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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 Previously unpublished articles and book reviews relevant to EFL teaching and research in Mexico and Latin America are accepted for publication.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.

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

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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.

Fe de erratas

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page 47:

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The following co-author was inadvertently deleted:

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Promoting Cultural Intelligence within the EFL/ESL Curriculum[1]

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Abstract

Culture is an important component in ESL/EFL courses because culture has profound effects on language and how it is used and affects society. The last half of the 20th century witnessed significant changes with regard to language teaching methodology, reflecting advancements in the areas of linguistics and language learning theory. The goal of language learning has also evolved together with world realities that oblige language teachers to focus primarily on English in terms of the communicative process between two or more individuals who may or ***may not*** be native speakers. Worldwide, more people speak English as a second language than there are actual native speakers. Although English language instruction has evolved greatly, culture is still sometimes taught in traditional, often superficial terms. This article will discuss how the ESL/EFL curriculum needs to revisit what the role and purpose of culture is in the classroom. It then presents the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CI) and provides suggestions about how to incorporate CI into the ESL/EFL curriculum. Finally, it proposes providing more relevant and real-life activities to help develop CI in conjunction with communicative activities to better establish both professional and personal relationships with people from other cultures.

Introduction

One of the primary goals of learning a second language is to help students actively and productively employ it in a variety of real-world situations that may present themselves in both their private and professional lives. Today, the English language has virtually become the *lingua franca* of the world economic phenomenon of globalization. In many countries, the English language represents part of an integral strategy to produce more competitive human capital in the industrial, technological, and commercial sectors of their economies, or more involved citizenry in the case of social and cultural development.

The importance of the English language cannot be overemphasized. The Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) currently consists of 21 countries and represents nearly 50% of total world trade. At an event hosted by the New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland, New Zealand in March, 2004, Ambassador Mario Artaza, Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat, stated that English is the official language for interaction and discussion within APEC, not

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because it is the most widely spoken language in the region, but because APEC recognizes that for business and official interaction, English is the most commonly spoken language with regard to economic activity and is the greatest bridge to cross-cultural interaction (Artaza, 2004).

Burt (2005) estimated that in 1997 between 1.2 and 1.5 billion people had near-native command of the English language, yet less than 50% of these speakers lived in countries where English was the first or official language. The use of English has grown to where the majority of English speakers in the world are actually speakers whose mother tongue is not English, resulting in an estimated 80% of verbal exchanges in which English is used as a second or foreign language by at least one of the participants (Burt, 2005).

English language instruction changed significantly during the last half of the 20th century in response to learner needs and demands. Early 20th century teaching approaches were based on grammar, structure, lexical knowledge, and reading comprehension, with limited superficial cultural knowledge. The primary reason for studying a second language was to "gain culture" by reading the great literary masterpieces or tales of adventurers who traveled the globe to far away and exotic places (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). This philosophy was best represented by the Reading Approach or the Grammar Translation Approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). These approaches reflected that only a small number of individuals would actually have contact with speakers of other languages or their cultures.

However, the second half of the 20th century witnessed great changes related to travel, communication, and business. English students now wished to learn a language in order to travel, do business, or otherwise have contact with other speakers of English; whether they spoke English as their mother tongue or as a second language made little or no difference. This reorientation of goals was reflected by changes in how languages were taught, as well as in a growing emphasis on sociolinguistics and communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Language teaching approaches or methodologies that were based on aural/oral proficiency and communicative content rather than structure became the norm. Total Physical Response, Counselor Learning Method, the Natural Approach, as well as other humanistic language approaches shared the goal of bringing people together through language, and that language was oral, interactive, and purposeful (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Teaching culture in the ESL/EFL classroom, however, did not evolve similarly. English classrooms, textbooks, and materials generally presented a very limited and superficial view of culture, and usually assumed that the communicative interaction would be in an English-speaking country with a native speaker. Consequently, the ESL/EFL materials and curricula tended to be Anglocentric and presented topics that were based on very specific interactions. Culture still consisted of learning about the landmarks, celebrations and cultural objects of the people who used the target language.

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Today, because English is spoken as a second language by many people who do not share similar linguistic or cultural backgrounds, the majority of interactions are now between two people who share a common need or goal, but come from different cultural backgrounds. In a 21st century world economy, students need to interact with non-native English speakers with diverse cultural backgrounds. The traditional emphasis on presenting Anglo Saxon culture, while still important, does not meet the expectations or needs of an increasingly communicated world. To better address student needs, a new view of culture known as cultural intelligence proposes a more in-depth analysis of individual, national and organizational cultures. Earley and Ang (2003) more broadly define cultural intelligence as one's ability to adapt to new dynamically-changing cultural contexts.

The manner in which culture is presented within the ESL/EFL curriculum and how it is actually taught in class needs to present culture as a linguistically and culturally adaptive behavior, instead of as knowledge about landmarks, celebrations, fine arts, handicrafts, etc. Including CI as an integral part of language classes provides the most appropriate setting for providing linguistic and culturally specific appropriate examples of how the English language ensures communication on one level. However, culturally appropriate behaviors, combined with contextually correct verbal expression, can reduce cultural distance and provide the basis for improved relationships.

Definitions of Culture

Culture flows through language and language expresses the ideas, thoughts, and beliefs of a social group. Without language to transmit culture, the rules by which a culture functions would be lost. Therefore cultural knowledge should represent a more important part of language instruction.

According to Hinkel (2000) "culture has diverse and disparate definitions that deal with forms of speech, the rhetorical culture of texts, social organization and knowledge constructs" (p.1). Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi (cited in Leesard-Clouston, 1997) contribute to an understanding of culture by providing four different senses of culture:

- Aesthetic sense: includes cinema, literature, music and media.
- Sociological sense: refers to the organization and nature of family, interpersonal relations, customs, material conditions, and so on.
- Semantic sense: encompasses the whole conceptualization system which conditions perceptions, and thought processes
- Pragmatic and sociolinguistic sense: emphasises the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills, and language code which are necessary for successful communication. (p.5)

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Rosaldo (cited in Hinkel, 2000) argues that "cultural models derive from the world in which people live and the reality they construct" (p.1). According to Fiske (cited in Kramsch, 2004), culture is a process which produces and reproduces meaning. She also describes one form of culture that she calls popular culture. According to Fiske, popular culture is the culture that second language learners adopt while they are learning the target language. This popular culture helps the learner become more competent in learning the second language. Finally, Buckingham (1998) adds that "popular culture is seen as an authentic part of students' experience" (p.8).

Kramsch (2004) discusses the culture that arises in the language classroom. She describes it as a type of "third culture." The emergence of this culture depends on its integration with a critical pedagogy. This third culture as Kramsch calls it, "includes a systematic assessment of the situational context in the production and the reception of meaning based on observation, analysis, and personal response" (p.243).

In sum, many definitions of culture exist and authors tend to disagree on some of the particulars, however some points become very clear:

1) Culture and language are intertwined and one cannot exist or be transmitted without the other.
2) Interacting appropriately within a culture is convenient and necessary in order to achieve one's goals.
3) Learning about culturally specific and appropriate behaviors is pragmatic in terms of optimal interaction with a target group and has a multiplying effect on linguistic competence.

The influence of culture in language teaching

Today, culture generally represents a significant part of the language curriculum. Through "the study of other languages, students can gain knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language: in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996 p. 27). Kilikaya (2004) contends that "any language is embedded in a particular culture and when you learn a language inevitably you learn about its underlying culture" (p.5). For Genc and Banda (2005) "culture has a humanizing and a motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process. They help learners observe similarities and differences among various cultural groups" (p.3).

Presenting students with a more profound and contact-based concept of culture might linguistically benefit language learners. Genc and Banda (2005) concluded that, "a culture class is significantly beneficial in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target

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societies and contributing to the teaching profession" (p.81). Today, language instruction might wish to incorporate cultural universals and the concept of CI. In many classroom settings, unfortunately, the study of culture does not concur with the sociolinguistic or sociocultural paradigms that characterize the 21st century. Culture is still taught in very traditional ways. An example of a traditional treatment of culture can be found in Cullen & Sato (2000), who suggest creating a cultural context by exploiting a wide range of materials and activities. After presenting culture using different information sources, the authors suggest pair discussions about true or false statements:

1. Ireland is totally dark during the winter.
2. There is little snow except in the mountains.
3. The population of Ireland is less than that of Aichi Prefecture.
4. Ireland is about the same size as the island of Honshu.
5. The United Kingdom includes the Republic of Ireland.
6. The Coors, the Cranberries, U2, the Beatles and Enya are Irish musicians.
7. Some Irish people think the Shinkansen connects Tokyo to Hong Kong. http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Cullen-Culture.html

This exercise focuses on discrete information, which although useful in terms of conversation practice, does not present any information or practice that permits students to develop a broader concept of culture.

Presenting culture in the ESL/EFL classroom or curriculum involves more than a casual study or a few lessons related to celebrations, folk songs, or the traditional costumes of the people who speak the language. Cultural intelligence involves a much broader concept of why people learn English and how they intend to use their linguistic knowledge in, what for them, is their foreseeable future.

Cultural Intelligence

The increased exchange of goods and services on an international level the last quarter century has prompted specialists to study and comprehend their respective cultures in a much more profound way. Consequently, the sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects of language learning have become increasingly important as they are directly applicable in situations where participants in the communicative act do not share the same linguistic or cultural background, yet have to interact to achieve a common goal.

As a result of this, a new concept of "culture," as well as the roles individuals, countries and organizations play as they interact has emerged. This new point of view of culture is known as cultural intelligence. According to James (2005) "cultural intelligence is the ability to recognize cultural myths, our own and those of others" (p.7). For Tan (2004) cultural intelligence can be defined as

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"a person's ability to successfully adapt to new cultural settings, that is, to unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context" (p.20).

Recent attempts to develop a measure of cultural intelligence have used similar definitions. Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh (2004) define cultural intelligence as "an individual's capability to deal effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (p.3). Organizations such as Novartis, Nike, Levi Straus, Lufthansa, among others, see the strategic value of cultural intelligence and are beginning to screen applicants for cultural intelligence (Tan, 2004). They have discovered that people with cultural intelligence work better in a more pluralistic society and better adapt to the workplace, particularly if that workplace is located in another country or includes people from other races or cultures.

Earley and Ang (2003), Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., & Koh, C. (2004), and Earley & Peterson (2004) linked the construct of cultural intelligence to other types of intelligence, including emotional and social intelligence (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1985, Goleman, 1998), which emphasize intelligence as the ability to adjust to one's environment (Sternberg, 2000). According to Earley (2003, 2004) cultural intelligence differs from both emotional intelligence and social intelligence in that emotional and social intelligence imply that the participants have sufficient cultural and personal intimacy to be able to infer emotional states. Cultural intelligence does not necessarily imply intimacy among the participants, but a desire to communicate and work together to achieve a goal.

These perspectives may provide a rich basis for understanding cultural intelligence. Mischel (2004) argued that, "Adaptive behavior should be enhanced by . . . the ability to make fine-grained distinctions among situations—and undermined by broad response tendencies insensitive to context and the different consequences produced by even subtle differences in behavior when situations differ in their nuance" (p.5).

Mischel (2004) touches upon the very essence of cultural intelligence in that it allows the non–native participant in a new cultural and linguistic setting to employ training and knowledge in order to bridge potential barriers and lower possible affective barriers that can be created either linguistically, racially or culturally. Borrowing from this person–situation approach, there are three basic possibilities here. One possibility is that an individual's behavior is invariant across cultures; a second possibility is that an individual's behavior varies across cultures, but in a way that is not consistent with what is most appropriate for each culture. A third possibility is that an individual's behavior varies across cultures, in a way that is consistent with what is most appropriate for each culture (Mischel, 2004).

Both verbal and non-verbal behavior must be interpreted in a consistent manner for true communication to be effective. If what a person says is accompanied by inappropriate actions, the communication processes, affectivity and the ultimate success of the interaction between participants may become

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seriously jeopardized. Therefore, in a globalized economy where communication can take place between almost anybody from any culture at any time, it is necessary for there to be a much more in-depth understanding of how language and culture interact. In class, teachers need to be more effective in relating the complications resulting from possible miscommunication due to a lack of understanding appropriate non-verbal behavior

The Papadopoulos, Tiki, and Taylor (1998) Cultural Competence Model (CCM) forms part of the nursing curricula at the Royal College of Nursing in the United Kingdom, and its goal is to teach nursing students how culturally sensitive behaviors are conducive to improved health care practices. The CCM consists of four stages, including: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. These authors relate that the CCM may be applicable to other areas of instruction and suggest the CCM can be modified to meet different curricular needs.

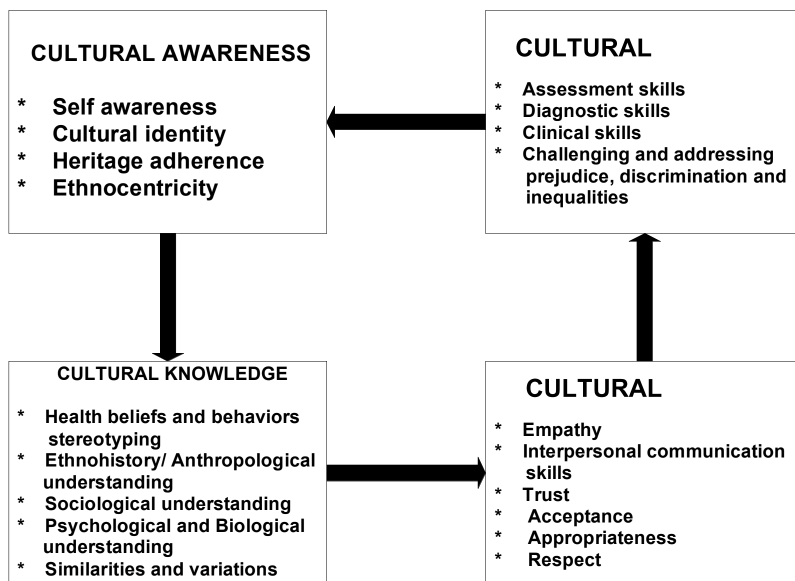

Figure 1: The Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor Model for Developing Cultural Competence

(1998, p. 197)

We suggest that this model can be employed, with appropriate modifications, to introduce culture in the ESL/EFL classroom in a more meaningful way. In fact, a parallel curriculum can be introduced into the English classroom to promote the four language skills and to better contextualize language use within communicative methods. Carl Rogers (1969) believed that the communicative

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approach to language learning is largely based on humanistic approaches, less teacher control, more student self-exploration and more perspective transformation that result from reflective learning. Transformative learning produces change that, upon causing an individual to reflect, has an important impact on later experiences. Perspective transformation is an important part of transformative learning and involves the process of becoming aware of our perceptions, how we came by them, and how they affect the way we perceive the world around us (Mezirow, 1990). The reason for including cultural intelligence in the curricula is that teachers can combine major aspects of the communicative approach, humanistic teaching principles, and reflective learning to better consolidate language learning and provide students with experiences that will positively affect their personal lives and create more flexible professionals in the future.

Cultural intelligence and the ESL/EFL curriculum

In some cases language instruction is based on a curriculum that reflects an instrumental approach whose main goal is to learn communicative functions. Often, language instruction does not permit culture to play a significant role in the learning-teaching process. Paricio (2001) writes that the communicative approach often focuses on the acquisition of linguistic competences, separating culture from learning development.

Byram (2000) also holds that "the 'communicative turn' in language teaching, particularly in English as a Foreign Language, tends to emphasize the speech act and discourse competence, rather than (socio-) cultural competence" (p.1).

ELT/EFL professionals can use or modify the Papadopoulos, Tiki, and Taylor Cultural Competence Model or any similar model to provide the basis for a parallel curriculum that can be added to English language instruction. With the goal of presenting such a possibility, this article will develop the CCM as the basis for introducing culture into the classroom.

The first stage of the Cultural Competence Model is to help students develop cultural awareness, which begins with a self evaluation of their personal values and beliefs in order to permit them to gain greater self-awareness. There are many self-assessment instruments to help individuals become more aware of their personal culture. Table 1 presents 10 items of the 28-item Diversity Change Agent: Self-Assessment Questionnaire (1998) developed to help persons reflect upon how they react to cultural diversity. Each one of these 28 items, if integrated into the ESL/EFL curriculum, can represent a variety of communicative activities such as group discussions, role playing, or more traditional writing activities.

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Table 1: DIVERSITY CHANGE AGENT: Self-Assessment (First 10 Items)

	Item	Scale
1.	I value having close relationships with people who are culturally different from me	1 2 3 4 5
2.	I avoid assuming that I understand other people's motivation or intent	1 2 3 4 5
3.	I seek out new information about people who are different from me in order to improve our communication	1 2 3 4 5
4.	I try to find objective reasons why others may behave in a way I perceive negatively	1 2 3 4 5
5.	I react to confusion or conflict with little visible discomfort or irritation.	1 2 3 4 5
6.	I try to understand others' experiences from their perspective	1 2 3 4 5
7.	I try to identify others' emotions when we communicate	1 2 3 4 5
8.	When there is a misunderstanding I make a point to determine why	1 2 3 4 5
9.	I refrain from blaming others when miscommunication causes problems	1 2 3 4 5
10.	I balance emotion with reason when I am in conflict with someone	1 2 3 4 5

Source: American Council for Voluntary International Action (2002)

Each of the 28 items of the questionnaire can also be followed by a great variety of questions for further discussion. For example, a few discussion topics for item number one might include:

- What is your definition of a relationship?
- Who do you have close relationships with?
- What is necessary in order to have a close relationship?
- Can you have a close relationship without trust?
- Can you have a close relationship without honesty?
- Can you have close relationships with people who are different from you?
- What are some of the barriers to establishing a close relationship?
- Are the barriers for establishing close relationships with people from other cultures the same as or different from establishing relationships with people from your own culture?
- Can you name a few things that make relationships with people from other cultures different?

With a little imagination, teachers can develop many different lines of questioning and develop activities that can make the class environment much

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richer in terms of communication, including: group discussions, debates, role playing, prepared oral or written reports, etc.

It is important to note that this 28-point scale and subsequent complementary discussion and related activities only refer to the topic of self-awareness under the section cultural awareness. If teachers develop each and every point within each of the four stages, the communicative opportunities are potentially endless.

The second stage of the Cultural Competence Model, called cultural knowledge, implies actually studying different topics related to what culture is and how it is expressed. Almost all cultures share many of the same basic points of reference. Basic cultural features common to almost all cultures are: concepts of time and space, language use, health, values, ethics, resilience, spirit, sex roles, relationships, tabus, heroes and myths, gestures, esthetics, religion, education, play and leisure, ownership, ceremonies, and bonding, among others.

