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Special Issue: Teaching English to Younger Learners

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Special Issue:
Teaching English to Younger Learners

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 Previously unpublished articles and book reviews relevant to EFL teaching and research in Mexico and Latin America are accepted for publication.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

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

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

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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.

Web sites:

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

Editors' Introduction

MEXTESOL Journal Special Issue on Teaching English to Younger Learners

Peter Sayer, University of Texas at San Antonio
Mario López Gopar, Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca / OISE-UT

The themes for special issues of the *Mextesol Journal* are chosen because the editorial board feels they are "hot topics" in our field. We proposed the topic of teaching English to younger learners because we perceived that although the profession in Mexico has generally focused on *secundaria* and above, there is a growing interest in teaching English as a foreign language to children. This interest of course corresponds to the expansion of English programs in *primaria* grades and even early childhood. This expansion of the focus and efforts of TESOL educators is happening both in private and now increasingly in public schools as well (see the Mextesol special issue edited by Smith, 2003). All evidence indicates that the trend towards introducing more English classes in lower grades will continue and continue to expand. There is a general assumption that if we start teaching English earlier, it will automatically produce better results. However, as Cameron (2003) cautions us, the expansion of EFL to younger learners creates special challenges in terms of how we as teachers must combine English teaching with children's literacy development, how to assess their learning, and how to develop teaching strategies specific for youngsters' learning styles. In addition, we need to reflect about how we can teach this language in a critical, local manner that promotes all of the languages (Spanish and Indigenous) and cultures present in Mexico. As language educators, we need to respond to these challenges by focusing our scholarly efforts on meeting the needs of teachers and students to generate theories, methods, materials, curricula and policies, and professional discussions around how to best teach English to young children in our Mexican context. The papers presented in this issue are the authors' contributions to this effort, and once again demonstrates that there is a vibrant, productive community of scholars working to meet Mexico's needs for quality English language teaching.

As Ruth Ban poignantly illustrates with her narrative piece in this issue, ELT in Mexico has undergone a process of professionalization built on an enormous amount of hard work from dedicated teachers. We want to thank everyone who has been involved in writing, reviewing, and supporting the development of this issue; the list of reviewers for this issue is listed below. The response we received to our Call for Papers for this special issue confirmed our suspicion that this is a timely and relevant topic. We received many excellent manuscripts covering a range of topics related to the theme of the issue from both local and international educators; some from well-established scholars, and others from first-time authors and contributors. In choosing the articles to include here, we have sought to balance between those with a practical, classroom-based focus, and those which deal with theories and research.

The first part of this issue includes three research papers. All examine classrooms where children are learning English. However, each takes a different orientation. Clemente, Dantas-Whitney, and Higgins examine the affective and sociocultural side of children learning English. They use ethnography to look at how children from working-class backgrounds in the city of Oaxaca use English as a site for expressing a wide range of emotions and interactions. Mercau's article presents an empirical study on children's development of oral skills, and focuses specifically on their acquisition of yes/no questions. Hearn and Sams provide an overview of a public English language acquisition program (grades K-2) in the U.S. Through the use of vignettes, they illustrate strategies to develop English literacy and emphasize that the creation of a positive, active, and engaging learning community is essential when working with youngsters.

The second part includes articles that address the questions of curricula, policies, and materials for teaching English to children. The first two articles offer a historical perspective. Tapia Carlín reminds us that although we think of ELT as a recent phenomenon in Mexico, in fact it has a longer history than we might suspect. She describes a bilingual education initiative in Puebla dating back to the 1930s. Ban gives us a more contemporary perspective: Her historical perspective goes back 15 years as she recounts a volunteer project in Aguascalientes that became the official state *Inglés en Primarias* program. Next, López Gopar and coauthors evaluate *Enciclomedia*, the computer-based program for teaching English to children. They offer a critical perspective that critiques and questions many of the assumptions built into the program. Moore and Sayer give an overview of models of sheltered instruction, a popular method for teaching L2 English to children in the U.S. and elsewhere. They consider the relevance and potential of adopting and adapting this method for ELT in Mexico. Finally, de Mejía gives a comparative perspective, and explains how English teaching at the elementary level has been implemented in Colombia. Her account offers many parallels for the efforts in Mexico.

In the final section, there are several shorter articles that focus on classroom practice. From Slovenia, Pislar describes a fun and motivating unit that she has designed for kindergarten-aged children around the book *Little Red Riding Hood*, incorporating puppets, songs and many excellent dynamics for youngsters. González García gives us an excellent explanation of how to design a "WebQuest" for our students: A series of internet based activities around a particular theme or topic. Torres Soriano addresses the difficult topic of assessing younger learners, and explains how to use portfolios as a way to assess children's language development over time, rather than in a single moment. Lastly, Farley presents "readers' theatre," a classroom activity that brings reading and literature to life. We hope that this collection will stimulate your thinking and give you ideas for your classroom.

References:

Cameron, L. (2003). Challenges in ELT from the expansion in teaching children. *ELT Journal, 57*(2): 105-112.

Smith, P. (2003). An introduction to bilingualism and bilingual education in Mexico. *MEXTESOL Journal Special Issue: Bilingualism and Bilingual Education in Mexico, 26*(3): 9-12.

Ethnographic Encounters with Young Language Learners in an Urban Primary School of Oaxaca*

Ángeles Clemente, Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca
Maria Dantas-Whitney, Western Oregon University
Michael J. Higgins, Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca

Abstract

The article reports on a long-term ethnographic study with pre-service EFL teachers teaching a group of working-class 4th and 5th grade students in Oaxaca, Mexico. The authors present ethnographic narratives on three different language encounters that took place among these students and student-teachers. They illustrate that by listening to the kinds of imagined communities that students envision, we can begin to see how bilingual/multilingual encounters can open up spaces for creative and aesthetics actions. The performative activities taking place in these complex interactions allow the children, teachers and researchers to examine their identities and to express their agencies in new and imaginative ways. Through a framework of critical pedagogy, the analysis of these narratives suggests a way to move beyond the concreteness of these particular contexts towards more hopeful worlds of social responsibility and justice.

El artículo se trata de un estudio etnográfico a largo plazo con maestros practicantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), haciendo su práctica docente con un grupo de alumnos de clase trabajadora que están en 4o y 5o grado en Oaxaca, México. Los autores presentan las narrativas etnográficas de tres encuentros lingüísticos entre dichos maestros y alumnos. Estos encuentros demuestran que si ponemos atención a las posibilidades o »comunidades imaginadas« que los alumnos crean, podemos empezar a percibir cómo estos encuentros bilingües/multilingües pueden abrir espacios para acciones creativas y estéticas. Las actividades performativas que ocurren durante estas interacciones complejas permiten a los niños, maestros, e investigadores examinar sus identidades y expresar su agencia en formas novedosas e imaginativas. A través de un marco teórico de la pedagogía crítica, el análisis de estas narrativas señala una manera de pensar más allá de la especificidad de estos contextos e ir con esperanza hacia un mundo de responsabilidad y justicia social.

Introduction

For over the last two years we have been tracking a group of students through their 4th and 5th grade classes in an urban primary school in the city of Oaxaca. The Language Center at the state university of Oaxaca has, for the past several years, been placing its practice teachers in urban classrooms to provide introductory classes in English. However, the class we have been observing is somewhat different in that the students come from very humble backgrounds and several of the male students are from the *Ciudad de los Niños*, a children's shelter and orphanage in Oaxaca. Through our encounters with the practice teachers (*Yesenia*,

* This is a refereed article.

Rosi and Irma), the children in the classroom, and the homeroom teachers, we felt that our research should be focused on how the language performances in the classroom were more dramatic and profound than just the utilitarian presentation of grammar and pronunciation skills. The young children were becoming aware that they could imagine many different outcomes for their lives, the student teachers found that they could imagine how to bring their concerns for social justice into the classroom, the homeroom teachers could see new ways for these children to learn and we could envision new dynamics for the process of doing ethnography (Fabian, 2007).

Fabian stresses that "ethnography is product of interaction, with speaking as its major, though not only medium, it is dialogical" and that "[w]hat we take away from research as data is only sometimes found, most often it is made" (2007, p. 13). Thus this "emphasis on communication and language in action made us realize how much of cultural knowledge and hence ethnography is performative" and "what we learn does not come as responses to our questions but is enacted in, and mediated by, events which we may trigger but cannot really control" (ibid). Fabian states that the "goal of anthropology or challenge to understand (and demonstrate) humanity's unity … depends on recognizing the presence or co-temporaneity (co-equvalency) with whom we study" (2007, p. 3). We refer to our methods, interviews, observations, and protocols as ethnographic performances. And it is within these performative dynamics that the co-equivalency of all the participants is composed. It is within this dynamic context of co-equivalency that we (the social actors of these ethnographic encounters) are changing social and personal objectives of language learning, particularly in terms of additional language acquisition (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), contesting the geopolitics of knowledge production through our collaborative efforts against the colonial difference (Mignolo, 2002), and composing sets of learning styles and strategies that are non-hegemonic through the assumption that knowledge is something to be used not owned (Clemente & Higgins, 2008; Lins Ribeiro, 2006).

Thus, in this paper we will present what we have ethnographically encountered as to this point in our research. This will involve briefly describing the state and city of Oaxaca, providing a background of the students and the student-teachers, offering interpretative observations of classroom interaction, and using critical pedagogy to move beyond the concreteness of our particular contexts towards more social responsibility and diversity. These ethnographic encounters suggest that activities of language learning can be spaces where the imagined has more far reaching implications than the utilitarian goals of grammar and pronunciation.

The Context

Oaxaca is located in the southwestern region of Mexico. It is a small state in terms of territorial size and population. The current population is estimated to be approaching four million. The overall political economy of Oaxaca is a regional variation of national patterns of neo-liberal policies of development (Higgins, 1997). The economy of the city of Oaxaca is centered on mercantile enterprises, tourism, and small scale 'artisan' production. The class structure of both the city and the state includes a very small upper-class elite, a large and diverse middle

class and the popular classes. The social and political realities of this social division of labor can be understood in terms of the dynamics of the formal and informal sectors of the economy (Higgins & Coen, 2008).

The formal sectors of these social and economic spaces are organized around a set of assumed rational rules and regulations that are supposed to be applied equally to everyone. These are the social fields of Mexico's larger industries, the country's vast networks of commercial and financial institutions and national, state and local governmental agencies. This is the world of profits, formal wages, taxes and bureaucratic procedures and processes. The informal sector involves those social spaces where small or larger businesses operate outside the legal requirements of wages, health insurance and job protection. It is where one can get services or products without paying taxes or import duties or where one, when dealing with government institutions at any level, can find a way to get something done beyond the actual rules and procedures (Higgins, 1997).

The need to move in between these two sectors is a reality for all social classes of contemporary Mexico and Oaxaca, where one's class position and location affects how effective one's movements can be. This division of formal and informal sectors is expressed differently in rural and urban settings of Oaxaca. The rural areas of Oaxaca are composed of either indigenous or mestizo villages anchored in extreme poverty. Interwoven into this rural social structure, there is a middle income sector that is composed of merchants, small land holders, teachers and government officials. The urban areas of Oaxaca are composed of urban popular classes (ranging from the urban poor to the working class), a diverse middle class of small business owners and professionals, and an elite level divided between the old money of Oaxaca and new money of politics and international commerce (Murphy, Stepick , Morris & Winter, 2002).

The children presented in this essay come from the urban popular classes. When we began this ethnographic encounter there were 18 children in the class, four girls and fourteen boys. Several of the boys were from the children's shelter, several others were from single-head households (in one case the child was in care of her grandmother) and many lived in households where the fathers were working in the United States. Parents worked in a variety of jobs found among the popular classes; they were construction workers, small scale vendors or domestic laborers. Crises of health, economic scarcity, and domestic violence were part of the tapestry of these households.

These children were attending afternoon classes that were set up to meet the realities of such households. Both homeroom teachers (for the fourth and fifth grades) were veteran teachers who were concerned about the children and showed genuine compassion for the difficult, everyday struggles of these children and their households.

Ignacio Allende Primary School is located on one of the main streets in the center of the city. The building was constructed over 50 years ago; it is a two story building with an L-like structure, and a large cement patio area. The classroom is on the second floor. It is a larger room, with widows on the street side, overhead lighting, an array of desks, storage areas, the homeroom teacher's desk and per-

sonal space, and the most prestigious area-- the computer. The room is in no way fancy but is an adequate learning space (1).

Urban primary schools are centered on Spanish, with no officially mandated amount of English instruction. In the rural areas there may be multilingual programs that include both Spanish and the local indigenous language. In the urban areas, there are attempts at bilingual education with English instruction in some private schools. However, English, or any other foreign language, is not an official requirement in the public schools of Mexico at the primary level. Thus, parents who can afford it often send their children to private language schools for either English or other language instruction. At the *Facultad de Idiomas*, students in the English teaching degree program are encouraged to do their teaching practicum in the public primary schools of the city. This is a popular program because it means the schools can offer English without having to bear the cost. Students, teachers and parents are very happy to get English instruction from the student-teachers (Clemente & Higgins, 2008).

The Student Teachers

Yesenia (who is in her early twenties) was the first English student teacher to work with these students during their fourth grade year (2007-08). She finished her coursework last year, and is now working as a part time teacher elsewhere. Currently, Rosi and Irma, who are also in their twenties and students in the eighth semester of the bachelor's degree in TEFL, are working as the English student teachers for the same class in their fifth grade year (2008-09). They are fulfilling their social services requirement for graduation by working with these students. All three are excellent students who were searching for a context where their teaching of English could be more than isolated language exercises. They wanted an opportunity to link their teaching to their concerns for social justice. Yesenia says "[I want to] give them something almost unreachable for poor people: the knowledge of English, but I am also giving them something else. I give them love and attention. I am trying to make them stronger, to have courage to go on, to change their lives". Rosi and Irma share this view: "We believe that everything creates a chain… If we mistreat them, they will repeat this type of behavior… And if they are mistreated in other places, we will only teach them to be more aggressive. We want to show them another way."

Yesenia, Rosi, and Irma's concern for social justice is also evidenced in their commitment to using both English and Spanish in their daily classroom instruction. They recognize that their students are in the early stages of English language acquisition, so Spanish is used as a resource to help them access their prior knowledge and experiences, to develop critical thinking skills, and to explore new understandings. In addition, the mix of Spanish and English creates a positive affective environment that results in greater student engagement and investment in learning. As Toribio (2004) notes, "*not* mixing languages … [in this classroom] would be considered irregular and socioculturally insensitive" (p. 136).

English Lessons and the Everyday Lives of the Students

Rosi and Irma's Teaching Practice

When we arrived at Ignacio Allende School's fifth grade classroom, the students were all sitting, attentively listening, and looking at the whiteboard. The homeroom teacher was explaining something about math. We greeted him and looked for a chair at the back. The teacher finished his explanation and moved to the computer desk with his back to the whole class. When it was evident that the person in charge had changed, the students also changed their attitude and behavior; that is, there was a marked difference between the English class taught by Irma and Rosi and the students' "regular" class with the homeroom teacher. The teacher generally stands in the front of the class by the whiteboard, and the students sit in rows, attentively listening to the teacher and writing in their books and notebooks. When the teacher realized that the English teachers had arrived, he stopped teaching to give "the stage" to them. Immediately the students started moving chairs around because they knew that they would be engaged in activities of a very different nature.

In Rosi and Irma's class the students are always moving around and working on activities that involve games, arts and crafts, and loud noise. Rosi and Irma say that the homeroom teacher is undoubtedly "más estricto" (more strict) than they are (2). They are "más relajadas" (more relaxed). However, the homeroom teacher is extremely supportive of everything Rosi and Irma do in class, no matter how rambunctious the students get. As Rosi and Irma say, he knows that this is their time for them to be the teachers, so he gives them total control of the class. The students know that the English class is very different from their regular daily work.

