events which had been traumatic or significant in their lives and were emotionally supported by their group's members, who listened attentively and respectfully. During these sessions, the teacher's role was limited to providing emotional feedback on their accounts, asking and answering

questions, making comments, clarifying concepts and suggesting ways of expressing ideas. Likewise, specific lexical items were provided when the students asked for specific words or collocations, their production was monitored by signalling unclear ideas or inaccurate patterns, and they were urged to continue in the process of generating narrative and opinion discourse. The teacher's intervention and participation was active, though indirect, as the students were in control of the organization and expression of their ideas.

The cycle of discussion and analysis of the set of stories on discrimination took approximately a week (9 hours altogether) and was completed by the end of April. The procedure described above was repeated when dealing with the two remaining topics of the students' choice in June and September.

◆ Stage 3: Producing an original text

Towards the end of the project, the students were asked if they would like to produce an individual written autobiographical story in an attempt to capitalise on their high exposure to narrative texts and on their analyses and interpretation of different stories⁹. Although they had been previously asked to group meaning-related words in semantic fields, and to write notes and summaries after each reading and discussion session, writing an autobiographical piece on the basis of self-examination and reflection represented a significant challenge. The purpose of this activity was to develop an awareness of significant moments in the students' lives and to examine: 1) their own reactions to those experiences as well as 2) the influence of outside pressures. It was agreed that they would complete the task in two weeks, and that it would then be considered as a part of their course assessment. Once they completed their first draft, students gathered in small groups to share their preliminary pieces and to get feedback from their peers and their teacher before working on their final versions. The production of an autobiography entails considerable ego-involvement; therefore, the learners were free to take their own initiatives in matters related to their feelings and they alone decided how much or how little to open up and contribute of themselves. As English II is a year-long course, staff-student and student-student contact takes place frequently so there is plenty of time to build up a genuine relationship and develop a sense of community. Many interesting topics emerged out of these interactions, such as the resistance to changes, the difficulties of adapting to new models or patterns, the importance of freedom to make decisions, the role our values have when making choices, the risk of becoming less human each day by being indifferent to other people's material and emotional needs, the relevance of

⁹ The reader may wonder how voluntary this activity was, considering that it was the teacher's suggestion. In fact, the students not only agreed willingly and enthusiastically but also came up with interesting ideas that led to a modification of the original model: they suggested exchanging their own texts, compiling a booklet with their finished stories and running copies for everyone in the class, including the teacher. During breaks, it was gratifying and stimulating to see them eagerly reading each other's stories and exchanging views on them. After all, they were really curious to see what their classmates had written!

developing positive attitudes, and the enhancement of values related to the family, our friends, and people by and large. Finally, these 'pages' of their autobiographies were compiled in a booklet and then shared with the whole class (Some samples are provided in Appendix 4). This experiment was carried out in the belief that the students' experiences can affirm their cultural heritage; thus, they make a welcome addition to our daily EFL literacy practices as they contribute to personalising and transforming the curriculum in a meaningful way.

◆ Stage 4: Listening to the students' voices

After completing each of the thematic units, students were asked to record their thoughts and views on the different topics and activities via journal writing, as journals provide a non-threatening forum to express ideas and comments with a minimum of concern about form or structure¹⁰. The learners wrote on the following topics related to the project: What I learned this week, My favourite story so far, My opinion on the Chicken Soup stories, An identity crisis I have gone through, My opinion on the project on values. Because there had been considerable involvement in each of the stages, their writing was simple, yet clear and enjoyable. At this point, the focus of attention was on the flow of ideas rather than on the grammatical and discursive aspects. These learning journals were read by the teacher, who usually responded with encouraging remarks as to the content of the entry—as readers looking for meaning –, with comments to reinforce and sometimes dispute what the students had written, and with questions to elicit further information. The results of this case study indicate, as the students themselves explicitly stated in their journals, the development of their self-awareness and appreciation of differences. Likewise, they seem to highlight the relevance of content-based instruction with the ultimate objective of empowering university level learners and raising critical thinking skills through the use of value-laden texts as initial input. The following renderings, however brief, illustrate this point.

Journal writing – Entry 2 (What I have learnt this week)

This week I have realized how important it is to KNOW people. Yes, 'know' with capital letters, that is, not just know about superficial matters – things they like and dislike and so on – but about their past, their experiences, their dreams and hopes. [...] The more we know about each other, the more likely it is that we will communicate successfully and without conflicts. I have also learnt that sometimes ignorance of other people's specific feelings and ideas may lead us to have a negative impression of their abilities and this, in turn, may lead us to a social or cultural stereotype, and eventually

¹⁰ The *Learning Journal* is a constituent part of the course. As a home assignment, the students are asked to write an entry once a week on topics related to the course and their own learning process. They usually keep a record of their opinions and ideas and reflect on their own progress as learners of a foreign language. In connection with the values project, they were asked to write on five occasions: after dealing with the first thematic unit (entry 2), after completing the second unit (entries 3 and 5), after the third unit (entry 7) and on completion of the project (entry 10).

to discrimination. [...] The less we know about each other, the more likely we are to misunderstand each other on a linguistic or cultural level.

Journal writing – Entry 10 (My opinion on the project on values)

The topics were interesting and touching because they were connected to our feelings, our emotions and our personal experiences in life. [...] I think that each of us managed to find something interesting to share. There were very moving stories which caught the attention of the class and generated a wonderful atmosphere to open up and debate. [...] In conclusion, I think it was an interesting project that helped us become more self-confident, to talk about our feelings, problems and experiences. But the most important point was that it helped us to consolidate as a group because it allowed us to 'discover' one another and to get to know each other in a deep way.

Although there was a marked increase in the students' effort and participation, the most substantial development took place in the realm of attitude, position-taking and openness of perspectives. The educational experience is individual but it is highly influenced by the context in which it occurs. Taking into account the learners' individual and contextual evaluation, the results yield considerable attitudinal growth which is reflected in most of the learning journal entries (See further samples in Appendix 5).

Qualitative discussion of the results

Even though the original aim of the course design and organization was to achieve a maturational change and to enhance emotional development in our students, the goal of both teachers and students alike was also to develop more complex lines of reasoning while utilising precise lexical items and grammar patterns when referring to a particular event or idea. The students' systematic progress at morphological, syntactic and lexical levels was not subjected to rigorous quantification, but their 'autobiographies,' as well as their oral performance in class and the written performance during term-exams, revealed the use of a wider range of vocabulary and a more accurate use of collocations than their production at the beginning of the academic year. There was also evidence of a more confident use of complex structural patterns and a more careful selection of words. Our contention is that a values project like the one outlined can contribute to the improvement of the students' oral and written performance, providing integral practice in the receptive and productive macro-skills.

In their evaluation of the course, the students reported that one salient aspect of their personal growth was the development of awareness of the fact that sometimes "what you say is not as important as how you say it." Besides, they concluded that they managed to generate ideas triggered by the stories, the discussions and the analyses, which served as springboards for the development of viewpoints and perceptive comments about their own reality. Many learners provided feedback on how they perceived their own activities and interactions in

the group in such areas as contributing ideas, praising and helping others, and staying on task. They viewed their own interactions critically and managed to discuss their group dynamics openly among themselves. Likewise, they admitted having realized how differently people could perceive the same event, and openly expressed that they had become aware of their own prejudices.

One of the strengths of a framework like this is its flexibility, as it allows both teachers and students to “create” a content-syllabus with the specific learners’ needs and interests in mind; however, a caveat is that the syllabus will have to be adapted or adjusted every year, as a new group of students start the course. But this is also one of the interesting aspects of a teacher’s profession: students change, teachers change, and teachers change when meeting new students, so the materials should also change accordingly to adapt to the dynamic complexity of the classroom.

Conclusion

A course based on values like the one briefly presented can be a welcome addition to a traditional language course as a stage in the process of *empowerment* of university students. A traditional axiom states that “students should not go through the university, rather, the university should go through the student” – *el alumno no debe pasar por la universidad, la universidad debe pasar por el alumno*. This is a wise reflection, though it may cause some discussion and even controversy. Our role as university educators is to lead our students to become critical not just of the other, but also of themselves; to consider other people’s perspectives, to understand and appreciate differences, to defend one’s views with respect for the other but also accept heterogeneity and diversity, while fostering integration. All these *values* will give our students the power—in a good sense—to be responsible citizens in society. Above all, guiding them to achieve a sense of control and ownership of their identities, manifested via their ideas and moral standards, will allow them to make smarter choices when using both the foreign language and their L1. Viewed this way, the linguistic system can provide a real access to personally and socially useful knowledge through the development of ethics and moral principles.

This paper has attempted to outline the framework that supports our methods and to conduct an experiment using a blend of features drawn from different, yet highly compatible pedagogical models, namely learner-centered, content-based, whole language and humanistic principles. The tasks and method reported in this case study are by no means the only or the best approach towards fostering the development of values and critical awareness. Imaginative teachers and interested students will discover new ways to explore these and other materials in order to better meet the needs of individual learners and classes in other institutional settings. In this sense, the guidelines provided thus far are still provisional and should be subjected to a continuous process of

revision and evaluation. The whole experience has raised many questions to which we are still trying to find answers, but from the results obtained, we are positive this is a promising start and a fruitful path to follow.

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APPENDIX 1: Contents of suitable stories to discuss and develop values

1. Selection of autobiographical pieces from the *Chicken Soup Series*:

- *Betty Ann*, by Ina Hughs, retells the sad story of a brilliant girl who has been discriminated against by her classmates and now it is too late to undo the wrong.
- *Like People First*, by Kent Nerburn, helps us think about the importance of getting to know the people around us before making judgements.
- *In Losing the “Us”*, Lia Gay feels no longer whole after breaking up with her boyfriend until she discovers that loving oneself helps overcome difficult moments.
- *Tigress*, by Judith S. Johnessee, deals with an adolescent who has to face the death of his pet.
- In *My Most Embarrassing Moment*, by Rochelle M. Pennington, a model student gets into trouble by putting one of her teachers in an uncomfortable situation and eventually discovers the value of forgiveness.
- In *Adulthood*, Robert Fulghum reflects on his life as a teenager and draws the conclusion that ‘being an adult is dirty work, but someone has to do it’.

2.a. Fictional short stories dealing with discriminatory practices:

- *One Friday Morning*, by Langston Hughes
Nancy Lee, a black teenager, is told that she has won the art scholarship at an American school. Prize Day will be a grand occasion for her and she has even prepared her acceptance speech when she is told that the committee have decided not to give her the award because of her race and color.
- *All Summer in a Day*, by Ray Bradbury
On Venus there is a perpetual rain, a rain so heavy and steady that the inhabitants live underground. Yet once every seven years the sun shines for an hour, and that day will be something special for Margot, who is the only child in the group who has seen the sun before. A conflict arises and, in the end, Margot is locked in a closet and released when it starts raining again.
- *The Lottery*, by Shirley Jackson
The inhabitants of a rural village are ready to play the lottery, a community event that they traditionally hold every summer year after year. Bill Hutchinson draws the black spot for his family and his wife, Tessie, who arrives late saying that she has forgotten all about the lottery, yells out that it isn’t fair. Finally, she is stoned to death by the villagers.
- *Country Lovers*, by Nadime Gordimer

Somewhere in South Africa, Thebedi, a black teenager, and Paulus, the farmer's white son, feel a strong attraction towards each other, yet they recognise the need to hide their affection from other people. Later, Thebedi, who is to be married to Njabulo, realises that she is pregnant and that she must not let anybody know that the baby is Paulus's. The baby is poisoned by his own father and the case goes to court. In the end, Paulus is set free and Thebedi is accused of committing perjury.