Many of these topics can be easily included as part of the ESL/EFL curriculum because language performs a fundamental function in life and expresses culturally universal elements. In the classroom, for instance, the concept of how the concept of time is culturally determined, readings and other information can be provided to students. Subsequent role plays or discussions can include topics such as punctuality and how different cultures view it. Some discussion questions that arise from examining the concept of time might include:

- Is punctuality the same for different groups (family members, friends, adults) within your culture?
- Is punctuality the same for people living in urban and rural settings?
- Does punctuality have the same relative importance across cultures?
- How might people express their disapproval if you arrive late to an appointment?
- Are there acceptable excuses for explaining tardiness?
- Can you name some common excuses you have used or heard to justify tardiness?
- Is time relative? Does time really go faster or slower, depending on the situation?
- Do religions have different views of time? Explain how different religions view the concept of time.

An interesting role play can be developed on this topic. For instance, the teacher can select a student to be the English student teacher for the following day and assign him to teach a topic to the class. Without advising the student teacher, the English teacher can then instruct some students to enter on time, others to arrive five minutes late and still others to arrive ten minutes tardy to class. After the final student has taken a seat, the English teacher can ask the student teacher how he felt having students arrive late to class. The students who arrived late to class can then explain how they felt when they interrupted the

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ongoing activities or how they actually feel when people are not punctual for meetings or dates.

Punctuality, however, is only one culturally determined point of reference related to the concept of time. Meal times as well as the amount of time people dedicate to eating, celebrating, socializing, dating, etc. are largely determined by culture. The relative importance of time itself and its importance in daily life can also vary greatly. Time, for instance, is an important aspect of religion and one's view of nature and the universe. Consequently, cultural aspects that are universally shared are practiced differently across cultures and these differences can provide many topics and activities to enhance the communicative syllabus.

The third stage, cultural sensitivity, implies developing empathy towards members of other cultures individuals may interact with. In other words, this third stage can be promoted by helping students learn to consider members of other cultures as their true partners and equals. Cultural Intelligence promotes relationships that are symmetrical and equitable. Therefore, activities that promote power sharing are necessary. Activities in the ESL/EFL classroom might include activities that rotate roles (team leader, secretary, treasurer, etc). Role playing activities can be particularly effective in helping observe both correct and incorrect behaviors that result from specific circumstances. An example of this for Mexican students would be to debate the pros and cons of building a fortified structure separating the Mexican – United States border, and what that barrier represents for persons living on opposite sides of the border. Attempting to understand what cultural, political and economic variables might move Americans to fortify their border and how their perceived needs conflict with Mexican dignity can lead to greater empathy. Debates about how appropriate building a wall is, as well as how sensitivities might be offended can result in very dynamic discussions. There are many discussion topics about how bilateral relations between individuals, corporations and countries are affected when communications break down due to a lack of empathy and understanding, trust, acceptance, and respect. How relations can be affected by misguided actions or even inaction can also motivate many class activities.

Finally, the fourth stage, cultural competence, consists of activities that require synthesis, application and evaluation of the previously gained awareness, knowledge and sensitivity. This level of competence is difficult to achieve in the classroom because it almost requires real-world situations in which the students must personally interact with members of other cultures. Still, activities might include discussing how actions in one culture can affect the impressions of and relations with another.

Cultural competence can be encouraged by using the Internet and other communications technology. The Internet now affords students more up-close contact through instant messaging, emails, chats, blogs, and discussion forums, where they can interact and practice cultural competence by actually being in contact with people from other cultures while practicing their English. This

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contact can be promoted in the ESL/EFL curriculum by providing topics students can discuss using different Internet tools and reporting their discoveries in small group or plenary class sessions. Internet searches on specific topics can be given to students who can write up summaries and provide oral reports. Excellent Internet resources include different online dictionaries and encyclopedias. Cooperating teachers from different countries can assign the same topics to their students. For instance, a Spanish teacher in the United States and an English teacher in Mexico can assign the same topics to their students and provide contact information for the corresponding peer classmate in the other country. This gives students the chance to collaborate and correct each other's versions of the assignment they are to turn in, as well as to negotiate both linguistically and culturally.

Conclusions

For communication to be "real," it must be purposeful. The authors do not suggest making cultural intelligence the only or primary topic of communicative activities. However, many of these topics can be included in the EFL curriculum, particularly at more advanced levels, where it becomes more relevant as students perceive travel and interaction with other peoples as a concrete and achievable possibility.

Consequently, the inclusion of these topics is of even more vital importance in language programs designed to produce students who must interact not only with native speakers, but also with speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds who must also speak and negotiate meaning in what is, for them, a second or foreign language. Adult advanced-level conversation classes or classes for students wishing to participate in foreign exchange programs represent two exceptional opportunities to include cultural intelligence as part of the foreign language classroom curriculum.

The way languages are taught changed dramatically during the last half of the 20th century as a result of research related to how humans learn or acquire language including second or foreign languages. Changes related to how travel and communication affected the frequency and types of interaction between peoples from different cultures also changed the perceived goal of learning a language. For the last 25 years or so, ESL/EFL students have viewed meeting non-native English speakers as a distinct possibility as the process of globalization reduced the cost of travel and increased commercial exchange. Students now feel that they might actually have the chance to not only go to the United States, England, or another English-speaking country, but to almost any country in the world where they will almost inevitably meet someone who speaks English.

Students, however, do not view learning English necessarily as a function of interacting with native speakers in a native English-speaking country. They view

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the English language as a means to travel across the entire globe and as a means to facilitate their travel, commerce, and other interactions with other non-native English speakers. If Russians want to speak to Spaniards, they do so in English; if the Chinese wish to communicate with Egyptians, they choose to use the English language.

Language students no longer view meeting and interacting with people from other languages and cultures as a remote possibility; they now view it as a distinct probability, which they need to prepare for if they want to have a competitive advantage in today's complex world stage. Consequently, if ESL/EFL classes can better prepare students to interact between and among different cultures by reinforcing their cultural intelligence, the language they are actually taught will be more relevant and purposeful. Are these not two of the most elemental tenets of language instruction?

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Hypertext-Based EFL/ESL Reading[2]

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Introduction

Hypertext is a unique computer application for written language. Nelson (1992) coined the term *hypertext* to describe non-sequential reading and writing displayed on a computer screen. Also, it is a psychological construct that enables information to be quickly and easily accessed in the order needed each time it is needed. As will be explained below, learning to use hypertext provides various benefits for students. Learners use this technology to pick and choose blocks of text by interacting with the computer.

Hypertext is a way to navigate through electronically-stored texts on computer networks. A URL (Uniform Resource Locator, which provides the address to a document on the World Wide Web (www) address, may, for example, direct the user to a site with different EFL/ESL (English as a Foreign/Second Language) reading materials. Each lesson will also be linked to other activities such as identifying the meaning of the words, and associated exercises and answers.

This paper looks at the effects of hypertext as a medium of learning English through reading comprehension, including pedagogical aspects and the relationship between attitude towards and the use of hypertext. It summarizes a pilot study of the use of hypertext in a university level reading course in EFL.

Several major questions are the basis for this paper and the pilot study:

1. Will students have a more positive attitude towards reading comprehension in EFL by using hypertext?
2. Will the teaching of reading comprehension using hypertext result in greater gains in proficiency than teaching with traditional text-based materials?

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An overview of hypertext

Heim (1993) describes hypertext as follows:

> *Hypertext today is a mode of interacting with texts, and not a specific tool for a single purpose. You can realize what hypertext is, or can be, by sitting down with it for only half an hour. Once caught in the interactive nature of the thing, you can begin to imagine an immense range of possible applications* (p. 29).

The term *hypertext* has now been expanded to include a wide range of computer applications, such as interactive books, encyclopedias, online materials and other forms of nonlinear reading and writing, created using computer technology. Interactive text where the reader chooses different paths of action at critical points is the most basic type of hypertext. The so-called different paths of action are *pre-programmed* by the *author* of the hypertext.

As a reader jumps to different passages in a single text or in different texts, multi-linear hypertext presents multiple points of view. Fowler (1994) states: *No piece of hypertext ever sings solo; it always collaborates in a cacophonous choir with all of the other nodes of the network in which it is implicated* (p. 18). Multi-linear reading requires students to make critical choices about what passages of text or points-of-view they will access next.

In large networked systems, students can select texts that are stored on different computer systems around the world. For example, one use of the world wide web is as a hypertext information retrieval system.

Keyword links connect the documents together into an associative information web. He and Napp (1994) describe this connection as follows: Every keyword or important concept is linked through hypertext with another set of knowledge modules. This actually simulates association - the most important learning capability of the human mind (p. 33). However, the associations in these systems are not random. They are structured, and systematically designed. For example, a student could search for information on a specific subject, such as vegetarian recipes. A list of categories and choices might then be displayed on the computer screen. Recipes could be selected by type of vegetable or course, such as carrots or desserts. Each category might have a directory list of recipes. Once the selection is made, the program would access the information from the remote computer and display the selected recipe on the screen. This structured design aspect of hypertext reduces the number of choices that could be made at any given stage, (e.g. the main list might contain items such as Soups or Salads, and only by choosing one of these, could a person get to the list of soups or salads).

However, hypertext is more than a software program, or an authority language, or just making decisions. Hypertext is a psychological construct that enables information to be quickly and easily accessed in the order needed, each

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time it is needed. Hypertext works as a network of blocks of information (nodes) connected to each other (links). The reader can jump from node to node by clicking on a pre-defined part of the information which could be a word, or a phrase, etc. Hypertext with added graphics and sounds is *Hypermedia*.

The pros and cons of hypertext

Using hypertext has both advantages and disadvantages. The application of hypertext empowers students to interact with blocks of text, and picking and choosing topics of interest by navigating through hypertext documents. Students must learn to navigate and explore the text in order to read documents. Using text navigational skills changes the students into active information explorers, blazing trails through the information space.

Heim (1993) offers another advantage of hypertext reading: *Instead of a linear, page-by-page, line-by-line, book-by-book approach, the user connects information in an intuitive, associative manner. Hypertext fosters a literacy that is prompted by jumps of intuition and association* (p. 30). Hypertext designs eliminate alternatives by linking together texts based on a topic. They enable students to select texts based on a related topic, so they may not be overwhelmed with information. As a result, students can gain a greater sense of control, which helps to maintain their interest in the texts.

Hypertext eliminates the process of *manual search* to find the cross-referenced texts listed in a book. Cross-references are automatically linked to a document. With a click of the mouse button, a linked source of an author's note will appear on the screen. This type of access to multiple texts improves critical thinking skills as readers can decide if the note warrants careful reading or if the reader should return to the main text. Moreover, students have access to multiple texts with different points of view. In contrast, many printed books either tend to present a single vision or present different points of view in different chapters or on different pages, which makes it difficult for the student to compare and analyze them.

Learning to use hypertext provides some key benefits for students. Hypertexts instruct students by presenting verbal and visual information on a topic. Thus, some students may better understand the material they are supposed to learn.

Like traditional text approaches, hypertext can be used as self-study and text review. After students learn to read hypertext literature, they are not dependent upon a teacher to use relevant hypertext instructional materials.

Students can also use hypertext instruction beyond a semester or a course to reinforce skills and concepts. Information presented in the course can be applied to a project in a different course by accessing hypertext literature. Study

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materials from different courses can further be linked in a hierarchical manner, thus allowing students to set their own pace, allowing them also to go back and forth between the materials, for quick reference.

Some other benefits of using hypertexts are that students potentially play a more active role as readers than is possible with traditional textbooks. Students are required to make decisions about the information they are accessing and reading on the computer. Consequently, learning with this technology becomes more student-centered. Because hypertext is student-centered, hypertext systems are generally called learning systems, rather than teaching systems.

Hypertext learning systems introduce an exploratory or discovery method of learning into the classroom. Students who learn to use hypertexts become active learners. Hypertext develops learner autonomy and helps the learners to take on an active role in and more responsibility for their learning.

At the same time, while students are becoming more mentally active, they are also interacting with new ways of presenting information through computer-based technologies.

Academic projects combining reading and writing can incorporate hypertext-reading skills (Bolter, 1992; Landow, 1992). The reader has the option to explore various reading paths by pursuing the links (as explained above). Icons, pictures, arrows, buttons, and scroll bars guide the reader through the nonlinear sequences of text and images. Hypertext writers include these visual nonverbal navigation cues within their texts. Navigation cues indicate reading paths and they need to be easily understood by readers. Designing visual elements to guide readers through a text is an integral part of the hypertext writing process (Bolter, 1992; Landow, 1992).

Though hypertext can provide students with a new type of interactive learning experience, it also has one major disadvantage. It can easily become a barrier for the students who are not familiar with the technology. They need to know the ways of accessing reading in order to use hypertext well.

Relationship between hypertext and reading comprehension: key points

A number of key concepts identified in the relationship between hypertext and reading comprehension are: comprehensible input, the communicative aspect, explorative construction, and non-linear reading.

A key concept in the relationship between hypertext and reading is *comprehensible input*. Research in the field of foreign language acquisition suggests that comprehensible input and interaction are possible elements in acquiring a foreign language (Krashen, 1985). The Internet can be a very useful tool to help students to acquire proficiency in reading through lively interaction.

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The learner needs to have the chance to explore new territories, via the foreign language. This is often not possible in the traditional text-based language class, because of the lack of instructional time and the lack of individualized practice sessions. The Internet is a good supplementary tool due to its potential as a supplier of varied input.

Another key element to consider is the *communicative aspect of reading*. According to Widdowson (1985), the reader applies a schematic frame or scenario to the textual object, samples the information it represents, and makes whatever modifications necessary to incorporate information not previously accounted for in the structure of his knowledge. In Widdowson's view, reading may be seen as a separate ability that can be investigated and taught in disassociation from other aspects of language behavior, but as the polarization of a general interpretive process, underlying all communicative activity. He believes that reading should be regarded as an interaction between the writer and the reader, mediated through the text.

Hypertext reading introduces an *explorative method* of learning into the classroom. Students learning to use hypertext are actively involved in the learning process. As students become more mentally active, they choose their own paths through this hypertext space, by consciously selecting links to follow up on and links to ignore. A major point here is that the students are in control and can use their own initiative dynamically. In contrast, in traditional book-based learning methods, students have to read in a linear fashion, with little or no control over what to read next.

Another concept is *meaning construction*.. Lee and Schallert (1997) provide this explanation:

> *One prevalent view of reading identifies it as a meaning construction activity served by lower level processes associated with word decoding and recognition, and by higher level processes associated with bringing relevant prior knowledge to bear on the reading. (p. 714)*

If reading comprehension is viewed as a multiplication of word recognition abilities and general language comprehension abilities, then reading comprehension can be divided into two parts: a word recognition part, which is bottom-up driven, and a comprehension part, which is highly interactive and top-down driven.. Unlike traditional reading methods, hypertext reading forces the reader to make choices (e.g. what links to follow). The user cannot read blindly; he or she has to think, and thus there is a constant activation of higher level processes.

Still another key concept in the relationship between reading and hypertext is reading in a nonlinear way. To use hypertext, students need to learn how to navigate through electronic space. Navigation is a nonlinear process with multiple paths, while books are linear, structured by the written word, and with a single

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path. Nelson (1992) describes writing in the following way: Ordinary writing is sequential for two reasons. First, it grew out of speech and speech-making which have to be sequential... Second, because books are not convenient to read except in a sequence (p. 29).

Hypertext is nonlinear and creates a new type of reading environment. This setting supports the development of interactive learning materials and interactive learning.

Hypertext documents are different from printed texts in three ways: First, hypertext requires that the students be familiar with computers and know how to access the hypertext information. Second, hypertexts present information in the form of verbal text and nonverbal images. Hypertext inevitably includes a higher percentage of nonverbal information (Landow, 1992). Hypertexts might use icons (and animations) that are not found or cannot be put in printed texts. Third, hypertext presents information best suited for non-linear reading. The ability of hypertext to *link* various pieces of information makes it possible for the reader to pick and choose topics or click on an iconic button, and access information about the text. Thus, students are now *experiencing a text as part of a network of navigable relations* (Landow, 1992, p. 126) instead of as a linear sequence of ideas. It is this characteristic of hypertext that creates an interactive style for reading information, and consequently alters the process of reading. Therefore, hypertexts are basically distinct from printed texts, and they change a student's instructional experience with texts by requiring a student to learn reading interactively.

An exploratory study of the use of hypertext in an EFL reading class

The choice of the topic for this study — hypertext and the teaching of EFL reading comprehension — resulted from both an interest in hypertext and a dissatisfaction with the current situation in Iran's foreign language teaching classes.

Learning English in Iran means little more than acquiring a thorough knowledge of grammatical rules and vocabulary, with little development in communication skills. Most students are able to reproduce grammatical rules and apply them in translation exercises. However, true internalization of a language goes beyond just learning the grammar.

Theories of communicative language teaching and learner autonomy are widespread and generally accepted in teacher training programs. Yet, in practice, they have still not been put to use in many Iranian schools and universities. During my own teacher training program, I was taught the importance of these theories; however, during teaching practice, I soon discovered that reality was quite different. The majority of English teachers were not convinced of the

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benefits of these current pedagogical theories and relied heavily on grammar translation teaching strategies.

Some teachers recognize the importance of communication and learner autonomy in language teaching. In addition, they realize that the benefits outweigh the inconveniences caused by the adjustments teachers have to make. These teachers have shifted from grammar translation teaching to communicative, student-centered language learning. However, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is still not prevalent, even though it would be a very effective way of implementing/facilitating this shift.

Furthermore, the great enthusiasm about the potential of hypertext for language learning has not yet been matched by research on what actually occurs in the online classroom. Much of the published literature on this topic consists of anecdotal teacher reports. A small number of published systematic studies have reported on narrow pieces of data, such as the outcome of particular class sessions or students' use of particular discourse features. However, language learning is a complex social and cultural phenomenon, even more so when it involves new technologies that connect the classroom and students to the world (Kilian, 1994).

This study aims to be a practical starting point for language teachers seeking to integrate the Internet into the foreign language curriculum. The following is a brief overview of the pilot study. I am willing to share more information about the study upon request. I welcome ideas and information about other additional studies as well.

The pilot study

The following sections offer capsule information on key aspects of the study: the purpose, the subjects, the research questions, the instruments, the materials, the procedures, the activities used, as well as the preliminary data analysis and findings, the interpretation of the results and (at least some of) the pedagogical implications.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of hypertext could substantially contribute to the instruction of EFL reading.. The focus of the research was the medium of learning: one group used hypertext from the web and the other group used the same texts, but printed out from the web. As such, this study aimed to be a practical starting point for teachers and universities seeking to integrate hypertext into the foreign language classrooms.

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Subjects

Forty undergraduate students were selected from a population of 300 students at Zanjan Azad University, and then divided into Experimental and Control Groups. The initial pool of students for both groups was selected based on the following common student characteristics:

1. Education: All of the participants were in their fourth year of college education. They had already accumulated at least 100 credits.

2. Native language: The native language of most of the students was Farsi (Persian).

3. Duration: Equal time was spent teaching both groups - ten weeks, two 90-minute sessions per week.

Once chosen, the forty students were randomly assigned to either the Experimental or the Control Groups. In the Control Group, 13 subjects were male and 7 female, and in the Experimental Group 11 subjects were male and 9 female. The Experimental Group received EFL reading instruction through hypertext, and the Control Group received EFL reading instruction with the same texts, but printed out.