A Class Activity: Choose a Profession

On one occasion the class was learning about professions. Rosi and Irma prepared several activities to introduce students to different occupations that reflected both skilled and non-skilled labor, in addition to professional careers. One day before class, they asked us for a few English translations. They wanted to know, for example, how to translate the word "albañil" into English. After some discussion, we agreed that "construction worker" might be a better translation than "mason," since "albañil" can refer to anyone who works in construction rather than just stone workers in particular. In discussing the translation of "barrendero," we talked about the fact that the word "street sweeper" in the U.S. generally refers to a machine (a truck), rather than a person. We also had difficulty finding an English translation for "cargador." We came up with words like "skycap" and "bellhop," but concluded that they are too restrictive because they refer only to people who work in airports and hotels. After consulting the dictionary, we came up with "stevedore," which is a bit old-fashioned but better reflects the range of meanings they intended. Clearly, Rosi and Irma wanted to include in their presentation of occupations a range of jobs that are common in the Oaxacan context.

A week later, Irma asked the students which were the professions they had talked about the previous week, and as they shouted out their answers, she wrote them on the board. Someone said "teacher!"

Another wanted "astronauta" in Spanish. Irma translated "astronaut". Another one remembered "pilot!" and shouted it out, while another one remembered "chemist!"

Armando was trying to remember something and said: "Wis-er?...wider?....mesero!!

"Waiter" said Irma, and wrote it on the blackboard. Irma wrote "teacher" on the other side of the whiteboard to start a new list and asked them to give more examples of professions:

"¡Cazador!" Irma wrote "hunter."

"¡Cantante! Cantor"! Irma wrote "singer."

"Arquitecto" and Irma wrote "architec" (sic). She hesitated about the spelling.

José complained about the list:

"¡Yo queria arquitecto!" (I wanted architect!). Damián joined him:

"¡Yo no me se ninguno!" (I do not know any of those!)

Rosi arrived and Irma asked her to check her spelling on the board. Rosi spoted the missing "t" and added it. Next Irma explained the activity:

"Tienen que escoger una profesion y escribirla en su pedazo de papel" (You have to choose a profession and write it down on your piece of paper). She also told them to arrange their chairs in a circle. It was evident that they had played the game before. Very creatively, some of them played around with some variations: filling the piece of paper with too much scotch tape, sticking the piece of paper on their legs or on their heads, or even using the back of the paper to write a different profession, which some of them defined as cheating.

The game was a variation of the popular musical chairs game. It started with Irma standing in the middle of the circle and saying: "La teacher viene por los hunters" (The teacher takes the hunters). All the students who had a piece of paper labeled "hunter" had to stand up and find a different chair to sit in. Meanwhile, Irma would sit in one of the empty chairs, so one of the hunters would be missing a chair. This student had to stand in the middle of the circle and make the next announcement. He said "El hunter viene por los actors!" (The hunter takes the actors). There was some discussion about some of them playing with too many professions. Soon it was evident that there were more actors, hunters and teachers than singers, which meant that the singers could never win. Irma announced that the ones that lost three times had to dance. José started dancing in a provocative way and everybody started chanting "¡Que baile! ¡Que baile!" (Dance! Dance!) pointing to Anita. Irma showed them the dance she wanted: "El pollo mueve la patita, el pollo mueve las alitas, el pollo mueve el piquito, el pollo mueve la colita" (The chicken moves its leg, the chicken moves its wings, the chicken moves its beak, the chicken moves its tail). There were laughs and giggles when the chicken moved its tail. Now, Anita had to do it. She was very

nervous and hardly moved. Irma finished the song and asked her to sit down while most of the boys complained that she did not dance properly. Irma restarted the game. This time Damián pushed Adan and he fell. Everybody laughed. Damián did not want to lose. He also refused to dance. Everybody was looking at him. He defended himself: "¡Yo no perdí! ¡Todavia no es mi tercera vez!" (I didn't lose! This is not my third time!). Irma decided that it was time to finish the game.

Now it was Rosi's turn. She started with some instructions: "¡Formen dos grupos!" (Divide into two teams!) We are going to play a word game". But nobody paid attention. Some were relaxing from the last activity, and others were attracted to the computer, where Rosi had started a program. She repeated the instruction several times. There were some attempts to form the teams (some boys used this chance to embrace the only two girls in the class), but nothing concrete happened. To motivate them, Irma told them that she would give balloons to the ones that were already in a team. Everybody shouted that they had a team. Their main goal was now to get a balloon, and Rosi was completely ignored. Everybody was around Irma, who was struggling with them. She had managed to inflate some balloons and given them away. Fredy and Fernando started playing volleyball. At one moment, Mariano got the bag of balloons and everybody surrounded him. Adan got four balloons and tied them together. Armando and David were competing to blow them bigger. Santiago was holding the balloon pump and threatened Sonia to blow hers up. Irma managed, with some difficulty, to get it back. Now, Santiago wanted Sonia to notice him simulating masturbating movements with the balloon in between his legs. Again, the lesson finished when somehow the movie was started and all the kids gathered around the computer. Rosi and Irma seemed relieved that their time was over.

As we see it, the overall style of classroom management (or lack of) used by Irma and Rosi gives the students a very fluid context for performing their particular expressions of agency. Students choose where to sit, to work independently or in groups, to collaborate or not. They go in and out of groups, they move around the classroom, and they often gather around the desk next to Irma and Rosi to complete their work while talking to them. These alternative formats encourage student freedom and self-initiative, allow for exploration and negotiation of relationships within the class, and give the students opportunities to express themselves through multiple modes and media. There are diverse performative activities going on, such as formation of social groups, practices of gender games and overt expressions of sexuality. In allowing these flexible participation structures Irma and Rosi risk losing control of the class. They struggle with discipline issues, but they want to create spaces where the children's daily school routines are altered for a short time, thus encouraging and reinforcing student agency and initiative. Students will remember these activities more than how well they conjugated verbs or pronounced English words. Instead of attempting to control this bilingual and bicultural context, Irma and Rosi are composing new ways of learning and producing knowledge.

Yesenia's teaching practice

During her work with this class, Yesenia was committed to creating a curriculum that included the everyday lives of the students. Below, we offer two examples, one dealing with household organization and the other with body types and diversity.

Last year during Yesenia's student-teaching experience, she was pondering how to link a lesson on vocabulary to the reality of family structures. She was especially concerned about the situation in the classroom. As noted earlier, many of her male students came from a children's shelter. Some of them had been left there by their families and some didn't even know if they had families or not. Also, several students came from single-parent households. To make things more difficult, there were some children in the class that did live with their nuclear families. From this group, there was one, Santiago, who had discovered that he could bother his classmates by bragging about the fact that he had a "real" family. He took advantage of any opportunity to mention his mother, his house, and the fact that his father was in the U.S. and would bring him lots of presents from there. We discussed different ways of treating the topic, and some days later Yesenia came back to tell us about her lesson. She started her lesson by showing an excerpt from the animated movie Ice Age (Blue Sky Studios, 2002). After checking that everybody understood the main plot, she introduced the topic of alternative family structures, focusing on the way one of the characters describes their family: "We are a weird herd." The "family" in the movie was formed by "Sid, a fast talking but dimwitted sloth; Manny, a moody wooly mammoth; Diego, a devilish saber-toothed tiger; and a human baby" (ibid). Then she explained that families are very different, and she asked them to describe their families, taking into account not only relatives but also people they lived with and people they cared for. That way, Yesenia made it possible for her students to use English as a means to include their friends, their caretakers and all the other significant people that were part of their "herds" or households.

Yesenia's second question was a week later, when she told us about her plan to do a class session on body parts. This derived from the fact that she was worried because two of her students did not meet what was assumed to be the norm in terms of a "normal body:" Anita had a misshaped hand and Fernando was missing an ear. We discussed various possibilities, and some days later she visited us to report on her results. She had taught the names of the different parts of the body with separate pictures of each of them, to avoid presenting a complete "normal" body. Then she asked them to draw monsters using the vocabulary learned. She made it clear that she wanted them to use their creativity. The results were very attractive, varied and original. The students used their imagination to add elements to their drawings that expressed concerns about their identities and their connections to other imagined communities.

Yesenia knew that her students enjoyed making *cartulinas (posters)* more than writing. The drawing of cartulinas offered the students a stronger means of expression than attempting to stay within the framework of composition writing. Four of the students used existing materials and adapted them to the assignment by adding more parts of the body.

Figure 1: Federico's Vegeta

Several of the students used estampas (collectible cards that they exchange among themselves) showing their favorite characters from cartoons, movies or videogames. Others created their own monsters from scratch, adding features and details that contributed to their "monster-ness." A good example is Federico's Vegeta (see Figure 1). He started with the sketch of a human figure. Then he added two more legs in between the original ones and two pairs of arms below the first he drew. He did the same with the face, adding details to the "normal face". One interesting addition was a second head that seems to come from behind the main one. In between this two heads there was a dragon coming up from the left cheek. To finish it up he stamped a spider on his belly and wrote the name of the monster on its chest in a tattoo/graffiti style.

Whether they were copied or not, most of the monsters had a human resemblance (only two were more alien-like figures) decorated with cultural elements that were salient in the students' lives (graffiti, punk look, tattoos, piercing), and were things they aspired to have or do when they grow up. Although the purpose of the activity was clearly directed to learning the parts of the human body, some of them used non-human features like animal parts (antennas and horns) or even non organic elements (speakers, umbrella) to create their monsters. For us the high frequency of scars (e.g., Figure 2) was a direct connection with a Frankenstein type of monster; however, when we talked to the children they did not make that connection (some hadn't even heard of Frankenstein). This made sense when we realized that the scars were meant to symbolize street fights, with no link to the surgical interventions of Mary Shelly's character.

Figure 2: Ramon's monster with scars

According to Yesenia's instructions for creating a monster, they needed to add or take away parts of the body. That way they were learning the names and practicing the numbers. However, according to the students' view, their creations were monsters not only because of the way they looked but because of their personalities (e.g., bad, weird) or their behaviors (e.g., troublemaker, fighter, nocturnal, human eater).

Another salient feature of this activity was the fact that most of them added written texts to their creations. Often these texts were illegible to us because they had been erased, were unfinished, misspelled, or crossed out. Also some of these texts consisted of coded graffiti, the odd names of the monsters (which they decided was also the title of the drawing) or anything that they wanted to add. Jose's cartulina had the largest textual addition: "El Amor es aora escondido entre los hombres Parece una rosa (sic)" (Love is now hidden among men. It looks like a rose) -- see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Jose's monster and text

This activity was definitively an opportunity for the students to express themselves in creative and playful ways. The ludic aspect of this activity can be illustrated with Fredy's Portberto (see Figure 4), a female monster with a male name, who, apart from wearing a quilted skirt, a blouse with 15 buttons and a hat with flowers, does not fight, but sings.

The most developed cartulina was Edgar's Pandy (see Figure 5). Pandy does not have anything apparently monstrous about it. He is clearly a man. He has one eye not because he is a monster but because he is a fighter. His hair is arranged in a punk style and dyed in two different colors. He has a long scar from his neck to his waist. He is also characterized as a wrestler, bare to the waist, with tight leggings and high-top tennis shoes. He is wearing a belt with the word CHOLAS written in it. His white face (different from the color of his body) resembles a mask. José Edgar completed his creation with some drawings in the background: a bear face, a container and a sign. He explained to us that the bear is a Panda

Figure 4: Fredy's Portberto

Figure 5: Edgar's Pandy

bear that connected the monster with its name; the container is labeled PANDA and holds the chains that Pandy uses to fight. There is also a triangle sign that reads CHOLAS. Its function is marking territory and preventing trespassing. Edgar told us that the CHOLAS are the people who hang around in the streets.

Through these various activities, the particularities of Anita's and Fernando's bodies were no longer so exotic, but were just part of the diversity of how bodies are formed. The students participated in composing a discourse that expanded the boundaries of body types as they moved beyond pre-determined assumptions of what is viewed as "normal." As in their exploration of the diversity of household structures, and again in a playful way, they were adding their voices to how knowledge can be produced (3).

More *Cartulina* Activities

Drawing upon Yesenia's work with the children's use of *cartulinas*, Rosi and Irma have continued with these activities. As we've seen above, the *cartulinas* have given students the opportunity to express themselves through art, utilizing colored markers, glue, scissors and graphics. They integrate the use of written text in both Spanish and English, and pictures (e.g., drawings, clip art or magazine cut-outs) in creative ways. The objective is always to personalize the material being learned. For example, after a unit on jobs and occupations, the class worked on a *cartulina* to answer the question: "What do you want to be?" During a unit on describing locations, the class created *cartulinas* entitled "Where do you want to live?"

In Rosi and Irma's classroom the *cartulinas* have become an important outlet for self-expression, allowing the students to make the English language more authentic and relevant to their world. In this way, the *cartulinas* have also provided Rosi and Irma with a window into the students' lives and their hopes and desires for the future. They learned about Anuar's special relationship with his mom through a *cartulina* activity which asked the students to answer the question: "¿Con quien les gusta vivir?" (Who do you like to live with?). Rosi reflects: "Y el puse pues con su mama. Y en el futuro, ¿con quien te gustaría de seguir viviendo? Pues con mi mama, ¿no?" (And he then wrote with his mom. And in the future, Who would you like to keep living with? Well, with my mom, no?). Rosi concludes that this close relationship with his mother may be the reason why Anuar plays so well with the girls in the class, unlike the other boys: "Anuar… juega con las niñas... y yo digo que tiene mucho que ver con la relación que tiene con su mama … por que la quiere mucho… Habla de eso en la cartulina." (Anuar plays with the girls… and I say that this has a lot to do with the relationship he has with his mom. He talks about this in the poster).What do you want to be?

As mentioned earlier, after learning about jobs and occupations, the class worked on a *cartulina* entitled "What do you want to be?" The kids were supposed to write about what they wanted to be in the future and why. On the back side of the *cartulina*, they were also asked to write about what they *didn't* want to do in the future and why. Rosi and Irma wrote the following directions on the board:

Yo quiero ser de grande _____.
I want to be _____ in the future.
¿Por qué?
Lo que no quiero ser de grande _____.
I don't want to be _____.
¿Por qué?

The kids immediately started working. Rosi and Itezel had brought several different magazines for them to find relevant pictures. They had also brought clip art graphics with drawings of different professions (e.g., fireman, mailman, pilot, doctor, veterinarian, psychologist, teacher).

Several kids expressed very practical reasons for the jobs and occupations they chose for their future. Ernestina, for example, said she wanted to be a psychologist "Porque tengo que estar sentada" (Because I can be seated) and "Porque puedo mandar" (Because I can give orders). Antonio didn't want to be a fireman: "A mi no me gusta ser bombero porque te puedes quemar" (I don't like being a fireman because you can burn yourself). Fredy didn't want to be a pilot: "A mi no me gusta ser pilot porque casi no me gusta biajar (sic) porque me mareo" (I don't like being a pilot because I often don't like traveling because I get sick). Alberto expressed a concern for safety: He wanted to be a chef "porque trabajan en lugares seguros" (because they work in safe places). Finally, Roberto was more materialistic (see Figure 6): "I want to be a fireman ¿Yo quiero ser? Fireman porque apaga el fuego y gana mucho dinero" (What do I want to be? Fireman because they put out the fire and earn a lot of money).