2.b. Stories that approach values related to love:

- *The Colonel's Lady*, by W. Somerset Maugham
The Peregrines have had a conventional marriage for more than twenty years. While George, the Colonel, is a respectable and popular gentleman, Evie is a housewife who keeps a low profile. When he learns that Evie has written a book of poems, he reads them and realises that she had a secret love affair with a younger man who had a sudden death. Confronted with this shocking piece of news, he resorts to indifference and wonders what on earth that man saw in his wife.
- *Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat*, by Roald Dahl
Mrs. Bixby lives a double life. She is married to a dentist in New York, but has a rich lover in Baltimore. On one of her visits, he decides not to see her any longer and gives her an expensive mink coat, which is very difficult for her to explain away. She takes the coat to a pawn shop and invents a credible story for her husband. In the end, he turns the table on his wife and she discovers that he is having an affair with his secretary.
- *The Gift of the Magi*, by O. Henry
Della and Jim are a young couple who live humbly in a small flat. Their two 'possessions' are Jim's gold watch and Della's hair. It's Christmas time and she wants to buy a nice present for her husband. As she only has \$1.87, she decides to sell her hair in order to buy a platinum chain for Jim's watch. When they meet, Jim gives her a set of combs to wear in her beautiful vanished hair. He has sold his watch to get the money to buy her the combs. Even though they get useless gifts, they show their love for each other, which now becomes the greatest treasure of their home.

2.c. Stories related to justice:

- *Vendetta*, by Guy de Maupassant
Widow Saverini is an old woman who lives with her only son and their dog on a small Italian island. One evening, Antoine Saverini is treacherously killed during a quarrel. Having no male relatives to help her kill the murderer, the old woman prepares a plan to avenge her son's death with premeditated cunning. She trains her dog, Semillante, who then carries out the vendetta to perfection.
- *The Man with the Scar*, by W. Somerset Maugham

This is the story of a revolutionary general who fought in Nicaragua. One day, he is captured, tried by court-martial and sentenced to be shot at dawn. His last wish is to say goodbye to his wife. When he meets her, they kiss passionately and he stabs her in the neck. When he is asked why he has killed his wife, he answers that he did so because he loved her. The general who ordered the execution considers this a noble gesture and sets the man free.

- *The Mother*, by W. Somerset Maugham

La Cachirra has had a hard life and her objective is to protect her son, Currito, who she loves with tenderness and passion. Her extreme jealousy reveals her inability to share him with Rosalia, a young woman he has apparently fallen in love with. The all-consuming nature of La Cachirra's love leads her to kill her son's girlfriend in a violent and unexpected way.

References Appendix 1

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1. FOCUS ON GENERAL ASPECTS

For a start, consider the following preliminary aspects:

TITLE: What is the title of the story?

AUTHOR: Who wrote it? When?
Where is he/she from? Is he/she a contemporary writer?
What else did he/she write?

TYPE: Is it an autobiographical story? Does it deal with horror, science fiction, mystery, contemporary and general-interest topics?

MAIN TOPIC: What is it about, *e.g.* family life, an unusual person, an adventure, etc.?

2. FOCUS ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STORYLINE

The next step involves the reconstruction of the original text. Read the *strategies for summary writing* below and produce your own simplified version.

After reading the story, put the text down. First, make a mental picture of the main idea/s. Then, write it/them down *in your own words*.

1. Locate *important/relevant specific information* in connection with the main topic, following the order of the original text. Establish another main topic and proceed in a similar way. Choose the information that is related to and expands on the main idea.
2. Make sure you include information on the *setting and the main characters or people involved*.
3. After examining how the author organized the material, work out your *outline* and get ready to organize the information you have selected. Flesh out your text. Remember that you should present 'the big picture' so leave aside minor details and irrelevant information.
4. Do not write one sentence for every paragraph or section. Instead, combine ideas from the different paragraphs/sections of the text by providing suitable *connectors* to establish semantic relationships.
5. Go over your summary when you have finished it. Then, quickly read the story again to make the necessary adjustments and check that your summary is complete.
6. Polish your summary. Ask yourself the following questions: Is it easy to follow and understand? Have I used connecting words like *furthermore, in addition, however* and so on? Have I organised my text in a coherent way? Does my summary reflect the original work?
7. Remember that a summary is based on other people's material, so mention the author at some point—generally at the beginning of the new text. To avoid plagiarism, paraphrase *i.e. use your own words* as much as possible. If you prefer to use the author's words, indicate them by means of quotation marks.

3. FOCUS ON LANGUAGE USE: Grammar Patterns, Vocabulary and Idiomatic expressions

We now need to consider the language used *in context* as a strategy to learn new words or to consolidate familiar and unfamiliar structures. Are there any specific lexical items or chunks that are semantically connected in the text? Are there any *semantic fields* or *word domains* in the story? Your task is to group and classify those words and expressions that belong to the same or similar semantic field according to some pre-established criterion. For example, you can use grammatical labels such as *nouns*, *verbs* and *adjectives*; an alternative is to provide an 'umbrella term' that refers to a particular field, such as *ways of walking*, *laughing*, *speaking* and the like. Yet, another possibility is to group words and expressions according to broad categories, such as *education*, *friendship*, *social issues*, etc. Then, you can organise a conceptual map to display the words and collocations of your choice, plus some others taken from an English-English dictionary. Finally, it is advisable to produce a short paragraph to illustrate usage and collocation in context so as to facilitate retention and retrieval.

4. FOCUS ON THE EVALUATION OF THE STORY

This stage of the process requires you to be critical and to judge the original text. In order to do so, your task is to provide evaluative comments while giving reasons for every point you make. Take some time to think about the main themes and sub-themes dealt with in the story. Is the writer saying something important about people and society? Is there a 'message' or 'moral'? The following questions may help you generate your evaluation of the text. Remember to always support your opinion.

Was the text easy/difficult to read?
 Is the language up-dated or old-fashioned?
 Is the register neutral, colloquial or formal?
 How would you describe the contents? Realistic? Amusing? Thrilling?
 Fast-moving?
 Did you like the story? Justify your answer.
 What did you like especially about it?
 What will you remember the most about it?
 How does it relate to other texts on the same topic that you have read?
 How did you feel after reading it? Happy? Sad?
 Would you recommend it? If so, who to?
 Complete the following: To me, this story means...

5. FOCUS ON QUESTIONS TO GENERATE FURTHER OPINIONS

Every text has the potential to generate second thoughts and establish associations with other situations. At this point, your task is to jot down a set of thought-provoking questions that you have come up with while reading and analysing the story. They can be related to personal experiences or to imaginary circumstances. Examples: Which of the characters do you sympathise with? What piece of information in the story can justify his/her behaviour? How would you react in a similar situation? As you can see, you may not have the answers to those questions, so the objective is to pass them on to your group and the whole class in order to generate debate and, if possible, reach agreement.

6. FOCUS ON AN ACTIVITY DERIVED FROM THE ANALYSIS

This is your golden opportunity to play teacher for a while. Your task is to design a motivating hands-on consolidation exercise for your classmates. The only limitation here is your time! Feel free to create thinking activities that involve matching, filling in blanks, illustrating the meanings of some selected words, solving a problem, drawing, mime, providing an alternative ending, writing a letter, a short article, headlines, a song, a poem... The sky's the limit!

7. FURTHER READING RELATED TO THE MAIN ISSUES AT STAKE IN THE STORY

This is the last stage in the process! In order to establish a connection between the story we have analysed and the real world out there, you should look for texts (minimum: 3, maximum: 6) that are in some way related to the main issues illustrated in the story. With this material, we will organise a data bank to be used for the oral term-exam. Feel free to include short articles, news items or ads derived from any source (newspapers, magazines, fanzines, the Net, books and journals). As you look for the topic-related texts, make sure you read **ONLY** English.

ALL SUMMER IN A DAY (**RAY BRADBURY**)

Integrated language practice

- *Reading*: unsimplified material, extracting topics and writing summaries
- *Speaking - Listening*: discussion in talking circles (groups of three or four students)
- *Writing*: after intensive reading and analysis of the stories (recognition of organizational relationships, presentation of the information and the like), production of a similar text on their own with the use of skeletal notes or outlines

Pedagogical objectives

- To develop an intellectual and emotional understanding of the lives and motivations of 'others'
- To experience a conflictive event and develop the ability to see things from another person's point of view

Responding to the Story – Triggering Questions for Group Discussion

Step 1 - **Description level**: Establishing the setting and main events

- Who are the characters involved in this story?
- What is the setting (a school)?
- What is the larger setting (a city on Venus)? How would you like to live there?
- Why do you think the people in the story have moved to Venus?
- What happens in this story?
- Do you like the ending?

Step 2 – **Explanation level**: Defining the problem or the cause of the conflict

- What fact or event causes the conflict in the story?
- Why is Margot different from the other children on Venus?
- Why do they dislike her?
- How did Margot feel when she emerged from the closet?
- How did her classmates react towards her?

Step 3 – **Transition level**: From the story to the students' lives and their feelings about the issue

- What are your feelings about Margot?
- What are your feelings towards the children in the classroom and the oppressiveness of the rain outside?

- Have you ever heard of the same kind of treatment that Margot received happen in another setting, for instance, in your school or community?
- Have you ever had a similar experience? Have you ever felt different, as if you didn't fit into a particular situation?
- How did you feel about it?
- How did you behave? Did you try to overcome the feeling of embarrassment?
- What was it like to be considered 'different'?
- Did you receive support from anybody to lessen the effect of prejudice?
- Did you cope successfully with this issue?

Step 4 – Projection level: From the students' individual experiences to a larger social or cultural perspective

- Why do problems like this exist? Why are some people cruel and discriminatory towards other people?
- Why are there so many victims of racial prejudice, religious prejudice, social class prejudice or any other type of prejudice in our present-day society?

Step 5 – Action level: Discussing alternatives and solutions

- What can you do to eradicate this problem? What collective actions can we take?
- What new perspectives on the issue of discrimination can ameliorate it?
- How can we reduce or lessen the effect of prejudice in our society?
- What is Ray Bradbury telling us about prejudice? Is he saying it effectively?
- Is fiction a good way to make the kind of statements that he is making? Why?

APPENDIX 4: Sample excerpts from student autobiographical pieces 11*Drop the Checklist!*

When you are too picky to find a partner and look for a mate on the basis of a long checklist, you might end up with... just a checklist! This is exactly what happened to me about two years ago while I was enjoying my 'bachelor' life. At that time, I was coming out of a break-up from a long-lasting relationship with a very special girl whom I got to love quite deeply. She was special in many ways, she had an interesting strong personality and she had a rather 'messy' life as well. The problem was that not only had I idealised this girl but also my relationship with her, despite the fact that she made me suffer quite a bit.

Every weekend I met someone new either at school or when I went out with friends. One evening I got the chance to talk to this 'I'll-be-a-good-girlfriend' and eventually date her. I got to know about her likes and dislikes, her ideas, wishes, etc. In short, I got to know her better. But after a while, I lost my interest in this person. And then the whole sequence would repeat, over and over again...

It wasn't after quite a long time that I realized what I was unconsciously doing. My frame of mind at that time was expecting the same type of relation that I had had with my ex-girlfriend from every girl I spent some time with. I even expected the same likes and dislikes! I missed our jokes and our fooling around!

The time when I actually took the blindfold off my eyes came along when I met my present girlfriend. She is a sweet, loving, patient and beautiful person. She's really good-looking, but it is her inside that shines the most. The moment she burst into my life I realized that I had to drop my checklist, otherwise, I would lose her and, as a consequence, I would have missed one of the most wonderful experiences in my life so far. (Paulo)

The Intruder

When I was twelve, I arrived home from school at midday, as usual. After saying hello to my mother, she broke a piece of news that changed my life for ever. "You are going to have a sister or brother. I am pregnant", she said.

I remember that I stared at her in astonishment without being able to utter a single word. I could not believe my ears! I was a twelve-year-old girl and had spent my whole life as an only child enjoying the love of my parents and now, an intruder would appear to make my life miserable. I left the room crying and shouting, locked my room door and jumped on the bed punching the cushions on it.

¹¹ The students' lexical and conceptual choices have been kept to reproduce the authors' voices. Minimal editorial revision has been done in the area of collocation, verb form or verb tense. All student samples are used with permission.

After I had calmed down, I decided to do everything at reach to prevent the 'little thing' from modifying my perfect life. I would not let the baby take away all the things that were mine: my relatives' love, my place in our home, my cherished dolls and toys... I was determined to fight!

The first stage of my plan was to wait until the baby was born. In the meantime, I would behave extraordinarily well so as to make my parents love ME more. Once the baby was born, my revenge plan would really start. The second stage would be to make her/him feel as miserable as I had felt when I got the news and to make her/him wish not to have been born at all.