Research Questions

1. Will students improve their attitude towards reading comprehension in English as a foreign language when hypertext is used, as compared to just printed text?

2. Will the teaching of reading comprehension using hypertext result in greater gains in proficiency as compared to teaching with traditional printed text-based materials?

Instruments

In this study a variety of instruments were used:

- The paper-based version of the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) reading comprehension proficiency test was administered as a pre-test to both Experimental and Control Groups. The TOEFL was used because it is a standardized test with known validity and reliability. The test consisted of 40 questions on reading comprehension. This was used to ensure that the two groups were homogeneous.

- An attitude survey (Appendix 1 – Attitude Test) based on a 4-point scale (from 1=Agree Strongly, to 4=Disagree Strongly) was constructed by the

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researcher and administered to both the Experimental and the Control Groups, once before instruction started and once after the instruction. This was to measure the students' attitudes towards EFL reading comprehension classes.

- Another survey, (Appendix 2) containing 46 items, was given only to the subjects in the Experimental Group, who were asked to agree or disagree with each statement. A 4-point scale was used (from 1=Agree Strongly, to 4=Disagree Strongly). The questionnaire was administered at the end of the students' ten-week instruction period. This was to evaluate the usefulness of hypertext in EFL reading classes. As the Control Group was instructed using print-based materials, this survey was not given to them.

- Two post-tests were administered, both consisting of 40 reading comprehension questions. One was based on the material which was covered during instruction in both groups. The second post-test was a TOEFL reading comprehension proficiency test similar to the one used as a pre-test (Appendix 3). All subjects in both groups were administered the post-tests.

Materials

The reading materials for the courses were chosen as a result of Internet searches and suggestions from ESL/EFL teachers from around the world.

The basic materials were the same for both groups, but the groups were taught differently. I selected different readings from three levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced from the site http://user.gru.net/Richardx /index.html, (permission given by the author in 2001). These reading passages had a number of different topics such as the Titanic, John a carpet fitter, and the Internet. (An excerpt of one reading and the post-achievement test based on it is found in Appendix 3.)

Procedures

The subjects were chosen and randomly assigned to the Experimental and Control Groups to ensure homogeneity between the two groups. The reading course lasted ten weeks, covering twenty 90-minute classes. Each group was introduced to the study by receiving the same orientation to the overall plan. In the first session, the Attitude Test (Appendix 1) was distributed to the students in both groups. Then the TOEFL reading comprehension proficiency test consisting of forty questions was administered to all participants before the actual instruction began. Care was taken not to mix the instruction processes between the two groups. However, it was practically impossible to keep the students from each group separate outside class hours. One could only hope that they heeded

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the instructor's advice and kept their class-related discussions with the members of the other group to a minimum.

The Experimental Group then received instruction at the Computer Center in the Institute for Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences (IASBS). These students were given general instructions on how to operate the computers and work with hypertext and were advised to familiarize themselves with the use of the computers. The researcher was present to answer any of the students' questions and monitor their progress. This took two days because it was important that the learners be familiar with using the Internet. Since the Control Group was assumed to be already familiar with printed material, no such similar training was given to them.

Activities – Experimental (Hypertext Use) Group and Control Group

Three kinds of activities were used for both groups: pre-reading, reading activities, and post activities. However, the method varied for the two groups. The most important difference between the two ways of teaching was that the Control Group used linear text in the classroom, whereas the Experimental Group used non-linear hypertext.

With both groups I tried to keep the conditions as similar as possible. The difference between the two groups was the media of the materials and how they were used. The Experimental Group used texts on the computer (no printed material at all) while the Control Group used printed copies of the same texts. During the teaching sessions for each group there were three kinds of activities:

Pre-reading activities

Both of the groups used the following pre-reading activities:

- Brief introductory information about the texts/topics. Both the Experimental and Control Groups were given the same information about the books. The only extra information that the Experimental Group had to be given was how to access the information on the computer.

- Visual material (colored pictures) was used to activate the students' background knowledge. For the Experimental Group, colored pictures were given through the hypertext to activate the students' background knowledge about the topic. For example, in the lessons entitled "Leonardo's Workshop," one of Leonardo Da Vinci's famous paintings was included as a way to make the students think. For the Control Group, pictures were used in the same way, but in print or poster form. Here is the link: http://user.gru/richardx/read3.html.

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- Some of the vocabulary was presented with pictures. For example, in the lesson entitled "Live Bell," different forms of water were shown using various pictures. For example, water as ice, as water vapor, and as liquid water. Both groups were given the same pictures (The Experimental Group, hypertext pictures, and the Control Group, printed pictures).
  See: http://www1.umn.edu/bellmuse/mnideals/watershed/watershed.html

- Explanations were given about very difficult words such as "prairie" or "beating the odds" before the students encountered them in the reading passage. The researcher decided on the selection of difficult words on the basis of the results of the TOEFL test. (This is more uniform, as it applies to both groups).

Reading activities for the two groups

In this section I will mention some of the activities that were used during the reading phase for both groups..

- Skimming.
- Using a speaker attached to one of the computers, the students listened to the passage read by a native speaker. For the Control Group a tape recorder was used instead of the computer or the students were asked to read the texts aloud sentence by sentence. Similarly, the Experimental Group was asked to read the texts aloud from the computer screen.
- The students in the Experimental Group checked the meanings of new words by clicking the mouse on the hypertext word, which was linked to the definition. In the Control Group the students were asked to cross out the words whose meaning they did not know, and check them in the dictionary.
- The students in both groups endeavored to understand the meaning of the passage by using collaborative strategies such as students helping each other.
- Students in the Control Group were encouraged to use a dictionary to look up the meaning of new words. The researcher asked for the meanings of the words and explained further only those which seemed to cause misunderstanding. Students in the Experimental Group had vocabulary links within the text to give the meanings. As with the Control group, the researcher explained the meanings of words that were still causing confusion for the students, even after they had checked the meaning through hypertext.
- Where necessary, the researcher gave explanations about the meaning of the passage for both groups.

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Post-reading activities for both groups

For both groups one of the following activities was used with each reading text:

- Multiple choice comprehension questions
- A multiple-choice quiz
- Writing a summary of the story (on paper by the Control Group, on the computer by the Experimental Group)
- Gap fill exercises
- Précis writing
- Recreating the story sentence by sentence through writing (paper/computer).

The researcher checked the answers for the Control Group while for the users of hypertext there was no need for this since the answers were automatically corrected through the Internet, and different feedback was given for correct and incorrect answers. If the answers were correct, the web page automatically displayed phrases such as "all correct," "well done," "very good," or "excellent," "your grade is 100." If the answers were wrong, phrases such as "failed," "try again," or "redo" were displayed on the web page. Similar feedback was used orally by the researcher for the Control Group as well.

The hypertext students had to follow the instructions and directions given for using the computer program, such as "log in," "go," "click," "continue," "sign in," "sign out," "next question," "let's go," "log out," "log in to start the game," "type in your name," "correct quiz," or "redo quiz," etc. (The activities here were already available at http://user.gru.net/Richardx/index.html).

Each lesson was followed by a different kind of reading activity.

Data Analysis and Findings

There was no significant difference in the results of the students' attitude survey and in the TOEFL tests that were given to both groups at the beginning of the course: 18.2 was the mean for the Control Group, and 17.8 was the mean for the Experimental Group for the TOEFL tests. For the attitude tests, the corresponding values were 16.8 and 17.05 respectively.

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Statistics for TOEFL Test (Before experiment)

Variable	Number of Subjects	Mean from 40	SD
PRE – TEST, TOEFL			
Experimental	20	17.8	5.422
Control	20	18.2	5.11
Mean Difference =- 0.4			

Test for Equality of Variances: F= 3.04		P =0.26		
T-test for Equality of Means				
Variances	T= value	df	One-tail	SE of Diff
Equal	0.745	38	0.75	10.92
Unequal	0.745	32.7	0.75	10.92

To= 0.745 Tc=1.69

The two groups had similar ranges in the results on the TOEFL at the beginning of the study. Since obtained T (0.745) was less than critical T (1.69), there was no significant difference in their initial ability level for reading comprehension, with regard to the TOEFL test.

Statistics for Attitude Test (Before experiment)

Variable	Number of Subjects	Mean from 40	SD
ATTITUDE 1			
Experimental	20	16.8	5.96
Control	20	17.05	5.22
Mean Difference = -.25			
T-test for Equality of Variances: F=1.380		P=0.25	

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T-test for Equality of Means				
Variances	T= value	df	One-tail	SE of Diff
Equal	-.141	38	0.972	0.789
Unequal	-.141	36.28	0.972	0.789

To= .141 Tc=1.69

The two groups had similar ranges of attitude test results at the beginning of the study. Since obtained T (0.141) was less than critical T (1.69), there was no significant difference in their ability level for reading comprehension at the beginning of the treatment, as reflected in the Attitude Test. Combined with the similar results for the TOEFL test, it can be safely said that the two groups were similar in capabilities at the beginning of the study.

Statistics for Attitude Test (After experiment)

Variable	Number of Subjects	Mean from 40	SD
ATTITUDE 2			
Experimental	20	29	8.49
Control	20	24	8.22
Mean Difference = 5			

Test for Equality of Variances: F=1.14			P = 0.77	
T-test for Equality of Means				
Variances	T= value	df	One- tail	SE of Diff
Equal	2.11	38	0.02	0.872
Unequal	2.11	35.38	0.02	0.872

To= 2.11 Tc=1.69

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Statistics for Achievement Test (After experiment)

Variable	Number of Subjects	Mean from 40	SD
ACHIEVEMENT TEST			
Experimental	20	34.15	5.56
Control	20	28.65	6.028
Mean Difference = 5.5			

Test for Equality of Variances: F=1.17		P=0.73		
T-test for Equality of Means				
Variances	T= value	df	One-tail	SE of Diff
Equal	-2.99	38	0.07	4.52
Unequal	-2.99	37.8	0.07	4.52

To= 2.99 Tc=1.69

Statistics for TOEFL Test (After experiment)

Variable	Number of Subjects	Mean from 40	SD
Post Test, TOEFL			
Experimental	20	23.1	2.09
Control	20	20.2	5.6
Mean Difference = 2.9			

Test for Equality of Variances: F=7.26		P=0.0001		
T-test for Equality of Means				
Variances	T= value	df	One-tail	SE of Diff
Equal	-2.33	38	0.003	5.6
Unequal	-2.33	24.1	0.003	5.6

To= 2.33 Tc=1.69

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In contrast, at the end of the course, there were differences in the attitudes, as well as on the TOEFL and achievement tests between the two groups. The final exam consisted of an achievement test based on the material covered in the class and the reading comprehension section of a TOEFL exam. Based upon the TOEFL exam and achievement test, 29 is the mean for the Experimental Group and 24 is the mean for the Control Group To= 2.11 Tc=1.69 for the attitude, since the obtained T score is higher than the Critical T score the treatment given to the hypertext group has caused a positive change in attitude, 34.15 the mean for the Experimental Group on the post achievement test, 28.65 the mean for the Control Group on the post achievement test, To= 2.99 , Tc=1.69 again since the obtained T score is higher than the critical T score hypertext has affected their reading comprehension ability and the Experimental Group students have performed better on the final test.

In addition, the analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire (applied only to the Experimental Group) indicates the following: Fully 98% of the students believed that hypertext helped them to improve their reading ability and skill; 70% found that it was not difficult to learn to use hypertext for EFL reading; 90% of the students agreed that materials become more comprehensible by using hypertext; 89% of the students agreed that hypertext creates active learning and effective contact between students and teacher; 92% of the students agreed that hypertext helps them learn the subject matter on a deeper level, makes class fun, encourages monitoring, helps them think creatively and critically, and also helps them practice independent thinking. The students were asked to weigh their answers on a scale of 1-4, 1 being 'hypertext not helpful at all' and 4 being 'hypertext is extremely helpful'.

No such questionnaire was given to the Control Group. On the face of it, this might seem biased. But the goal was to check if the Experimental Group enjoyed and had a positive experience while learning to use hypertext. The Control Group might have enjoyed working with paper texts, but their results were clearly not as impressive as the Experimental Group's results.

Interpretation of the Results

The results suggest that the treatment given to the Experimental (hypertext use) Group positively affected the students' attitudes and performance in EFL reading. As a result of the use of hypertext tools which develops a student- centered classroom and autonomous learning environment, students in the Experimental Group were more prepared for their final exams and obtained better scores than the Control Group. This can be inferred from the results of the questionnaire.

The application of hypertext in EFL reading classes not only helps EFL students (as we can see from the results) but also improves the students'

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attitudes toward reading, and leads to improved proficiency and autonomy as well.

At this point I will expand on these results. Concerning students' attitudes towards the use of reading materials, the data collected from the questionnaire show that 89% of the students asked to be given more opportunities to read using hypertext reading materials and 90% thought hypertext reading materials should be included in all classes.

As the data indicates, reading texts using hypertext materials is considered to be not only necessary for EFL/ESL reading (if the goal is to obtain higher grades), but also effective.

In addition, the analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire (see Appendix 2) indicates the following:

Generally speaking, most of the students agreed that the use of hypertext promoted learner autonomy through the use of the web sites.

I include a number of the results with the highest percentages from the questionnaire given to the Experimental Group.

> 92% reported that hypertext materials empowered them to take the initiative, be creative, and work independently.
>
> 92% were willing to use the hypertext reading materials for more reading comprehension courses.
>
> 90% indicated the need for taking more hypertext-oriented reading courses.
>
> 90% enjoyed reading comprehension through the hypertext reading materials.
>
> 88% reported using hypertext reading material was/is less time consuming.
>
> 87% of the students indicated that they felt not only comfortable but also empowered to take responsibility for their own learning when they used hypertext reading materials in reading classes.
>
> 85% stated that doing reading exercises online is interesting and useful.
>
> 80% reported that hypertext reading materials were fun

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While interviewing the students, I found that 76% of the participants in the Experimental Group preferred the hypertext mode of reading to what they had been exposed to previously. When asked to explain, the students gave a number of reasons. The comments below are not presented to show the efficacy of hypertext reading, but rather to show that reading in hypertext can have some additional advantages which might be outside the purview of the present research. The opinions presented are those of the students, and are mentioned here for the sake of completeness. More work is needed to gauge the psychosocial impact of hypertext reading.

First, hypertext promoted a different atmosphere when reading.

> *I am a shy girl, especially when I speak in English, I am always afraid that I will make mistakes. Using the Internet can help me solve this problem. (Student 19).*

> *I don't feel stressed when I'm expressing my own views and can read more freely. (Student 13)*

> *I don't like reading from linear text, because I may feel nervous. I don't know what to say when I look at other people's eyes. (Student 29)*

> *You will not need to think about others, you can express your idea bravely, and will not care about the laughing from others. (Student 10)*

Second, the hypertext provided the students an appropriate environment to think deeply and creatively.

> *What I have thought could be well organized in the computer. Text reading makes me nervous and I have fewer ideas about the topic in discussion. However, hypertext reading softens my stress and I can speak out my ideas as much as possible. (Student 5)*

> *Reading freely will encourage our thinking. Ideas will be more than reading text. (Student 7)*

> *I have more ideas when I sit in front of the computer. (Student 28)*

> *I feel very comfortable and relaxed and it's easier for me to think of my own ideas and to organize them. It provides me more time to think of others' opinions, while at reading text, I hardly can think about other's opinion carefully. (Student 26)*

Third, reading with the computer allowed students to think about the grammar and spelling.

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> *We have to think of using the right words and grammatical sentences, doing the reading exercises when using hypertext and computer. (Student 18)*

> *Since we can practice our writing exercises using Microsoft word, we will pay attention to the grammar and spelling of the words and we can use spell check. (Student 3)*

Fourth, students said they were likely to read about something not directly related to the topic in reading through hypertext.

Fifth, some of the students thought that the use of hypertext helped them to improve their computer skills.

Sixth, several participants mentioned that reading through hypertext was efficient and saved more time than reading through printed text.

On the other hand some students preferred reading with a traditional paper text because they felt reading this way was more straight forward.

Some said they felt their ideas or train of thought were easily disrupted because they were not used to reading with hypertext. One participant mentioned she had to pay more attention to computer links which caused her problems in keeping her train of thought.

One point that should be made is that from among the 40 students, 14 students in the Experimental Group read materials at a higher level than students from the Control Group. Both the Experimental and Control Groups had access to advanced materials (either through hypertext, or through paper texts for the Control Group). 14 students in the Experimental Group ended up reading and accessing materials which were more advanced than those read/accessed by those in the Control Group.

Furthermore, I would like to include my observation that those students who were reluctant to use hypertext readings and were less active at the beginning of the course became more active and interested at the end of the course. This may indicate a positive change in their attitude toward the use of hypertext. Of course, there is a definite correlation with the point made in the previous paragraph. Further research is needed to support this.

All of the above data support the usefulness of the Internet in the EFL/ESL classroom and show how much students enjoy using hypertext reading materials.

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Pedagogical Implications

The use of hypertext for an EFL reading course has a number of pedagogical implications. First of all, teachers need to gain technical competence to coach students in the use of hypertext in EFL reading comprehension. This competence involves the installation and use of hypertext programs and materials. To solve technical problems quickly, teachers should have technical support at hand. Also teachers need to explain both the basic and complex hypertext notions clearly in order to encourage learning and stimulate progressive skills development.

This research shows that teachers should be clear about the goals, objectives and assessment techniques of using hypertext so that the objectives of the overall language course can be understood by the students. This would involve/necessitate careful preparation but would make the course more enjoyable and stimulating.

Also, teachers should be encouraged to motivate students by using existing techniques and also to invent new ways for motivating students to take responsibility for their role as active learners and to become more autonomous learners.

I also recommend that teachers establish and maintain professional contact with other "e-teachers" in their specific discipline. This would ensure a continuous flow and exchange of information. Finally, teachers should consider assuming a facilitator role rather than the traditional authoritarian teacher role.

Conclusion

To conclude, further research is needed on the effectiveness of the use of hypertext in language learning. In this pilot study, the Experimental Group taught by hypertext not only scored better on their comprehension tests than did the students in the Control Group, but there was also a greater change in their attitude towards reading comprehension in general. Based on this preliminary study, hypertext has been shown to be a powerful educational tool.

Students and teachers who overcome the barriers of hypertext literacy skills enter into a new type of literacy experience. This experience transforms students from passive learners into active information explorers. Moreover, hypertext provides a method for students and teachers to collaborate on projects interactively and exchange ideas in visual form (text or graphic explanations) as well as through verbal messages (recorded audio files).

Finally, from the teacher's standpoint, hypertext can be used during any lab session as a method of self-study, so students are not dependent on the teacher or lab assistant. Reading comprehension and learning with hypertext becomes more student-centered and increases learner autonomy.