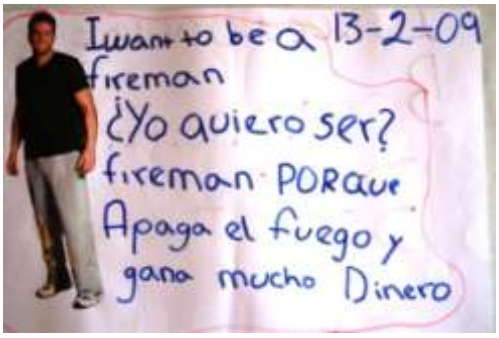

Figure 6: Roberto's cartulina

The kids also expressed idealistic hopes for future occupations. Many of them talked about a desire to help others and to make a difference. Anita wanted to be a doctor "para curar ninos" (to cure children).Vicente also wanted to be a doctor for several reasons: "Porque quiero salvar vidas. Porque quiero conocer bastantes curas de enfermedades incurables. Porque quireo cuidar a los enfermos. Curar a mi familia" (Because I want to save lives. Because I want to know many cures for incurable diseases. Because I want to take care of the sick. Cure my family). Sonia wanted to be a doctor, a lawyer, a chemist and an astronaut so she could "ayudar a la gente a cumplir obligaciones" (help people fulfill their obligations). Edgar wrote on his *cartulina*: "Yo quiero ser chemical (sic), quimico y doctor por que me gusta el oficio, para cuidar a las personas, para inventar cosas" (I want to be a chemist and a doctor because I like the occupation, to take care of people, to invent things). Antonio selected a picture of a mariachi singer

and wrote in his *cartulina* (see Figure 7): "Singer – cantante. Yo quiero ser cantante porque me (sic) a mi me gusta cantar canciones bonitas" (Singer -- I want to be a singer because I like to sing beautiful songs).

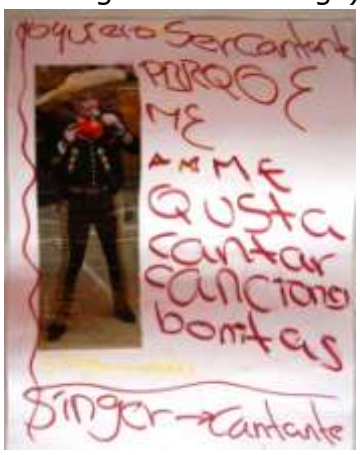

Figure 7: Antonio's cartulina

The students' sociocultural realities perhaps became more clearly depicted when they expressed what they *didn't* want to be in the future. Vicente, David, Damián and Roberto all said that they didn't want to be "borracho" (drunk). Damián added: "porque no me gustaria andar en la calle ni tomando" (because I wouldn't like to walk the streets or drink). Sonia didn't want to sweep the streets, to make candy or to be a beggar: "Lo que no quiero se: barredera, dulcera, pidiente lismona. (sic)" Finally, two boys reflected in their *cartulinas* the negative stereotypical image often assigned to teachers in the state of Oaxaca. Edgar said: "I don't want to be a teacher. Es orible no me gusta ser teacher (sic)" (It's horrible, I don't like being a teacher). Alberto was more critical (see Figure 8): "I don't want to be teacher. Porque hacen huelga" (because they go on strike).

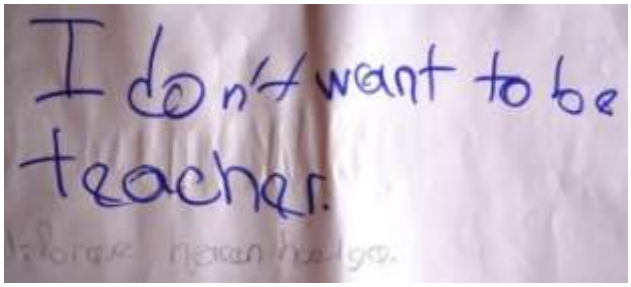

Figure 8: Excerpt of Alberto's cartulina

Where do you want to live?

Another *cartulina* activity asked the students: "Where do you want to live in the future? Why?" The students had just learned about describing places, and this was an opportunity for them to use the language they had learned in a contextualized and personal way.

Most of the students expressed that they wanted to live either in the country or by the beach. In describing the country, the kids mentioned the natural landscape, animals and plants. Sonia said: "I would like to live in *campo* = country in the future. Porque me gustan los rios que hay los animalitos y las frutas" (Because I like the rivers that have the small animals and fruits). Anita expressed a

more nostalgic feeling about the country (see Figure 9): "Porque ahi nascio (sic) y me gustaria vivir mas tiempo en mi pueblo y me gusta mucho los peces, las flores, los arbores, las casas, las frutas y los pollitos" (Because I was born there and I would like to live in my village longer, and I like the fishes, the flowers, the trees, the houses, the fruits and the little chickens very much).

In describing the beach, the kids mentioned the climate, the beauty of the sea, the attraction of seafood and leisure activities. Vicente said: "I would like to live near the sea in the future. Porque es bonito, me gusta el clima y tambien el mar" (Because it is pretty, I like the climate and also the sea). Ernestina reflected: "Porque me gustan camarones, los pescados, es bonito estar en la playa y para salir a jugar y por todo demas" (Because I like shrimp, fish, it is nice to be on the beach and to play and everything else). Edgar had a more adventurous reason: "Porque me gusta la playa y nadar manejar los barcos las bananas lancha" (Because I like the beach and to swim and to drive boats and banana boats).

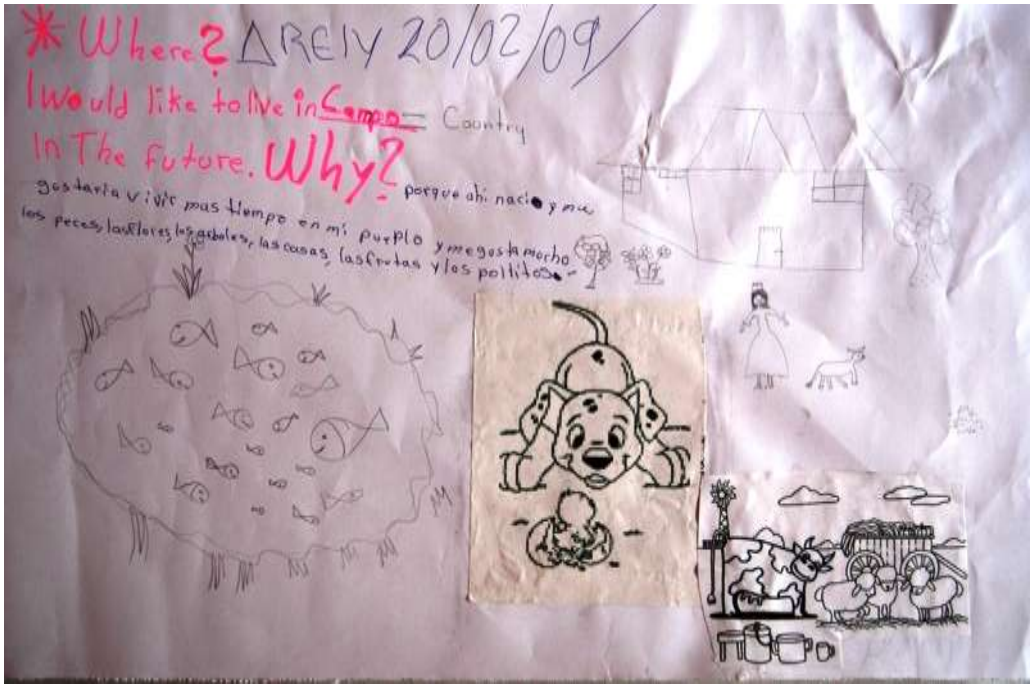

Figure 9: Anita's cartulina

Several students mentioned specific places where they wanted to live. Most of them wanted to live in different places in Mexico. David said: "I would like to live in Acapulco ¿por qué? Ay un vonito (sic) mar" (Why? Because there is a beautiful sea). Damián mentioned that he would like to live either in Oaxaca or in Guadalajara "porque me gusta" (because I like it). Fredy was quite a bit more descriptive in his desire to live in Quintana Roo: "A mi me gusta y me quiero montar en un caballo y quiero tener un carro de carga para poder llevar a los animales como borrego, vaca un caballo salvaje y quiero vivir en una casa y me voy a Quintana Roo" (I like and want to ride a horse and I want to have a carriage to push animals like sheep, cow and wild horse, and I want to live in a house and I will go to Quintana Roo). Roberto was the only student who said he wanted to live in

the United States in the future: "I would like to live in the E.U. in the future.Why? Esta bonito. Ermoso (sic)" (It is pretty. Beautiful).

Anuar's *cartulina* expressed a very simple desire for his future: "I would like to live in casa in the future. Why? Para tener familia" (I would like to live in a house in the future. Why? To have a family). He added clip art pictures of a horse, a dog, a car, and even an airplane (see Figure 10).

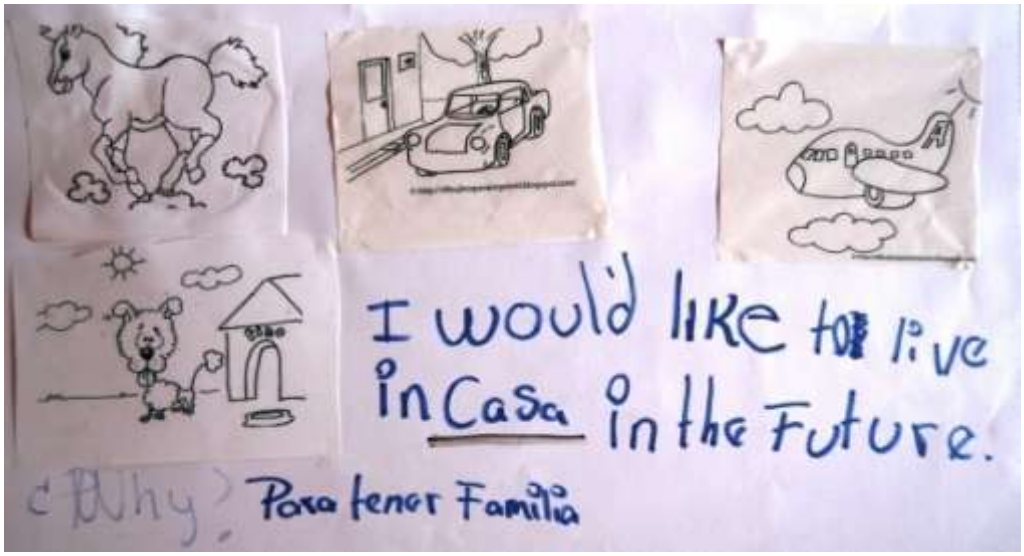

Figure 10: Anuar's cartulina

As the reader can see, in these various *cartulina* activities the children's agency was strongly expressed. They easily moved from concrete concerns to the more hopeful world of imagined dreams and aspirations: They explored body types, what they could be in the future, where they could live, the aesthetics of places and foods, and also what they did not want to be. Again, in playful and creative ways, they were also defining themselves as producers of their own knowledge.

Conclusion

In this article we have presented a series of language performances that expresses a wide range of learning activities, feelings, emotions, and styles of social interaction. We have no doubt that many of our readers could encounter similar performative activities in their classrooms. For us, this suggests that the language classroom can be a stage for meaningful learning that goes beyond the utilitarian presentation of grammar and pronunciation practice.

For these students in urban Oaxaca in particular, many of whom live in poverty, lack family support structures, and face daily struggles related to health problems, economic hardships, and domestic violence, the English class has provided them with strategies for dealing with the realities of their own lives. Although these students don't have an immediate need to learn English, they have other important needs that are addressed through the English language class. The activities in this class have helped the students not only articulate and explain who they are, but also rehearse other possibilities for their lives. The use of multimodal forms of instruction for their assignments-- posters, games, film and com-

puters-- has allowed them more freedom of movement in their learning, both literally and figuratively. When the students express themselves through these various modes and media, they are in effect gaining some control over their own present and future.

We have attempted in these ethnographic "snapshots" to focus on various forms of creative and responsible activities that were not only ludic but also socially productive. Through our observations and interpretations of Yesenia, Rosi and Irma's styles of classroom management and their choices of curriculum assignments, we have tried to show how they have used the classroom for different forms of social interaction and play through breaking down the space between authority and learning. Through this relaxed style of classroom management, the students have come to learn that their classroom can be an arena for them to explore issues related to their identity, their hopes, and their fears. That is, these young student teachers, through the use of their own agency in composing their teaching styles, have opened up the classroom for their students to also use their own agency.

As we have seen through the few examples described here, the students have begun to understand different forms of social responsibility in terms of the diversity of household structures and body types. They have explored without fear of punitive reactions how to negotiate friendships while playing a game. And quite dramatically, they were able to move into an imagined future, where they pondered who they could be and where they wanted to live, how their aspirations might come about, and reflected upon what they did not want in their futures. The combination of these various performances suggests that for these students, learning the imagined had more immediate implications than simply learning the rules of the English language.

As far as we know, this is a new area of research in Mexico. Further ethnographic studies could be carried out on classroom encounters which offer a space to reflect upon language teaching and learning. In this paper we have illustrated that by listening to the kinds of imagined communities that these students envision (Kano & Norton, 2003), we can begin to see how language encounters with English can be more than just learning a second language. We are not saying that English has some kind of essential quality that encourages imaginative activities, but that encounters within bilingual/multilingual contexts can open up spaces for creative and aesthetic performance (Milstein, 2008; Sommer, 2004). As we stated in the introduction, these performances express ethnographically and linguistically the *coevalness* of all the actors involved (Fabian, 1983, 2007). That is, all the actors of this project (the students, the student teachers, the homeroom teachers, and we as researchers) are jointly composing these performances by sharing in each others' time and place.

Notes

1. In general, students enter primary school at age six and leave close to age twelve. The educational objectives of the primary schools are to develop literacy (reading and writing), numeric skills and general information subjects such as national history and geography and both natural and social sciences. The level of classroom enrolments in primary schools varies in terms of the age and social composition of the students. Also there is great deal of diversity in the actual quality of the schools. The more prestigious public schools in the urban areas tend to have larger class sizes, but they are more homogenous in terms of student age and position in the social class. However, in the rural schools and the urban afternoon special schools, the students tend to be from various age ranges and are often poor or from the working class; ironically, the class size is smaller (12-25 students) than in the prestigious schools. In the urban areas, generally the classroom size ranges from 25 to 40 students, with a homeroom teacher who is in charge of the class during an academic year (from August to June, two hundred school days). Nowadays, most of the urban primary schools are supposed to have computers and it is up to each school to organize how they will be utilized. In the rural areas, classes often have multiple grade levels, in which teachers work with a mix of students at different age and skill levels. The luckier schools may have a staff of several teachers, but more often than not there is only one teacher for the whole school.

2. Original data excerpts are provided in Spanish with English translations in parenthesis.

3. When we first observed Anita, she was quite timid about using her "different" hand, on which she always wore a glove. Michael, one of the authors, has a granddaughter-Aliana-who also has a "different" hand. We thought it would be nice to give Anita a photo of Aliana, so that she could see that she was not the only child with this kind of difference. Luckily, we first asked the homeroom teacher how we should approach this exchange. She took the photo and waited for a time that she thought would be appropriate to offer the photo to Anita. Later, she presented the photo to Anita in front of the whole class and gave them a lecture on the importance of differences and how all the students need to respect that. The next time we observed the class, Anita still had her hand gloved, but she showed no hesitation in using both of her hands. Michael reported these events to Aliana, who at the particular time was feeling somewhat depressed about her hand, and the story of Anita helped her feel better about herself.

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Michael Higgins, as an anthropologist, has been doing ethnographic research in the city of Oaxaca for more than 35 years. Though by no means an insider, he has been ethnographically moving into and out of the various fields of social diversity found in Oaxaca. He is at best an uneven bilingual in English and Spanish.

Young Learners' Ability to Produce Yes-No Questions*

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Abstract

This paper reports on the results of a transversal study designed to observe young learners' ability to produce yes-no questions while playing a game which elicits these kinds of questions. The study was carried out at a bilingual English-Spanish primary school in Mexico City. Secondly, this paper relates the study results to the issue of bilingual primary school students' oral skills.

En este artículo se reportan los resultados de un estudio transversal, lo cual fue diseñado para observar la capacidad de los aprendices jóvenes para producir preguntas de respuesta "sí-no" mientras participaban en un juego que solicita esta clase de preguntas. El estudio se realizó en un primaria bilingüe inglés-español en la ciudad de México DF. Posteriormente, se relacionan los resultados del estudio con la cuestión del desarrollo de las habilidades orales de los alumnos de educación básica.