Nine months went by sooner than expected and one evening, I found myself at the waiting room of the hospital. My dear father was by my side. After waiting for four unbearable hours, my mother gave birth to the intruder. I could not help feeling jealous when my father hugged the little baby with the happiest expression I had ever seen on his face. I started to sob and then I burst into tears. At that moment, my father put the baby in my arms and told me that she was my little sister. He added that from then onwards I would have to take care of her as if she were a little treasure because she would probably take me as a role model. I had to do my best in order not to let her down!

I cannot explain the joy I felt the moment the little baby opened her eyes and made a gesture as if smiling at me. She was such a sweet little thing that I realized I could not hate her. I immediately understood that she would not take my parents' love from me; on the contrary, I realized that, from that moment onwards, I would have another person to love and to share my life with. (Soledad)

The Chance

When I got to know that the person I admired and loved the most was leaving us for good, I felt that the world was coming down to pieces. My father was the one who broke the news to me, just as I arrived home after a gym class about three years ago. When he told me that he had received a phone call from the hospital announcing that my grandmother was about to die, I panicked. Although she had been in hospital for nearly a month and her death was quite predictable, I still hoped she would recover. Confronted with this reality, the first thing I did was drive up to the clinic so as to have a chance to, at least, say goodbye.

When I went into the room, I had the feeling that she had been waiting for me. I took a deep breath and sat next to her bed. She seemed to be sleeping, with closed eyes and a sad expression on her face. I was holding one of her hands when a miraculous thing happened: she opened her big grey eyes and smiled. She kept on looking at me in silence and I felt an internal peace inside. We didn't say a thing, just looked at each other for a couple of minutes, and then she passed away.

I have the conviction that she is next to me every day and I am grateful to have had the chance to be with her for a little while before she departed. This was my first encounter with death and, in fact, it was not as traumatic as I had expected. I will always keep my granny's smile in my heart... (Nora)

A Hurricane of Pessimism

During the last three months, I have been thinking about my future as an English translator. Every time I try to get an image of myself working happily, everything turns black... I suspect that the crucial fact which has caused this negative impact on my train of thought has been the last meeting I had with my tutor.

From that day on, pessimism has invaded my mind with an immense power. For instance, I wonder how I will explore those literary texts in the target language if I cannot even cope with them in my mother tongue. Apart from this, as it was said that the Internet would be our closest ally, I will have to make a great effort and start surfing the net. I hate technology! From where I stand, it is rather tedious to spend hours glued to a computer looking for information. To make matters worse, it was also highlighted that translators' job opportunities are much fewer than teachers'. As a result, many of us – including myself??? – would have to face the challenge of “playing teachers”. The picture that immediately came to mind wasn't that gratifying, actually. If I had to establish eye contact with such a sea of faces while giving a lesson, I would probably faint!!!

I still remember the last phrase at the meeting due to the fact that it made me get on my nerves. “You can join the teachers' course of studies if you are not satisfied with the translation classes”, the tutor said. What a disappointing comment! If only I had had the courage to respond to her!

Needless to say, this is something temporary (I hope!). I am positive this hurricane of pessimism will disappear as soon as I get rid of all my exams... If it doesn't, there will be many more entries on this topic in my personal journal! (Angélica)

The Real Me

There was a period of time in my childhood when it was not easy for me to relate to people, especially children my own age. Approximately from age nine to thirteen I was quite plump and, as everybody knows, children are cruel towards those peers who are somewhat 'different' from the standard child. I remember myself as a funny girl, talkative, eager to have friends and be accepted by others, with lots of ideas to share and things to say. But because of my 'extra kilograms' I had to put up with all kind of unpleasant jokes. I liked to make friends with boys, but they called me names all the time. They said that I was 'their little fatty buddy', that I couldn't run as fast as they did, and they even told me hurtful things which I won't reproduce here. My relationship with girls was not much better. They used to compare

themselves all the time, talking about clothes and make-up that I didn't wear. They even exchanged sweaters and pants for parties, but I couldn't do so and all I could think of was that I was 'the ugly duckling', the piece that didn't fit the puzzle. Yes, I was different and I felt rejected because of that...

I now realize that, luckily, I had real friends – very few – who helped me to overcome my sad situation because they made me feel that they accepted me no matter my appearance and looks. Anyway, I gradually became a shy person and on many occasions I found myself hiding the 'real me' because I felt I wasn't loved by others. I thought that something was wrong with me and though I had a nice childhood, those are my worst memories.

With the passing of time things got better as I grew up. I lost weight and I realized that boys treated me with respect. Although I regained confidence, I have never shown myself again as openly as I used to when I was younger. I can only open up in a very comfortable environment when I am surrounded by people who love me and I love. Of course I understand that it is impossible to be loved by everybody, just as it is impossible to love all those people around us, but it has taken me quite a while to build up a strong spirit to fight for acceptance and always remember that there are people who will support you in spite of your 'outer' looks. If they love you, it is because they got to know your soul. And that is what matters the most...
(Ailín)

APPENDIX 5: Samples from Journal Entries written by the students¹⁴¹⁵

Journal Entry 3

My favourite story so far

[...] What impressed me the most about *Like People First* is its moral: ‘Don’t judge people if you don’t know them.’ I think this story deals with tolerance and that the person who learns to be open to differences will have more opportunities in life. I will re-read it every now and then because we run the risk of discriminating or being discriminated against every day in the real world. [...] Personally, I consider that behaving or looking differently is not a good reason to be looked down or set apart. Needless to say, human beings are the ones who can make discrimination disappear by accepting others. [...] Finally, I would like to point out that the author of this narrative began to see the world with different eyes when he started to listen to people. [...] We certainly have to accept others as they are and treat them the way we would like to be treated! (Sandra)

Journal Entry 5

What is your opinion on the Chicken Soup bunch of stories?

I enjoyed reading the first-person narratives from Chicken Soup. To be honest, the only plot I would describe as unbelievable is the one from *My Most Embarrassing Moment*, but I have to take into account that people who live in the USA have a different culture from ours. Obviously, each country has its own sets of beliefs! In addition, I know the unpleasant jokes those teenagers played on their teacher was an episode the author has chosen to show ‘the power of forgiveness.’ By the way, I adore the reflections that we generated after each reading and I find them very useful to enrich our knowledge as regards the vocabulary and the culture of people who live in another country. Most of the words and phrases are related to feelings which are not easy to express. The only problem is that their assimilation takes time, as a result, I haven’t yet been able to incorporate all the new expressions into my oral and written production. As you can see, I am satisfied with these texts and I will be grateful to read many others. All in all, my objective is to learn the English language as thoroughly as possible, so any other coherent project like this will be welcomed! (Virginia)

Journal Entry 7

Have you ever gone through an identity crisis?

Lately I’ve realized I have a big problem, which is related to an abstract but very important aspect of life. The problem is that I don’t know how to define my personality. In

¹² The samples reproduced here have minimal editorial revision in order to maintain the students’ ideas and organizational design.

other words, I don't if I am a secure boy, a very shy one, a merciful one, a young man who is interested in nothing, a man with social commitments, an outstanding person...

Nowadays, it is very hard if you don't fit into the system, or if you don't fit with the 'regular' pattern, and this makes you feel a weird person because you 'feel' different. I think that a person cannot be classified or defined as X or Y, because the way in which we behave depends on the circumstances we live. We have to take into account that our lives depend on our personality and, why not, on our attitude when dealing with problems or unexpected situations. I think that our personality will open some doors and close some others, so to speak, and that is why I am worried. Would you say that we could refer to personality as a general framework, which adapts to different situations? If so, can we say that in life there are circumstances that call for perseverance and hard work, and others that call for honesty and sincerity, for example? This is a very thorny question to deal with, isn't it? (Javier)

Las Búsquedas en Red o Web Quest en la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera¹⁶

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Introducción

Como ha sido ampliamente sostenido por múltiples autores, tales como Warschauer, Shetzer, y Meloni (2000), Warschauer (2002), y Koutsogiannis y Mitsikopoulou (2004) la *Internet* es una herramienta que puede ser de gran utilidad para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas o de lenguas extranjeras. Desafortunadamente no ha sido del todo aprovechada para tal propósito, sobre todo en nuestro país, pese al creciente acceso que a dicha herramienta tienen nuestros estudiantes.

Las aplicaciones concretas de la *Internet* a la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras son múltiples, entre las cuales podemos señalar las siguientes: acceso a diferentes acentos y estilos de habla; acceso a textos y conversaciones reales; acceso a corpus lingüísticos; envío y recepción de mensajes a hablantes nativos o estudiantes de una determinada lengua; y la búsqueda de información a través de la *Internet*.

Sin embargo, como atinadamente señala Benz (2005), no todos los usos de la *Internet* son igualmente benéficos: existe una gran cantidad de información poco seria y confiable en la red y las búsquedas interminables en línea o las actividades libres que dejan a los estudiantes navegando a la deriva de una página a otra no permiten alcanzar gran cosa. Concientes de tales limitantes, en este artículo nos centraremos en un tipo de actividad denominada búsqueda en red o *Web Quest*, que como más adelante desarrollaremos, permite a los estudiantes enfocar su atención en un objetivo específico apoyados por una serie de recursos proporcionados por el o la maestra.

¿Qué es una búsqueda en red o *Web Quest*?

Una búsqueda en red o *Web Quest* no es una simple búsqueda de información en la *Internet*, sino una actividad centrada en el uso de información proveniente especialmente de la *Internet* para resolver un problema teórico o práctico asociado a un tema o tópico claramente delimitado. El modelo fue creado en 1995 por Bernie Dodge y Tom March de la Universidad Estatal de San Diego

¹⁶ This is a refereed article

(San Diego State University) a fin de ayudar a los estudiantes a desarrollar sus habilidades de pensamiento en los niveles de análisis, síntesis y evaluación. El modelo se basa en la teoría constructivista y pretende que los alumnos se enfoquen en el uso de la información existente en la red y que construyan su propio conocimiento o comprensión sobre determinados temas o tópicos, apoyados en un andamiaje diseñado por el o la maestra.

¿Son de alguna utilidad para la enseñanza?

Las búsquedas en red o *Web Quests* han sido exitosamente utilizadas en la enseñanza en general como lo demuestran las múltiples investigaciones y experiencias que podemos encontrar en la bibliografía especializada, tales como las descritas en los trabajos de March (1998,2000 a y b), Levine (2005), Lipscomb (2003), Bidón y Maddux (2002) y el impresionante número de referencias y ligas que se obtienen al escribir la palabra *Web Quest* en cualquier buscador de la Internet ² así como la amplísima cantidad de actividades de tal tipo prácticamente sobre cualquier materia disponibles en la red.

En el caso particular de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera o segunda lengua, si bien el número de trabajos tanto de investigación como de propuestas y de narración de experiencias es mucho menor, es posible encontrar algunas propuestas, como las de Luzon (2002) para la enseñanza del inglés con propósitos específicos en España, la de Dudeney (2003) y Godwin-Jones (2004) para Estados Unidos, y la de Koenraad y Westhoff (2003) para la enseñanza de segundas lenguas en los países bajos; diversas experiencias, como a las que hace alusión Dodge (2005) para los países bajos o las desarrolladas por Emmert (2002) y Deutsch (2005) en Estados Unidos, Covo-Farchi, Soinard, Viquerat y Benz (s/f) en Francia, Koenraad (2000) en Holanda, y Miller (2005) en México; y un incipiente número de investigaciones, entre las que destaca la de Pérez (2005) sobre el diseño de *Web Quests* para la Enseñanza/Aprendizaje del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

¿Para qué pueden ser utilizados en la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés?

Las aplicaciones de las búsquedas en red o *Web Quests* a la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera son múltiples.

Las *Web Quests* pueden ser utilizadas para ayudar a los y las estudiantes a desarrollar las cuatro habilidades básicas. Pueden utilizarse en las áreas de comprensión auditiva y expresión oral para ayudar a los estudiantes a localizar y

² Según el propio Dodge (2005), una búsqueda en *Internet* utilizando el buscador *Google* en marzo del 2005 arrojó 664,000 páginas donde se utiliza dicha palabra!

tener acceso a diferentes acentos y formas de habla y a presentar sus hallazgos por escrito o de manera verbal a sus compañeros. Pueden también emplearse en las áreas de lectura y de escritura para enseñar a los alumnos a buscar información en diferentes fuentes; para involucrarlos en actividades que requieran que lean una amplia variedad de textos relacionados con temas de su interés; y para incentivarlos a crear sus propios textos escritos a fin de presentar en línea o de manera presencial los resultados de su trabajo (Luzon:2002). El mismo autor también sostiene que las actividades basadas en la *Internet* propician una mayor integración entre la lectura y las habilidades de escritura y proporcionan a las estudiantes mejores oportunidades de practicar lo aprendido en contextos más significativos.