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It still remains to be seen how hypertext will influence EFL/ESL instruction in the future. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to claim that the key to success in the future will be the successful access to and use of information. A further integration of networked computers into society is likely to take place. Global communication will become increasingly important and a good knowledge of English, as a world language, will be paramount. Therefore, students will have to acquire both computer and English language skills to be successful in the information age. (And,) As shown in this research, the integration of hypertext in the EFL/ESL classroom can be an important step in achieving this goal.

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http://user.gru.net/Richardx/index.html

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APPENDIX 1 - ATTITUDE TEST (given to both groups)

Please write the number about how you feel.

1: Strongly Agree 2: Agree 3: Disagree 4: Disagree strongly

1. Reading in English is fun.
2. I like to read in English.
3. I like to read in Persian.
4. Reading in English is a waste of time.
5. Reading in English is boring.
6. Reading in Persian is boring.
7. Time assigned for reading classes is very short.
8. Reading in English enables students to do better in other classes.
9. Students should take more reading courses in English.
10. Reading exercises in English is interesting, useful, and fun.
11. The reading course has been one of my worst courses.
12. It seems I can do without reading courses.
13. Other English courses are better than the reading ones.
14. Reading courses are less time consuming than other courses.
15. Readings should be related to everyday life values..
16. Reading in English is worth spending time on and it is enjoyable.
17. Most reading sessions in English, are dull.
18. Most reading sessions in Persian, are dull.
19. I enjoy reading comprehension better than listening.
20. I would like to take more reading comprehension courses.

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APPENDIX 2 – QUESTIONNAIRE (given to the Experimental Group only)

Please write the number about how you feel.

1: Strongly Agree 2: Agree 3: Disagree 4: Disagree strongly

1. The Internet helps me to read better.
2. I spend more time working on reading comprehension when I use the Internet than when I use printed texts (other forms of reading).
3. When I used the Internet for reading comprehension, I was more careful about meaning, as compared to reading paper texts.
4. I could think of more ideas for my reading when I used the Internet, as compared to paper texts.
5. I like using the Internet better than reading printed texts.
6. Usually, I like to read in English through the Internet.
7. I think I am a good reader in English using the Internet.
8. When I use the Internet for reading comprehension, I pay more attention to what I'm reading about.
9. Using the Internet has helped me to become better at reading in English.
10. I feel I've learned more about reading in English from this class than I have from other English classes I've taken in which the Internet was not used.
11. I plan to continue using the Internet to read after this class is finished.
12. I pay more attention to vocabulary when I use the Internet.
13. The feeling in the class is friendly.
14. Using the Internet makes me less worried about reading because I am independently involved in the reading activity.
15. I think I can read longer passages and articles using the Internet.
16. I don't like it when I can't understand what to do when I am trying to read my passages on the Internet.
17. I can easily make changes when I use the Internet.
18. I feel I can get more individual attention from the teacher in the Internet class than I do in other non-Internet reading classes.
19. I pay more attention to organization when I use the Internet.
20. The students in this class help each other.
21. When I read using the Internet, I pay more attention to the grammar also.
22. I found it was not difficult to learn to use the Internet.
23. I was worried that I might break the computer.
24. I was worried that it would take me longer to learn to use the Internet than it would other students.
25. I think using the Internet in reading class is interesting.
26. I would like to take another reading course if I could use the Internet.
27. I get better scores on reading tests if I've practiced reading using the Internet.
28. It was difficult to learn how to use the Internet.

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29. I can change my reading speed more easily and more often when I use Internet.
30. I feel that I learn better when I get individual attention from the teacher.
31. I pay more attention to spelling and punctuation when I read on the Internet.
32. I think the Internet offers effective contact between students and teacher.
33. The use of hypertext helps/encourages cooperation among the students.
34. Hypertext creates active learning.
35. Hypertext causes students to have higher expectations of themselves.
36. Using hypertext teaches practical technological skills to students.
37. The Internet provides better practice for classroom activities and lessons.
38. The use of the Internet introduces potential student benefits and outcomes when using technology in the learning process.
39. Using the Internet helps me think critically as well as work actively and independently.
40. The use of hypertext helps me improve my reading ability and skills.
41. Hypertext helps me to understand that there is a difference between "just finding something" on the net and "finding something good".
42. Materials become more comprehensible by using the Internet.
43. Using hypertext helps me to learn the subject at a deeper level because of "the hands-on" approach (Hands on: more control over what to read or not read).
44. Using computers helps to make the class fun, and encourages mentorship.
45. The use of the Internet helps me to think creatively.
46. Hypertext helps to exercise independent thinking.

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APPENDIX 3 – EXCERPT OF READINGS AND POST-ACHIEVEMENT TEST

Instructions: Read the articles below and answer the questions.

The Titanic

The Titanic is a very famous ship. In 1912 it was new. It was the biggest ship in the world. It was also very beautiful and expensive. People said that it was very safe. On April 12, 1912, it started to go on its first trip. It left Southampton, England. It was going to New York. It had over 2,200 people on it. There were 1,310 passengers and 898 crew members.

On April 14, at night, there was a lot of fog. It was hard to see. The boat went very fast. It hit an iceberg. In only 2.5 hours the boat sank. There were not enough lifeboats. Many people had to swim, but the water was very cold. 1,503 people died in the cold water.

1. When was the Titanic built?
a) in 1911
b) in 1912
c) in 1913
d) in 1914

2. Why did the Titanic hit an iceberg?
a) It was hard to see because of the fog, and the boat was going fast.
b) The Captain was asleep.
c) The boat didn't hit an iceberg.
d) The Captain thought the iceberg wouldn't harm the ship.

Suggested web sites: TESL-L@cunyvm.cuny.edu, NETEACH-L@ raven.cc.ukans.edu, and TESLCA-L@ cunyvm.cuny.edu

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ESL Writers and Writing Center Tutoring Dynamics[3]

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Abstract

This study investigated writing center tutoring dynamics with ESL students at a large, Midwestern institution of higher education in the United States of America. More specifically, it described the ESL writing center conferencing approaches and strategies as well as the ESL writers` expectations about the tutoring process. Sources and methods of data collection included interviews, document analysis, and participant observation along with note-taking. Data analysis consisted of coding, thematic organization, and thick description. Findings indicated that the participating tutors used a combination of approaches or variety of tutoring strategies during the conferencing sessions. However, such approaches or strategies turned out to be inefficient to engage in ESL writing center conferencing activities. Therefore, this study proposes a culturally-based alternative to tutoring.

Introduction

A post-positivist view of knowledge based on the notion of learning as a social constructionist act has challenged traditional directive-interventionist approaches to literacy instruction. In this perspective, knowledge is socially constructed through a subjective and interactive process that requires cooperation and/or collaboration.

One of the proponents of learning as a social act is Vygotsky (1978) who strongly believes that individuals may overcome any so called developmental stages by means of the help of others, including the teacher. Freire and Macedo (1987) also advocate a collaborative approach to education in which the teacher should be the coordinator of a literacy circle. They firmly believe in democracy in the classroom as an alternative to "banking education." They propose an education for independence in which individuals, rather than being passive, appeal to their backgrounds to construct knowledge from a reflective/critical point of view.

The social-constructionist theory of learning that gives rise to collaboration techniques in classrooms has been influential in composition pedagogy (Moore, 2001). Composition instructors who teach their classes based on social constructionist approaches to collaboration engage students with written texts by

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means of conversation. Unlike those instructors who base their classes on current-traditional approaches to composition, these instructors do not see the type of help they offer to students in their writing courses as that of a technician who takes a damaged electronic device, fixes it, and returns it to the owner. Instead, they view writing as a process in which the owner of a piece of writing interacts with a teacher and, as a result, improves his or her writing skills. The learner strengthens his/her voice and skills by getting collaborative feedback that aims at helping him/her become a better writer rather than a person accustomed to receiving an improved and returned piece of writing from the teacher.

Collaborative instruction has been prominent in writing centers peer tutoring sessions. Hobson (2001) says, for instance, that peer tutoring, as a form of collaborative learning, creates a system of education based on a community of learners rather than on "single authority figures." He further specifies that peer tutoring based on social-like interaction "replaces the metaphor of the generation and transmission of knowledge with that of a conversation. The conversational focus underlying most discussions of collaborative learning assumes knowledge is socially constructed, culturally and historically located, dependent on individuals reaching consensus" (p. 171). This suggests that the production of knowledge emerges from the shared efforts of tutors and tutees as individuals affected by a social context. The knowledge-building process cannot be unilateral or centered on the tutor because knowledge is not "packaged into discrete segments and dispensed to passive recipients, fast-food style" (Lunsford, 1990, P. 4). Bowden (1995) puts it, this way: "In most writing centers today, for example, the line between teacher and student is often blurred; writers help writers and everybody learns" (p.163). Therefore, it is important to consider the tutee as another writer who needs the help (collaboration) of co-writers. Thus, the role of the tutor is to provide help without confiscating the voice of the tutee.

Although there has been a shift in writing philosophy that also affected writing center practices, there are concerns when it comes to tutoring ESL students by using the new pedagogical trend, collaboration. This does not necessarily imply a movement against the collaborative approach, which is – by the way - the most widely used today (Burns & Shamoon, 1995), but an alert in regard to a generalized tendency among writing centers toward using the same approach for both L1 and L2 one-on-one tutoring (Carson & Nelson, 1994). This tendency has ignored evidence that approaches that have successfully been developed with mainstream native speakers of English in the U.S. context do not properly serve nonnative speaking writers and, therefore, should not be directly extrapolated to ESL one-on-one tutoring (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). ESL students come to the writing center with particular language and cultural characteristics that make them different from native speakers of English (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004). Consequently, they require particular tutoring strategies to most adequately serve them and to facilitate comprehension during the interactive process (Powers & Nelson, 1995; Harris, 1997; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Ritter, 2002). Not only are ESL students

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different, but they should also be taught differently throughout the writing center sessions.

In light of the previous statement, I decided to develop a qualitative research study in the writing center at a large, Midwestern institution of higher education in the United States of America in order to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What tutoring strategies/approaches are reflected in writing center tutoring dynamics with ESL students?
2. To what extend do the writing center tutoring strategies/approaches correspond with ESL students´ expectations?

Methodology

Participants and Site

Six (6) nonnative speakers of English from different nationalities participated in this qualitative research study on ESL writing center tutoring dynamics for a whole semester. All were international students enrolled in an ESL composition course at a large, Midwestern institution of higher education in the United States of America. In order to guarantee full confidentiality, each participating student was provided with a pseudonym; therefore, throughout the report of this study, the tutees are referred to as Sarath, Chang-Su, Yoshiko, Malaika, Amanda, and Tania respectively.

Biographical Sketch of Participating Tutees

Sarath is a Communications Media undergraduate student. His native language is Sinhalese, which is the language of the major Sri Lankan ethnic group, the Sinhala.

Chang-Su is from Korea and is majoring in Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Management.

Yoshiko is a Japanese undergraduate student pursuing a degree in the field of International Studies.

Malaika is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Biology. She is from The Democratic Republic of Congo and is a native speaker of French, Swahili, and Lingana.

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Amanda, from Mexico, speaks Spanish as her native language. She is an exchange undergraduate student pursuing a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Management.

Tania is also a Mexican exchange student who is pursuing an undergraduate education in Mathematics.

The Site

The site for this research was the writing center at a large, Midwestern university in the United States of America. The writing center was staffed with nineteen (19) tutors: sixteen (16) undergraduate and three (3) graduate students. The majority of the undergraduate students were English majors. The three graduate tutors were enrolled in Composition and TESOL programs. Nine of these tutors volunteered to let me study the tutoring sessions they conducted with my selected tutees.

The writing center opens every week during the spring and fall semesters, Monday to Thursday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm and from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, and Friday from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. Tutees are not allowed to schedule appointments with tutors; instead, they are encouraged to walk in and sign up on a waiting list.

The writing center staff explains that they organize workshops to help tutors accomplish their main mission, i.e., to help writers throughout the different stages of the writing process. It is important to point out, however, that this research study did not examine the particular training tutors receive at the writing center.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection emphasized the search for credible information by using multiple methods/sources of data collection. Thus, the data were contiguously provided by methods such as participation, observation, documents, and interviews.

Participation-Observation: Research participation was characterized by prolonged engagement in the setting where the conferencing sessions took place. This methodological stance allowed me to engage in the setting long enough to avoid getting distorted information that could come from an overemphasis of isolated occurrences of particular events or from the lack of an adequate acquaintance of researcher and participants (Erlandson, Harries, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). This stance also provided me, the researcher, with the opportunity to "learn directly from his own experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

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Field Notes: As shown in the example below, for each conferencing session, I used a double-entry observational protocol sheet in order to enter descriptive and reflective notes that not only facilitated data collection and analysis but also the development of further interviewing.

Observational protocol

Tutee: *Tutor:*

Essay topic: Duration of session:

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES	REFLECTIVE NOTES
Te= Tutee Tr= Tutor Te: “This is the paper I brought before.” Te is asking for the why of certain changes. Tr explains. The session has been so far on form, local level. Te asks about the organization of his paragraphs. Tr: “You’re talking about 3 different things here, so it is good to break it up like this.”	During this tutoring, Tr is assuming a very reactive position – just responding to Te’s concerns. I wonder if being reactive does not let tutees stranded in a strange world – a culture with a totally different system of writing or with a particular rhetoric. Do they (Tutors) assume that tutees know where they are going and all they need is to be provided with responses to support their transit toward writing in a new culture in which tutees are supposedly informed already about what it takes to write in English? [Tutees may only ask about the conventions that they think they need]

Documents: I collected a copy of each draft every tutee wrote throughout the whole conferencing process. Since drafts constituted the basis for further interviewing, I collected them shortly after the tutees produced new revisions. On most occasions, tutees brought me copies of their drafts every time they went to the writing center, or when we met for an interview.

Interviews: Throughout this study, I carried out a series of formal and informal interviews. I conducted formal interviews after checking or reading students’ drafts. Formal interviews, other than shedding light on how the students used the tutoring feedback in their pieces of writing, provided me with insights for planning the ongoing interviewing process.

I conducted informal interviews after observing each conferencing session. These interviews aimed at freshly capturing unfolding events. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out, for instance, how crucial time is for recalling events, which means that it is not recommended that a considerable amount of time elapse between conferences and interviews. Therefore, in order to avoid the time-consuming situation of scheduling or looking for an adequate place, interviews held after the conferencing sessions were not tape-recorded.

Tape-Recording: I tape-recorded the tutoring sessions and the formal interviews I conducted with the tutees. Tape-recording allowed me to “get the material down in an accurate and retrievable form” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 126) for precise data analysis and report.

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Reporting and Analyzing the Data

Data Analysis Strategy: In order to analyze the data, I used a categorizing strategy based on coding and thematic organization. Specifically, I sorted out the data into broader themes (Maxwell, 1996, p. 76) attuned with my research purpose. These broader themes or thematic units (e.g. Writing Center Tutoring Approach, and Conferencing Approach and ESL Writers` Expectations) created an umbrella for a series of coded patterns/materials that contributed to the naming of narrower, emergent themes (e.g., Grammar-Checking Discourse, A Collaborative Dialogue, etc.) that together describe the broader themes.

Thick Description: I narrated the situation considering significant details and the authenticity of the information that derived from the different sources of data collection. That is, I allocated considerable space – throughout my descriptive analysis – to the genuine views or acts of all the participants. I did this by bringing a great deal of quoted material to my final report. For instance, I incorporated textual portions of the tutees' essays, transcriptions, and field notes containing information that gravitated around the various research themes throughout my descriptive and interpretive analysis/narrative.

Results

The presentation of the data is divided into two major thematic components: "Writing Center Tutoring Approach," and "Conferencing Approach and ESL Writers` Expectations." The first broad thematic unit, "Writing Center Tutoring Approach," includes detailed description of the approaches used throughout the whole conferencing process. The second thematic unit, "Conferencing Approach and ESL Writers` Expectations," provides a descriptive account of what ESL students expect when they go to the writing center to seek assistance with their writing assignments.

Writing Center Tutoring Approach

The tutoring sessions that I present below took place in the writing center at different times throughout a whole semester. The sessions usually started with a clear purpose. Every session was followed either by tutors' questions about tutees' main writing concerns or by tutees' voluntary statements about the writing issues they wanted to work on. "What do you want me to look at?" was a common tutor question. "Check my grammar" was the students' most frequent statement. Although less frequently, the students also said that they wanted help with organization, references, thesis statements, content, and other global-related writing conventions.

Initial/opening interactions, other than setting the goal for each session – what to work on – contributed a great deal to shape subsequent tutoring

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dynamics or to frame the deployment of particular tutoring strategies. Thus, the tutorial work on different writing skills or issues was usually related to particular tutoring strategies. This means that different tutoring strategies or approaches were used throughout the various tutoring sessions. For instance, when working on the most frequent issue or tutees' concern, grammatical accuracy, the directive approach was the most obvious throughout the tutoring sessions. When the tutoring sessions shifted to global issues of writing, a nondirective tutoring stance was then used.

A Directive Stance

A Grammar-Checking Discourse: When Sarath, Chang-Su, Yoshiko, Malaika, Amanda, and Tania went to the writing center, they usually indicated that their main writing concern, and reason to go to the writing center, was English grammar. The tutors frequently dealt with these tutees' concerns or interests in local issues of writing by assuming a directive tutoring stance. For instance, on one occasion, Sarath went to the writing center and told the tutor, "My issue is grammar." The tutor reacted, "I'm going to read through this out loud. As I notice something that, maybe, needs to be fixed, I'll point it out as we go." Right after this brief interaction, the tutor, with a pen in hand and Sarath's essay in front of him, initiated a conferencing session characterized by unilateral and explicit work on Sarath's essay.

Tutor: Right here, it's just a little thing. You just need to, instead of saying, "for few weeks,"

… put, "a (higher pitch) few weeks."

Sarath: A few weeks.

Tutor: Here, when you use, "a" this will be an "an" simply because this is "an" . .

Tutor: The adjective here, which instead of being "elder" is "elderly."

It has an "ly" on the end instead of just "elder lady." It would say, "elderly lady." Get rid of

that period. "All of the other tenants," so this here would be plural.

Sarath: Plural.

In the previous transcript, the tutor started fixing most of the errors he came across in the essay by asserting a lecture-based tutoring strategy, a grammar-checking discourse that exemplified the realization of the directive tutoring approach. There was almost no interaction. Sarath's participation was limited to a few statements, e.g., "a few weeks," "plural." Directive tutoring situations like this occurred in multiple situations, with various tutors and tutees.

The example above portrays a directive tutoring stance characterized by a grammar-checking discourse in which the roles of the tutees are similar to that of

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disengaged bystanders. Whether the tutees said or did not say a word actually did not matter; the tutors were focused on a unilateral cleansing process.

A Grammar-Checking Dialogue: The tutors also conducted the grammar-checking process by explicitly telling the tutees how to fix their errors rather than fixing the errors for them. That is, although the tutors did have a pen in their hands and occasionally wrote on the tutees' essays, it was mostly the tutees who did the actual writing after getting the direct corrective feedback from the tutors. Thus, this tutoring stance, although still very directive, involved a considerable degree of participation from the tutees. The tutors questioned the tutees and, at the same time, the tutees asked questions and/or demanded clarification related to the directions they received from the tutors. This means that the tutoring sessions took on more the form of a one-on-one dialogue. The following conferencing excerpt when Chang-Su and the tutor worked on the "Family Stories" essay provides evidence:

Tutor: Okay, I think that what you want to say here is the word "hospitality."