Introduction

Nowadays there are an increasing number of bilingual schools that follow the International Baccalaureate "Primary Years Program" (PYP). In Mexico alone, at the moment there are 30 of them (IBO, 2009). These schools offer, besides the Mexican SEP curricula, an English program in which certain subjects are taught in English by English native speaker teachers. The PYP program goes form kindergarten to sixth grade (3 to 12 year-olds). Students are immersed in the second language for about 15 hours a week.

In 2009, a transversal study designed to observe primary students' ability to produce yes-no questions was carried out in a bilingual school of Mexico City which is applying the PYP program. Yes-no questions were selected by the school ESL specialist and the Academic Coordinator as one of the problematic aspects of students' oral production.

After many hours of class observation at a bilingual school one can realize that students' ability to understand spoken language seems more developed than their ability to produce well-formed utterances. Lynne Cameron's (2001) explanation of "meaning in listening and speaking" and James Lee and Van Patten (1995) language processing model can shed some light on this fact.

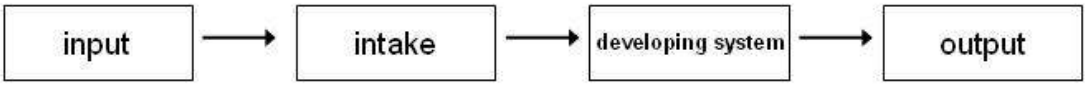
Cameron states that "listening and speaking are both active uses of language, but differ in the mental activity involved and demands that they make on learners of language in terms of finding and sharing meanings" (p. 40). She explains that to construct meaning from what the learner hears (instructions, a story, etc.) they rely on their language resources, built up from previous experience of language use. "For example, children listening to a story told in a foreign lan-

* This is a refereed article.

guage from a book with pictures will understand and construct the gist or outline the meaning of the story in their minds. Although the story may be told in the foreign language the mental processing does not need to use the foreign language and may be carried out in the first language or in some language-independent way using what psychologists call "mentalese". (p. 40) But it is very unlikely that these children would be able to retell the story in the foreign language because their attention was not on language form but on meaning (Cameron, 2001,p. 41).

According to Lee and Van Patten's (1995) processing language model language, to acquire a language one needs to build the right form-meaning relationships. In this process learners build an internal system or a representation of the foreign language from the language input they get. This internal system is different form the one an adult native speaker may have. When beginner language learners produce utterances (output), they use the information they have in their internal system and consequently, their utterances usually are not well-formed phrases (Mercau and Hooper, 2006, p. 11).

Lee and Van Patten propose the following diagram and two hypotheses about input processing:



Hypothesis 1: Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form.
- a) Learners process content words in the input before anything else.
- b) Learners prefer to process lexical items to grammatical items (e.g., morphology) for semantic information.
- c) Learners prefer processing more meaningful morphology before less or non-meaningful morphology.

Hypothesis 2: In order to process form that is not meaningful, they must be able to process informational or communicative content at no or little cost to attention.

Figure 1: Lee & Van Patten, 1995, p. 96-97.

Transversal Study

In an independent study sponsored by Investigación y Desarrollo Anglo-Mexicano, 18 students, who have been at the school since KI or KII, were selected randomly from first, third and fifth grade (6 students from each group). The students were invited to play the game "Guess Who" which elicits only yes-no questions with the verb "be" or other verbs (mainly "have") about personal appearance. This game is played by two players. Each player gets a secret card in which there is one of the many characters that appear on each player's board. The player who guesses first the other player's secret card by asking yes-no questions (such as, "Does your character have brown hair?" or, "Is your character a man?") is the winner. The research session was filmed and then transcribed to be analyzed.

Data analysis and Results

To analyze student's utterances, the different types of yes-no questions they produced were classified in types and then, the percentage of use of each type was calculated (See tables 1 and 2).

Type	Level	%
"Is your character a man?" (A) Inverted question	First	0
	Third	62
	Fifth	30
"Your character is Rodolfo?" (B) Uninverted question	First	100
	Third	37
	Fifth	29
"Is girl?" (C) Subject (and article) omission	First	0
	Third	0
	Fifth	37

Table 1: Interrogative utterances with "be."

Type	Level	%
"Does your character have a hat?" "Has he got his hair like this?" (1) Well-formed inverted question.	First	0
	Third	38
	Fifth	18
"Does your person has glasses?" (2) Inverted questions that keep unnecessary subject-main verb agreement.	First	0
	Third	15
	Fifth	0
"Do your character have glasses?" "Do your character has red hair?" (3) Ill-formed inverted questions.	First	0
	Third	0
	Fifth	13
"Your character has hat?" "Your person have glasses." "Your has a ear big?"*** (4) Uninverted questions.	First	100
	Third	30
	Fifth	63
"Does her hair of color is orange?" (5) Mixed types: ill-formed inverted questions that mix "be" and "other verb" or "have" rules.	First	0
	Third	0
	Fifth	4

*Lack of subject-verb agreement.
** Spanish interference/transfer.

Table 2: Interrogatives with other verbs (mainly "have").

Discussion

In this section, each group's performance will be analyzed separately and afterwards I will try to describe briefly the whole picture from a language acquisition point of view.

First graders

It is worth mentioning that the first graders needed some help when playing the game because it is still hard for them to apply the logical reasoning the game requires. This means that they had to concentrate on both playing and speaking English, which were difficult tasks for them. It was observed that most first graders needed help with English vocabulary and that they often transferred language information from Spanish. It seems that phrases which could be quite

easy for them to understand if they hear them are very difficult for them to produce (1).

Let's see some examples of first graders' yes-no questions:

Tiene…your has a ears big?
Your person has the eyes blue?
Your person is boy?
Have a hat?

None of the phrases present the subject-object inversion required in these questions. First graders did not add the auxiliary (*do* or *does*) in the interrogatives with *have* or other verbs different from *be*. In (a) and (b) the position of the adjective in the noun phrase corresponds to Spanish and not to English. In (e) the subject was omitted which again, it is a very usual procedure in Spanish which is a pro-drop language.

Following Lee-Van Patten's model we could say that these young learners are not able yet to cope both with conveying meaning and choosing the right structures. On one hand, their attention is on meaning (recalling the right vocabulary) which is the one thing that would allow them to play the game. On the other hand, it seems their long term memory has not stored yet the right form-meaning relationships and that is why they cannot produce questions accurately.

Third Graders

Their performance was very different from first graders. Mainly because they applied the subject-object operation in 62% of *be* interrogatives and produced 38% of well-formed questions with *have* and other verbs. Let's see some examples:

a. Is your character boy?
b. Is it a man?
c. It is a girl?
d. Does your character has a hat?
e. Does have it black hair?
f. Does he have orange hair?

Although they still have trouble with producing correct yes-no questions, they seem to start managing some of the right construction hypothesis.

Fifth graders

This group shows (Table 3) the broadest set of interrogative types which seem to show that they have several working hypothesis and that they have not mastered the right ones yet. They are still working on the construction of the form-meaning relationships.

Interrogatives with "be"	Interrogatives with "have" and "other verbs"
a. Is girl? / Is Jesus? / Is a man?	a. It has white hair?
b. It is woman?	b. Does he use glasses? /does your character have black hair?
c. Is it a man?	c. Does he has hair here?
d. Is your character boy?	d. It has a hat?
e. Is his hair yellow?	e. Does her hair of color is orange?
	f. Do it has glasses?
	g. He use glasses?
	h. She have brown hair?

Table 3: Fifth graders' questions.

It is curious that they produced such a variety of interrogative phrases and that their performance was poorer than third graders' if considered from a grammatical point of view.

One explanation could be that in their language acquisition process they have even more working or temporary hypotheses in mind than third graders and therefore, since some students apply one or more, there is a broader variety of phrases. There is even the case of a student who applies many different ways of constructing interrogative phrases when playing the Guess Who:

He have a hat? vs. Does it have white hair?
Is a woman? vs. Is it a man?

Overall Comments

Although in a bilingual school students get many hours of English input, the quantity and quality of it is very different from both the input they would receive if they were studying in an English speaking country and from the input native speakers get when they are acquiring English as a first language. In the first case, children would be surrounded by a "whole" English environment: English speaking classmates, teachers, neighbors, and peers in playgrounds. But in the bilingual school, due to the fact that students share the same mother tongue, they only speak Spanish among themselves during school hours. This means that they are not immersed in an English language environment and that their brains keep switching from their mother tongue to the second language back and forth.

According to the study reported by Tomasello, (Cameron-Faulkner, Lieven, and Tomasello, 2003), in which they analyzed the interaction between English speaking mothers and their 2-to 3-year-old children:

1. Children heard an estimated of 5,000 to 7,000 utterances per day.
2. Between one-quarter and one-third of these were questions.
3. More than 20% of these were not full adult sentences, but instead were some kind of fragment (most often a noun phrase or prepositional phrase).
4. About one-quarter of these were imperatives and utterances structured by the copula.
5. Only about 15% of these had the canonical English SVO form (i.e., transitive utterances of various kinds) supposedly characteristic of the English language; and over 80% of the SVOs had a pronoun subject.

As we can see, very young children acquiring their mother tongue hear an average of 7,000 utterances a day (and about 1,500 questions). Children in bilingual schools hear a fewer phrases in comparison to native speakers and only a minimal proportion of those phrases are addressed to them individually.

In the following description we mention some of the issues students will need to have learned to acquire yes-no questions so we can see the multiple tasks they have to cope with:

1. They need to have stored the vocabulary they want to use in the long term memory to be able to retrieve it easily.
2. They should be aware of the fact that the structure of a question is different from the structure of a statement.

3. They should be aware of the fact that *be* in questions behave differently from other verbs.
4. They should know how to apply the subject-verb inversion.
5. They should be aware of what auxiliary to add in each different question.
6. They also need to know which auxiliary belongs to each tense.
7. They also need to be aware of the fact that when you add an auxiliary, subject-verb agreement does not apply because it is the auxiliary which must be conjugated and not the main verb.

As we can see learning to make *yes-no questions* is not a simple task. This kind of analysis could also be done about other language patterns children in bilingual school do not master easily. For example, the simple present tense conjugation in free speech and writing.

Some Pedagogical Suggestions

The ideas presented above can give us food for thought about what a multifold, complex task learning a second language at school is. A hopeful known fact is that most students who stay at bilingual schools for 12 or 15 years end up speaking English fluently and quite accurately. Therefore the idea for us, as teachers, is to try to be aware of how to support students' second acquisition process. The following are a few suggestions that we can consider:

1. Give each student frequent occasions to speak and write in the second language both about academic and non-academic issues.
2. Organize meaningful activities in which students work in pairs or in small groups so each one have several chances to communicate in the second language.
3. Recycle interesting activities and subjects as often as possible in order for the students to internalize structures, vocabulary, intonation patterns, etc. without noticing it. These kinds of routines help them store language information in the long term memory.
4. Present language matters in many different ways along the school year so students with different learning styles can take advantage of them.
5. Remember that games (for example, "Guess who", "Hide and seek", "Simon says", "Go fish", etc.) are excellent tools for having students speak in a self-confident manner.
6. Work and have them work towards a happy, secure, and challenging classroom atmosphere. Having a high motivation, feeling we are accepted by others the way we are, helps us learn and be creative and loving.
7. Take advantage of different school times and places to give students a variety of lively experiences: break time, lunch time, festivals preparation, tests, routines, class rules. Every thing we do together can be a new support for learning.
8. Try to assess each student as often as possible in his/her oral abilities so you can help them develop from the language level they have.

Notes

1. In 60 hours of English class observation at the kindergarten and primary levels, I could see most students have no problem following school instructions or participating in class activities.

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A Look into an Early Childhood English Language Learners' Classroom in the U.S.*

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Abstract

An overview of a public school English language acquisition program in the southeast United States is described, including detailed descriptions of English language class sessions designed for Spanish speaking kindergarten, first, and second grade English learners. Strategies for teaching and learning letter-sound relationships, sight words, vocabulary, beginning sentence writing, story prediction, story elements, graphic organizers, word walls, and individual inquiry are described with some examples of student work. The creation of a positive, active, and engaged learning community is emphasized. Limited theoretical background information is provided.

Se presenta en este escrito una descripción general de un programa para la adquisición del idioma inglés en una escuela pública en los Estados Unidos, incluyendo descripciones detalladas de sesiones de clases diseñadas para niños de primer y segundo grado cuyo idioma es el español. Se describen estrategias para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la relación entre letras y sonidos, las palabras visuales, el vocabulario, los enunciados para empezar una historia, la predicción de historias, los elementos de una historia, los esquemas de organización, murales de palabras, y la investigación individual como ejemplos del trabajo de los niños. Se enfatiza la creación de una comunidad positiva, activa, y comprometida con el aprendizaje. Se presenta una breve información sobre el marco teórico.

Introduction and Background

It is 2:00 p.m. as the Kindergarten English language learners sit on the carpet waiting for their last lesson of the day. They are tired but ready for anything that might be fun. Their teacher, Ms. Crowe, realizes that play is an essential process through which children develop and learn about the world around them. "In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). The ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher keeps this fact in mind as she puts a colorful poster on an easel in front of the students, and asks them to tell the numbers and pictures they already know. All of the students are five or six years old and are from Honduras, Mexico, or were born in the United States with families from those two countries. Most of the students are at the beginner or high beginner proficiency level in English; the beginners speak a few English words and phrases while the high beginners' communications consist of one to two short sentences on a topic.

The preceding vignette is typical of many English as a Second Language classes in the southeast United States where Spanish primary language speakers make

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up the majority of students in English Language Acquisition Programs (ELAP). And the trend appears to be growing. Recently the *USA Today*, a U.S. national daily newspaper, described a significant demographic shift in the U.S. which is expected to result in Spanish speaking students becoming the majority demographic in U.S. schools by the year 2023 (Yen, 2009). At present, one-fourth of the kindergarten students in the United States are Spanish speaking. Although the trend is more evident in the western states such as Arizona, Nevada, and California, the shift is impacting public schools across the U.S., including the one described above in the southeast region. One aspect of the trend which is not widely recognized is that the majority of the Spanish speaking English language learners are not themselves immigrants. In fact, in the year 2007 according to the *USA Today* report, more Spanish speaking kindergarteners were U.S. born than foreign born. And because they were born on U.S. soil, these kindergarteners are U.S. citizens who will be eligible to vote at age 18. This demographic and political shift is posed to impact not only the U.S. educational system, but also its political realities. A report for the Pew Hispanic Center (Lopez, 2009), a nonpartisan research center in Washington, D.C., states that in the most recent presidential election, November, 2008, Hispanics accounted for 7.4% of the voters, an increase of 2.7 percentage points over the Hispanic turnout in the presidential election of 2004. As Spanish speakers become an increasingly more populous and politically powerful aggregate in the U.S., it becomes apparent that success in English for Spanish speaking students will be an increasingly important issue.

Multiple Modalities for Learning English in Kindergarten

During their 30 minute lesson, Ms. Crowe asks the students to look at a large, colorful poster that contains numbers and pictures for a children's song. One by one, the teacher points to each graphic and asks students if they know the word in English, repeats the correct answers, and gives positive reinforcement to the students. After pre-teaching the vocabulary in the song, Ms. Crowe demonstrates to the students an action to perform with each picture. After some practice, the teacher turns on a CD player and plays the song that corresponds with the poster. The students listen to the children's song and concentrate on the new tune. Ms. Crowe has time to play the song three times before the school day ends. The first time, the students concentrate on listening to the music. The second time they listen and mimic their ESL teacher as she performs motions for which they will soon learn the verbs. The third time, the students move with her and join in the chorus. The students like the song because it is upbeat, repetitive, and predictable. The teacher sings aloud:

> When I was one, I swallowed a bun, going over the sea.
> I jumped aboard a sailor ship and the sailor said to me:
> Going over, going under, stand at attention,

Like a soldier with a one! Two! Three! (Singlish Enterprises, Inc., 2007) It is the second afternoon. As she reintroduces the song, Ms. Crowe holds a red star pointer in her hand and points to each number on the poster as the students count to ten. Then, she takes the pointer and touches each picture, asking the students to recall the vocabulary words. Next, the teacher asks a student to stand next to the poster and use the pointer as students call out the words. Stu-

dents get excited and wait expectantly hoping to take a turn with the pointer. Some students use the pointer as it is intended, touching the individual words, while others more simplistically move the pointer in the general direction, left to right, demonstrating their understanding of directionality. Next, their English teacher sings the song and observes whether or not the students remember the words. The students join to sing the words they remember, especially the repetitive chorus. When Ms. Crowe asks the students if they remember the song's hand and body motions from yesterday, the students shout, "Yes!" in response and begin to sing while they move together like the small navy described in the song. By the end of the school year, students will learn concepts of "word", or where a word stops and starts, and will be able to read words on the poster.