Adicionalmente, las *Web Quests* pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a incrementar su vocabulario y mediante la utilización de textos auténticos para ejecutar tareas reales pueden tomar mayor conciencia de conceptos tales como propósitos y receptores de la comunicación y darse cuenta de la utilidad de estudiar un segundo lenguaje o una lengua extranjera (Ibid).

Las *Web Quests* sirven también como poderosos instrumentos de motivación para los estudiantes quienes en general se sienten más atraídos a trabajar con fuentes reales disponibles en la *Internet* que con los medios tradicionales, pues como señala Benz (2002), los materiales que se encuentran en *Internet* son con frecuencia mucho más actualizados y reales que los que aparecen en los libros de texto típicos. Además, sobre todo en nuestro país, trabajar en línea, sigue siendo una experiencia atractiva para nuestros estudiantes, sobre todo por lo novedoso del recurso por lo que vale la pena aprovechar dicha atracción en beneficio de su propio aprendizaje.

Finalmente, las *Web Quests* pueden proporcionar a las estudiantes mayores oportunidades de interactuar con el lenguaje estudiado porque los estudiantes tienden a invertir más tiempo en este tipo de actividades.

¿Qué elementos debe contener una búsqueda en red o *Web Quest*?

De acuerdo a Dodge (1997), una búsqueda en red o *Web Quest* tiene que tener al menos las siguientes secciones:

- Introducción: párrafo breve donde se introduce la actividad a los estudiantes, se establece el marco de la actividad y se proporcionan algunos antecedentes. Aquí también se presenta el problema o conflicto que los estudiantes tendrán que resolver así como el papel que los estudiantes asumirán para lograr lo anterior, por ejemplo, de detective, doctor, o científico. Según Area (2004) "la meta de la introducción es hacer la actividad atractiva y divertida para los estudiantes de tal manera que los motive y mantenga este interés a lo largo de la actividad".

- **Tarea:** descripción del producto o desempeño final esperado. Las tareas pueden ser de corto o de largo plazo. Las de corto plazo pueden requerir de dos a cuatro días, en tanto que las de largo plazo pueden ser realizadas desde una hasta tres semanas, dependiendo de los objetivos y metas a alcanzar. La tarea puede ser la resolución de un problema; la formulación o defensa de una postura o posición; el diseño de un producto; o cualquier cosa que requiera que los estudiantes procesen y transformen la información que han recolectado.
- **Procesos:** explicación detallada de los pasos a seguir así como de las maneras en las cuales deben ser llevados a cabo. Se puede aquí también incluir algún tipo de ayuda que sirva de guía a los estudiantes para organizar la información tales como diagramas de flujo, cuadros sinópticos, mapas conceptuales, lista de verificación, o algún otro dispositivo que permita llamar la atención hacia puntos o aspectos particularmente importantes.
- **Recursos:** se presentan en esta sección las direcciones electrónicas de, o enlaces hacia, los sitios que los y las estudiantes tendrán que visitar para buscar la información necesaria para resolver el problema o tarea, así como una breve descripción de cada uno de las direcciones o enlaces incluidos. Esta sección también puede presentarse dentro de la de procesos, si así se desea.
- **Evaluación:** en esta parte se proporciona información sobre las maneras en las cuales los estudiantes serán evaluados y sobre los criterios específicos a considerar.
- **Conclusión:** se presenta aquí una visión general de lo aprendido durante la actividad y una invitación a seguir practicando y aplicando en su vida diaria lo que los y las estudiantes han aprendido.
- **Página del profesor(a):** más que una sección esta es una página destinada a otros profesore(a)s donde se les proporciona información adicional que les permita utilizar una búsqueda en red o Web Quest específica con sus propios alumnos. Incluye información tal como destinatarios, nivel y grado de los mismos, plan de estudios o currículo para el cual fue diseñada la actividad. Se recomienda también agregar una descripción de la actividad y de los objetivos perseguidos, así como de los procesos a seguir tanto por estudiantes como por el docente, y de los recursos necesarios y las formas y criterios de evaluación.

Para el caso de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, debido a que para muchos estudiantes, sobre todo los de los niveles menos avanzados, resultaría por demás difícil enfrentar textos reales sin ayuda alguna, como atinadamente lo

señala Benz (2002), consideramos necesario además de las secciones anteriores, agregar algunas otras que sirviesen de apoyo adicional al estudiante y le posibiliten abordar las tareas con mayores probabilidades de éxito, tales como glosarios o ligas a definiciones de determinados conceptos; actividades previas al trabajo con una Web Quest específica; o imágenes de apoyo.

¿Cómo se elabora una Web Quest?

Según March (2005), las tres grandes etapas a seguir para elaborar una búsqueda en red o **Web Quest** son: elaboración de la pregunta o problema, definición de la tarea de aprendizaje, y diseño de la página.

Elaboración de la pregunta o problema

La elaboración de la pregunta o problema a su vez se subdivide en varios pasos: selección del tópico o tema, identificación de vacíos o lagunas de aprendizaje, inventariado de recursos, y formulación de la pregunta.

El tópico o tema puede ser seleccionado en función del programa escolar y de las habilidades y nivel de los estudiantes, tratando de que sea un tema lo suficientemente amplio y complejo como para ameritar la búsqueda y confrontación de la información proveniente de varias fuentes, tales como temas controvertidos o que puedan ser abordados desde múltiples perspectivas. Se recomienda igualmente, formular algunos subtópicos o subtemas derivados del tópico central que serán de utilidad en el momento de definir los roles de los participantes.

La identificación de vacíos o lagunas consiste en identificar habilidades relacionadas con un tema que se quieran desarrollar en los estudiantes y que puedan ser resueltas mediante el uso de la *Web Quest*, tales como las habilidades de pensamiento crítico, resolución de problemas, o grupos de aprendizaje colaborativos.

El inventariado de recursos consiste en buscar en la *Internet* las fuentes o sitios que mejor se relacionen con el tema. El mismo autor (March:2005b) recomienda seleccionar sitios actualizados, auténticos o reales, ricos en información, controversiales, relevantes, y ricos en recursos. Se recomienda también que sean confiables, veraces y válidos. Una buena manera de iniciar la búsqueda es revisando los sitios enlistados en *Blue Web'n* o en *Filamentality* (ver direcciones electrónicas en las ligas que aparecen al final de este artículo), o bien navegar en la red utilizando los subtópicos o subtemas ya previamente elaborados.

La formulación de la pregunta es según el mismo autor (March: 2005a) el aspecto más importante de una *Web Quest* y para responder a dicha pregunta el

estudiante debe utilizar habilidades de pensamiento complejas y las respuestas deben ser abiertas a múltiples interpretaciones o puntos de vista, y permitir la formulación de nuevas preguntas o hipótesis.

Definición de la tarea de aprendizaje

La definición de la tarea de aprendizaje requiere a su vez de varias subetapas: lluvia de ideas, identificación de fuentes de retroalimentación, clasificación de ligas de acuerdo a roles, y definición de la tarea de aprendizaje.

Se sugiere iniciar con una lluvia de ideas para enlistar el mayor número posible de tareas cognitivas que se involucrarían en la actividad. Posteriormente se recomienda identificar personas que pudiesen proporcionar retroalimentación a los estudiantes en relación a su producto final, sobre todo aquellas que tengan páginas relacionadas con el tema en la red o que participen en grupos de discusión abiertos sobre la temática. Un tercer paso sería clasificar las ligas localizadas de acuerdo a posibles roles que pudiesen desempeñar los estudiantes y diseñar actividades preliminares que les permitan tener el conocimiento preliminar necesario para iniciar su trabajo. Finalmente se recomienda definir la tarea de aprendizaje, sobre todo en términos de un producto terminal a elaborar por los estudiantes. Una buena manera de iniciar es ver los ejemplos proporcionados en March (2005a).

Diseño de la página

Para el diseño de la página donde se colocará la actividad de búsqueda, se sugieren los siguientes pasos³: elaboración de la página; elaboración de una introducción y una conclusión; redacción de instrucciones; e implementación y evaluación de lo realizado.

La manera más sencilla de elaborar la página es utilizando una plantilla de diseño ya elaborada, como las que aparecen en las ligas al final de este artículo, e ir llenando la información que ahí se solicita de acuerdo al contenido de la propia propuesta.

La introducción debe preparar el terreno para la presentación de la pregunta o tarea central y atraer la atención del estudiante e incentivar su motivación. March (2005a) recomienda utilizar anécdotas, ejemplos, citas, metáforas o escenarios potenciales. La conclusión debe presentar una síntesis de lo aprendido.

En las instrucciones es necesario describir detalladamente los pasos que los estudiantes deberán seguir para realizar la actividad.

³ No necesariamente deben ser seguidos en el orden presentado.

Los últimos pasos son montar la actividad en la *Internet*, e implementar y evaluar lo diseñado. ⁴

Ejemplo de una búsqueda en red o *Web Quest* para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera: Uncle McDonald's Farm

Este ejemplo es una actividad de corto plazo denominada *Uncle McDonald's Farm* ⁵, para ser utilizada con niño(a)s de primer y segundo año de primaria, siguiendo el libro de texto de Kniverton y Llanas (2004) y como apoyo al mismo. El libro es proporcionado a los profesores de las escuelas públicas del Estado de Sonora por la Secretaría de Educación y Cultura del estado a manera de currículo oficial para los cursos de inglés de dichos grados. La actividad está diseñada para que el alumno la trabaje con la ayuda del maestro, la maestra o de un adulto ⁶. Los objetivos de la actividad son que los alumnos practiquen la gramática y vocabulario vistos a lo largo de la unidad y que aprendan acerca de los animales de la granja y de las frutas. La actividad completa puede ser consultada en la siguiente dirección de la *Internet*: <http://www.geocities.com/eflwebquest/> . En los párrafos siguientes se describe la actividad y se presentan algunas pantallas tomadas del ejercicio tal y como aparece en la *Internet*.


Como se aprecia en la Figura 1, la actividad abre con una pantalla que contiene en su parte superior central la lección y unidad dentro de las cuales se enmarca la actividad. En la columna de la izquierda aparecen una serie de ligas hacia las diversas partes de la actividad, en tanto que en la parte inferior central aparece el título de la actividad, la descripción del tipo de actividad, y el nivel escolar al cual está dirigido. Se combinan letreros en español y en inglés tal y como se hace en el libro de apoyo utilizado por la Secretaría de Educación y Cultura (Kniverton & Llanas: 2004), pues la idea es que sea una actividad complementaria a lo que aparece en éste.

⁴ En la sección de referencias anotamos una liga donde aparece una lista de verificación que puede ser utilizada para la evaluación del diseño (*Web Quest Designer's*) y otra para evaluar la implementación (*Web Quest Rubric*).

⁵ Diseñada por estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad de Sonora (México).

⁶ Enfatizamos la necesidad de que la actividad se realice con el apoyo de un adulto (profesor/a o uno de los padres) debido a que los niños recién están empezando a leer y es difícil que hagan las actividades sin apoyo alguno, de ahí que el libro y el ejercicio tengan explicaciones en español para los papás. Además, es importante señalar que el ejercicio pretende apoyar al texto oficial, respetando el grado de complejidad planteado por éste.

Unidad 7. Frutas y animales de la granja.



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Uncle McDonald's farm

Webquest de enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera

Nivel primaria - Primer grado



Actualizado en Enero 2006

Diseñado por:

Figura

1

Introducción:

En la introducción se les muestra a lo(a)s estudiantes el objetivo de la actividad diciéndoles cual será su papel y lo que tendrán que hacer. Ver Figura 2.