Is that what you mean?

Chang-Su: Yeah.

Tutor: Okay, so write after the . . . write "the word" because that specifies

what exactly you mean.

Notice how the tutor explicitly said, "write 'the word' because. . . ." The tutor preferred to tell Chang-Su to make the correction through explicit/direct feedback rather than through doing the correction himself.

Throughout the themes I have presented so far (Grammar-Checking Discourse, and Grammar-Checking Dialogue: all part of the thematic unit, "A Directive Tutoring Approach"), it is evident that local issues of writing were the focus of the tutoring sessions. At the same time, it is evident that local issues of writing were dealt with by using a directive tutoring approach. The tutees' participation, therefore, was limited to repetition, brief responses to the tutors' questions regarding intended meanings in the essays, and eventually some clarifying questions they asked the tutors. In contrast, the tutors' participation was characterized by a monopolization of the interactions. The tutors' role can be depicted as that of a repairperson working for a body shop where flawed papers are taken for proper fixing. Further, what we have seen is a tutoring function characterized by an investment of action aimed at amending each piece of writing the tutees take to the writing center.

A Directive Stance in Transition: The tutors did not appear so authoritative when dealing with some writing issues associated with the form of sentences, paragraphs, quotations/citations, and reference lists or bibliographies. What they mostly did, in these cases, was to provide occasional direction (or, in other

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words, they used the directive approach occasionally) while trying to get the students to come up with some answers to their own writing concerns/problems. In other words, the tutors still used a directive stance but, at the same time, they allowed the tutees to be more in charge or sometimes put the tutees in a position of some degree of independence. I would say that this can be seen as a decentralization phase of the tutoring sessions or a transition to a less directive way of tutoring. During this phase, there was direction, but there was also reluctance to continuously stick to it:

Tutor: Okay, this is the part where I was confused. All these commas, I mean question mark and then commas, are they . . .? I know you are asking a bunch of questions here.

Amanda: (Reads text). Ah, maybe this shouldn't be here . . . and this one here.

Tutor: Yeah. Okay, and then you want to . . . Okay, because the way that it is, it's really long. So, we might . . . it might be a good idea to try and break it up a little bit more, just so . . . because otherwise, it is going to be run on. But I think what you just did there . . . getting rid of that was a good idea. And this can be, maybe this can be the end of the first sentence. You can end with this paragraph and you can turn these into a new sentence.

Amanda: Okay.

Tutor: Right, because you are saying . . . well, here you are saying, "What will happen?" Here is a question, "What will happen?" And here, you are kind of saying, this is the answer. When you do this, that's "segmentation." Okay, you just . . . this is just a little thing but you want to say, "a way of life," "l-i-f-e."

Amanda: Alright.

Tutor: You say, "When you close your mind . . . That sentence is really confusing. I'm not exactly sure what you are trying to say.

Amanda: I can . . . (reading) . . I think I can remember. . . . I am trying to say .

Tutor: Why don't you say it just like that? That's the perfect way to say it.

Amanda: Okay, thanks.

Notice that in the above interaction, the tutor gave explicit feedback. She said that there was a problem with the sentence, i.e., it was a confusing run-on sentence with misplaced punctuation marks. Although the tutor indicated what the problem was, she did not solve it for the tutee. Nor did she tell Amanda right away how to solve it. Instead, she engaged Amanda in a discussion that gave her a chance to come up with her own solution. Nevertheless, when Amanda stated what she was going to do to solve the problem, the tutor reacted authoritatively by saying, "That's the perfect way to say it;" a stance that is

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consistent with the directive approach. This suggests that the tutorial dynamic depicted, so far, can be described as methodological swinging. That is, the tutoring stance showed features of a directive approach, but, at the same time, it appeared to have aspects characteristic of the collaborative/nondirective approach.

I consider that the tutoring stance displayed throughout the theme - "A Directive Stance in Transition" - in this section reveals a transition towards a nondirective tutoring approach. It is a process characterized by a continuum, i.e., a process in which the tutors move back and forth from one extreme to the other, from being directive to nondirective. However, due to this seesaw pattern, it is hard to notice any absolutely or permanently defined manifestation of either a directive or nondirective stance. Instead, it is often a combination of both strategies.

A Nondirective Stance

A Collaborative Dialogue: In the directive approach, as shown above, the tutoring process is tutor-centered. The tutor is in control of the sessions. He or she assumes an authoritative or knowledgeable stance and, therefore, imparts explicit, corrective input. In addition, he or she takes on the role of an editor or proofreader. Based on this approach, the tutee is viewed as passive and dependent. While the tutee is the owner of the paper/essay, he or she does not have ownership of the tutoring or conferencing process.

My research data suggests that, unlike the directive approach, there was a stance throughout the sessions that was quite nondirective and hence consistent with the collaborative approach. For instance, in the featured sessions below, the tutors did not fix errors on the students' papers/essays. Nor did they specifically tell the tutees how to correct their errors. Instead, in these instances, they engaged in one-on-one dialogue in which they made suggestions about writing concerns. Tutors intended for these suggestions to be independently considered by the tutees.

In one instance, for example, Yoshiko came to the writing center and told the tutor, right at the beginning of the session, "I wanted to know if I could connect my first example and thesis statement." The tutor, then, did not read or analyze the paper in order to provide an authoritative response, as is the case when using the directive approach. Instead, s/he reacted, "Is this your thesis statement?" After the tutee said "yes," the tutor, as shown in the following transcript, challenged her to find answers to her own question by saying, "How do you want to connect it further?" This, of course, was a way of encouraging the tutee to actively participate in the knowledge-making process and, at the same time, a way of providing an opportunity to get the tutee more involved in the session and to speak more:

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Tutor: How do you want to connect it further?

Yoshiko: The basic opinion of this essay is that Japanese people have some racial prejudices . . . the relations between Japanese people and foreigners . . . I don't think it's good (the essay), so . . .

Tutor: Do you think it's especially harsh against Chinese or just any ethnic group, any foreigner?

Yoshiko: I don't think it's so hard for English speaking people . . . Do you think my thesis statement should be more complex?

Tutor: (mumbles).

It was after Yoshiko tried to come up with her own response that the tutor gave her what is more of a lead than a direct response. The tutor said, "Well, if you think you know why, you could always work that into the thesis statement." Then, the tutee, Yoshiko, asked another question:

Yoshiko: Ah! So I can put some reasons.

Tutor: Yeah, if this is . . . if you want to argue that something happened, you know this is a problem because of this . . . you know, it's like a historical problem because there's a long history of racial tensions between certain countries and Japan. Or, whatever, you know, whatever you . . . here, you'd have the inequality of the job opportunities and crime, things like that (mumbles) . . . as well in the thesis statement or you can just, you know, let that go and back it up.

Yoshiko: Do you think my thesis statement is too simple?

Tutor: No, I don't think it's too simple. I think you're picking a really tough topic. It's very general but it's okay to be very general as long as your argument is clear.

Yoshiko: The next question is, as an example of racial problems that Japanese people have; I raised that nationality . . . foreign . . . in Japan. Do you think I should put some . . . like statistics?

The tutor again avoided any direct response to the tutee's questions. Instead, in a clear collaborative-nondirective stance, the tutor provided statements loaded with hints but avoiding a direct response. Notice, that the tutor stated ideas that, although valuable, were actually optional. S/he said, "If you want to argue . . .," "Or, whatever you know . . ." (to introduce another possibility), "Or you can just . . . let that go." It was up to the tutee whether to

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take any of these ideas or to come up with an elaborated statement of her own for her thesis.

So far, Yoshiko still seemed to have doubts about her own point and, as shown above, asked, "Do you think my thesis statement is too simple?" This question reveals that, at this point it was still her thesis statement that concerned her; no one had provided her with a thesis statement for her paper. One important aspect of the collaborative approach is that the tutor does not do the job for the tutee.

A tutoring situation similar to the one explained above is illustrated when the tutor engaged in a collaborative-based dialogue with Malaika. During the dialogue, the tutor asked questions to get Malaika to think about her writing concerns. S/he also made suggestions or provided leads but did not do the work for Malaika. Nor did the tutor provide explicit feedback about how to conduct any corrections.

The tutor and Malaika engaged in an interactive-learning dialogue around an issue. The conversation about the writing issue extended considerably, and the tutor never said things like, "Just do that," "It is like this," which would have ended the conversation once the tutee received easy "ready-to-incorporate-in-essay" feedback.

Unlike in the directive approach, in which a writing concern is tackled and the tutee comes out with a corrected paper, during the development of the collaborative approach, it is not clear when a conversation about a specific writing issue is going to be over. The collaborative tutor does not show a willingness to arrange or fix any particular aspect of the student's paper. His or her attention, instead, is on the learner and the learning process and, therefore, his or her purpose is to help the tutee grow as a writer. Since attention is directed toward the learner and the learning process, tutoring is viewed as an ongoing activity rather than as an act of fixing the student's piece of writing. That's why a conversation based on the collaborative approach is usually long; it lasts as long as it takes to get learners oriented in their writing tasks. The conversation is not ended by the tutors' provision of corrective feedback; rather, it is paced and aimed at empowering tutees with the tools they need to solve their own writing problems.

Conferencing Approach and ESL Writers' Expectations

Directive Feedback Preference

Throughout the various tutoring sessions in this study, I noticed that Sarath, Chang-Su, Yoshiko, Malaika, Amanda, and Tania favored directive feedback strategies for their major writing concern, grammar. I asked these tutees about their main expectation when they met with the tutors to work on their papers.

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Sarath responded, "I told them I wanted it [the paper] to be corrected . . . my main problem is grammar." Tania added, "Almost all the time I want them to check my grammar, the prepositions and, perhaps, some vocabulary because sometimes the words that I find in the dictionary are not the correct words that I have to use."

Directive feedback was very common throughout the tutorial work in the writing center. However, Chang-Su even suggested that it was not enough. He indicated that the tutors should check his paper one time and, before he leaves the writing center, they should go over his paper again in order to make sure there are no errors left.

Although the previous statements provided me with a picture of the tutees' expectations during the one-on-one tutoring process, I was still intrigued by the tutees' preference for a directive tutoring stance. Therefore, I considered it necessary to explore how serious they were about their preference or to what extent they would have preferred a less directive or nondirective stance. Consequently, I asked Sarath, Chang-Su, Yoshiko, Malaika, Amanda, and Tania about the option of getting suggestions from the tutors that would orient them to do some research or find sources to solve the writing problems by themselves.

Sarath responded to this question by indicating that the tutors should correct or indicate if it was "correct or incorrect" or "appropriate or inappropriate," but he did not like, for instance, the idea of being sent to the library to investigate his own writing problems. In other words, he liked it when the tutor conducted the correction or s/he provided explicit guidance to conduct the correction, but he did not consider being encouraged to do his own research to be an alternative way to solve his writing problems.

The following interview excerpt with Malaika provides a similar response to that of Sarath, expressing a preference for a directive tutoring stance:

Jose: What about if they say you should change this, but you should go to the library and investigate how to do it? What about if they say, go to the library and check out a grammar book.

Malaika: They can't say that because they're supposed to help you. They are the ones to tell you that (incomprehensible). They can tell me how, for example, I go to see the tutor and she tells me okay go to the library and check the grammar and stuff like that. I can change the grammar but, you know, it's different when you read it and when someone explains it to you.

According to Malaika, if the tutors sent her to the library, they would be evading their responsibility or not doing their job because they were supposed to be in the writing center to "help." She understood "help" as direct instruction.

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Therefore, the type of help she expected was not the one advocated by the collaborative/nondirective approach (i.e., help that promotes independence), but one that was characterized by explicit feedback on the spot or during writing center sessions.

Tutors as Authorities

The directive approach to tutoring was not only prevalent but also the favorite one in the writing center with ESL students. Sarath, Chang-Su, Yoshiko, Malaika, Amanda, and Tania indicated that they preferred tutors to provide explicit, directive feedback during the tutoring sessions. Amazingly, although the tutors largely complied with the tutees' requests for direction, as evidenced by their almost total control of sessions characterized by proofreading and explicit corrective feedback, the tutees still implied that tutors should have been more authoritative. This means that when these tutees went to the writing center, they expected to meet knowledgeable individuals who would provide directive feedback right on the spot.

As I have already indicated, the tutees preferred tutors to check their essays for errors, and they did not like tutors to give up their "tutoring responsibilities" by sending them to check other sources.At the same time, they did not want to have doubts about the correctness of the feedback they get from tutors. Therefore, these tutees did not see tutors as equal peers, as advocated by the collaborative approach, but as authorities.

For instance, when Yoshiko went to the writing center, she expected to meet a knowledgeable person; that is, someone with the authority to impart knowledge. She believed that the tutors should be as knowledgeable as the professor and that "they should study more" to be able to carry out the type of feedback she preferred, i.e., an instructional-directive feedback.
Sarath expressed feelings similar to those of Yoshiko in the following interview excerpt:

Jose: When you went to the writing center, what were you expecting?

Sarath: Actually, I expected someone of education [academic training].

Jose: Someone?

Sarath: With education. That means teaching.

When Sarath talked about someone with an education, he meant a person able or trained to teach. Thus, he felt, as Yoshiko did, that the tutor should be knowledgeable enough to provide the type of help he was interested in.
The tutees had their own agenda concerning the tutors' role, then, regardless of what the tutors thought was the right thing to do during tutoring sessions. For

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instance, while the tutors thought that they should not teach or provide explicative feedback, the tutees' perspectives on tutoring implied that the job of a tutor was equal to that of a traditional teacher: an authority in the field of writing whose role was to impart knowledge.

Correction plus Explicative Feedback

The tutees' main expectation of a tutoring session was to get explicit corrective feedback on local issues of writing. Further, local issues of writing, other than being the students' main concerns, were the main targets throughout the tutoring sessions; the tutoring sessions mostly concentrated on grammar or mechanical issues of writing. In addition, as previously indicated, the tutors dealt with grammar issues by direct intervention or a directive tutoring style. One could quite possibly believe, then, that the students were totally satisfied with the tutoring approach.

However, the tutees' expectations were not totally satisfied. The tutees felt that the correction was not accompanied by an explicative statement concerning why a particular element in the paper was wrong. For instance, Malaika commented, I've noticed that they always say, "You should change this to this." They should also try to explain, you know. Not only tell you that change this to this, but they should tell you why you are changing this, this exactly, so you understand what, so you keep it in your mind.

Tania remarked:

> Sometimes, when they told me, this is a great preposition here . . . I was like, "Why?" Most of the times they didn't know how to answer and they were like, "Umm, I don't know it's just like that, English is weird, we know, but it's just like that."

The tutees were not just interested in getting a corrected paper; they also wanted to improve their understanding about grammatical issues. This suggests that the tutees really valued the importance of learning the intricacies of the writing issues targeted during the tutoring sessions.

There was not only a lack of detailed/explicit explanation on targeted errors, but the participating students stated that they needed explicative feedback as a complement to the error-checking on their main writing concern, grammar.

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Discussion and Implications

Discussion of findings

Statements about the extension of the collaborative approach to ESL tutoring may quite possibly be exaggerated because, throughout this study, I realized that the tutors did not favor the reportedly most popular approach to tutoring, collaboration. Nor did the tutors stick to a particular tutoring approach. Instead, the tutors used a variety of tutoring stances in ESL one-on-one conferencing that included, to a lesser extent, the collaborative approach.

Moreover, throughout this research study, the directive approach proved to be problematic. For instance, the tutees were not totally satisfied with this approach because they were interested in more than the proofreading process; they also wanted learning-enhancing directive feedback that would show them why certain grammatical components were erroneous. The tutees wanted explicative feedback along with the grammar-checking tutoring stance. The lack of complementary explicative feedback led Yoshiko to say, "I don't know, they [tutors] should study more."

Pratt-Johnson (2006) says that culturally diverse students usually come to the classroom with different ways of knowing, learning, solving problems, communicating nonverbally, dealing with conflicts, and using symbols that affect the ways in which these students behave. Studies have also shown that people's view of language learning and instruction is influenced by social values. For example, in a study of Chinese and American contexts of literacy, Bell (1995) described the frustration she went through during the process of learning to read and write in China. One of the main problems was that she wanted to focus on meaning while her Chinese tutor wanted to concentrate on the beauty of each character.

I also found this type of mismatch during my research with culturally diverse students and tutors. For example, the tutees preferred correction plus explicative feedback whereas the tutors preferred to provide just correction. Interestingly, nothing suggests that the conferencing dynamics or materialization of different tutoring approaches and/or strategies contributed significantly to making the tutees' conferencing preferences converge with those of the tutors.

Implications: An Integrationist Approach to ESL Writing Center Conferencing Sarath, Malaika, Yoshiko, Tania, Amanda, and Chang-Su showed that their views on tutoring were different from those of the tutors they interacted with in the English-speaking culture. These tutees favored a directive feedback, an explicative feedback that was never given to them. Attuned with Hall (2000), this suggests that tutors "often need to 'refocus their lens' when looking at and working with culturally and linguistically diverse students" in order to be successful.

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We need to appeal to a tutoring approach that - besides respecting or recognizing the tutees' values and learning behaviors they bring from their home cultures (Johnson, 2005) - creates the conditions for integrating the ESL tutees with the new culture and hence with new modes or learning and writing. We need, then, an integrationist approach to ESL writing center tutoring.

An integrationist approach will function as a cultural-enlightening mechanism aimed at creating conditions for learning adjustment. Getting ESL tutees to adjust to a new learning environment is one of the goals of an integrationist approach to tutoring. I believe getting ESL tutees to adjust is feasible. ESL students choose to study in the United States of America because they have great expectations about its educational system; they trust the U.S. educational system as a channel to professional success. Therefore, "If those students seek to prosper in an individualistically oriented culture like that of the U.S., they will need to learn to engage in the academic practices of individualism to some considerable degree" (Elbow, 1999, p. 11). Carrington and Mu (2007) add that ESL students need to adapt themselves to a learning environment that is different from the one they are familiar with. They also indicate that the members of the target discourse community need to be open-minded to other communicative styles and ways of learning.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that ESL "students in our class continue to demonstrate through their work that . . . they are trapped in their home discourses" (Zamel, 1997, p. 347). Therefore, the process of integrating ESL students into the American learning system may not be so easy. Nevertheless, with a little patience and tolerance, and "with ongoing and sustained instruction that is responsible to their attempts, they [ESL students] can try on and become conversant in a variety of discourses, writing movingly, adopting critically and authoritative stances, taking individual positions" (Zamel, 1997, p. 347).

The integrationist approach might provide tutees with the tools to fully appreciate, understand, and connect to the English discourse community. In other words, it will create the conditions for ESL tutees to experience current, sound, educational customs in the U.S. context or, specifically, in the writing center. How does the integrationist tutor achieve this purpose?