In ELAP classes like Ms. Crowe's kindergarten class, literacy learning is a whole body, whole brain activity. Gardner's (1999) foundational work on multiple intelligences provides the theoretical background for such learning strategies. According to Gardner, many different intellectual capacities exist and are drawn upon as we learn and express what we have learned: linguistic intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and naturalist intelligence. In the learning activity described above, musical intelligence plays a prominent role in the learning experience. Learning with music uses the right temporal lobe of the brain, while language is centered in the left temporal and frontal lobes (Armstrong, 2003). Using multiple intelligences to learn English allows the child to make neural connections between the new language, English, and previous knowledge and experiences by using musical intelligences and abilities. In the particular learning strategy described in the vignette, other intelligences including linguistic (looking at song poster), bodily-kinesthetic (motions that accompany the music), interpersonal (working in group), and naturalist (background knowledge of the ocean) are incorporated as well. The repetition, the melody, and the accompanying movements help the child learn English using several of the intelligences. Activities which incorporate several of the intelligences build upon each other to reinforce learning and take advantage of the individual's unique capacities for making connections and remembering.

On the next day, Ms. Crowe brings in a large card with the letter *S*. Her objective is for the students to learn that words are made up of letters. Also the kindergarteners will recognize the letter, say its name, and make the sound for the letters that make up the initial sounds of the words. They have memorized the song and can understand because they can make the appropriate motions. In this class session, Javier searches for the letter *S* on the song poster and proudly isolates the letter in the center of the red star pointer as his friends nod their heads in approval, yearning to hold the star pointer themselves. As the ESL teacher plays the CD today, she notices that every kindergartener now sings along with her and that each one makes the motions confidently and with great gusto. Before the end of the class, the students are able to share in the "reading." Ms. Crowe sings the first line of the song, but pauses just before the last word and watches the class; eyebrows raised expectantly. Several students smile and sing the word, "Sea!" aloud. She smiles and applauds their answer.

As Ms. Crowe reflects after teaching the lesson, she thinks about how her students enjoyed the activity, music, and physical motion. She realizes that her young kindergarteners enjoyed themselves so much that they probably do not realize that they just participated in a sophisticated English lesson. Although "Going Over the Sea" is a children's song, the number of language and grammar structures used within it is significant. The students learned the names in English for the numbers one to ten, 12 past tense verbs, 13 nouns, two prepositions, two phrasal verbs, and a phrase expressing age in the past that is structurally different in Spanish and English: "When I was one" versus "Cuando tenía un año." Ms. Crowe is satisfied that many learning objectives were pleasantly accomplished with the song. Later that day, she is even more surprised when the students quietly begin to sing the song by themselves as they await the bus that will take them home.

When we further analyze the theoretical background for this teacher's use of multiple learning options in instruction, we know that the teacher intends for the students to connect the more concrete kinetic, visual, or auditory images to the abstract words they must remember. According to Paivio (1986), the human brain uses two types of memory: (1) sensory images including kinetic, visual, and auditory (touch and taste may also be incorporated), and (2) words or speech. When students experience an additional visual, auditory, or kinetic experience of the same abstract information such as the letter names and sounds, it causes the student to record a concrete mental image that is related to the more abstract letters, words, or sounds he has stored in the memory. These two types of memories, words and images, are connected in the brain, so that with both concrete images and abstract letters and words, the ability to remember the learning is twice as strong as it would be if only one type of representation was recorded in the memory. This is called the dual coding theory. A teacher who is knowledgeable of dual coding will use learning activities based on kinetic, visual, and auditory images so that her students are more likely to learn and put down memories that can be easily retrieved at a later date.

Some researchers think that there is a direct kinetic link between human movement and the development of language and letters themselves. This connection was investigated in linguistic research by Allott (1994) on the evolution of letter and word forms. Allott endeavors to link human motions and natural human gestures to the concrete printed form of letters and words. This connection is capitalized on in several alphabet-teaching programs which make kinetic intelligence, or movement, part of learning letters and sounds.

Zoophonics (http://www.zoophonics.com) is a teaching system used in the English language acquisition program in the southeast United States which is described in the vignettes. In this program, each letter of the alphabet is represented by a gestural equivalent which symbolizes an animal. This program links alphabet letters to animals by connecting each letter to an animal shape and alliterative properties of each animals' name (Allie Alligator says /a/.) The program engages students through their natural interest in animals and love of movement. It has been successful in the ELAP program to quickly teach letters and sounds to kindergarten students whose primary language is not English. In Spanish most of the consonant sounds are similar to those in English, but the

vowels need more emphasis with Ms. Crowe's students because most of the vowel sounds in English are new to them.

It is mid-September. The students have learned several complete texts of songs, and they are beginning to focus on individual letters. Ms. Crowe begins to teach the students to crack the alphabetic code using Zoophonics. Basic instruction starts with all short vowel sounds and consonant sounds come next. To begin, she shows her students a large card with Allie the Alligator in the shape of a capital *A*. Students giggle as they hold their arms like alligator jaws snapping as they repeat the short /a/ sound for Allie Alligator. Next, Ms. Crowe reveals the other side of the card to the students. On the reverse, the animal takes the shape of the alphabet letter to help students remember the abstract letter and sound by association with its animal shape. With daily practice her dual language kindergarteners master the alphabet letters and sounds in one week. When they perform their animal letter motions and sounds for the parent program on Monday night, both parents and teachers beam with pride, and the kindergarteners' shyness starts to melt away.

Ms. Crowe knows that students must review the alphabet frequently to retain new knowledge. Since new English language learners arrive frequently throughout the year and need to be introduced to the alphabet, repeated lessons on the letters and sounds serve as a beneficial review for the students. The English language learners enjoy language games, so Ms. Crowe brings a new game in the afternoon session--a new way to practice letters and sounds. To play the game, Ms. Crowe shows a small letter card to the students, repeats the sound, and places the animal letter card on the carpet, repeating the sequence until six cards are placed on the floor in a circle. Then, using a CD player and a hand-held remote device, Ms. Crowe starts the music and slowly walks around the circle of letter cards. After the third revolution, she stops the music and then points to the card nearest her. She loudly says the alphabet sound. She asks the students if they understand the game; they smile and reply, "Yes!" excitedly anticipating the fun. This process continues until eventually 15 alphabet cards are placed on the floor, and all 15 students in the ELAP class are playing the game. The letter sound version of musical chairs continues for seven minutes, and soon the lesson is over. Although the students are reluctant to stop the fun, it is time to go home.

When all of the letters have been taught to the new members of the class, the teacher will change the alphabet cards to word cards and review the sight words which have been learned so far this year. Many of these frequently used words such as *have*, *do*, and *you* don't follow the phonics rules for pronunciation. The students also have a list of these words displayed on a poster with the title *Popcorn Words* printed above. Ms. Crowe explains to the students, "These are basic words that constantly pop up to our attention." All kindergarten students, including the English language learners, are expected to recognize thirty-three of the high frequency words automatically before they move on to first grade, and they must read the words just as fluently as they identify the letters-sound relationships. It is assumed that once students know many frequently used words, they will be on their way to reading and writing well.

The Reading-Writing Connection in First Grade

Writing is the expressive aspect of English language learning. Language learners who have no words with which to express themselves in their new language can draw to demonstrate their understanding; that is their first form of writing. According to Tompkins (2006), emergent writers should learn to write at the same time as they learn about books and reading. Students may write about experiences that they have had or have shared with the class; this is called the language experience approach. At first, children's scribbles may represent only the first sound of the word, but most of the time children at the emergent literacy stage will be able to read what they have written by themselves whether their teachers can interpret it or not. Soon the children add ending sounds. Finally, vowels and correct spelling are seen in their spelling as children learn more about writing as they listen, speak, read, and write together about the topics that they study. These principles about beginning writing can be detected in the following vignette from Ms. Lafollette's first grade class in the same school's ELAP program.

Ms. Lafollette, the first grade teacher, prepares for her English language learners before they arrive in her class on a September morning. The previous day the students had been introduced to dinosaurs by species name as they dug in the sand and discovered miniature dinosaur models. They also had listened to the story, *Digging up Dinosaurs* (Aliki, 1988). Today Ms. Lafollette constructs a vocabulary board by placing six picture and word cards in the plastic pockets on the board. She writes a sentence on a long strip of heavy paper and underlines the vocabulary word, and finally she adds the correct picture for each word. There are six dinosaur vocabulary words: *tyrannosaurus, triceratops, stegosaurus, brontosaurus, pterodactyl, and mammoth.* With this unit, the teacher intends to use comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) to teach subject matter and English language at the same time.

Ms. Lafollette is prepared, and now it is time for a writing center activity time. Four students sit with the teacher at a small table. The vocabulary board with dinosaur words is to her left and the high frequency popcorn word chart is placed to the right of the teacher. Ms. Lafollette reviews both sets of words with the students. Next, she asks the children to think about the previous lesson and to think of a sentence that they would like to write about dinosaurs. With her prompting, students study the word chart and picture vocabulary. Then, they dictate a sentence in English to Ms. Lafollette. She repeats each sentence, showing the students the number of words in each sentence by lightly tapping her hand as she repeated each word. "How many words in the sentence?" she asks, and then highlights with her pen an equal number of lines on the student's blank paper as a guide. This memory aid assists the student to learn where the words stop and start, or concept of word, and it supports their knowledge of concept of sentence as well.

In the next step of the writing activity, each student uses the vocabulary and word charts on the table in front of them to copy the words needed to write the sentence that has just been dictated. Most students use capital letters and periods, one aspect of concepts about sentences. After each student writes a sen-

tence, he/she draws a picture to illustrate the sentence in a box at the top of the paper. If the sentence and picture match, this demonstrates that students understand that sentences have meaning, another important concept about sentences. As students work on the writing task, Ms. Lafollette edits the work by writing the correct spelling, if needed, under the word on the highlighted line. Examples of student work (below) show progress in oral and written English language proficiency, and the English language learners learn by experience that reading and writing are two related aspects of literacy that go hand in hand.

Figure 2: Examples of Student Work

Responding to Literature in Second Grade

English language learners have much to learn: letter sound relationships, what a word is, what a sentence is, and how to write one; but it is experience with books, stories, and songs themselves that cement the fact in their minds that books and stories have meaning and are enjoyable to read, reread, talk about, and write about. These are the ultimate goals of primary school education for both English language learners as well as primary speakers of English. Whole stories carry rich meaning: story structure and plot, humor and life messages, predictability and surprise, repetition and lyric language, colorful pictures, meaningful dialogue, and vocabulary, both known and new. Stories provide rich, complex, meaningful input that allows students to reference their own prior knowledge and background experiences in order to build meaning for themselves. When students understand the meaning and message of a story that they are engaged in hearing or are ready to read, they receive comprehensible input, or meaningful language experiences. This, according to Krashen (1982), is when real language acquisition occurs. As we look into a second grade classroom in the ELAP program, we will see how whole texts are used in the classroom. Students must understand most of the words before they can read and understand stories,

so vocabulary is an integral part of the lesson. Then, with lots of questioning and discussion, students and teacher develop their understandings of the folk tale as they share and learn together as a community of learners.

Ms. Derrick asks the second grade English language learners, "Have you read the famous children's story, *The Three Bears* (DePaola, 2004)?" Several students raise their hands indicating that they have read it before. As part of the process of learning about the parts of the book and how they work, students locate the book title, author, and illustrator by pointing out and naming them. Together they discuss the illustrations by taking a book walk. In this preview process, Ms. Derrick turns each page, and the students comment about what they see. This helps the students get the big idea of the book and engages their curiosity before they actually read the story.

Finally, Ms. Derrick reads the book to the students, stopping at crucial points in the story to show them the pages and to ask their predictions about what will happen next. In what is called a "grand conversation" after reading the tale, students are asked to retell their favorite parts of the story. Each student takes a turn, relishing the chance to regale classmates with their favorite parts of the story. Many of the children agree that the part when Goldilocks jumps out of the window and runs away is their favorite. Ms. Derrick understands that a personal response helps students understand and make connections with what they have read (Rosenblatt, 1991).

Next the students consider the elements that make up a story. On the table in front of them, the teacher places three sheets of paper with the words: characters, setting, and plot (see below). For the remainder of the class, Ms. Derrick and the students discuss these three aspects of the story, recording details on the appropriate sheets as the students discuss them.

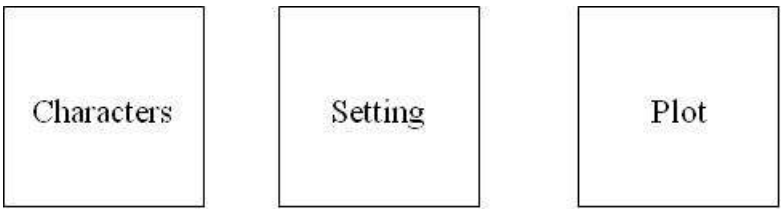

Figure 3: Three Aspects of the Story

The next day, Ms. Derrick prepares for vocabulary study and creates a graphic organizer to help the students record and remember details from their own reading about bears. For the individual inquiry about bears, Ms. Derrick has already visited the library and has checked out six books about bears; she has chosen each book at a different reading level in order to meet the needs of each of her six students. Each book has many pictures that illustrate black bears and their habitats. In preparation for the lesson, the teacher draws the outline of a bear on a table-sized piece of white paper to create a "word wall" upon which to list important words from the library books. On the bear-shaped word wall poster, the teacher writes categories in different places of the paper bear's body:

- Bears eat
- Bears drink
- Bears can

- Bears have
- Bears are

She plans for her students to complete the graphic organizer as they discuss the story and elaborate on the details.

That day, Ms. Derrick begins the class by asking the students to retell the story from yesterday's lesson, *The Three Bears.* Students excitedly recall the bears' adventures, the repetitive text features, and the frequency of the number three in the story. Next, Ms. Derrick asks, "The story we read was a folk tale. Bears talked and slept in beds in our story. Real bears don't do those things. What do you know about real, actual bears?" The students live in the Great Smoky Mountains, so several students have seen wild black bears and are excited to describe these experiences to the their classmates and to their teacher.

After the discussion, the students consider what they know about real bears and what they would like to learn. As the teacher shows the bear themed word wall to the students and then tapes it to the wall, she asks them if they already know some answers to the written categories. When students answer, they receive a marker to record their answers on the bear word wall. Each student is eager to record an answer on the word wall with the special colored markers. But there are some facts that the students do not know. At this point, it is time for the students to find out more by conducting research together on bears. In order to obtain factual information, the students scan the teacher-selected library books for information that would complete the categories on the word wall. Upon finding an answer, each student writes the fact on paper and then walks up to the word wall to copy the information and contribute to the class assignment. By the end of the period, each student has found answers and has written them on the word wall. Each one raises a hand to volunteer to read aloud one of the six categories to the class.

On day three, the thematic unit (Meinbach, Rothlein, & Fredericks, 1995) on bears culminates in a writing assignment. Students excitedly enter the classroom and review the word wall, again taking turns to read the categories aloud to classmates. With a Venn diagram, Ms. Derrick asks the class to recall the story of *Three Bears*; then they recall the facts about real bears. She directs the class discussion to identify some similarities and differences between bears in the fantasy and the natural worlds. As students relate their ideas, Ms. Derrick asks if the item was real or fantasy and writes their statements in the appropriate circle of the Venn diagram. When ideas are exhausted, students utilize the posted information to write 3 -5 sentences comparing real versus fantasy bears. Students work with partners to write the paragraphs based on their responses. Volunteers read their sentences aloud: "Storybook bears eat porridge. Real bears eat fish."