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Granja del tío McDonald

El tío McDonald acaba de comprar una granja y no sabe que animales y árboles frutales debe poner en ella. Ustedes son un grupo de asesores agropecuarios que le ayudarán a decidir que hacer. En clase ya aprendieron los nombres de algunos animales y frutas. Ahora tendrán que investigar los productos que se obtienen de los animales que ya estudiaron así como algunos nombres y productos nuevos a fin de que puedan asesorar al tío McDonald en su problema.



Figura 2

Tarea:

En la sección de la tarea, como se muestra en la Figura 3, se le indica a lo(a)s estudiantes el producto o desempeño final esperado:

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Tarea

La tarea que hay que hacer es elaborar un cuadro donde anotarán, en inglés, los animales y frutas que recomiendan al tío McDonald, un dibujo de cada uno de ellos y las razones (en español), por las cuales los escogieron. Una vez terminado el cuadro, lo presentarán en clase a sus compañeros para entre todos elaborar el que se entregará al tío McDonald.

Figura 3


Proceso:

En la sección de proceso se describen paso a paso las actividades que se realizarán y la manera de hacerlas, como describe a continuación y parcialmente se ilustra en la Figura 4:

- Paso 1: Formen equipos de tres personas.
- Paso 2: En la lista de direcciones de *Internet* que se encuentra en la sección de recursos, investiguen los animales y frutas que tienen algunas granjas.
- Paso 3: Con base en la información que obtengan en el paso anterior, copien el cuadro de concentración ([oprime aquí para ver el cuadro](#)) en una cartulina y llénelo con la información que recolectaron. Pueden utilizar recortes de revistas o dibujos para mostrar los animales y frutas. No olviden escribir los nombres en inglés.

- Paso 4: Vuelvan otra vez al área de recursos y busquen en las direcciones de *Internet* que aparecen ahí los productos que se obtienen de cada animal de la granja.
- Paso 5. Dibujen los productos que encontraron en la columna correspondiente para completar el cuadro. Recuerden escribir debajo de cada dibujo el nombre en inglés.
- Paso 6. Seleccionen los tres animales y las tres frutas que le recomendarían al tío McDonald que pusiera en su granja y las razones por las cuales se las recomendarían.
- Paso 7. Marquen con una estrellita los animales y frutas seleccionadas y anoten (en español) en el cuadro las razones por las cuales las recomendarían.
- Paso 8. Una vez terminado el cuadro, lo presentarán en clase a sus compañeros para entre todos elaborar el que se entregará al tío McDonald.

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Proceso:

Sigán los siguientes pasos para hacer la tarea:

-Paso 1:
Formen equipos de tres.

-Paso 2:
En la lista de direcciones de *Internet* que se encuentra en la sección de recursos investiguen los animales y frutas que tienen algunas granjas.

-Paso 3:
Con base en la información que obtengan en el paso anterior, copien el cuadro de concentración (opreme aquí para ver el cuadro) en una cartulina y llénenlo con la información que recolectaron. Pueden utilizar recortes de revistas o dibujos para mostrar los animales y frutas. No olviden escribir los nombres en inglés.

-Paso 4:

Figura 4

Recursos:

En el área de recursos, se les proporcionan a los estudiantes siete sitios de la *Internet* donde pueden encontrar información además de una breve descripción de lo que encontrarán en cada uno de ellos así como un diccionario y un traductor para palabras o frases difíciles, como se ilustra en la Figura 5:

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Recursos:

En las siguientes páginas encontrarán la información necesaria para realizar la tarea. Al final también encontrarán un diccionario en línea y un traductor.

- [Kiddy House](#). Aquí podrás aprender de los animales de la granja, descubrir como son y porque son importantes para nosotros.
- [Kids Farm](#). Aprende un poco mas en detalle de los animales de la granja y sus características. Ve imágenes de los animales y descubrirás que productos se obtienen de ellos.
- [Magic Keys](#) Aquí encontrarás una pequeña historia de los animales que habitan en una granja y algunos de los productos que se obtienen de ellos.
- [Fruits Page](#) En esta página encontrarás información acerca de las frutas.
- [Dictionary](#): Este es un diccionario que podrás consultar cuando no comprendas alguna

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Figura 5

Evaluación:

En esta sección se les explica a los estudiantes que se les evaluará lo que aprendieron de manera individual y en equipo en cuanto a contenidos, valores y actitudes (solidaridad, compañerismo, colaboración, apoyo a los demás, y compromiso con el trabajo a realizar y con sus compañeras).

En lo individual, se les evaluará lo que aprendieron en cuanto a contenidos mediante una autoevaluación que realizarán ellos mismos al hacer los ejercicios que aparecen en la actividad. El primer ejercicio consiste en seleccionar el nombre correcto de los animales y el producto que se obtiene de cada uno de ellos (ver Figura 6). En el segundo, tienen que reordenar las letras del nombre de cada fruta correctamente, ya que se encuentran desordenadas (ver Figura 7). En el tercero, seleccionar nombres de animales y productos de la granja de una serie de opciones que se les dan. El cuarto consiste en reordenar palabras en una frase relacionadas con la ordeña de vacas. El quinto es un ejercicio de aparejar columnas de las frutas con su color. En el sexto deben completar un párrafo

relacionado con productos de la granja. En el séptimo deben dar respuestas cortas a preguntas sobre frutas de la granja, y el octavo consiste en resolver un crucigrama con nombres de animales. Se les pide que la mayoría de los ejercicios los hagan primero individualmente (con la ayuda del profesor(a) o de uno de sus padres si la requieren) y después que comparen y compartan sus respuestas con su compañero(a) o con el grupo.

Para la evaluación de valores y actitudes se les pedirá que respondan a unas preguntas breves, primero de manera individual y posteriormente le pidan a su compañero(a) de equipo que los evalúe siguiendo el mismo formato, para en un tercer momento, comparar y comentar sus evaluaciones y la razón de las mismas. Finalmente se recomienda que el maestro o la maestra los evalúen a través de observaciones de su desempeño tanto en el trabajo en equipo como en el grupal.

La evaluación en equipo también abarcará tanto contenidos como valores y actitudes. Los contenidos serán evaluados mediante el cuadro de concentración que elaboren y la presentación que hagan del mismo al grupo. Los valores y actitudes se les evaluarán mediante un formulario que tendrán que llenar entre todos y platicar al grupo al concluir la tarea.

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Evaluación 1

En el siguiente ejercicio tendrás que seleccionar que nombre le corresponde a cada animal y a cada producto. Oprime la flecha en el cuadro que aparece a lado derecho de cada dibujo para desplegar las respuestas, selecciona la que creas es la correcta. Al finalizar tu profesor (a) revisará tus respuestas.









Figura 6

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Evaluación 2

El nombre de las siguientes frutas está revuelto, en el recuadro debajo de cada imagen teclea el nombre que le corresponde en el orden correcto. Cuando termines tu profesor(a) revisará tus respuestas.



Baanna




ImPu

Figura 7

Conclusión:

En la conclusión se les presenta una globalización de lo que aprendieron explicándoles que ahora tienen la información suficiente para decirle al tío McDonald qué animales adquiera para su nueva granja. Ver Figura 8.

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Conclusión:

Ahora que ya aprendieron más acerca de las granjas, pueden utilizar lo que saben sobre frutas, animales y los productos que se obtienen de ellos para ayudar al tío McDonald a poner su granja y explicarle sus razones.

Además, compartan lo que aprendieron a lo largo de las actividades con su familia y amigos, y sorpréndanlos diciéndoles como se llaman en inglés los animales y los productos que se obtienen de ellos así como las frutas que hay en las granjas cada vez que utilicen un producto que venga de ellas.




Figura 8

Página del maestro

En la página del maestro (Figura 9), se explican con mayor detalle las secciones que aparecen en la *Web Quest* del estudiante, junto con objetivos de la actividad, el plan de estudios al que corresponde, los pasos a seguir, los recursos, y una propuesta de actividades preliminares a realizar con los niños antes de iniciar la actividad de búsqueda.

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Teachers' Page

This Web Quest has been designed for first grade elementary children, based on the program from the Ministry of Education and Culture of Sonora (SEC) of Mexico.

The students will practice what they have learned in Unit 7 (Kniverton & Llanas:2004:52-59^[1]), which talks about the farm. They will get to know which animals are there and the products obtained from them. They will also learn names of fruit and colors.

The grammar points that they have seen throughout the school year will be practiced in this Web Quest.

As a pre-requisite, the students will need to have basic knowledge on how to use a computer.

The purpose of the task is to develop the students' researching skills as well as critical thinking. The latter will provide enough tools for them to be able to discriminate between irrelevant and useful information for completing the task.

You will have to guide the students throughout the search of information, allowing them however

Figura 9

Conclusión

Las búsquedas en red o *Web Quests* pueden ser de gran utilidad para cualquier profesor(a) interesado en hacer su clase más dinámica; aprovechar los recursos tecnológicos disponibles y el interés de los alumnos en ellos; enseñar de manera más contextualizada; y ayudar a sus estudiantes no sólo a aprender el contenido de sus cursos, sino a desarrollar sus capacidades y habilidades de análisis, síntesis, evaluación, pensamiento crítico, búsqueda de información, y formulación verbal y escrita de lo aprendido. En este trabajo hemos tratado de demostrar la importancia de dichas actividades y de qué manera pueden ser diseñadas y utilizadas provechosamente en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, así como proporcionar un ejemplo concreto y algunos sitios y vínculos de la *Internet* donde se puede obtener mayor información para iniciar las propias búsquedas. ¡A buscar se ha dicho!

Más ejemplos

Algunos sitios donde se pueden encontrar más ejemplos de búsquedas en red o *Web Quests* para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera o segunda lengua son los siguientes:

http://www.call-esl.com/sampleWeb_Quests/Web_Questcontents.htm *Ellis Island Web Quest.*

<http://www.iei.uiuc.edu/travelsim/> *Imagination Voyages*

<http://pw.vsb.bc.ca/library/eslexp.html> *Prince of Wales Library
Esl: Web Site Exploration.*

<http://tarek169.tripod.com/yt/> *Tarek El-Bikai.*

<http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/langacad/lecirque/index.html> *Le Cirque: A global Simulation.*

http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Web_Quest/matrix/6-8-For.htm *Grades 6-8 Foreign Language Web Quests.*

http://www.isabelperez.com/Web_Quest/ *Isabel's ESL Site, My school.*

Sitios para descargar plantillas para la elaboración de búsquedas en red o *Web Quests*:

http://Web_Quest.sdsu.edu/LessonTemplate.html

http://www.ozline.com/templates/Web_Quest.html

http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/staffdev/tpss99/myWeb_Quest/index.htm

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Ligas:

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Web Quest Designer's: <http://www.ozline.com/Web Quests/checklist.html>

Assessing Web Quests: <http://www.ozline.com/Web Quests/rubric.html>

Uncle McDonald's Farm: <http://www.geocities.com/eflwebquest/>

Error Diaries: Making the Most of Correction and Self-editing

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Abstract

Error diaries are a three-step technique for students to learn from their errors after their papers have been corrected. The first step is to select the error for follow-up. The second step is to rewrite the corrected passage and underline the corrected structure. The third step is to practice the corrected structure by creating new sentences. This stage, practice, is often neglected in discussion and treatment of error. While controversy continues about the value of correction, both research and teaching practice point to the need to distinguish between different types of error and treatments of error. Error diaries might provide a tool to help students produce reasonably accurate language, at least in the short-term.

One of the greatest challenges facing teachers and students of English as a second language is how to deal with lingering errors. The efficacy of grammar instruction has been the subject of long-term, ongoing controversy and research in the literature on second language acquisition (see, e.g., Long, 1983 and Han & Selinker, 1999). At the City University of New York where I teach English as a Second Language, all students (both native and non-native) must pass a timed essay exam to qualify for entry to freshman composition. Passing the exam is also a requirement for entry to a senior college; thus students who do not pass are often required to temporarily attend a community college. The exam is graded holistically, with positive consideration given to a well-developed, cohesive essay; yet a preponderance of mistakes does impact negatively on the evaluation of the student.

Entrance and exit testing are high-stakes situations. Thus, students need to be able to produce correct or near-correct target language structures on demand. Ellis (1998) distinguishes between the practical knowledge of teachers and the technical knowledge of researchers, cautioning against placing technical knowledge in an exalted position when it is clearly the needs of classrooms that should drive practice, something almost any teacher would agree with. In other words, while the effect of instruction on a student's long-term interlanguage remains an object of research, students' immediate academic needs require practical pedagogical strategies.