We know that process pedagogy is most frequently put to practice by using the collaborative/nondirective approach, whose goal is to promote better, independent writers. Integrationist tutors should engage ESL learners in a dialogue about these learning/instructional behaviors. Also, they might want to consider engaging ESL students in dialogue about the learning behaviors they are used to or bring from their societies. In so doing, they will lay foundations for cultural awareness, which is a fundamental aspect for cross-cultural communication.

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The integrationist approach I am proposing should develop into an ESL learner friendly and culturally based alternative to one-on-one conferencing in the writing center. Its main goal is to promote adjustment to current models of writing instruction in the U.S. through cultural awareness. It is a culturally based approach to tutoring because it would aim at promoting current ways of writing and learning in the target culture while being respectful and conscious of ESL tutees` own ways of writing and learning.

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A Case Study Approach to Identifying Anxiety in Foreign Language Learners: A Qualitative Alternative to the FLCAS Anxiety Scale[4]

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Introduction

Language classroom anxiety has been the object of study for the last two decades as it is acknowledged to have a major impact on language learning and, most importantly, the language learner himself (Turula, 2004). Being aware of anxious language learners in the classroom is a starting point for us teachers to address the situation in terms of where language anxiety comes from and what we can do to lessen its negative effects on learning (Shingi & Ying-Ling, 2004). It is the anxious language learner's perspective, however, which has received increased attention in the last few years.

This paper is a case study with a single participant who was first observed and then interviewed about what he actually does to cope with language classroom anxiety (LCA). I originally conceived it to be research on what a group of anxious learners do to cope with LCA by duplicating a study Shingi and Ying-Ling (2004) carried out with beginning learners in Japan. Their study categorizes the strategies those learners use to cope with anxiety in the language classroom. As I reviewed the literature and my understanding of qualitative research methodological principles, I used Shingi and Ying-Ling's study as a starting point to find alternative ways to claim a language learner suffers from LCA. By avoiding the use of a statistical instrument to measure LCA, I aim to refine a methodology to systematically collect and analyze qualitative data on both the labeling of the learners as being anxious, and on the strategies they use to cope with LCA.

I will first review the relevant literature about measuring anxiety in language learners and on how strategies they might use relate to the issue of LCA in general. Then, in the methodological section, I will propose an alternative instrument to claim that a learner is anxious and what he or she does to cope with this situation. I will proceed to analyze the data obtained by relating it to the findings in Shingi and Ying-Ling (2004). Lastly, I will analyze and discuss the limitations of my study and will try to give myself and interested researchers directions for further inquiry.

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Literature review

The study I base this research paper on uses a scale to statistically confirm that learners suffer from LCA. This scale known as FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) was developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and consists of 33 statements subjects are asked to agree or disagree with (see Appendix 1). The results of the survey report the degree of anxiety an individual experiences in the language classroom (LC). Two other factors are important to note: (1) the scale is written in English and (2) it measures LCA in adults. The statements are mostly concerned with the learners having to produce the language orally, for LCA is generally associated with speaking and listening (Koba, 2000).

Since its development, the FLCAS has been adapted to determine the degree of LCA in various contexts. For instance, Argaman and Abu-Rabia (2002) adapted it to see whether young learners experience anxiety when reading and writing. Also, it has been translated into a variety of first languages to conduct research on beginners, especially adults, who are much more likely to experience LCA (Turula, 2004). These translations risk being misunderstood, though. For that reason, piloting a translated version of the scale is desirable. Ortega (2003), for example, conducted a study to pilot a Spanish version of FLCAS. It is worth pointing out that this Spanish version was piloted with advanced Spanish speaking learners, not with beginners. Although it is not clear which language is used in their scale, I assume Shingi and Ying-Ling (2004), used a Japanese version, for it was administered to learners in basic levels.

Nevertheless, using a scale may not be at all mandatory to determine whether an individual suffers from LCA. Oxford (1999) points out there are observable traits in determining whether a learner feels restless and uncomfortable when in language class. Observation can therefore be a reliable research instrument if we aim to qualitatively say whether and/or to what extent learners suffer from LCA. Moreover, observation can help us teachers develop sensitivity toward anxious learners, which is something we might need to work on (Crandall, 1999). First, it raises our awareness of the existence of this kind of learner in our classroom. Second, knowing which strategies learners use most frequently and how they use them can provide insights into what helps learners handle their language anxiety. This valuable information can have a strong impact on the planning of individual lessons, classroom management, and on individual students' development as language learners in particular, and as learners in general.

Yet, teachers and researchers need to be aware of cultural and personality factors, as well as facts and beliefs about learning and teaching. We may have to come to terms with many learners' lack of readiness to try out strategies which involve working collaboratively with others, for example, for the idea of a safe language learning environment is perhaps unthinkable for some of them. Competitiveness and/or being left to their own resources may frequently be what

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learners are, for one reason or another, used to when learning a language in the context of a classroom. By the same token, being aware of the fact that some learners need time and space to adjust to the requirements of a collaborative learning environment can help teacher researchers better understand how to put these learners at ease so that they can work with and integrate with peers and the rest of the group (Dornyei & Malderez, 1999).

Research questions

Instruments such as scales and questionnaires provide researchers with objective, straightforward information that can be fairly easily classified for later analysis. However, when aiming to replicate Shingi and Ying-Ling's study, I found the FLCAS scale particularly long and impersonal. Even though it has been tested to confidently say how anxious an individual is about learning a language, I felt if I gave a version of this scale to my learners I would be making them (1) express something which affects them directly in words which are not their own, and (2) feel I was keeping affective distance and was not genuinely interested in their answers beyond research purposes.

In addition, I thought the subjects in Shingi and Ying-Ling's study could have felt predisposed to answer in a certain fashion since they had previously labeled themselves 'anxious' when they volunteered to participate in their study. A first research question arises here: How can evidence of whether an individual suffers from LCA be collected without using FLCAS? In order to answer this question, I would need to adapt the methodology to collect data so that there would be neither segregated subjects, nor words explicitly given to express the emotions and concerns they experience in the language classroom.

If the learner is used as the primary source of information to make any claims about anxiousness and to elicit the strategies used to handle anxiety, interviews may be a more appropriate way to collect data (Creswell, 1994). The use of recording devices and actually telling learners why they are being interviewed, however, may influence and bias the learners' accounts. Moreover, a structured interview will clearly shape the sort of data obtained from it. Thus, another aspect of the methodology would have to answer the question: How can honest and genuine data about strategies to cope with LCA be elicited from self-identified anxious learners? Conducting a flexible interview that elicits spontaneous and sincere comments from anxious learners would be needed to obtain worthwhile, qualitative data.

Methodology

The methodology I present here is a result of my evolving reflection about adding more qualitative value to the two points specified above: claiming a learner is anxious, and eliciting from him/her the strategies he/she uses to cope

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with this anxiety, if any. I used three data collection strategies: initial identification through observation, confirmation of initial identification with a short questionnaire, and recorded interview with the subject of this study.

Initially, I observed a population consisting of three groups of Spanish-speaking learners at beginning levels, each group having from 20 to 30 students. There were 37 women and 40 men distributed in all three groups (see Appendix 2). These learners were enrolled in English as a general university requirement courses at a large public university in the south of Mexico. They ranged in age from 18 to 50 with a mean age of 22. I identified about 9 learners in each group (see Appendix 3) who I believed were experiencing some degree of anxiety in the classroom. I base these choices on what in my experience can be labeled as anxious behavior displayed by the university students in my specific institutional setting when in the role of language learners. I did not use an instrument (see Appendix 1) which would enable me to prove that an individual experiences classroom anxiety as in Shingi and Ying-Ling's study (2004). Instead, I focused on my learners' self-perception of being anxious during lessons.

Materials and data collection procedures

I designed a questionnaire which would help me identify those learners who, in their own view, experience some level of anxiety in the classroom. This brief questionnaire consisted of two yes/no questions, one of which had an open-ended follow up question, and a multiple choice question (see Appendix 4). These questions were placed at the end of what was intended to look like a *fact-file card*[5] to be given out to every student in the groups so as to avoid segregation. This questionnaire could also allow me to identify subjects who were experiencing some kind of discomfort which was not evident to me through observation.

Fact-file cards were given out casually while students were carrying out a task in groups. I collected a total of 38 questionnaires from groups 2 and 3 only. As a second step I separated those questionnaires where the words 'nervous'/'anxious' were either circled or written by the learners themselves. Seven learners marked or wrote 'nervous' / 'anxious'. Four of these seven learners had previously been identified as having some degree of anxiety in my initial observation of group 3 (see Appendix 3).

At the beginning I intended to give out a second, follow up questionnaire to those seven students (Appendix 5) so that I could replicate the original study more closely. However, because of the qualitative advantage interviews have over questionnaires, I decided I would interview two students I felt I could get closer to. It was hard to keep track of Laura and Roman as they were constantly

[5] Small cards containing personal and/or language learning- related information about students. Usually filled-out for learning purposes in activities such as exchanging personal information, writing profiles an do on, it can also be used by teachers to get to know learners better when course begins.

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late and/or absent. Nevertheless, I did manage to get closer to Alan, and was able to record a casual, supportive conversation with him. This recorded material lasts 14 minutes (see Appendix 6).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data consists of only one piece of recorded material with a single subject: Alan. The recorded material reflects a casual conversation in which I managed to ask questions 1, 3, 4 and 6 from my guiding questionnaire (see Appendix 5). Because I wanted to talk to Alan more than forcing us into a structured interview and follow the questions in order, I let the conversation go and asked questions where I felt they were appropriate (see Appendix 6).

I first analyzed the data to find evidence of Alan being an anxious learner. I use italics and inserted comments to relate the data to the theoretical background. I underline what I feel has to do with using strategies to cope with anxiety from a very general perspective about the issue; e.g. not actually using it as a strategy but acknowledging its importance in better coping with LCA. I use bold, italics *and* underline data that I feel is particularly outstanding in terms of representing three things: strategies the subject uses, reasons for using those strategies, and evidence of self-perception of being anxious.

Analysis of Results and Discussion

The data is very fruitful and revealing (see Appendix 6). Alan seems to have it clear in his mind when he feels and does not feel at ease in the classroom. Feeling that he is in good hands means he is being taken care of, which in turn releases tension, while uncertainty and a lack of direction in the classroom create a feeling of lack of control which in turn causes anxiety. He seems to need a teacher he can rely on in terms of experience, approachability and knowledge. In contrast, if he feels the class is aimlessly managed, that he cannot see where he should be going, and does not have control of the situation, the result is restlessness and anxiety.

The fact that he was told off and humiliated before peers by one of his previous teachers can be another possible source of his LCA. If the classroom is perceived as a hostile environment that threatens the learner as an individual, feelings of discouragement and fear will likely result in LCA. In addition, Alan's feeling of being unable to afford learning English also places him at a disadvantage when compared to his peers. This factor, over which he feels he does not have any control, contributes negatively to both his self-perception when compared to others and what he as a learner can actually do to lessen his suffering. Learners inevitably compare themselves to peers as a consequence of language learning in settings such as school and university classrooms. What is more, comparison is frequently maintained and emphasized in these learning

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environments by the teachers themselves. On the optimistic side, he seems to be aware of when help is being offered. Yet, he may feel unsure about how to handle positive circumstances due to all of the above.

The first part of the conversation helps me confidently say my subject suffers from LCA. I then proceed to elicit from him what he does to ease the pain, if anything. Alan seems to realize he is not anxious by nature and that there are circumstances that cause this state, that is, he tries to find the source of his present anxiety (see Appendix 6). This is where he starts by acknowledging it is no use hoping the teacher will change his/her methods or avoiding class altogether. Also, although the teacher may try to help learners by adapting to them he may have to take risks of his own. He has, for instance, tried to come prepared to class by looking up words in the dictionary and to get himself some tutoring. However, he had not tried seeking help from his peers, but which he recently started doing and thinks he should do more often.

Contrary to what Shingi and Ying-Ling found about which strategies are more widely used by learners, I find evidence of Alan using strategies which fall in the least-used categories: 'positive thinking' in first place, and 'peer seeking' in second. Alan's apparent preference for positive thinking strategies seems to be due to personality and cultural factors. Having previously collected some facts about his family background, I sense there is a feeling of pride and responsibility when Alan refers to family anecdotes and when he talks about trying hard even if he thinks there is very little chance of success. His tone of voice and relaxed attitude during the conversation lead me to come to positive judgments about his having an easygoing, though timid, personality.

The use of peer seeking strategies, on the other hand, is rather unconscious. This may be due to a rooted belief that learners should manage by themselves in the classroom. Peers are initially perceived as a threat, and Alan does not see himself as being sufficiently prepared and capable of achieving what they can. In his view, collaboration is impossible under these circumstances and avoidance is the result. These perceptions must have gradually changed for him by observing how integration did take place among others when he looked on from a safe distance at first, and when he started participating in tasks later on. During the course he was able to see first hand that other learners were also having problems but willing to collaboratively try, especially as no danger of humiliation followed the tasks. I find evidence of this attentiveness/sensitivity when he talks about Roman and Leonel and how they seem to be gaining confidence.

Alan acknowledges the usefulness of such safe integration although he is not aware of how in fact working with others collaboratively has become one of his own strategies. I think there is evidence for this claim in two ways. First, he has turned to help others as a way to help himself. Second, he does not seem to believe it is actually helpful in adverse circumstances because he later insists there is very little he can do to reverse his situation. This feeling of helplessness could indicate that his language learning anxiety is deeply rooted, but may be

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overcome by raising his awareness of the power of collaborative work and the real opportunities he has to try out several other strategies to fight his anxiety and actually enjoy language learning.

Conclusions

Although I do not use a scale to verify the levels of anxiety my subject experiences in the classroom, I do find evidence of this state through data analysis. I also find evidence of strategies he makes use of and which categories from Shingi and Ying-Ling's (2004) study these strategies belong to. This allows me to say that the methodology I follow in this paper may successfully be carried out to gather qualitative and enriching data on what anxious learners do to cope with LCA.

A possible drawback of this study, however, lies in the time it took to collect genuine data from a single subject. In addition, the use of recording devices was first introduced by one of the learners for purposes other than research (see Appendix 6, first paragraph) and this may be seen as very particular to this case study. In order to be able to generalize claims about alternative ways to carry out research which typically relies on statistical data, the qualitative data presented in this study would have to be quantitatively supported; e.g. the FLCAS scale could be administered to subjects at a later stage to see whether anxiety has decreased. Yet, getting the subject to talk about language anxiety in ways that encourage spontaneity and discourage predisposition did result in rich, genuine data, which may seem worthwhile enough to interest teacher researchers in following the methodological steps presented in this study.

The fact that avoidance on the part of the anxious learner is very likely to occur may pose some additional problems due to absenteeism, tardiness and purposeful failure. Finding ways to ensure that learners attend class and are given the opportunity to experience the use of preparation, relaxation, peer-seeking and positive-thinking strategies through collaborative work and other techniques may therefore be necessary. An additional point is the fact that the studies I cite here only focus on describing anxiety levels. They do not say whether learners have been given help with their language classroom anxiety so that they can tell the difference, nor what learners *say* they do when feelings of anxiety and helplessness arise.

Replicating the methodology I propose here may not result in new insights about LCA. Nevertheless, it does have implications on how both learners and teachers can become aware of the problem and how to address it. Simply approaching and being able to get shy learners to speak up little by little about their own shyness can build their self-confidence and, more importantly, their self-esteem. Similarly, designing tasks with the anxious learner in mind does have an influence on a number of classroom management elements which can help create a much safer and more comfortable learning environment.

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Appendix 1: FLCAS Questionnaire[6]

(1) I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign-language classes.
(2) I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
(3) I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class.
(4) It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
(5) It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign-language classes.
(6) During language class I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
(7) I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
(8) I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
(9) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
(10) I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign-language class.
(11) I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign-language classes.
(12) In language class I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
(13) It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
(14) I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
(15) I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
(16) Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
(17) I often feel like not going to my language class.
(18) I feel confident when I speak in foreign-language class.
(19) I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
(20) I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
(21) The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
(22) I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
(23) I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
(24) I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
(25) Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
(26) I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
(27) I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
(28) When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
(29) I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
(30) I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
(31) I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
(32) I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
(33) I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance.

[6] 'A number of instruments exist, the best known of which is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS, by Horwitz (1986). The FLCAS was developed to capture the specific anxiety reaction of a student to a foreign language situation. This instrument integrates three related anxieties – communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation'. Oxford, R. (1999). Learners are asked to *completely agree, agree, disagree, or completely disagree* with each of the statements.

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Appendix 2: Initial population and distribution

Total	Gender	Observed anxious learners
Group 1: 31	(19m, 12w)	12 anxious learners (4m, 8w)
Group 2: 26	(12m, 14w)	6 anxious learners (2m, 4w)
Group 3: 20	(9m, 11w)	9 anxious learners (6m, 3w)

Age: Mean 22

Appendix 3: Group 3: Nine subjects identified as being anxious

Nine subjects	Observation	Self-perception of feeling anxious / nervous
1(m)	Yes	No
2(m) Alan	Yes	Yes
3(w)	Yes	No
4(w)	Yes	No
5(m)	Yes	No
6(m) Roman	Yes	Yes
7(m)	Yes	No
8(m)	Yes	No
9(m) Leonel	Yes	Yes

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Appendix 4: Questionnaire/Fact file card for the whole population

HOJA INFORMATIVA

Nombre:___________________________________Matrícula:___________

Carrera:_____________________________________ Edad:___________

Usa el reverso de la hoja si así lo deseas

Datos familiares que desees dar (numero de hermanos, ocupación de padres, nombre o edad de hijos):

Historial de tus niveles de inglés dentro de la carrera (año y/o semestre en que fueron cursados, recursos, opinión general sobre el haberlos tomado)

Inglés100:

Inglés 101:

Otoño 2005. Inglés 203. Profesora Elba Méndez García.

1. ¿Estuviste presente en el primer día de clase? Si / No
2. ¿Qué palabra define mejor el como te sentiste el primer día de clase (o el primer día que tomaste clase)? Angustiado Nervioso Inseguro Seguro Tranquilo Relajado
3. ¿Consideras que la sensación del primer día ha cambiado? Si / No ¿Por qué?

Appendix 5: Follow-up questionnaire / Guiding questions for individual interviews

1. ¿Qué parte o momento de la clase te hace sentir angustiado / nervioso / inseguro?
2. ¿Cómo crees que afecta esto tu aprendizaje del idioma?
3. Una vez que empieza la clase, ¿qué haces para sentirte seguro?
4. ¿Qué elementos o aspectos de la clase te ayudan a sentirte menos angustiado / nervioso / inseguro?
5. ¿Qué cambiarías de la clase para no sentirte angustiado / nervioso / inseguro?
6. ¿Qué cambiarías en ti para no sentirte angustiado / nervioso / inseguro en clase sin cambiarle nada a esta?