At the end of the class, Ms. Derrick congratulates the students on their ideas and good work. She files their papers as writing samples to be examined as documents for the state assessment of academic progress in March. Ms. Derrick reflects about the well-integrated experience which her students had experienced as a learning community reading, discussing, and writing about literature and academic content about the theme, *The Three Bears*. As an English teacher, Ms. Derrick knows that a thematic unit of study on bears interests students while

addressing content and language objectives. Further, the teacher is pleased that the bear word wall significantly contributed to the success of the lesson, providing scaffolding (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005) for the early writers.

Reflecting about the English Language Acquisition Program

The English language acquisition program works because a number of principles are woven throughout. By utilizing all modalities and incorporating music and movement, English learners are receptive to language and learn English more easily. Secondly, reading English holds more meaning for English language learners when they are engaged in writing English at the same time. And finally, the teachers in the ELAP recognize that young English language learners enjoy learning language and learn it quickly when multiple methods and strategies that appeal to their multiple intelligences, involve fun activities, and build classroom community are used. The lessons may seem elementary in their scope and subjects, but the lessons of kindergarten, first, and second grades are very important in building a broad literacy foundation for the young Spanish speaking students. And it is these literacy skills: reading, writing, and communicating with others in a learning community that the dual language students will continue to use to inform themselves for life as socially responsible adults. In English language acquisition programs such as the one featured, a larger goal is being addressed: Educators are meeting the English learning needs of a growing U.S. Spanish speaking populace who will soon have a voice in the democratic process. In just ten to thirteen years many of the ELAP students will be able to inform themselves, to vote for the candidates of their choice, and to make an impact on the political and economic policies of the United States.

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Memories, Poems, and Songs: Successful Bilingualism in Primary School*

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Abstract

This study analyses the narratives of three participants obtained from semi-structured interviews about their experiences as students in a Mexican bilingual primary school in the early 1930s. The methodology used by one of their teachers, who taught them for two consecutive years, is analyzed taking as a basis the experiences of each participant.

El estudio analiza las historias de tres participantes obtenidas a través de entrevistas semi-estructuradas. Sus narrativas describen las experiencias que vivieron en los primeros años de la década de los 30's cuando eran alumnos de una primaria bilingüe mexicana. El análisis se enfoca en la metodología de uno de sus maestros quien les enseñó durante años consecutivos, basado en la experiencias de cada participante.

Introduction

Nowadays, there are many bilingual schools all over the world, including Mexico. Their goal is to make learners successful bilinguals. A person is considered a bilingual when he is fluent and literate in two languages. Balanced bilinguals are persons that are fluent and literate in his two languages (Holzman, 1997). Also, bilinguals can be *simultaneous* or *successive*. One is considered a simultaneous bilingual if they learn the two languages together from birth. A successive bilingual learns the second language have the first language has been acquired (Whelan, Marinaccio & Pett, 2007).

There is little research conducted about bilingualism in Puebla, at least as reported by Encinas & Salazar (2007). Thus, this study aims to explore successful teaching and learning practices in a bilingual primary school in Puebla through the analysis of retrospective narratives of three students in a bilingual primary school in the early 1930s. It is worth mentioning that in the 1930s there were few primary bilingual schools in Puebla. English was then taught by native speakers there as it is now, but nowadays there are more non-native speakers of English teaching in these schools than native ones. Besides, in the 1930s, English was taught following the direct method. English teachers then were not familiar with other methods of teaching English due to the fact that they had not been proposed, as Richards & Rodgers (2001) state: "the most active period in the history of approaches and methods was from the 1950s to the 1980s" (p. 15). This study analyzes the experiences of three learners in the 1930s as well as the methodology used by their teacher. Though it does not pretend to be an exhaustive comparison between 1930s and current practice, it allows the reader to compare and reflect on them.

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* This is a refereed article.

Bilingual Education

Bilingual education is a system in which two languages are used. These languages can appear in the curriculum in different ways. Ramírez (as cited in Jones, 2001) suggests that when limited English proficiency students receive most of their instruction in their home language, they should not be abruptly transferred into a program that uses only English (p. 99). However, this study presents the experience of three Mexican balanced bilinguals who experienced successive bilingualism. That is, they studied in a program where they experienced full immersion in English, in spite of the fact that they had studied kindergarten only in Spanish.

Success in foreign language learning

According to Jaatinen (2007) foreign language teaching can only be successful if the teacher not only teaches the language, but also deals with the entire human being and the group of people involved in this process. When dealing with the students as human beings, it is quite important to consider their motivation. Crookes (2003) highlights the importance of maximizing motivation through the use of adequate materials considering their appearance, content, and students' real interests. Furthermore, Prodromou (2001) argues that students succeed when they are motivated, participate in the lessons, enjoy learning, listen to their teacher; are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them, the topics are of interest to them, and the teacher encourages and believes in them.

The Study

Subjects

The participants of this study were two female and one male subjects who were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. They were called Amy, Lia, and Ray. All of them were classmates in a bilingual primary school in Puebla in the early 1930's. At present, Amy is 89 and Lia and Ray are 87. When they finished primary and/or secondary school, they became professionals. Their English proficiency helped them to be successful professionals. Amy became a bilingual secretary, Lia, a bilingual primary teacher, and Ray, an oncologist. He studied his specialization in a hospital in New York. Amy and Lia stopped working when they got married (1946, 1954), but Ray is a doctor who still practices his profession in a hospital in Puebla.

The primary school where they studied was attached to the 'Instituto Normal Metodista para Señoritas', though this Methodist school had, in the 1930s, male and female students. The school was founded in 1881 and it was the first school in Puebla to have an English bilingual program in a primary school. Actually, it had a regular primary program in Spanish and the bilingual one where the main language was English. This school had students from different sociocultural backgrounds: some of them were very rich, others were middle class, and others were the children of market vendors from a marketplace nearby. There were far too many more students in the Spanish primary than in the English one. Due to this, the English students in primary were grouped together. The participants recalled especially the time when they were together with 5^{th}, 6^{th}, 7^{th}, and 8^{th} graders (20 students) and they had a very special teacher for two consecutive

years (1931-1932), who will be called Miss White (it is also a pseudonym). Miss White was a middle aged American teacher who came to Mexico as a Methodist missionary and a school teacher.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

As mentioned earlier, the narratives of the three participants were collected through semi-structured interviews where the researcher elicited the participants' experiences when learning English in primary school. The questions guiding this interview can be seen in Appendix A. They were only used to guide the conversations. The participants spoke for about half an hour. The narratives of the interviews were obtained, transcribed, and analyzed. Common categories were identified and they were used to obtain the findings of the research.

Findings

The School

The three participants highlighted the fact that their school was the first and only bilingual primary school in English in Puebla in those days. In the words of Ray:

> *It was the only school where English was taught in Puebla. Our teachers were American and they only spoke English. They were very good teachers. We learned English very well. (interview transcript)*

Bilingualism was not seen then as a highly desired goal as it is nowadays. The last decade has brought many changes to primary non-bilingual private schools that have become bilingual. However, the trend is that English will also be taught in all primary schools in Mexico including the public ones (Davies, 2009).

Bilingual program

When describing the bilingual program, the participants mentioned that the English lessons were taught in English by female American teachers, but they also had to take subjects in Spanish with Mexican teachers for an hour daily. In the words of Amy:

> *We had books for the different subjects. We studied in English grammar, spelling, history, geography and arithmetic. But we also studied Mexican history and geography in Spanish. In eighth grade we did not study arithmetic in English, but algebra in Spanish. (interview transcript)*

Different subjects are still taught in different languages in bilingual schools (Jones, 2001). On the other hand, Ray raised an issue in relation to the content of the subjects in the English program. He said that they learned too many things about the USA and very little about Mexico:

> *We learned a lot about the USA, but we did not know many things about Mexico. (interview transcript).*

This issue raised by Ray is still presenting a challenge for primary teachers in Mexican bilingual schools, since these schools in Mexico have to cover two curricula simultaneously. As a result teachers of both languages have to struggle in order to cover such ambitious program. This has been reported informally to the researcher by primary teachers of bilingual schools.

Activities

Each participant described their daily activities according to their experience. Amy said that they read every day and worked on the subjects with their textbooks. She also mentioned that she enjoyed singing every day:

> *We learned a lot through the use of songs. I remember those songs, I learned them very well. Miss White taught us songs where we learned content of different subjects, such as history. I also remember when she used to read aloud 'The Christmas Carol'. All of us were 'spelled bound' listening to her ...she knew how to motivate us and she had a good control of the discipline of the group; she did not like misbehaviour, if this happened, she looked for ways to overcome this situation. (interview transcript)*

Textbooks are still now an important teaching aid used in bilingual schools, but they are not as important as in those days. Technology is now providing a considerable amount of information and resources for teachers and learners to learn English (Rossetti, 2005).

Lia mentioned that Miss White was an excellent teacher who used different techniques to teach them, such as songs, role plays, and literature:

> *For example, I remember Miss White acting out when teaching us about Galileus [Galileo]...She stood at the front of the classroom and said the words that the judges were telling him and then she moved to the other side of the classrooms and acted out as if she was Galileus answering... We sang everyday at the end of the lessons and we also learned many poems. I loved the songs, I can still sing them. (interview transcript).*

Primary teachers still need to use a variety of techniques to teach children. The use of songs and literature are still considered important tools to teach English (Bastidas, 2001; Renandya & Jacobs, 2002).

Unlike Amy and Lia's experiences, Ray mentioned that he had to study very hard. This may be due to the fact that, as Amy and Lia mentioned, they had to learn vocabulary and facts as well as songs and poems in English. Ray remembers having sung in the classroom, but he said that he did not enjoy this kina of activity very much, he said:

> *Miss White who stayed in the school for many years, told me to sing and I didn't like it. But some time later I recognised that learning English was very good for my professional life. We also took dictations... (interview transcript)*

Ray's anecdote highlights the relevance of taking into consideration individual differences and needs. Nowadays as in the 1930s, centering the curriculum on the learner and considering their needs is important as noted by Sayer (2001).

Drama

At the end of the school year, Amy and Lia reported that a special play was acted out by students with lots of songs. They said that all the primary students disguised, acted, and sang. Lia mentioned that this kind of activity was more ac-

cepted by younger students than the older ones, especially because they had to disguise themselves and some of the older students did not like this. She said:

> *I remember Amy disguising and acting out the following: "The woman was old and pale, in the winter day... It's somebody's mother, you know". Those activities were memorable. I will never forget them. (interview transcript).*

Although role play and drama linked to literature are suitable activities to teach children (Ellis & Brewster, 1991), when growing older they tend to reject this type of activity.

Discussion

The School

When participants entered primary school, they did not know they were going to participate in a program where they were going to experience immersion in English. Their teachers were using the Direct Method by demonstrating and acting without translating (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Besides, the three participants mentioned that this was an innovative program. Taking Markee's (2001) terms to describe an innovation, the American teachers were the *implementers* and the students were the *clients.*

Bilingual Program

Even though the students who entered that primary school had not learned any English before, they entered a program where English was spoken all the time in most of the subjects, due to the fact that they were taught in English. Ramírez (as cited in Jones, 2001) suggests that it is better to do this immersion gradually in bilingual programs (p. 99). However, none of the participants reported having problems understanding the English subjects in first grade.

Textbooks Activities

Participants reported having done activities with the use of textbooks. Those materials were probably chosen because of their content, but the textbooks in some subjects just presented content related to the target country/culture and did not consider the learner's culture as suggested by Hedge (2000). Actually, it was Ray, the participant, who raised this issue.

Songs

Medina (2000) points out that songs can be used to enhance language acquisition. In this case participants reported not only having learned/acquired English through song, but also having learned content, such as history or geography. It is important to mention that two of the participants enjoyed singing songs, but the other participant did not like it. This is where the term *individualization* becomes important. That is, it is advisable to focus on the learner as an individual, as suggested by Sarwar (2001). When teaching English, it is always important to be aware of the fact that there are individual differences and individual needs.

Literature: Storytelling, Poems and Drama

1. Storytelling

Ellis & Brewster (1991) point out that "storybooks can provide an ideal introduction to the foreign language presented in a context that is familiar to the child" (p.1). They go on stating that stories are motivating and fun, they exercise the imagination, they are a useful tool to link fantasy with the real world, and listening to stories in a class is a shared social experience. Besides, they can be used to teach the four language skills (Tapia, 2002).

2. Poems

Miss White integrated language and literature as suggested by Collie & Slater (1987). Students were asked to learn poems and some of them not only integrated language but content subject as Amy pointed out. Collie and Slater mention that "many poems are well-suited to a single classroom lesson" (p. 226).

3. Drama

Drama was used both by the teacher and by the students. The teacher used drama to illustrate different teaching points related to content courses, as mentioned by Lia. But students also participated by acting out plays at the end of each school year. They sang and acted. They wore special clothes. As Collie and Slater (1987) mention "with groups that respond well to drama activities, putting on one scene, or a short play, can be both enjoyable and rewarding" (p. 163). It seems that drama was a useful tool to teach the language to children, and some of them found it enjoyable and rewarding.

Dictation

Dictation is a simple teaching technique that can provide much needed structure and reinforcement for language learners. It can also be used to quiet a restless class or to pull together a distracted one as pointed out by Nelson (1998). Miss White also used this technique in her lessons.

Conclusions

To sum up, from these narratives it can be inferred that Miss White was a competent teacher as defined by Randall & Thornton (2001). She had strategies to cope with common classroom events, she was able to improvise, plan, and make conscious decisions about her own actions based on the context. She integrated the four language skills communicatively and she used experiential learning as suggested by Kang (2007). She was an American EFL teacher teaching in Mexico in the 1930s. Thus, she followed, at times, traditional methods such as rote learning for poems, but she combined these techniques with motivating ones, such as storytelling and drama, becoming a multiple actor to help learners understand content and the language without translation; therefore, she was using the Direct Method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Amy and Lia, Miss White was a teacher that enjoyed her job and made a difference in students' lives. She created a learning atmosphere where meaningful learning occurred (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández, 2002). The three participants reported having mastered the four language skills in English and they can still use this language to communicate effectively, that is, they are successful bilinguals. It is worth mentioning that they used the language in their professions and they can still use it now. I think we can learn from their teacher from her enthusiasm, variety of ma-

terials and techniques, and her love for her profession. Furthermore, as suggested by Cameron (2002) we belong to a modern society and according to her, we need to construct our own story. Thus, it is our turn to be those professional teachers that use a variety of techniques, motivate our students, and help them learn English; and by doing so, making a difference in our students' lives, as Miss White did on the participants of this study.

Further research is needed about English teaching in bilingual primary schools. It would be worth exploring teaching practices in those settings to analyse them and learn from this analysis.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

1. Can you describe your experiences learning English at primary school?
2. What activities did the teachers do to teach you English?
3. What was the purpose, length and frequency of these activities?
4. Did you like them? Why?
5. Anything you would like to add.

Then and Now, Inglés en Primarias

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Abstract

This autoethnographic narrative seeks to reflect on how pedagogic experiences mediate professional development in the area of English language teaching at the primary school level. Based on the teacher participants' contributions as well as the author's personal memories, a socio-historical reflection of how the English in public primary schools project came about in one state is recounted, and how this project provided academic opportunities for teacher development as well as student learning of English.

Esta narrativa autoetnogáfica busca reflexionar en como las experiencias pedagogicas influyen en el desarrollo profesional dentro del área de la enseñanza del idioma inglés a nivel primaria. Basándose el las contribuciones de los profesores participantes así como la rembranzas del autor, se llega una reflexión sociohistórico de como surgió el proyecto de ingles en primarias y como este mismo proyecto proporcionó oportunidades académicas para el desarrollo profesional de los maestros(as) así como para el aprendizaje del idioma por parte de los estudiantes.