In an attempt to help students overcome the obstacle of lingering errors in their timed writing, I have implemented the use of error diaries. Error diaries consist of a multi-part, ideally self-generated log to give students practice in using troubling structures with a higher degree of accuracy.

Error Correction and the Research

One compelling reason to work on error correction is that students expect it. Leki (1991) surveyed 100 ESL students from a broad range of language backgrounds taking freshman composition and the results indicated that students expect teachers to correct their work. In her study, students claim some preference for an indication of tense correction on verbs. Nonetheless, she found students report paying more attention to comments on content and organization than they do to specific correction of language items. At the same time, Ferris (1995) found that students "both attend to and appreciate their teachers' pointing out their grammatical problems" (p. 48). Schultz' (1996) research raises the issue that students' expectations of correction are often at odds with teachers' beliefs in its usefulness, yet she points out that not meeting student expectation can be problematic.

In addition to student expectation is the question of whether correction is effective. Ferris (1999) responds to Truscott's claim that grammar correction is ineffective and possibly harmful. She points out that in Truscott's review of other studies, little distinction is made in the type of error correction offered. Thus, we can conclude that more research needs to be done with reference to the specific techniques of correction. Additionally, Ferris notes that the subjects in these studies have not been comparable, the research paradigms and teaching strategies vary and few of the studies involved ESL college students. She singles out Fathman and Whalley's study of ESL college students that found positive results for error correction. One area where both Truscott and Ferris are in agreement is with respect to the notion that syntactic, morphological, and lexical knowledge are acquired differently. Ferris suggests that correction can be made more effective if teachers are trained to identify and correct varying types and patterns of errors. In particular, teachers can make a distinction between errors of word choice and rule-based errors such as those made with verb tenses—that is, not all errors should be handled in the same way. Chandler (2003) in an experimental study found the technique of underlining to be superior to the technique of describing types of errors for achieving a reduction in the frequency of long-term error.

In addition to the selection and treatment of error, there is also the question of how instruction addressing the error can be effectively delivered. Ellis (1998) characterizes correction, termed negative evidence, as only one of four options in providing form-focused instruction. The other three are: providing structured input, giving explicit instruction, and lastly, requiring production practice. He proffers that while production practice "may not enable learners to integrate entirely new grammatical structures into their interlanguages, it may help them use partially acquired structures more fluently and more accurately" (p. 51).

Technique: The Error Diary: A Three-step Process

The approach to correction that I have been using over the last six years is the **error diary**. It is, in effect, a post-correction technique since it involves doing follow-up work after an essay draft or in-class writing has been reviewed (and, yes, corrected) by the teacher. It is a three-step technique that could be classified as chiefly utilizing two options of the form-focused instruction that Ellis describes: negative evidence and production practice with some attention given to explicit instruction. The first part requires that the student (or teacher) select an error and then copy it. This is an example of Ellis' negative evidence. The second part is for the student to rewrite the phrase or sentence correctly. To some extent, this is where explicit instruction might be required, either from the teacher, peers, or as a result of the student's own analysis. The third part is for the student to engage in production practice by using the correct structure in further examples. I would argue that production practice is vital and often overlooked.

I. Error selection

The first step is error selection. Not all errors should be selected and thus, the question arises as to whether the teacher or the student should make the choice. When I first began using error diaries, I asked students to select their own errors. I wanted them to become aware of those errors in their writing which were persistent, that is, to focus on aspects of the language they were already familiar with but had so far been unsuccessful at using consistently in the correct form. I believed that the persistent errors would be the ones to target and also, students would be more likely to notice these errors. Students routinely claim that they could have avoided these errors because they do know the correct structure but have simply forgotten it or neglected to use it at the moment of writing. I advised them to ignore one-time only, more idiosyncratic mistakes. Over time I found that some students are, not at all surprisingly, better than others at making the selection of errors that are more useful for further work (or at least the ones I would have chosen!).

Errors can also be analyzed from the point of view of 1) errors that are also committed by native speakers of English, 2) errors typical of ESL students from various language backgrounds and 3) errors particular to specific language backgrounds. By referring to some of the errors of a Polish student at the next-to-highest level of ESL instruction at my institution, I can offer examples of each type. In one instance, she writes, "many of them is selfish." The error in subject-verb agreement would not be uncommon in papers written by native English speakers. She also writes "saleing drugs" for "selling drugs;" again, not atypical for native or non-native speakers. However, "single family kids are raising" (substituting "raising" for "raised"), is an error that a native speaker would probably be less likely to make whereas it is a common confusion for non-

native speakers from many different language backgrounds. A similar instance is found when she writes "attendance must be taking," although here, the phonological similarity of "taking" and "taken" could also confuse the native speaker writer. When this student makes errors with articles, however, the errors are more likely to be specific to her Polish language background. She writes in one instance, "in a summer time," substituting "a" for "the" and in another case, "school is not a some kind of fashion show," adding "a" as an additional determiner in front of "some."

While determining the underlying cause of the error is not necessary to utilize error diaries, it may be useful for the teacher to have a loose framework for different categories of errors for the purposes of instruction. Some errors may be phonologically based, as mentioned above with the example of "taking" versus "taken." Students also often confuse the words "live" and "leave" because the vowel sounds are not distinct in their native languages. Phonological errors seem to emerge frequently under the pressure of extemporaneous writing and are also common for native speakers. Even I will reread my e-mails (hopefully before I press "send") to sometimes find I have substituted "your" for "you're."

There are other errors that appear to stem from grammatical confusions. For example, "it's depend " for the correct "it depends" is an error I have found made by students of varying language backgrounds, including Haitian Creole and Korean. Another example could be sentences that begin with "there are." An example from a Korean student is "there are a lot of good programs are made." The repeated main verb can be either eliminated through ellipsis or subordinated with "which" or "that." Then there are errors which may be phonologically based or grammatically based or a combination of the two. For example, errors with final "ed" may be more prevalent in contexts where the "ed" does not appear as a separate syllable so that the "ed" is not heard by the writer. Examples are: "you will recognized the problem" and "couples are concern about their children." Of course it is an open question whether persistent errors with "ed" are based on faulty syntactic knowledge or are phonologically based. They are probably best considered an interaction of the two. Categorizing or analyzing the source of the errors (part of explicit instruction) can be a useful option either in one-to-one communication with students or as an additional step in the procedure.

Step one of the procedure is completed when the student copies the incorrect sentence or enough of the sentence to put the error in context and underlines the error. When I first implemented this procedure, I found many students would not copy enough of the faulty phrase to clearly show the error in context. If they, for example, merely copied the word "leave" or a verb with or without an "ed," it would not be clear why there was an error. Again, teacher intervention in what could otherwise be a student-driven process has proven to be necessary, at least until the students become familiar with the error diary technique.

II. Error correction

The next step of the procedure is rather simple. Students rewrite the sentence correctly and underline the corrected portion. This step of the procedure combines different elements of Ellis' classification but is probably closest to "explicit instruction," which Ellis divides into "direct instruction" and "consciousness raising." Students are in essence reviewing, and in some cases, learning about, correct usage and grammatical rules. While this part of the procedure should not present problems, there is always the possibility that more errors will emerge.

For example, a Cantonese-speaking ESL student produced the following entries:

A. Error: **I glad** to hear our community have money to improve the quality of instruction at ...

Correction: **I'm glad** to hear our community have money to improve the quality of instruction at ...

B. Error: **Provide** more high technology into classroom can help students save more time.

Correction: **Providing** more high technology into classroom can help students save more time.

C. Error: **On** our schools **there have** not enough computers to provide for student.

Correction: **In** our schools **there are** not enough computers to provide for student.

In all of the examples, additional errors from the original phrases were not corrected. In A, there is an agreement problem with the verb *have* while in B, the plural form is missing from *classroom*. In C where the student attempts two corrections, the extra preposition *for* remains at the end of the sentence and again, there is the missing plural form on *student*.

III. Production practice

The third and last step of the procedure is the one that appears to give students the most difficulty: production practice. Students are required to produce several new sentences that utilize the problematic structure. I have observed several pitfalls. The main one is that without supervision, many students will skip this step, a clear sign that students find it difficult. Another pitfall occurs when a student has selected an overly unusual or specific sentence to work on in the error diary. It may, therefore, not be so easy to come up with another sentence utilizing the same structure. One student, a speaker of Bhasa Indonesian, used the phrase "various field knowledge" rather than "various fields of knowledge." Without guidance on the use of the collocations "fields of" such as "fields of inquiry" and "fields of study," it would probably be very difficult for the student to come up with novel sentences to practice this structure. Another problem is that many students will only come up with overly simple or personal examples; that is, sentences that would not find a place in more academic writing. For example, a student might have made an error using the phrase "even though." A common error is to use it as a sentence fragment rather than connecting it to the main clause, for example, "Even though attendance is required. Many students still absent from class." A student might also use the structure in a sentence with personal content rather than "academic" content such as "Even though I don't like spicy food, I eat it sometimes." Nonetheless, the new sentence has given the student some limited practice in correct usage.

For the practice sentences in the error diary entries by the Cantonese-speaking student referred to above, the production of simple sentences appears for the correction of *I'm glad*:

A. I'm glad to know my good friend will come here.

I'm glad to know you will marry.

I'm glad to play with my nephew in the garden.

I'm glad is not a particularly difficult structure and since it is also personal, her choice of simple personal sentences is not surprising.

Kenkel and Yates (2003) describe the difficulty native speaking writers in remedial classes have in managing textual information in their essays. Their findings support giving students the challenge of managing contextually complex content. Similarly, if ESL students merely practice the structures they find difficult by constructing simplistic sentences, they might not be adequately prepared to write college-level essay compositions. It is thus important when utilizing the error diary procedure to have students write on topics that are at a suitably challenging level.

Finally, in the practice sentences of the third step of the error diaries, students will often make new mistakes. The teacher must decide whether to correct and how much to correct regarding these new errors. The Cantonese student's other practice sentences exhibit the problem of new errors although, (or perhaps because), academic content remains at a similar level to the original:

B. Providing a new housing to lower income families can help them to have a good environment. (unnecessary article "a" before new housing)

Providing a quiet place to students. (wrong preposition "to")

C. In our schools **there are** many books to provide for students. (again, a preposition error)

In our schools **there are** many places for student to study. (missing plural)

In our schools **there are** many professors are good teacher. (here there is the more syntactically troubling lack of the relative pronoun *who* in addition to the missing plural form of *teacher*)

Effectiveness: Some Reports from Practice

This three-step procedure is by no means sufficient in eradicating persistent errors. Many teachers have encountered students who simply want to have a ready-made formula for successfully passing an exam. As an anecdote, I can give the example of one student who was quite diligent about completing his work yet wanted to stick to a formula for all of his compositions. Regardless of how uninspiring this may seem, the more serious practical problem was that his formulaic sentences weren't even accurate. Nearly every second paragraph began with the sentence, "there are two proposals have been presented." I corrected this sentence every time and the student did the error diaries I assigned to him. In exasperation, I wrote on one of his papers that I was tired of correcting the same error over and over again. I followed this up with a face-to-face apology during one of our regular writing conferences, explaining my frustration, and the problem was apparently eradicated, at least temporarily. The student succeeded in passing the exam, yet I imagine he continues to make the same mistake.

I cannot claim that using error diaries will reliably increase passing rates on high stakes exams. From my own experience, my classes have varied in their success with this technique but I have noticed that when I am consistent in my expectations that students follow through with the procedure, not just in self-editing but especially in the third part of the technique, production practice, students appear to do better. As one additional anecdote, when I first began using error diaries and was not as careful about making sure that all students were keeping up with the task, I did have one student who was very diligent and

had filled a notebook with over two hundred carefully prepared entries. When she first came to the class, a six-week intensive, I honestly felt (privately) she had little chance of passing. After she passed the exam in spite of my initial expectations, she came to see me and showed me her notebook, telling me she had done this in addition to writing essays everyday (probably more helpful for the purposes of the exam) and always between 11 at night and two in the morning since she was divorced and had a small child.