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Appendix 6: Tapescript of the recorded interview with Alan

Background to the recorded material

At the beginning of the second half of the course (around the 35th hour of 60 hours of instruction) Alan started to overcome shyness and ventured to ask questions while I monitored groups, volunteered a couple of times to contribute with an answer and so on. One of his classmates, Manuel, was a blind, self-confident student who used a pocket tape recorder to keep a record of his and his teammates' work throughout the course. His group members got used to being recorded when working with him, and I thought that bringing my own tape recorder would not influence interviewees negatively. The day of my conversation with Alan (during the 48th hour of instruction) the group was finishing homework exercises while I asked Manuel about himself, his own development and how I could help him and others like him in the future. I told him I would keep an audio recording of his comments for future reference and he agreed.

Alan waited until Manuel and I finished talking about how I could help other blind students. Then he approached us to say he was not working on the exercises because he had not brought his material that day and was sorry. I had been sitting with Manuel at desks in the student area, surrounded by groups of learners engaged in talking and working together when Alan joined us. Alan and I were barely noticed and it did not seem to bother him when I announced I also wanted a record of his reflections, which were surprisingly prolific and needed little elicitation (see below). Class time was about to finish and the class started to leave. We were alone only for the last two minutes of the recording.

In the beginning stages of the interview I managed to ask question 3 ("Once the lesson has started, what do you do to feel at ease?") from my list of guiding questions. Later I managed to ask questions 1 and 4 ("What part/moment in the class makes you feel anxious/nervous/insecure?" "Is there any part of the lesson which helps you feel less anxious/nervous/insecure?"). Finally, in the last stages of the interview I asked question 6 ("Without making any changes to the lesson, what would you do differently not to feel anxious/nervous/insecure in class?"). Places where I ask these questions are marked in bold print and a comment with the question in English is inserted. Italics indicate the segments of data which I use as evidence of Alan being an anxious language learner to develop my analysis. When I feel there is strong evidence, the italics are also bold. Underlined segments relate to the strategies mentioned in the study I base this piece of research on (see document).

Int. Interviewer
Al. Alan

Int.	Bueno, dices que sientes que aprendiste mas en la secundaria que en la prepa.
Al.	Así es.
Int.	Y eso por que.

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Al.	Mire en la secundaria el profesor, igual, bueno, nos daban los libros y el profesor nos decía, miren pónganse a leer, contestan y ya contestaba yo y nos pasaba al frente, nos hacia diálogos que venían en el libro. Así nos los aprendimos de memoria y pasábamos. Mas aparte *siempre decía que cuando tuviéramos algún problema que se lo dijéramos, y que si no comprendíamos alguna cosa, se la dijéramos,* entonces así era la dinámica en clase, bueno, en la secundaria. Cuando ingrese al bachillerato pues, no nos dieron, no nos dieron el primer año ingles, el segundo año, fue hasta tercero, cuarto cuatrimestre, cuarto semestre cuando se empezaron, nos empezaron a dar clases de ingles y solamente eran cuatro profesores en el bachillerato, entonces eran, había tres ingenieros, una licenciada en psicología (interrupción, un alumno sale y me habla desde la puerta) una licenciada en psicología, entonces no había que de verdad fuera un maestro de supiera, que hubiera salido de una escuela de lenguas. Entonces, con lo poco que ellos sabían, no sabían la gran cosa (ríe), por ser también, eran recientemente graduados, se habían recibido y habían ingresado al magisterio, y pues no sabían de ingles, yo digo que nada porque también, pues, o sea le decía uno nuestras dudas, 'pues déjenme investigar y mañana les digo'. Eso no es un maestro de ingles no (risas) es que, en serio no o sea si, pues no, 'déjenme ver y yo sentía que pues eran pues cosas sencillas, a lo mejor pues uno puede resolver, *bueno, nunca nos apoyaron, nunca nos dijeron pues, va a haber algún libro*, (muestra) fotocopias o, nada, solamente lo que ellos supuestamente nos dictaban y eso era con lo que ibas aprendiendo supuestamente.
Int.	Y acá
Al.	Aquí… bueno, hubo una maestra que… no pues, me traumo no recuerdo ni su nombre, era gordita ella, chinita, y bueno, primero me recurso. Fue porque supuestamente no participaba en clase, *cuando me pasaba a participar este y decía yo algo mal, me como que tartamudeo cuando no puedo pronunciarlo, y ella en lugar de corregirme me decía, no pues, estas mal, y así pues es que uno como también ya cuando te vuelven uno a decir 'pasa a participar' pues ya no…* (no audible) pues, me recurso. Y… cuando volví a cursar el ingles 1 fue hasta con el extraordinario, lo pase con 6 y luego el … lo pase con 7. *La maestra* también este, (nombre) *nos, ahora si que nos, vaya nos entendía no*, no yo nada mas, fue también un compañero que se había equivocado de clase, este, o sea, *nos ayudaba y, como le hacíamos trabajos como que ya nos ayudaba mas a pasar la materia* (inaudible) y como no, como le digo, estudie en el bachillerato y pues, *no tenemos la solvencia económica para pagar unas clases de ingles* (mj) mas que nada seria eso.
Int.	A ver,… tu ficha y, algunos datos que recabe tuyos y de otros compañeros tuyos, tu eres uno de los que me llaman la atención, este, me dices que… que te sientes muy nervioso.
Al.	Si. Por lo mismo, le digo que, a lo mejor bueno yo, yo siento que fue por lo del este lo del ingles 1, *le digo que nos pasaba a participar 'no, no, no, toma asiento, practica mas en tu casa' pero en lugar de que ella me dijera 'oye,*

Elba 10/12/07 15:03
Comment: Expresses when he feels secure: when he feels supported.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Uncertainty is very likely to be one of the sources of his anxiety.

Elba 10/12/07 15:04
Comment: Evidence of feeling humiliated, discouraged and/or threatened. Another highly possible source of LCA.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Acknowledging sympathy from others.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: This may be another source of anxiety. Believing that learning a language is something you pay for. Not being able to afford things causes restlessness.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: First trigger. Intention: to help him become aware of self.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Tries to find the source of present anxiety.

Elba 10/12/07 15:05
Comment: Feeling ignored?

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	que palabras tienes problemas para pronunciarlas, dime y te apoyo, no pues es re fácil' y pues haga de cuenta que llegaba, daba su clase, y se salía, no aclaraba dudas ni nada, y llegaba a la hora o antes, daba hora y media de clase y se salía ya nada mas.
Int.	Y así, con esta clase en particular si te sentías así.
Al.	Al principio, ya mas después cuando, ya desde cuando dijimos que, nos explico un poco en español y un poco en ingles y hasta ahorita sentí que si, que pues he puesto mucho esfuerzo, usted ya nos apoya mas, que palabras en español y a veces, o como hacer los ejercicios y ya lo entiendo mejor, me ha ido sirviendo mas. Las ultimas clases las he ido entendiendo mas, siento que me ha servido, y ya entiendo por ejemplo las de (fin de un lado)
Int.	¿(Que bueno, ahora, todavía te falta un semestre. Y bueno, te puede tocar lo que sea no. A mi me interesa que, por ejemplo), que **te toco esta maestra, o este profesor, y se da así la clase y pues, así como que de ni modos no. Tu, que haces**.
Al.	Por ejemplo, cuando tome ingles uno yo yo vi a la profesora y eso, pues dije bueno pues, voy a intentarlo. También nunca ha sido de mi idea 'no puedo, no puedo, no puedo', siempre me han dicho que se bloquea uno mas, digo bueno, pues si, si voy a hacer el intento. De hecho el primer libro si lo compre (muestra copias) (aja) este (el intento) aja dije bueno, lo voy a empezar a hacer. Y pues ya empecé y todo pero por lo mismo de que de, bueno, o sea, yo agarraba y llegaba yo a mi casa y cuando nos dejaba tarea y agarraba yo dos diccionarios que tengo que están uno de ingles a español y de español a ingles. Buscaba yo las palabras que encontraba en ingles, y los buscaba yo y ya veía yo su significado, llegaba yo y las ponía, igual no con, llego
Int.	Antes o después de la clase
Al.	Después de clase, después. Si, como ella no nos resolvía dudas ni nada yo llegaba yo a la casa, buscaba yo en el diccionario, pero ahora, también otro problema que he visto con el diccionario es que no trae todos los usos, por ejemplo, si viene en una (inaudible), el diccionario a lo mejor trae otro ejemplo, otro significado, no lo puedo ubicar, no lo puedo ubicar, lo dice que, lo que esta preguntando (mju) con la pregunta, a lo mejor podría, entendería un poco porque no entiendo completamente la pregunta (mj) entonces, pues era así nada mas que, ahorita, pues busque a un maestro que, de ingles. Es una señora que llego de Estados Unidos me estaba dando cursos de
Int.	La buscaste
Al.	Si, pero, fui a una sesión. Pero lo que pasa es que ella el español no lo entiende del todo, entonces es un problema no, si no sabe el español completamente como me puede enseñar a mi ingles, que yo no se ingles, se se el español, o sea no había una forma de que pudiera yo comprender el..
Int.	Aja, si. Y tu la buscaste o
Al.	Si. Mi papa es mecánico, le arregla su carro a su esposo y este el fue el que le comento y mi papa me dijo pagamos unas clases era de, de 50 pesos a la semana ***dije yo bueno, si las podemos pagar***, dice pues si. Y fui a una sesión

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Acknowledging it needs to be a two-way effort.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Question 3. What do you do to lessen your anxiety?

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Strategy III. Positive thinking

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Strategy I. Preparation ('Post preparation')

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	pero le digo, ese fue el problema, la señora no estaba del todo, o sea no sabía todo el idioma español como para una duda. Le hacia 'uhm, y es, un es…' y ella misma no encontraba la palabra.
Int.	La intención era que te resolviera dudas o que era, cual era la i
Al.	Que me apoyara con lo del ingles, que me apoyara, de hecho yo llevaba las copias y pues (bajo)
Int.	Llevabas tu libro
Al.	Si, no (señala copias del libro del curso)
Int.	Ah, estas copias
Al.	Estas copias, fue apenas. Entonces este, no le hacia yo la pregunta 'no que es esto' decía 'en español es…' se quedaba pensando (risa). Y ya decía yo, híjole no, pues así no menos nos vamos a poder entender. Y le digo o sea, fui en buena onda así, no pues es que no me sirve. Alo mejor si fuera yo un poco mas ya mas avanzado pues si nos pudiéramos entender mejor y me hubiera servido para practicarlo pero pus no se, no voy a practicarlo.
Int.	Mj, y de **acá con nosotros**, ahora si que… **que parte no te ayuda mucho, que parte si te ayuda**
Al.	Por ejemplo esto de los trabajos en equipo es muy bueno porque, con los compañeros o sea unos, bueno, saben mas, que aquí a veces desde el kínder les dan clases de ingles, en primaria, en secundaria, así, pues ya vienen como que mas preparados. Entonces cuando yo no entiendo algo y llego 'ah, esto es esto, es que es esto' no se, lo voy entendiendo mejor y, trato de grabarme las, las palabras en ingles, y ya como que ellos me van diciendo pues ya como que me ayudan y… al principio cuando usted no utilizaba tanto el español para dar clase, se me hacia mas difícil, se me dificultaba mas entender las cosas. Pero ahora, como ahorita como de las preguntas y esto pues ya, este lo voy comprendiendo mejor…
Int.	¿Te toco hacer al principio trabajos en equipo? ¿te toco?
Al.	En los…?
Int.	Los primeros días, aja o en los otros ingleses
Al.	En los otros ingleses no, no nos ponían trabajo… eran los trabajos nos lo ponían individuales (mj) o así como por ejemplo ahorita de las copias, que usted nos sienta en equipos para resolverlo, (mj) en las otras clases nos decían 'resuelvan tal parte'(mj) pero no nos decían este 'agrúpense (alumnas se despiden) en grupos de 2 o 3' sino que nos decían 'resuélvanlo' ***y ya uno solito*** tenia que empezar a entender, pues ahí si ***yo los ejercicios no los hacia porque yo no se mucho de ingles*** (mj) ***pues no los hacia yo***. Y acá pos se me hace un poco mas fácil por lo mismo de que ***los compañeros van resolviéndolos y ya voy entendiendo,*** y pues ahorita si ya… ***Al principio si como que no participaba yo tanto con ellos porque por lo mismo de que no entendía, pero ahora hay palabras que ya las entiendo y 'no, pues puede ser esto, y esto' y como que ya nos apoyamos ahí entre todos,*** al principio no (chao, le cierro la puerta, señal 'no gracias') (mj) si, bueno, (ok) eso es, lo que *me ha ayudado bastante, también y que ahora usted nos ha empezado a hablar un poco mas en español*, o sea para (ah si?) no tanto, pero para las

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Questions 1, 4. What moment / part of the lesson makes you feel anxious / nervous / insecure?

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Strategy IV. Peer seeking.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Feeling isolated, cut off. Territorial classrooms.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Belief: everyone knows what to do except me.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Knowing first hand what to do. Need for safe integration.

Elba 10/12/07 15:07
Comment: Feeling he has nothing to contribute with

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Empowerment. Collaboration which leads to safe integration.

Elba 10/12/07 15:08
Comment: Stepping on safe ground.

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	cosas que no se entienden muy bien entonces, si me ha servido bastante
Int.	Mj ok, ahora entonces, ya por ultimo digamos que…: vas a seguir teniendo clases, te digo y vas a seguir teniendo de, a ver que te toca (si). Aja, y vamos a terminar la, el curso pues casi como lo empezamos. Ahorita estas prácticamente como lo empezamos pero ya están mucho mas integrados (si) eh, **como para que se te bajen los nervios, tanto en la clase que ahorita vamos a acabar como en las clases que te vengan… a que vas a recurrir.**
Al.	Pues, ahora si que para entenderlo (aja) le digo, de hecho en mi casa yo tengo los libros (aja) bueno, son dos diccionarios, grandes pero también como ya están un poco atrasados luego hay palabras que no se si sean recientes o no se pero no vienen en el diccionario (mj) ***y este, pues trato.*** Ahora también otra cosa a la que recurrí por así decirlo, ***fue ayudarles a mis hermanos en sus tareas de ingles de la secundaria (¡!) (risa)*** bueno, son de secundaria y, como se me hacen un poco mas fáciles (mj) las preguntas de secundaria que ahorita, pues ya ***con mis hermanos y eso ya digo 'ah mira aquí es así y aquí puedes contestar esto y esto'***, y… a veces agarro sus libros de ingles y me pongo a hojearlos a ver que este que ya entiendo y que es lo que no entiendo y busco en el diccionario o sea, yo ***les ayudo a hacer sus tareas, mas a mi hermana que va en tercero ya de secundaria*** pues es con la que mas ***me pego ahí a ver si se me pega tantito (risas) aja y entre los dos,*** aja pues si es un poco divertido no también estar entendiendo ingles. *Pero pues, nada mas así* y, le digo, luego *hago las cosas que le diré no soy muy afecto a ingles, también, otra realidad es que el ingles, por lo mismo, no se si es porque se me haga difícil pero casi no.* Y también a lo mejor como *soy muy poco a la idea de que digo bueno, así que me vaya a servir el ingles en mi carrera le digo no, pero dicen que nunca hay que decir de esta agua no beberé,* porque ya puede suceder. Pero si, y entonces pues mas que nada ha sido y eso y ***yo me trato de ayudar en esa forma, o sea, ayudarle a mi hermana y el diccionario mas que nada*** no, el diccionario. *Pues en si otra cosa, como le digo, que puedo hacer?* (mj) pos no. Le digo, de lo del, libro de trabajo, (mj) si lo leo, y como ya esta contestado lo busco en el diccionario en español. Me dijo un amigo que no haga yo tanto eso, porque si no, estar todo buscando en español y en español, dice, nunca vas a aprender el ingles dice, 'trata de pensarlo en ingles, alo mejor cuando estés viendo una silla piénsalo en tu cabeza en ingles, chair /ei/ o, que se yo, table /ei/ o, que se yo' dice, 'pero piénsalo en ingles, dice, no te enfoques tanto a que estés a pues aquí dice esto o lo voy a buscar en el diccionario a ver que dice en español, mas que nada piensa trata de pensarlo en ingles, trata de acordarte (aja) de algo.' Eso es lo que me ha dicho pero pos si le digo
Int.	No lo has intentado a ver si te sirve
Al.	No lo he intentado.
Int.	Pues bueno, por mal camino no vas y, los consejos que te han dado, también son de utilidad. Yo digo que todo sirve (si, eso si) todo sirve, o sea, agarra de todo (ríe), **todo sirve**. Este, si, **espero que también la parte grupal les ayude**

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Question 6. Without making any changes to it, what would you do differently not to feel anxious / nervous / insecure in class?

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Strategy III. Positive thinking. Voice raises here.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Helping others: empowerment.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Helping others: empowerment.

Elba 10/12/07 15:08
Comment: Finding ways to be in contact with the language

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Feeling accompanied.

Elba 10/12/07 15:08
Comment: Feelings of helplessness, little acceptance towards language learning and resignation.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Feeling can't do much. Yet tries.

Elba 8/12/07 12:49
Comment: Helplessness. Wants advice.

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Al.	***No créame que si nos sirve de mucho, mas como a los demás compañeros. Ya ve L, R y ellos que también*** (y que no vinieron hoy, eh? Ríe) que no vinieron y bueno, ***también están mal en ingles, yo los he visto que, que les ayuda, les sirve. La verdad no se como vayan ellos pero yo he visto que si le van agarrando mas a esto del ingles***
Int.	Pues si vienen mañana, mañana les pregunto también porque… bueno (si) bueno, algo mas?

Elba 10/12/07 15:10
Comment: Confirms whether something helps by itself (seeking others).

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Reflections on the Connections between Second Language Acquisition Theories and Language Teaching: A Historical Perspective

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In the 1940s and 1950s, research in second language acquisition (SLA) emphasized the study of contrasts between languages. Errors made by second language learners were attributed to transfer from their first language (L1). The influence of the L1 was thought to play a role of paramount importance in the acquisition of a second language (L2) (Lado, 1957). But as more research was carried out, the idea of explaining language learners' errors in terms of the differences between languages was challenged (Dulay and Burt, 1973, 1974). A new paradigm in SLA research was emerging. The attention of research moved from viewing errors as a product of L1 transfer to viewing learning a second language as a distinct process. This shift of approach has triggered claims with regard to how second languages are learnt and how they should be taught.

What is the nature of this research? And perhaps more importantly for the language teacher, can these findings be translated into effective recommendations for how to learn and teach a second language? The intention of this essay is to explore some salient second language acquisition theories in to the light of their connection with language teaching.