Then and Now

It has been fifteen years since I first heard those words, *Inglés en Primarias.* For a decade and a half, that term has been part of my life and part of my professional history. It seems impossible that it was that long ago, but it is true. They were first spoken to me regarding another place, another state initiative, when English language teaching in Mexico was quite different; at least that is what we tell each other when we gather at our International Conventions and Academic Meetings. And now, finally, there are murmurs about the Mexican Education Ministry initiating a change the national elementary school curriculum for the teaching of English in *Educación Básica* (grades 1-6). This curricular change causes me not to look forward, but to look back. In addition, it provokes many questions for me as a professional in the English language teaching field. How did we get here, and how can what we know about our sociohistorical development in the area of language teaching inform this exciting new development in the lives of Mexican schoolchildren?

I write in an historical autoethnographical genre. Over the years, "the ethnographic genre has been blurred, enlarged, and altered to include autoethnography…." (Richardson, 1999). These authoethnographical writings allow the author to represent their understanding of life through individual social inquiries (Richardson, 1999). This autoethnographical piece is written as a reflective exercise. But, it is also a public task, in other words, although it is written to help the author understand and reflect on a piece of her life that she wants to understand more deeply, it is also for public consumption. This narrative recount of my experiences in *Ingles en Primarias* is based on memories of the participants, but primarily on the recollections of the author, supported by teachers and collaborators who were a part of this professional development piece of my life.

As we write, it is inevitable that our own worldviews and ways of viewing truth form the words we put on the page. The author writes from an epistemological position that learning is a social process, be it language learning or any other kind of learning. In addition, she believes we are mediated by social signs, tools and cultural artifacts as we learn, leading to development (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, when a person, or teacher carries out her professional role, be it instruction in a classroom or program development and implementation, there is social learning taking place through the mediation of the objects and others involved in this process.

I still have contact with colleagues that were with me on that remarkable journey 15 years ago. When we were young professionals involved in impacting ELT as it existed in Mexico at that time. It all began when two events took place at almost the same time. First, in 1994, the Mexican Education Ministry began the process of restructuring responsibility for the first ten years of education (*Educación Básica*) to the individual state governments. It coincided with a review of the national ELT curriculum at the secondary school level. At that time, the national curriculum was re-written to include a more communicative approach to language teaching (SEP, 1994). In our state, there had just been a gubernatorial election; we had a brand new governor. He promised to make changes in education, and suddenly there was talk of innovation in the area of computer laboratories and ELT. I heard it on the news, and read about it in the newspaper, that was as far as it went at that point.

I began my professional career in Mexico as an English teacher like any native speaker; I was hired because I had good pronunciation. No one ever asked me if I had a university degree, which I did. No one ever inquired if I was certified to teach in my home city of Chicago, which I was. I would like to believe that things have changed. By that time, I had gotten the hang of my new profession, *English language teacher*, and had dedicated myself to learning the linguistic aspects of my language that had escaped me as a native speaker. I taught at the local state university.

One day, I received a phone call from one of my university colleagues. She told me that someone in the state Education Ministry wanted to speak to me. I agreed, not really knowing what I had gotten myself into. My big thrill at that moment in my professional life was that I had been accepted into a Masters program at a university in the UK, and was soon to begin my studies that would finally give me a degree that showed I was an ELT professional.

English as a foreign language teaching in Mexico at that time was beginning a professionalization process. There were multiple things happening that allow me to make this statement. More and more teachers were getting university degrees, either graduate or undergraduate, that provided the theoretical underpinnings for our beliefs as language teachers. In addition, people started to talk about a globalized world, one where the lingua franca was English, where one needed English to do business and consequently make money. In all of this talk of making money, NAFTA was being developed. Technological developments were beginning to offer means of sharing and communicating ideas about teaching and learning. Local state universities were developing BA in ELT programs

that began to educate young people to be our future English teachers. Our national professional organization was growing and developing and offering more professional development meetings and conferences for English teachers in Mexico. As an English teacher, it was an exciting place to be.

By the time the interview came with the Secretary of Education of my state, I had been living in Mexico for a little over ten years; I had lived in my adopted Mexican state for a decade. He asked me if I wanted to be part of an exciting project that would change English language teaching; he had many questions that seemed too political, too irrelevant, and too unimportant to me at the time. I was an English teacher. My vision of language teaching was limited to the classroom and meeting the needs of my students. In spite of my limitations, I felt I was doing a decent job of teaching the language and was about to get better at it through my Masters degree studies.

In short, I agreed to be the academic coordinator of this new, state-wide project for innovation of English language teaching at the secondary school level. We worked day and night, and when I was not working for the Secretary of Education, I was teaching my class at the university. When I was not working, I was trying to complete my Masters studies. Oh, yes, life was busy. I rarely had time to question the aspects of professional development that were becoming part of my everyday life. I had little time to contemplate Richards' (2000) domains of language teaching or Freeman & Johnson's, (1998) ideas about foreign language teacher education or Bartlett's (2000) reflective cycle of teaching and how they should be integrated into the professional development courses for my secondary school teachers who were also participating in ongoing courses and diplomas. We were going full steam ahead – courses, presentations, degrees, all in the name of professional development.

We had been working for two or two and a half years when another call came from the Minister of Education. He would call and ask us – our team – to come and talk to him about how the *Proyecto de Inglés en Secundarias* was going. He was interested in our progress; he was a politician, both he and the governor asked for reports and information regarding where the money was going. By then, we had installed English learning centers in more than 35 secondary schools in the state, and had completed two generations of our Diploma course for secondary school teachers. This time he had something different on his mind.

As I said, I had heard about *Inglés en Primarias* from one of my colleagues from another state. By the time this call came from the Minister of Education, I fully understood the SEP system and how curricula were designed and carried out in *Educación Básica*. I had visited the state that was the pioneer at that time in teaching English in primary schools in Mexico and had wondered if this would ever be possible in my own state.

His first words to me were, "There are some parents teaching English at a primary school here in our state. I want you to find out what is going on." By now I understood that this was his leadership style, it did not put me off, and actually I found it interesting. He was in a particular position, he was not an educator, but he was responsible for education in our state. He needed people who knew about teaching and learning of different areas of content to provide innovative ideas

about curriculum and its application. By now, I understood that I was not just an English teacher, I also had curricular responsibilities. Did I feel prepared to meet all of these responsibilities? Not always. Did I realize that I had grown and developed professionally? For sure!

So we met with the above-mentioned 'parents' who were teaching English in their children's primary schools. We asked them all kinds of questions and we realized that just like many novice teachers, their ideas about ELT were based on the education they had been provided as secondary school students years before. Their language proficiency was less than desirable, and they had basically no teaching material for themselves or for their young learners.

So, after our meeting with the parent-teachers, another meeting with the Secretary of Education was in order. I asked if there was money to support this endeavor. He explained that the existing budget was destined to the Secondary School project. ELT in primary schools was years away, and perhaps would never happen. So, suddenly I realized that if we were to provide support for these people who had the best interests of their children in mind, we needed to be very innovative.

I remember the looks, the amazement, and the doubt when I began to discuss a voluntary project for teaching English in Primary schools. In my mind, the initiative was to support the existing classes and the people who were teaching them. I put forth the idea of a project of volunteer teachers, mostly made up of my university students who needed more opportunities for developing their teaching skills. Other volunteers included elementary school teachers who knew English and wanted to provide English language learning for their students. This group of volunteer teachers would include the parent-teachers who I met with when they came to the attention of the Minister of Education. But volunteer teachers would not be enough. I got in touch with the people I knew who published ELT materials at that time. I explained and requested they come to a meeting. They came and I asked them to adopt a school. This would mean providing ELT materials for that primary school and being part of this volunteer *Inglés en Primarias* project. They agreed. So, we began our first year of teaching English in primary schools with a group of volunteer teachers, and donated ELT materials provided by publishers who agreed to support our efforts. The students received instruction after their normal classes had finished. They paid one peso a week for their English class. The teachers used the 'pesos' to provide paper, crayons, copies and other teaching material. The teachers were invited to use our English Learning Center for secondary school teachers. There, they could avail themselves of any materials the secondary school project created or used. The teachers took the courses on ELT that the secondary school English teachers took at the *Centro de Maestros.* The volunteer teachers from the BA in ELT were teaching primary school learners; they also took the courses the secondary school teachers took.

By the second school year, the project had grown to fifty teachers, all working voluntarily as English teachers in primary school. Primary school principals were calling the office to find out how to sign up for this project; we had more requests than we could deal with. It was obvious that the parents of students in primary schools in our state were interested in their children learning English.

In 2000, our state was honored to host the International MEXTESOL Convention. At the inauguration of that academic event, the new Secretary of Education announced the launching of a new, *Inglés en Primarias* program. These English classes would be integrated into the school day, offered three times a week on a regular basis, taught by professional English teachers. It was the end of the volunteer project; with this state-wide program one of the first seeds of *Inglés en Primarias* that is about to become part of the national curriculum was planted.

I think about those years frequently, the opportunity to write about my experiences led me to contact some of the people who taught in that volunteer project years ago. I am certain that my experiences in the *Inglés en Primarias* project mediated my professional development, but what about the others involved in this effort? I conducted a survey of the English teachers via SurveyMonkey who were part of the volunteer project. They too, reflected on how their work in the *Inglés en Primarias* project mediated their teaching practice.

They described their teaching activities as the place where they began to define their professional lives. One teacher described her work by saying,

> *As an English teacher, I was responsible to do lesson plans for every grade as well as the design of the material. It was really hard work to do. It took me an entire day to plan for three grades and design the specific material for the lesson.*
> *In class, I was responsible to do the lesson but also, I remember that I had to check the English books and homeworks [sic] of the students. A 50 minute class was not enough to do the evaluation, so I had to take all the books and notebooks to my house to check them.*
> *When there was the exam period, we took a page of the English book to do it as an exam. The page was very [sic] related to what we have been taught, so students did not have difficulties to do the page. As a teacher, I just had to check it and most of the time the page just contained 10 items to solve. So, it was not a hard work to check exams.*
> *Dealing with a classroom of 40-50 students was not an easy task. The lesson had to be well planned and the material ready to keep students' attention. It was quite a challenge, but I enjoyed it (Roberto, Personal communication, March, 2009).*

When asked if this volunteer project had been 'real' or a true teaching experience one of the participants responded like this, "When I was in the project, a long time ago, I think it was a real job. I had to do the same things I did in my other jobs. I did not find any difference.(Maria, personal communication, March 2009)"

Yet, there was something that was not real about the volunteer project. One teacher wrote,

> *We did not get paid for the job, it was a volunteer fee of 1 peso each children, and if they did not want to pay it was no problem, I believe we did it for the love of teaching and for the reward of looking at children expressing at least something in other language (Cristina, personal communication, March 2009).*

Yet another teacher was more specific in comparing a 'real' job to the volunteer project. He stated,

> *I would like to compare this volunteer project to a "real job" in this form:*
> *1. The volunteer project was more fantastic than a "real job" because I had the opportunity to do many things with kids; we danced, we sang, we jumped, we played, etc. In a "real job", I can't do it, because teenegares [sic] are a little bit difficult.*
> *2. A "real job" is more satisfited [sic], I mean, talking about 'salary'. A "real job" is well paid than a volunteer project.*
> *3. You work more in the volunteer project than in a real job.*
> *4. You get diplomas in the volunteer project, while in a real job you don't get anything (Pamela, personal communication, March 2009).*

Yet another teacher spoke strongly about the volunteer aspects of this project as compared to a program that has other obligations.

> *[…] Siendo voluntario, haces las cosas con más alegría con más entusiasmo, todo lo que se hace se hace por el puro placer de disfrutar y aprender los niños asistían a las clases con mucho gusto porque además era fuera de su horario de clases lo que implicaba un esfuerzo extra para ellos pero esto nos les importaba porque sabían que iban a algo diferente. De de otra manera, el trabajo que se hace es más estresante sabiendo que tienes observadores que te van a detectar algún error y tienes que obtener resultados y tienes que cumplir con diversas exigencias (Valeria, personal communication, March 2009).*
> *Translation: Being a teacher-volunteer, you do things in a happier, more enthusiastic manner; all that you do is for the purpose of having fun and learning. The children are glad to come to class because although it was outside of normal class hours, and it implied more work for them, they did not care because they knew it was something different for them. Otherwise, the work we do is more stressful knowing that someone will observe you and try to detect your errors and you have to obtain certain results and meet certain demands. (Author's translation)*

In a face to face interview with one of the teachers, in my preparation for the development of this article, she reminded me of the 'utopian' manner in which we viewed the project ten years ago. We were blessed to be free of observers who visited the classes to ensure quality, we did not have a fixed curriculum, in short, perhaps we did meet the stringent requirements of quality English teaching that we ascribe to today. We lived in an academic bubble. I will leave the evaluation of this kind of English language teaching to the reader. I make no value judgments on what we should have done, and what should be done now.

Last year, I was asked to give an academic talk to the English teachers in the *Inglés en Primarias* program. They have monthly academic meetings that involve both administrative and teaching information. I agreed, but was shocked when I was informed that one meeting was actually three meetings, because there are now so many English teachers in primary schools that they do not all fit in the auditorium at one time. I did the talk and was richly rewarded by the opportunity to see some of the teachers who began ten years before as volunteers in that

small *Inglés en Primarias* project. I was honored as I was introduced as the one who had begun the program with my work years ago. It was then I knew I had to write about my professional development experiences. It was then that I realized how those years and that project had made me a more professional educator. As I became aware of the social needs of teachers in my academic community, I was forced to try to help them professionally, provide practical experiences for them as teachers, but I was also given the social responsibility of providing English language learning for children in my state. I had to find a way to do it – in a professional, ethical manner that met the needs of all of my academic community. So, now as the Federal Minister of Education plans to provide English language teaching at the primary school level throughout Mexico, I invite them to contemplate how these curricular innovations will mediate the professional development of English language teaching and teachers throughout the country. I remind them that no one curricular change can be made without causing a rhizome-like effect on all players in this social learning context.

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Inglés Enciclomedia: A Ground-Breaking Program for Young Mexican Children?*

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Abstract

This paper presents a critical analysis of *Inglés Enciclomedia,* the Mexican federal policy and software that brings the English language to all public 6th and 5th grade classrooms, from a critical applied linguistics and multimodal lens. The analysis is juxtaposed with the reality found in an urban afternoon school in Oaxaca. The analysis focuses on the introductory component of *Inglés Enciclomedia*, its general pedagogical suggestions, and one unit of study. This paper connects *Inglés Enciclomedia*'s strengths to best practices in teaching English to children. It also criticizes it because it connects English to the United States, its stereotypes, and the so-called native speakers, reinforces the hegemony of the Spanish language over Indigenous languages, and includes content that do not speak to the realities of low-SES children. This paper concludes with suggestions for future versions of *Inglés Enciclomedia* and calls for a multilingual and intercultural approach in teaching English to Mexican children.

Este artículo presenta un análisis crítico de *Inglés Enciclomedia*, la política federal mexicana y el software que trae el idioma inglés a todos los salones de 5º y 6º grado de primarias públicas, desde una perspectiva de lingüística aplicada crítica y de múltiples multimodales. El análisis se yuxtapone a la realidad encontrada una escuela vespertina urbana en Oaxaca. El análisis se enfoca en la sección introductoria de *Inglés Enciclomedia*, sus sugerencias didácticas generales, y una unidad de estudio. Se conectan las fortalezas de *Inglés Enciclomedia* a las prácticas modelos en la enseñanza de inglés a niños. También se critica este programa porque conecta el inglés con los Estados Unidos, con sus estereotipos, y con los llamados hablantes nativos, refuerza la hegemonía del idioma español sobre las lenguas indígenas, e incluye contenidos que no corresponden a las realidades de los niños de bajos recursos. El artículo concluye con sugerencias para futuras versiones de *Inglés Enciclomedia* y un llamado a incluir un enfoque multilingüe e intercultural en la enseñanza del idioma inglés a los niños mexicanos.