Of course, had I checked her diary regularly I would not have been surprised. More to the point, most students do require regular feedback and monitoring of their error diaries. In the crush of other curricular demands, giving feedback on error diaries can be daunting, but I would suggest that once students are underway, the error diaries should be reviewed every few weeks.

As a future direction for the use of the error diary technique, I am currently working on structured input, one of Ellis' other categories of form-focused instruction. To provide structured input, I am compiling typical student errors and then creating model sentences to present to students so that, aside from having students learn from their mistakes, I, as the teacher, am providing examples of target usage of the structure. In effect, it means my doing an expanded version of what the students are doing in their own production practice during the third step of their error diaries. The end result will be a mini-corpus of correct examples of structures students have failed to correctly produce. This part of the process could result in more useful and extensive materials.

I am hopeful that when students focus on and practice structures that have so far eluded them, it might help push their interlanguage along. Even if it is not a permanent change, students may be able to remember phrases and structures in the short-term that could help them produce more accurate language under the monitored conditions of essay-exam testing. It is at these moments, especially when the tests have high-stakes outcomes, that students need to be accurate. Beyond short-term gains, I think most teachers and language learners would concur that focusing on structural elements and practicing their use could have a beneficial impact on acquiring the target language with greater accuracy.

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El Desarrollo de las Habilidades Discursivas en la Escritura de los Alumnos del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

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Introducción

Comprender la organización general de los textos escritos es esencial para el desarrollo académico de nuestros estudiantes. Desafortunadamente, tal vez sea la habilidad que como profesores de lengua extranjera desarrollamos en menor medida dentro del aula. Es importante para nuestros estudiantes, por lo menos tocar brevemente las nociones de tema, coherencia y organización de textos durante el curso (McCarthy, 1991) y enseñar a los alumnos los diversos géneros y patrones tanto literarios como académicos que pueden encontrar ya sea en su primera lengua o en la lengua meta. Podemos aprender del Análisis del Discurso en el Aula, cómo y porqué se organizan los textos en varios niveles; esto con el objeto de comprender el procedimiento de creación de un texto escrito a través de un proceso de análisis del texto tanto de su totalidad como de sus partes constitutivas, desde las unidades más pequeñas hasta las más grandes.

Este artículo presenta una opción sencilla para desarrollar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes de bachillerato que estudian el inglés como lengua extranjera, por medio del análisis y reescritura de un cuento de hadas como proyecto a largo plazo. El objetivo del mismo es mostrar mediante un caso de estudio, una manera práctica de relacionar las investigaciones y resultados teóricos obtenidos en el campo del Análisis del Discurso, con el desarrollo cotidiano de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera en el aula.

Antecedentes

La Importancia del Uso de Proyectos en el Aula de Lengua Extranjera

Durante los últimos años, la enseñanza de segundas lenguas o lenguas extranjeras ha integrado cada vez más el concepto del aprendizaje basado en tareas y el desarrollo de proyectos de largo plazo dentro de su práctica en el salón de clase. Esto se debe principalmente a que el uso de trabajo en proyectos desarrolla las habilidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes a la vez que les brinda conocimientos prácticos y aplicables sobre temas de su interés, mediante un proceso de trabajo que involucra comunicación auténtica, aprendizaje cooperativo y resolución de problemas.

Entre las múltiples ventajas que brinda el trabajo en proyectos dentro de la clase de lengua extranjera, Stoller (2002) menciona las siguientes:

1. Los proyectos se basan en el aprendizaje del contenido más que en rasgos específicos de la lengua. Involucran el estudio de objetos y temas del mundo real que son de gran interés para los alumnos.
2. Los estudiantes son los encargados de desarrollar y presentar los proyectos. El profesor juega un papel secundario al brindar asesoría y guía durante el proceso de trabajo, pero sin intervenir en la creatividad y autonomía de los alumnos.
3. El trabajo en proyectos es cooperativo más que competitivo. Los estudiantes pueden trabajar en parejas, en equipos pequeños o hasta en grupos grandes, con el objeto de compartir recursos, ideas y experiencias relacionadas con el tema.
4. Los proyectos favorecen la integración auténtica de las habilidades lingüísticas que buscamos desarrollar en los estudiantes.
5. El trabajo en proyectos desemboca en la culminación de un producto final que puede ser presentado a otros alumnos, profesores o grupos. Esto brinda al trabajo un objetivo real. Aún así, el valor del proyecto radica tanto en el producto final como en el proceso de su elaboración, por lo que el trabajo en proyectos cuenta con una orientación tanto de proceso como de producto.
6. Y finalmente, el trabajo en proyectos es en sí mismo estimulante y motivante. Fortalece la autoestima y autonomía de los estudiantes a la vez que desarrolla sus habilidades lingüísticas y su conocimiento del mundo real.

La Escritura como Proceso

El desarrollo de la escritura como un proceso es un concepto utilizado desde hace ya varios años en la enseñanza de la escritura en segundas lenguas. El objetivo principal de este enfoque radica en la idea de evaluar tanto el producto final como las etapas para el desarrollo del mismo (Reyes, 1991).

La escritura como proceso en el aula involucra las cuatro etapas básicas de la escritura: planeación, redacción, revisión y edición; además de las etapas adicionales impuestas por el profesor: presentación y evaluación. Estas etapas, se relacionan directamente durante todo el proceso de desarrollo del texto escrito

y son evaluadas continuamente tanto por el profesor como por los propios estudiantes.

El siguiente esquema (Seow, 2002) muestra la relación de las etapas de la escritura como proceso:

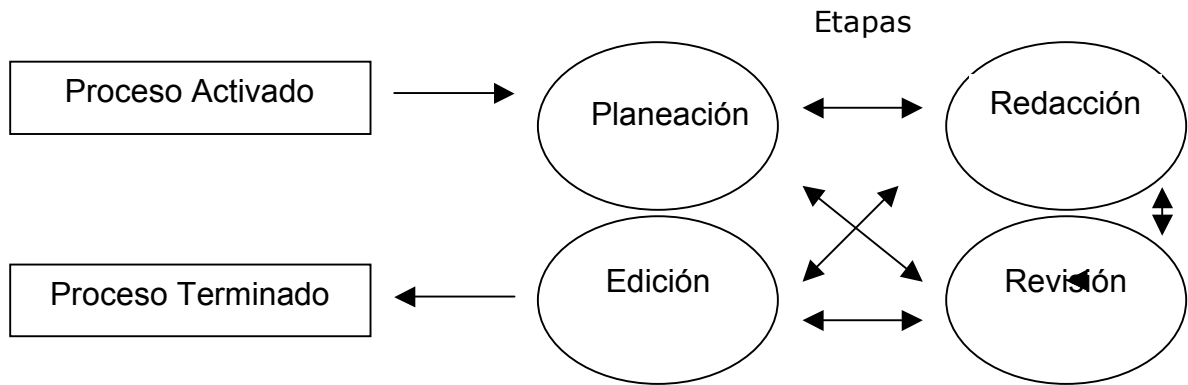


Figura I. Etapas de la Escritura como Proceso

Durante la etapa de planeación se motiva a los estudiantes para que generen ideas relacionadas con el tema y la estructura del texto. Los estudiantes realizan preguntas y pueden generar cuadros sinópticos o mapas mentales sobre el tema elegido. En la etapa de redacción, los alumnos inician el proceso de escritura a través de un bosquejo del texto que debe considerar la audiencia, el género literario y el objetivo general de la narración. En el proceso de revisión, los estudiantes realizan un análisis del texto con el objeto de corregir errores de sintaxis, ortografía y estilo. Finalmente, durante la etapa de edición se hacen las modificaciones necesarias y se evalúa nuevamente el texto.

El Aprendizaje por Andamiaje

La concepción del aprendizaje por andamiaje radica en la idea de brindar a los estudiantes la oportunidad de participar en interacciones sociales más allá de sus habilidades lingüísticas actuales (Johnson, 1998). Tanto los andamiajes verbales (Bruner, 1978) como los andamiajes instruccionales (Applebee y Langer, 1983) tienen como objetivo involucrar a los alumnos en un proyecto sin tener que asumir la responsabilidad total sobre el mismo, fomentando la autonomía y el aprendizaje gradual de las habilidades necesarias para la culminación de la tarea. Esto se logra a través del uso de los conocimientos actuales del alumno, fortalecidos por el input del profesor, lo cual genera nuevas habilidades lingüísticas que culminan en un mejor desempeño por parte de los estudiantes.

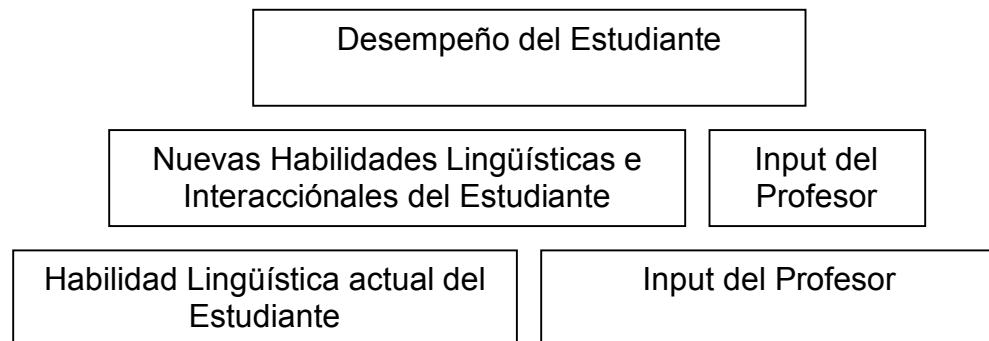
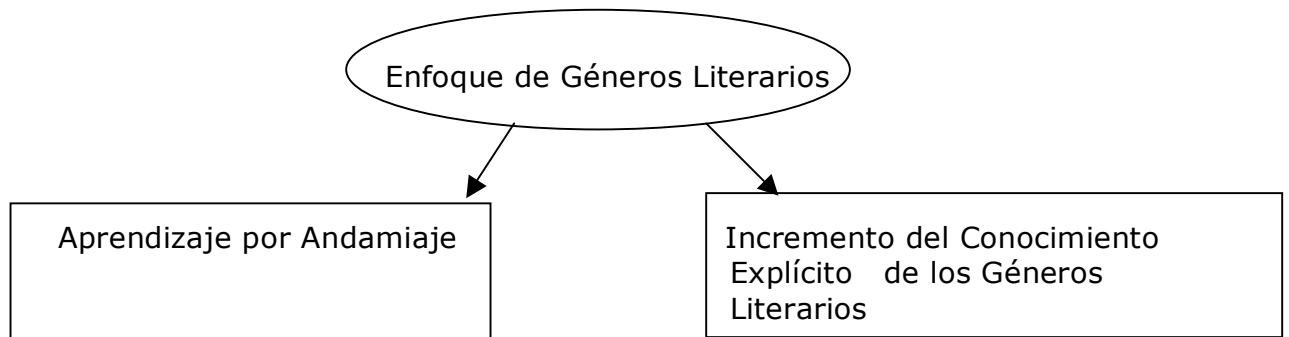


Figura II. Proceso de Aprendizaje por Andamiaje

El Enfoque de Géneros Literarios para la Enseñanza de la Escritura

De la misma manera en que los estudiantes deben aprender el uso de diferentes registros de forma verbal, es importante que aprendan a distinguir las particularidades de cada género escrito, para que a su vez, sean capaces de utilizarlas de forma efectiva y congruente con el objetivo de cada texto. Muchos estudiantes de lengua extranjera, no tendrán acceso a las convenciones estilísticas y literarias de la lengua meta o incluso de su propia lengua, a menos que los profesores incrementemos su conocimiento explícito de las mismas (Reppen, 2002). Si los estudiantes cuentan con el lenguaje necesario para hablar sobre los textos escritos y los diversos géneros literarios, podrán aprender más fácilmente a analizar e incluso a elaborar un texto por sí mismos.