Developments in the Understanding of Second Language Acquisition

A key concept in the study of SLA is that of *developmental sequences*. Developmental sequences refers to the idea that learners studying a second language grasp certain areas of grammatical knowledge early and others only until afterwards, regardless of their mother tongue. A cornerstone of the idea of the existence of developmental sequences in second language learners was the work of Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974). Their research showed that children of Spanish and Chinese background learning English had a similar order of acquisition of a set of grammatical morphemes. Additional research, this time with adults, was carried out by Bailey et al (1974) and confirmed a similar pattern of acquisition order in learners with different language backgrounds. The grammatical morphemes Dulay and Burt investigated in their first study were: progressive '*–ing*', plural '*s*', irregular past tense, possessive, articles (a, the), 3rd person singular present, copula be (contractible), and auxiliary be (contractible). Further research has examined these and other features such as negation, questions, relative clauses and references to the past (see Schumann, 1979 for a review, Pienemann et al, 1988, Doughty, 1991, and Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995 respectively; cited in Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

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A seemingly obvious implication for language learning and teaching is the creation of a syllabus based on this natural order of acquisition: "The most effective instruction is that which follows the observed order of difficulty, one with a 'natural syllabus'." (Bailey et al, 1974:243).

Such a proposal implies that the process of acquiring the natural sequence is linear. It assumes that once linguists have established what the developmental sequence is, course designers or material writers will be able to write a syllabus to fit it. But the whole process of language acquisition is not that simple. To me it seems more reasonable to view acquisition as Corder (1986) describes it: "The spontaneous development of grammar is organic. Everything is happening simultaneously." (Corder, 1986:187).

In addition, research findings acknowledge that whereas in general terms there is a predictable order of stages in linguistic development, there is considerable variation within each stage (see Meisel et al, 1981). Meisel et al suggest that some of the patterns found within this developmental framework are likely to be explained as "being the result of strategies which are not shared by all speakers, but are specific to only one or several groups of learners" (Meisel et al, 1981:131). Strategy is certainly one factor in determining such variations, but there are other factors to be considered. Nonetheless, their argument raises the issue of variability among learners.

Naïve as the idea of a natural syllabus might seem, it is supported by an important underlying premise which emphasizes the role of the learner in the process of learning a second language and acknowledges the presence of innate subconscious processes that guide the acquisition of the second language. What are those processes? In other words, how do we acquire a second language?

An early attempt to present a comprehensive theory of second language acquisition was Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Krashen (1985) affirms that exposure to the target language through natural communication is a necessary condition in the process of acquisition (i.e. a naturalistic approach). But in order for acquisition to take place, the content of this natural communication must be comprehensible for the learner: "We progress along the natural order by understanding input that contains structures at our next 'stage' – structures that are a bit beyond our current level of competence" (Krashen, 1985:2). The context, the learner's knowledge of the world and previously acquired linguistic competence play an important role in Krashen's model of SLA in that they enable the learner to understand language that contains grammar which has not yet been acquired. Krashen also highlights the importance of a 'silent phase' at the beginning of language learning – a stage in which the learner does not produce the target language. In his model, Krashen deals with the idea of variability, not in the sense of differences within developmental stages, as discussed above, but in the sense of success or failure on the part of the learner to acquire language when comprehensible input is available. Emotional states such as anxiety, stress,

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lack of motivation and a negative attitude are believed to inhibit acquisition (i.e. through a high affective filter).

Krashen's idea of comprehensible input assumes that because the new information is slightly above the actual level of knowledge of the learner (i.e. *i + 1*), he or she will be able to process both content and form. But the process of comprehension is much more complex and the principle behind comprehensible input appears to be too naive.

From a cognitive perspective, it is assumed that human cognition is information processing and that information is stored in different memories with different capacities. Information recently attended to by the central processor is kept in short term memory, which has a limited capacity (see Ericsson and Simon, 1993). Because of this limitation, learners simply cannot process all the input they are exposed to; rather, they focus on particular features of the information they are receiving. In a context where the content of the information is privileged over linguistic form, such as the communicative or naturalistic classroom, the priority of learners will tend to be to process language which has the most communicative value. In the case of English, it is lexical words rather than grammatical words that carry the most communicative value.

It follows that if content and linguistic form compete for attention in comprehension, and it is content (or meaning) that generally prevails, how is the learner expected to develop his or her interlanguage system in a naturalistic environment? Arguably, comprehensible input is not enough.

While Krashen contends that a necessary condition for acquisition to take place is comprehensible input, the role of interaction and communication is not emphasized in his model. However, interaction is believed to play an important role in second language acquisition. Swain (1985), for example, suggests that 'comprehensible output' (also referred to as 'pushed output') contributes to acquisition as well. Comprehensible output occurs when learners are encouraged to reformulate their messages to make them more comprehensible. Similarly, Long (1996) affirms that acquisition is aided when input is made comprehensible through negotiating for meaning (i.e. the Interaction Hypothesis). Negotiation for meaning refers to attempts of learners during interaction to overcome comprehension difficulties through interactional adjustments so that partially comprehensible or incomprehensible input becomes comprehensible. In this sense, negotiation for meaning in an activity occurs when the listener signals to the speaker that his or her message (the speaker's message) is not clear, hence they need to work linguistically to resolve this difficulty (see Pica, 1994).

In the context of the classroom, the processes of negotiation of meaning leading to reformulation are potentially promoted by the teacher or by other learners, and in either case they constitute excellent opportunities for providing genuine communicative interaction (Cook, 2001).

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A reaction to these ideas in the field of ELT was the advent of task-based instruction; that is, an approach where students in the classroom carry out tasks which produce a definite outcome. To complete a task, students are engaged in meaningful interaction and in doing so they are expected to negotiate what they want to convey when they encounter gaps in their understanding. But how much do students really negotiate in task-based activities? And how much do students reformulate in classroom interaction?

Based on a database of lesson extracts, Seedhouse (1999) evaluated the interaction produced by tasks in the classroom. He found that learners tend to minimize their effort (including linguistic effort) to complete a task. Rather than linguistic competence being stretched, challenged and upgraded, learners' interaction portrays "such a minimal display of their linguistic competence that it resembles a pidgin" (Seedhouse, 1999: 154). Similarly, Foster (1998) analyzed the language produced by intermediate EFL students engaged in 'required and optional information exchange tasks' in pair and group work. He found that very few students in either setting reformulated. He suggests that negotiating for meaning is not a strategy that learners are willing to use when facing communication problems. Furthermore, of the few interaction modifications learners made, the most common were lexical, not syntactic.

To summarize the preceding discussion, it has been proposed that (1) learners tend to process what is communicatively valuable; (2) the language used for task completion tends to be syntactically poor; and (3) lexical items appear to take priority both in comprehension and output adjustment. These contentions seem to undermine the value of comprehensible input and comprehensible output for language acquisition.

Nevertheless, the naturalistic view strongly influenced the teaching practice of the language classroom in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The communicative approach, task-based instruction, and content-based instructional programs had their heyday in those years. Common to these approaches is the heavy emphasis on meaningful interaction and language use rather than knowledge about language; materials and activities emphasize a communicative purpose rather than just a linguistic goal; and the attention of the students should primarily be on messages, ideas, and content rather than on the linguistic form in isolation (Ellis, 1982).After all, the central aim of second language teaching is to develop communicative competence in learners.

But communicative competence implies providing the language learner with a balance among sociolinguistic, discourse, pragmatic and grammatical competences (Canale, 1983). It follows that an approach that pays extreme importance to language use at the expense of linguistic form (i.e. grammatical competence) is not actually promoting a fair balance of communicative competence.

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What is the role of a conscious focus on linguistic form, then? The concept of consciousness has been an important issue in second language acquisition research since the 1980s. A radical viewpoint is Krashen's. He makes a distinction between learning and acquisition and posits the consciously learned system as a 'monitor' which is used when the learner's focus is on being correct. The role of conscious learning is regarded as playing no role in acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Conversely, Schmidt (1990) argues for the importance of conscious attention. He asserts that conscious attention is necessary for conversion of input to intake[7]: "Subliminal language learning is impossible, and … intake is what learners consciously notice" (Schimdt, 1990:149). Similarly, other researchers (Ellis, 1994, 1997; McLaughlin, 1987, Sharwood-Smith, 1993; Long, 1996) challenge Krashen's distinction between conscious learning and subconscious acquisition.

It is widely accepted that conscious learning (such as that enhanced by focus on form, creating salience, input enhancement, the development of learning strategies, or contrasting the L1 and the L2) facilitates the learning of a second language in adults. Long, for example, suggests that success or failure to learn can partially be explained in terms of the learner him- or herself, "in the areas of attention, awareness and cognitive processing" (Long 1996:425).

Under the perspective of meaningful communication, explicit dealing with grammar is expected to be different from traditional grammar teaching. An alternative trend in research is the idea of focus on form (cf. focus on forms[8]), where the emphasis is on drawing the learner to view 'language as object, but in context.' To put it in Long's words "learners need to attend to a task if acquisition is to occur, but … their orientation can best be to both form and meaning, not to either form or meaning alone" (Long, 1996:429). It is important to note that the idea of conscious attention applies not only to grammar, but also to vocabulary, collocation, phonology, and pragmatics (see Schimidt, 1990, Willis and Willis, 1996).

Recommendations for how to learn and teach languages

The following is a summary list of implications drawn from the discussion in the previous section. Some have already been explicitly made while others were implicit in the overall discussion above. They try to be congruent with the findings about the nature of second language acquisition:

Recommendations for the teacher

- Allow for a rich exposure to the target language.
- Allow for silent periods, especially at early stages, but also at other stages,

[7] i.e. input which is actually helpful for the learner.
[8] see Long 1986:429 for a discussion of the differences between *focus on form* and *focus on forms*

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to give learners an opportunity to reflect and internalize.
- Allow for different sources of input - pair and group work.
- Seek a balance between teacher-talking time and student-talking time.
- Do not expect accurate production, especially at early stages – favour meaningful communication.

Recommendations for the learner

- Read extensively.
- Be creative with language; do not be afraid of making mistakes.
- Use language genuinely, inside and outside the classroom.

Activities and materials should...

- Be set up in meaningful, contextualised situations (including drills!).
- Link new to old or given information (both linguistic and world knowledge).
- Emphasise what language does rather than what language is.
- Offer opportunities to negotiate and reformulate meaning.
- Increase the learners' sensitivity to language and learning.

I have tried to bring together some important issues that, in my opinion, are relevant to the discussion of second language acquisition and language teaching. While this account is by no means exhaustive, I hope I have aroused an interest for further discussion.

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First Step: A Práctica Docente Student Tutoring Program

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Introduction

Standing in front of a real classroom for the first time is a scary experience. The same is true of doing micro-teaching in a Práctica Docente classroom. An excellent way to alleviate this fear is to have Práctica Docente students spend a semester doing individualized tutoring sessions with students who are studying English. This provides Práctica Docente students with the opportunity to practice-teach first, without having to deal with stage fright at the same time.

The Universidad de Quintana Roo in Chetumal, Mexico has a five-year Licenciatura program in Lengua Inglesa. Students study the English language throughout the ten-semester program. In addition, during the last five semesters of the program they begin preparation to become English teachers, taking courses such as Philosophy of Education, Educational Technology, Methodology and Techniques of Teaching English, and Elaboration of Materials. During semesters 9 and 10 they take Práctica Docente I and II. As the course names imply, these subjects are very practical, allowing the students to put into practice everything that they have learned during the courses of the English language major. The Práctica Docente courses give students the chance to develop professionally and the opportunity to actually practice teaching skills.

During Práctica Docente I, students are required to participate in a tutoring program and observe classes in the Centro de Enseñanza de Idiomas. During the two Práctica Docente seminars each week, students discuss what they have observed and learned through the tutoring and observation experiences. As the semester progresses, students do some micro-teaching during the seminars. In their tenth and final semester, students take Práctica Docente II. This course requires students to do several different micro-teaching segments during the seminars, as well as to observe classes and assist classroom teachers in primary, secondary and preparatory institutions in the community.

Project history

The tutoring program was first started in 1999 when Práctica Docente students began tutoring a group of village-based eco-tourism guides in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Since that time, the program has expanded to include the tutoring of Lengua Inglesa students who are in the early stages of learning English, as well as tutoring students from other majors who are taking obligatory English courses in the Centro de Enseñanza de Idiomas of the university.

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Objective:

The rationale behind this program is to give Práctica Docente students the opportunity to teach one or two people at a time before they have to deal with typical classroom issues such as discipline, crowding, and hostile students. The tutoring experience also prepares Práctica Docente students to do individualized teaching which can be a good employment option to supplement a regular teaching salary.

Benefits

I have found that students enjoy this experience because, for many, it is the first time they really feel like teachers. They are able to put their knowledge to work and see the results of their years of university training. They become very excited and motivated to do an excellent job, and they are able to work on the development of their teaching skills in a relatively safe and comfortable environment.

The tutoring experience provides Práctica Docente students practice opportunities in giving clear directions, explaining grammar points, and becoming more comfortable with teaching in general. Plus, they become more familiar with books, materials, and supplemental activities which can make their lessons dynamic. The experience also helps them develop effective error correction techniques, as well as strategies to help students with pronunciation and communication problems. The Práctica Docente students learn firsthand about the planning and timing of activities. This practical experience helps prepare them for teaching in front of a classroom as they develop self-confidence, not only in their teaching skills, but in their English language skills as well.

Organization

The organization of this program has been very straightforward. At the beginning of each fall semester, teachers at the university make their English students aware of this tutoring opportunity, and those who are interested sign up to participate. The teacher in charge of the Práctica Docente program assigns one tutor (a Práctica Docente student) to one or two tutees. The tutors and tutees have an initial meeting during which they make a schedule to work together once a week during the semester. Usually, there are approximately 40 students taking the Práctica Docente I course. However, during some semesters there have been more than 40 students who have signed up to be tutored. On those occasions, I have assigned two tutees to one tutor, and this has actually worked out very well. It has provided food for thought as to whether two or three tutees with one tutor might not be wiser than a one-on-one arrangement. Not only does it reduce the problem of an absent student and hence a missed/cancelled session for the tutor, but it is also similar to having a small class.

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What happens during tutoring sessions

The work done during tutoring sessions is that of general support and practice of what the students have been learning in their regular English classes. The sessions are not used for doing homework, but instead are used to teach and reinforce skills in which students have been having difficulties. In addition, the sessions are an opportunity for natural conversation in English in a private setting. Many tutees have stated that this was the first time they felt comfortable speaking in English.

Challenges

Attendance

In general, the program has gone smoothly and been highly successful, except for some problems with regular attendance. One reason for student absences has been due to motivational issues on the part of some individuals; another reason has been caused by busy schedules and time constraints. A third has stemmed from the voluntary nature of the program. These attendance issues in turn affect the continuity of the classes, as well as the enthusiasm levels of both tutors and tutees.

Committment, motivation, and scheduling of sessions

The motivational issue is one that needs to be examined. The program is intended to be a voluntary one; however, in some cases, teachers have told certain students that they must participate because of their low grades or other learning difficulties. This is not a pull-out from their regular class, but an extra session for these students, outside of regular class hours As would be expected, some of these individuals were not intrinsically motivated, and as a result did not regularly attend the tutoring sessions. Students who are pushed to participate may not be suitable candidates for this program, especially if they need to come to sessions during their free time. In examining this aspect, one possible solution was to have the sessions take place during regular class hours, with all students having a tutor; this would be a way for everyone to receive individualized tutoring attention, with the presence of the regular teacher as support and back-up. In other words, the tutoring sessions could be incorporated into the regular class hours, perhaps on a Friday to review what was learned during the week.

Generally speaking, the highly motivated students attended faithfully, yet even some of these individuals had attendance problems due to their busy schedules and other responsibilities. This may be another reason to have the sessions take place during regular class hours.

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The Práctica Docente students and I looked closely at the absenteeism rate, and we decided to experiment with the concept of using contracts in the fall of 2006 in the hope of solving this problem. At the beginning of the semester, tutees had to sign contracts which obligated them to attend all sessions, except in the case of medical or family emergencies. However, the contracts seemed to have no obvious positive effect as they were not legally binding; in reality they didn't affect the commitment level of the tutees one way or the other.

Location

Because of the lack of available classrooms or free space at the university, there are very few locations on campus where tutoring sessions can be held. The cafeteria is too noisy, and the library is not a suitable location because of its silence policy of silence. Finding a good tutoring location has been a big problem.

Evaluation

Reflections

All the Práctica Docente students were required to hand in a reflective journal and lesson plan for each tutoring session. The lesson plans were helpful because this forced the tutors to focus on the structure of their lessons, the timing of the activities, and the search for effective ways to supplement and adapt the books the students are using in their classes.

The reflective journals have been excellent tools through which the tutors can reflect on what worked well and what didn't, as well as identify areas they need to work on. For example, many of the Práctica Docente students discovered that they had trouble giving clear and concise grammar explanations. Great improvements were made in this regard during the course of the semester.

Presentations

At the end of the semester, the students were required to make a final presentation during the Práctica Docente seminar. The tutors outlined all aspects of their tutoring work, including a description of their tutees' proficiency level and specific difficulties, the types of activities carried out, the resources used, and the problems which they faced. They also summarized the areas in which they, as tutors, had improved and those which needed more work. This type of experiential sharing was extremely useful as the students could identify universal problems and share solutions.

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Summary

Overall, the Práctica Docente students found the tutoring experience to be exciting, gratifying, and fun. They felt that not only was it excellent preparation for the micro-teaching and classroom practice they would be doing in the second semester of Práctica Docente, but it also gave a big boost to the self-esteem of all those involved. In addition, it provided a positive benefit to the English-learning community of the university through the availability of free tutoring sessions to those interested.

Future changes as solutions to challenges

As mentioned earlier, absenteeism, commitment, and location have represented the biggest obstacles. Therefore, I have decided to try a new approach to the tutoring program during the fall 2007 semester in order to hopefully remedy these difficulties.

A former Práctica Docente student who participated in the first tutoring project in 1999 is now teaching in a local secondary school. She approached me to see if we could begin a tutoring project in two of her classes. With over forty students in each group, she would like to do something special to spice up these large classes, as well as offer remedial help at the same time. She said she is looking for a way to give her students special attention, particularly in the areas of speaking and writing. English is mandatory, but most of her students have no interest in learning the language. This situation seems like an excellent opportunity to explore various changes in the tutoring program, as well as to remedy location and absenteeism problems.

One change will be the number of tutees assigned to each tutor. In the fall 2007 semester, there are 30 Práctica Docente I students; they will be working with a total of 87 secondary school students, with one tutor assigned to two or three tutees. Therefore, in the case of the absence of a tutee, the tutor will not have gone to the session in vain. This should help to keep the motivation level of the Práctica Docente students high. In addition, because the sessions will be held during regular class hours at the secondary school, there will be no problem with missed sessions.

The issue of location will also be solved because the sessions will take place in the secondary school during the two regular Friday afternoon class times. Group A begins at 2:00, and Group B at 3:30; 15 Práctica Docente tutors will work with Group A, and 15 with Group B, each tutor being responsible for 2 or 3 students. In order to comfortably accommodate everyone, half of the groups will meet in the classroom, and the other half in the library. The principal of the school has been very supportive of the project and has offered the use of the library during these two hours.

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Extending the tutoring program into the public school system is an exciting new challenge. It will be gratifying to see the results of offering this service in a secondary school setting where positive seeds of language learning need to be sown.

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