El Enfoque de Géneros Literarios (Reppen, 2002) se basa en dos principios fundamentales: el primero es el aprendizaje por andamiaje y el segundo es el incremento del conocimiento explícito de los géneros literarios por parte del estudiante, que facilita la interpretación y aprendizaje de las estructuras que constituyen el texto. El siguiente esquema explica esta relación:



- El profesor debe estar familiarizado con la situación de aprendizaje y con el material utilizado.
- El profesor debe ser un asesor para que el alumno alcance sus metas.
- Los estudiantes deben practicar con diversos modelos literarios.
- Cuando los estudiantes adquieren mayor práctica con los géneros literarios el papel del profesor disminuye.
- Se espera que los estudiantes se conviertan en aprendices autónomos.
- Al discutir los rasgos y características de los diferentes géneros literarios, los estudiantes adquieren el lenguaje para referirse a los textos escritos.
- El estudiante comprende el cómo y el porqué de la estructura y organización de los textos escritos.
- El estudiante adquiere la habilidad para escribir y evaluar sus propios textos escritos.

Figura III. El Enfoque de Géneros Literarios

El Modelo de Narrativa de Labov

En 1972, Labov publicó su Modelo de Narrativa, el cual especifica los elementos que comúnmente se encuentran en diversos tipos de narrativas como son los cuentos, las anécdotas y los chistes. Este modelo, incluye los siguientes elementos (Labov, 1972 citado en McCarthy, 1991):

- Resumen: El resumen consta de algunas oraciones cortas que explican de forma general el contenido de la narración.
- Orientación: La orientación establece la ubicación, el tiempo y los personajes que intervienen en la historia.
- Eventos Complicantes: En esta sección se incluyen los elementos principales de la narración, los eventos que ocasionan que la historia se genere.

- Resolución: La resolución explica la manera en que los sucesos se resolvieron dentro de la narración.
- Coda: La coda expresa la relación entre los eventos acontecidos en la narración y el tiempo y lugar actual en el que la historia es contada.
- Evaluación: La evaluación incluye todos los elementos que enriquecen a la narrativa, como son la exageración, el uso de sonidos y diversos elementos que intervienen constantemente en el curso de la historia.

Aunque no todas las narraciones incluyen todos estos elementos, por lo general se encuentra la gran mayoría de ellos dentro de las historias infantiles así como en los cuentos de hadas y de misterio.

Los Cuentos de Hadas en el Aula de Lengua Extranjera

Existen diversos motivos para utilizar cuentos de hadas para la enseñanza de la escritura en lengua extranjera. Entre los principales encontramos:

- Los estudiantes están familiarizados con los cuentos de hadas en su lengua materna. Los conocen desde que son muy jóvenes, ya sea por medio de sus padres y familiares o por medio de diversos programas de televisión, historietas y libros.
- Los cuentos de hadas son accesibles y fáciles de encontrar en cualquier libro de cuentos infantiles o en sitios especializados en Internet.
- Los cuentos de hadas por lo general son cortos y fáciles de entender.
- Al estar dirigidos a un público infantil, los cuentos de hadas están escritos con un vocabulario sencillo y comprensible.
- Los cuentos de hadas cuentan con un discurso narrativo fácilmente identificable en términos de estructura.
- Los cuentos de hadas son divertidos e interesantes, muchos de ellos incluso cuentan con una moraleja que puede ser relacionada con nuestra vida personal.

Caso de Estudio

Metodología

Participantes

En este proyecto participaron 62 estudiantes de bachillerato del segundo, cuarto y sexto semestre del programa de preparatoria de la Universidad del Valle de México, Campus Querétaro. La edad de los estudiantes fluctuaba entre los 16 y 19 años. Todos los participantes eran nativo hablantes del español y cursaban la materia de Lengua Adicional al Español (Inglés) como parte del programa oficial de la misma institución educativa. Las sesiones de clase se impartían dos veces por semana, abarcando un total de 3 horas. El nivel de los estudiantes en la lengua meta fue evaluado como Bajo-Intermedio por el Examen de Colocación Institucional que el propio organismo educativo aplicó al inicio del semestre escolar.

Proyecto

El proyecto se llevó a cabo como parte complementaria de la materia de Lengua Adicional al Español (Inglés) que forma parte del programa de estudios que los participantes cursaban en ese momento. Al inicio del semestre escolar, se solicitó a los alumnos que seleccionaran un cuento de hadas o historia de misterio en inglés que tuviera una extensión de una a dos cuartillas. Durante el transcurso del semestre, los estudiantes trabajaron por parejas o equipos de tres integrantes en el proceso de analizar y reescribir el texto en inglés, para finalmente al concluir el curso presentar su historia en forma escrita y oralmente, con ayuda de apoyos visuales como maquetas, marionetas, historietas o presentaciones en programas computacionales. El valor que se le asignó al proyecto fue del 30% del total de la calificación que cada estudiante recibió al final del curso dentro de la materia.

Proceso de Escritura

El proceso que los estudiantes siguieron para completar la tarea fue el siguiente:

1. Selección de la Historia: Durante esta primera etapa los estudiantes revisaron bibliografía en libros de cuentos infantiles y en sitios de Internet en inglés en busca de una historia de su interés que fuera sencilla, corta y que contara con los elementos incluidos en el Modelo de Narrativa de Labov. Una vez seleccionada la historia, los estudiantes realizaron una lectura de comprensión general del texto en busca de palabras, oraciones o conceptos complejos. Durante esta etapa recibieron apoyo del profesor de lengua extranjera.

2. Análisis de la Historia: Tras seleccionar y leer cuidadosamente la historia, los estudiantes dividieron la misma de acuerdo a los elementos mencionados en el Modelo de Narrativa de Labov, ubicando Resumen, Orientación, Eventos Complicantes, Resolución y Coda. Se decidió no utilizar la Evaluación por tratarse de una serie de elementos que intervienen intermitentemente en la historia y que podían generar confusión en los estudiantes. (Ver Apéndice 1).
3. Reescritura de los Elementos de la Narrativa: Durante esta etapa, los estudiantes reescribieron cada uno de los elementos de la historia utilizando su propio vocabulario en inglés, pero tomando como modelo el texto original. Al concluir la reescritura de cada elemento (Ver Apéndice 2), el texto era revisado por el profesor y editado por los alumnos para finalmente, contar con una historia completamente escrita, revisada y editada por los propios alumnos.
4. Elaboración de Glosario Inglés/Inglés: En esta etapa, los estudiantes seleccionaron una serie de entre 5 a 15 palabras claves para la comprensión general de la historia. Una vez seleccionadas las palabras, los estudiantes elaboraron definiciones sencillas en inglés para cada una de ellas (Ver Apéndice 3).
5. Elaboración de Material Visual de Apoyo: Después de concluir el texto y el glosario, los estudiantes procedieron con la elaboración de material de apoyo para la presentación oral de sus proyectos, utilizando maquetas, marionetas, historietas y presentaciones en programas computacionales.
6. Presentación Oral: Finalmente, los alumnos presentaron oralmente durante una sección de dos horas el producto final de su proyecto. Para llevar a cabo esta etapa los estudiantes se presentaron en equipos de trabajo al frente del grupo, y a la vez que narraban su historia, ilustraban cada escena por medio de marionetas que recitaban los diálogos, o por medio de presentaciones en programas computacionales como Flash o Power Point que contenían imágenes relacionadas con el cuento, o incluso utilizando historietas o *comics* que los propios estudiantes elaboraron con dibujos y recortes de revistas y periódicos. Cada exposición tuvo una duración aproximada de 5 a 8 minutos. Además de sus compañeros de clase, a la presentación asistieron varios profesores y alumnos invitados pertenecientes a la misma institución educativa.

Resultados

Al finalizar el curso, los alumnos fueron capaces de elaborar a través de la metodología propuesta por los teóricos del Análisis del Discurso en el Aula un texto original utilizando un cuento de hadas o de misterio como modelo. El uso del Trabajo en Proyectos permitió que los estudiantes elaboraran en equipos un producto final que fueron capaces de presentar a sus compañeros de manera integral, utilizando un texto escrito por ellos mismos y material audiovisual de apoyo que los propios alumnos elaboraron. El trabajo continuo y detallado que realizaron a lo largo del semestre en el análisis y reescritura de una misma historia, les permitió sentirse preparados y seguros al momento de la presentación del producto final. Así, el proyecto no sólo fomentó el conocimiento de los alumnos sobre la narrativa en los cuentos de hadas, sino que además favoreció la integración de las cuatro habilidades de la lengua meta a la vez que fortaleció la autoestima y confianza de los estudiantes al permitirles presentar un tema que ellos conocían ampliamente.

Durante la elaboración del proyecto los alumnos no sólo incrementaron su conocimiento implícito sobre el proceso de escritura, sino que además practicaron las cuatro etapas del mismo: planeación, redacción, revisión y edición, culminando con la presentación. La evaluación por parte del profesor y de los mismos estudiantes se llevó a cabo durante todo el proceso de escritura, lo cual permitió evaluar tanto el proceso como el producto final.

Contar con un modelo como base para la elaboración de un cuento propio permitió a los alumnos adquirir las habilidades básicas para la elaboración de un texto escrito compartiendo la responsabilidad de la tarea con el profesor e incluso con el autor del texto original. Una vez que su habilidad se incrementó el rol del profesor disminuyó y los alumnos fueron capaces de presentar el proyecto por sí mismos.

El conocimiento explícito de los elementos básicos de la narrativa provocó que los alumnos se interesaran por encontrar estos elementos dentro de otros textos que no se relacionaban con la elaboración del proyecto a largo plazo, y pronto fueron capaces de localizar el resumen, la orientación, los eventos complicantes y la resolución en lecturas de su libro de texto, ejercicios de comprensión e incluso en las lecturas contenidas en otros instrumentos de evaluación que se utilizaron durante el curso; aún cuando el profesor de lengua adicional no solicitara la identificación de estos elementos como parte del ejercicio. El interés de los alumnos se desarrolló de tal forma que, de no encontrar alguno de los elementos de la narrativa dentro del texto estudiado, elaboraban a petición del profesor de lengua un breve párrafo como resumen o coda para complementar el texto.

Implicaciones a futuro

Después de haber realizado este primer acercamiento a los géneros literarios y a los elementos de la narrativa, los estudiantes pueden escribir historias nuevas y originales, con sus propios personajes y acontecimientos, utilizando la habilidad que adquirieron para imitar, examinar, analizar y comparar críticamente un texto escrito. Además, existen otros géneros literarios que pueden ser enseñados a los alumnos utilizando la misma metodología, esto con el objeto de incrementar las habilidades del discurso escrito de los alumnos para elaborar diversos tipos de textos de acuerdo a sus necesidades comunicativas.

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Apéndice 1

The Princess and the Pea
by Hans Christian Anderson

Abstract

ONCE upon a time there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess; but she would have to be a real princess.

Orientation

He traveled all over the world to find one, but nowhere could he get what he wanted. There were princesses enough, but it was difficult to find out whether they were real ones. There was always something about them that was not as it should be. So he came home again and was sad, for he would have liked very much to have a real princess.

Complicating Events

One evening a terrible storm came on; there was thunder and lightning, and the rain poured down in torrents. Suddenly a knocking was heard at the city gate, and the old king went to open it. It was a princess standing out there in front of the gate. But, good gracious! what a sight the rain and the wind had made her look. The water ran down from her hair and clothes; it ran down into the toes of her shoes and out again at the heels. And yet she said that she was a real princess.

"Well, we'll soon find that out," thought the old queen. But she said nothing, went into the bedroom, took all the bedding off the bedstead, and laid a pea on the bottom; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them on the pea, and then twenty eider-down beds on top of the mattresses. On this the princess had to lie all night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept. "Oh, very badly!" said she. "I have scarcely closed my eyes all night. Heaven only knows what was in the bed, but I was lying on something hard, so that I am black and blue all over my body. It's horrible!" Now they knew that she was a real princess because she had felt the pea right through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eider-down beds.

Resolution

Nobody but a real princess could be as sensitive as that. So the prince took her for his wife, for now he knew that he had a real princess;

Coda

and the pea was put in the museum, where it may still be seen, if no one has stolen it.

Apéndice 2

Abstract

Original Story:

Once upon a time there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess, but she would have to be a real princess.

Rewritten Text:

A prince wanted to get married, but only to a real princess, because there were girls that said they were real princesses, but they weren't, so it was going to be hard to find a real one.

Apéndice 3

Glossary

Princess: The daughter of a King.

Pea: Green, small and round vegetable.

Storm: Rain, thunders, wind.

Mattresses: Soft thing on a bed.

Sensitive: Very delicate, like a real princess.

Wife: A woman who is married.