Introduction

> *Mexican children are running and playing in a school patio. Their brown faces, worn-out uniforms and brick classrooms depict a middle-low socio-economic public school. The narrator of the Internet video, created by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP henceforth), begins with, "Education in Mexico faces great challenges, and in different occasions, very serious difficulties to overcome these challenges. One of these challenges is the need for our children to learn English in order for them to better communicate in a context of global integration. So far our children*

* This is a refereed article.

> *have been lacking something indispensable: their teachers' knowledge of the English language, so their teachers can teach them [this language]. Today, we are breaking this limit, thanks to Inglés Enciclomedia. A system, so that any teacher can teach English to their students without having to speak this language." (SEP / ILCE, 2007, our translation) (1)*

In their desire to compete economically with other nations, many Asian countries—Japan, Korea, and Taiwan (Butler, 2004; Kanno, 2007; Shin, 2007), European countries—Spain and France (Etxeberría-Sagastume, 2006; Helot, 2008) and Middle-Eastern countries—Turkey (Atay & Kurt, 2006) to name a few examples, have started teaching English in elementary schools. Other Latin American countries such as Colombia (de Mejía & Montes Rodríguez, 2008) and Argentina (Tocalli-Beller, 2007) have also developed language planning projects to introduce English in elementary schools. In Mexico, there are several initiatives in different Mexican states that are piloting English in public elementary schools. The English program in public elementary schools in Coahuila, Mexico, was selected as the innovative educational practice of the year (see SEP, 2002). The state of Morelos has also been piloting an English program in elementary schools (Terborg, García Landa & Moore, 2007). In addition, as briefly stated in the introductory vignette, the federal government has decided to bring the English language to all public 6th and 5th grade classrooms in Mexico through Inglés Enciclomedia, which was to be launched in August, 2008 (Del Valle, 2008a). This policy and software claim that any teacher, with or without knowledge of the English language, will be able to "teach" it (SEP-ILCE, 2007) or "learn English together" with their students (ELLIS-SEP-ILCE, 2006). It is important to critically analyze Inglés Enciclomedia because it will reach millions of Mexican children.

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a critical analysis of Inglés Enciclomedia from a critical applied linguistics and multimodal lens. We will juxtapose our analysis with the reality we found in an urban afternoon school in the city of Oaxaca where we conducted a one-year critical ethnographic action research project (CEAR Project henceforth). The CEAR Project was conducted with the collaboration of ten student teachers. Its purpose was to use the teaching of English as a medium to foster multilingual and intercultural practices, develop elementary school teaching expertise, and co-construct affirming identities among all the participants. The CEAR Project acknowledged that Mexico, constitutionally, is a pluricultural and plurilingual country where Indigenous languages are recognized as national languages at the same level of Spanish (2).

In this article, we will first present a brief description of the urban school included in the CEAR Project as a way to ground our analysis of Inglés Enciclomedia (Blommaert, 2005). Second, we will the present the critical applied linguistic (Pennycook, 2001, 2006, 2007) and multimodal (Kress, 2000; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) theoretical framework we are using to analyze this program. Third, we will conduct a review of literature, of both academic and media texts, regarding Enciclomedia specifically highlighting the controversies this initiative has created. Fourth, we will present the results of our analysis of the introductory component of Inglés Enciclomedia, the general pedagogical suggestions, and one unit of study. We will conclude with suggestions for future versions of Inglés

Enciclomedia and a call for a multilingual and intercultural approach in teaching English to children.

Downtown School

We gathered information about this school and its student body and their families through one semi-structured interview with the principal, three interviews with the sixth and fifth teachers, and three interviews with 19 sixth grade students and 14 fifth grade students during one academic year. We also conducted six participant classroom observations in these two classrooms and numerous informal observations of recess periods where we interacted with the students in order to gather more information about their lives and language practices. Laura conducted her teaching praxicum in the six grade classroom and Miriam in the fifth grade classroom in the second part of the academic school year. They were able to get to know the students at a personal level.

Escuela Primaria Urbana Vespertina (Downtown School henceforth) is located in the heart of the city of Oaxaca. The principal of Downtown School states that,

There are seventy-six students in our school. Around fifty percent of those students are Indigenous or from an Indigenous background, mostly Triquis and a few from the Sierra Sur, who come to work as mocitos (live-in young servants) in the houses around the school.

Downtown School is part of the mainstream strand, but is an *afternoon* school. "The difference between morning and afternoon schools is the socio-economic status (SES) of the children," reported the principal. It is the school for the Triquis, the poor, the older and the "problematic" children as opposed to the morning school for the middle-class, the Spanish-only speaking "normal" children. Children at Downtown School contribute to their family economy by looking after their younger siblings and doing the housework, by working in the family business, by helping their parents with their jobs, and/or by getting independent jobs. Some children work as *mocitos*, street vendors, and tortilla deliverers among other jobs.

In the two classes we worked with, most parents had low levels of formal schooling and held different jobs. In average, 20% of the parents had no formal schooling, 16% had completed up to third grade of elementary school, 25 % had completed elementary school, 30% middle school, 6% high-school, and only 3% had completed a university degree. These numbers are the norm rather than the exception in Oaxaca and other southern states of Mexico (INEGI, 2006). The children's parents held different jobs. Some of these jobs were: merchants, tortilla makers, butchers, weavers, master masons, *vidrieros* (glass installers), plumbers, cleaners, and housewives among others. A few parents worked in the United States. Only one mother was an accountant and another father a lawyer.

Children at Downtown School grew up in complex families. Seventy percent of the children lived with their parents and siblings. The other 30 % of the children lived in different family structures. A few children lived in houses as *mocitos*. Their parents were either in their hometowns or in the United States. Other children lived with a step-parent. Another student lived with her older aunt. In

addition, other children lived with older siblings while their parents were working in other states of Mexico or in the United States.

We take the reality we found at Downtown School as our footing, as our socio-historical context, to analyze *Inglés Enciclomedia*. In the next section, we describe our theoretical lens.

Critical Applied Linguistics and Multimodalities

It has also been argued that English teaching can be a double-edged sword; in other words, it can reproduce or unsettle power relations. Pennycook (2001) coined the term "critical applied linguistics." He argued that language teachers must continually examine their research and teaching practices if they are to connect English teaching to "questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology, and discourse" (p. 10). Pennycook (2006) has warned us about the "many myths about English as a 'marvelous tongue' . . . and the collusionary, delusionary and exclusionary effects of English" (pp. 100-101). In respect to the collusionary effect, Pennycook (2006) argues that "English colludes with multiple domains of globalization, from popular culture to unpopular politics, from international capital to local transaction, from ostensible diplomacy to purported peace-keeping, from religious proselytizing to secular resistance" (pp. 101-102). Regarding the delusionary effect, he claims that there are many myths about how English will improve peoples' lives. Due to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA henceforth) and the products with English labels that Mexico "imports" from the United States, Mexico's small businesses have gone bankrupt because of the unfair-trade NAFTA really imposes (see Arroyo Picard, 2001 for different NAFTA's detrimental effects). In respect to the exclusionary effect, Pennycook (2006) states, "While English opens doors to some, it is simultaneously a barrier to learning, development and employment for others, and thus keeps out far more than it lets in" (p. 103). This seems to be the case in Mexico, where NAFTA seems to work for the extremely rich Mexicans and not for most small businesses. Similarly, English seems to be for the rich, who can afford private schools, and not for the poor. The delusionary effect and liberal arguments for access have driven the Mexican government to bring English, and the many things English may be or turn into, to public elementary schools. Mexican children, including Indigenous students, are confronted with those effects.

The teaching of English can also unsettle power relations. "The teaching of English, like any other pedagogical act, can reinforce existing inequalities in a society, but it can also help to expose these inequalities, and more important, help students explore alternative possibilities for themselves and their societies" (Pierce, 1989, p. 407). One of the examples of the alternative possibilities of the English language comes from a Oaxacan women's cooperative. "Nueva Vida" is a women's cooperative established in an Indigenous weaving community in the Valley of Oaxaca (López Gopar, 2005). In the past, these women would sell their rugs to middle men who did not value their work symbolically or economically. With the collaboration of an American anthropologist, they started learning English. They were introduced to different genres, which in turn increased the value of their product. They designed "about the author" cards in English, which were

attached to their rugs. Their work went from a handicraft piece to an art piece, which had an author with a history in need of acknowledgement. They also designed business cards in English and Spanish. Little by little, this cooperative has increased their business. They have made several visits to the United States where their work is valued both symbolically and economically. We can conclude that English is not something "good" or "bad" in itself. It might be English's collusionary, delusionary and exclusionary effects, our teaching practices, and/or the teaching materials, like *Inglés Enciclomedia*, that may move it towards one or the other.

English is usually accompanied by Information Communication Technologies (ICT henceforth), which have created different types of texts. Typically, text has usually referred to printed words on paper. In other words, a drawing or a song is not considered text. However, with the development of technology, people came to recognize that texts are not confined to the written word (Kress, 2000, 2003); they have become multimodal. For instance, on the Internet, one can find sites that include different "modalities," such as print, photos, videos, sounds, and moving icons, making the webpage a multimodal text. *Inglés Enciclomedia* is a multimodal text. Hence, for this analysis, we also rely on the work of Kress (2000, 2003) and Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996) in social semiotics and multimodalities. According to these authors, humans produce multimodal texts which are complex signs. Kress (2000) states that, "it is now no longer possible to understand language and its uses without understanding the effect of all modes of communication that are copresent in any text" (p. 337). Kress (2003) also argues that text design is always an interested process where humans bring their own agenda to the creation of multimodal texts. Our analysis hence looks at the different modalities present in *Inglés Enciclomedia* and infers the possible subtle, un-intended interests of the producers of this program.

Enciclomedia

In 2000, the people of Mexico elected Vicente Fox to be the new president. Fox defeated the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) political party, which had been in power for over 70 years. Many Mexicans believed that Fox would lead Mexico to become more democratic. According to Reséndiz (2006), this was not to be the case unfortunately. Fox directly intervened in the next electoral process and disappointed Mexicans with its cutting-edge projects (Reséndiz, 2006). One of those "cutting-edge" projects was *Enciclomedia*, which was launched in 2004. Prieto Hernández (2005), who worked as a consultant for this project defines it as follows:

> *Enciclomedia is an educational program with a national reach, whose objective is to improve the quality of public education at the elementary level through the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the classroom. It uses as its basis the digitalized free textbooks to enrich these [textbooks] with multimedia materials [such as still images and audio and video files produced by government and educational organizations]. (p. 162).*

Treviño Ronzón and Morales Landa (2006) rightly define it as "an informational, educational and *political* program" (n.p., our translation and our emphasis). Fox

and the government officials advertised *Enciclomedia* as the policy that would "change" the national basic education (Comunicación Social SEB, 2008a; *La Crónica de Hoy*, 2005) and would "close the gap for everyone" (Cavanagh, 2004, p. 13). During the planning stages, Mexico was supposed to invest one billion U.S. dollars in this project (Cavanagh, 2004), but ended up spending 1.6 billion US dollars (Del Valle, 2008b). Due to the political transition of power in Mexico, the Mexican congress denied Fox the funding to continue with the project. However, Fox was able to obtain funding from other government institutions (e.g., *Secretaría de Hacienda*) (García, 2007) and continued with the program without realizing that many schools around the country would not even have the trained personnel, the proper classrooms to safeguard the equipment (Sánchez, 2007), or even electricity to be able to run the program (Matías, 2007). This is especially the case in many Indigenous communities in Oaxaca (Matías, 2007). Aviles and Vargas (2006), two news reporters, mocked the validation report of *Enciclomedia* conducted by researchers from Harvard with its newspaper article entitled, "*Descubre* Harvard que Enciclomedia funciona mejor en escuelas con luz" (Harvard *Discovers* that *Enciclomedia* works better in schools with electricity) (italics in original). Consequently, many academics and news reporters viewed this program as "elitist, costly, exclusive, and presidential" (Elizondo Huerta, Paredes Ochoa, & Prieto Hernández, 2006, p. 218, our translation; see Prieto Hernández, 2005 for an analysis of 130 articles published in 2004 regarding *Enciclomedia*).

In spite of the political and financial controversies, *Enciclomedia* was "installed" and is still "in use" in most public elementary schools across the country. Even though *Enciclomedia* is a national project, there have been few research studies focused on *Enciclomedia*. Of those, one study focused on *Enciclomedia*'s application from the teacher perspectives (Sánchez Rosete, 2006), a couple others focused on different student populations such as students with special needs (Puentes Jiménez, López Rodríguez, Ramos Campos, Mota Leyva & Villagómez Parra, 2007) and students in rural communities (Treviño Ronzón & Morales Landa, n.d.). Altamirano (2006) focused on *Enciclomedia* and cognition and Hernández Luviano (2005) on the use of images as a pedagogical strategy. All these studies concluded that children may benefit with *Enciclomedia* as long as teachers use it as a pedagogical tool to enhance their teaching practice. In a more comprehensive study of *Enciclomedia* by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales México (2008), it was concluded that,

> *the infrastructure aspect has received much more attention . . . than the components related to the improvement of education . . . teacher preparation . . . focused populations' [teachers' and children's] perceptions [of the program,] . . . and the impact of the program on teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning. (pp. 109-110, our translation)*

Ramírez Romero (2006) concludes that more research is needed on the use of ICT and the ways that it is being incorporated into education. He also states that "it seems that there is more concern about 'making things' than about thinking about them and evaluating what has been done" (p. 63, our translation, quotation marks in original). More longitudinal and in-depth studies of ICT are needed. In the next section, we will conduct a critical analysis of *Inglés Enciclomedia* as a

first step toward evaluating what is been done in Mexico regarding ICT and the incorporation of English in public elementary schools.

Inglés Encliclomedia

"*Inglés Enciclomedia* was created especially to be implemented in the public elementary schools of Mexico, with the goal of including the English language as part of the curriculum" (ELLIS-SEP-ILCE, 2006, p.1, our translation). It "is designed in a way for teachers and students to learn together" (p. 1, our translation). In other words, according to the program, teachers do not need to know English in order to teach it. *Inglés Enciclomedia* makes use of ICT and has three basic components: an interactive program, a student workbook, and a teacher's guide. The government of Mexico hired Pearson's ELLIS (English Language Learning and Instruction System), a U.S. company, to design and produce *Inglés Enciclomedia* (ELLIS-SEP-ILCE, 2006). The software runs using *Enciclomedia* Version 2.0, which has been installed in most states. Oaxacan schools are still waiting for the installation of this version.

Inglés Enciclomedia is meant to be completed in one or two school years. The program is divided in two volumes. Each volume includes four units of study. Each unit has eight lessons: the first six include exercises, activities, and games, the seventh unit is a review and the last one includes the evaluation of the unit. Each lesson includes communicative objectives, grammar and uses (functions), vocabulary, and dialogues. Up to this point, only Volume One has been printed and distributed to the different states. According to Avendaño Aquino, who is in charge of professional development in the Department of Technology in the state of Oaxaca, *Inglés Enciclomedia* Volume Two is ready for printing; however, there is no federal funding at the moment to do so and the different States will have to finance it themselves if they wish to use it (Avendaño Aquino, personal communication, January 2009).

Subsecretaría de Educación Básica (2009) claims that *Inglés Enciclomedia* has been tested and "perfected" through pilot projects conducted in the academic year 2005-2006. ELLIS-SEP-ILCE (2006) asserts the same. They tested out the program in different states around the country with the assistance of The Anglo Mexican Foundation (3). The results included the students' average score in each unit. In the pilot studies' presentation of the results however, there is no mention of the content of *Inglés Enciclomedia*. It appears that the government officials and its supporters approve of it solely on the basis of test results (Comunicación Social Gobierno de Tamaulipas, 2008; Comunicación Social SEB, 2008b; Gobierno del Estado de Quintana Roo, 2008; Manjarrez Vargas, 2008) without analyzing the contents of the program and the different messages it may send to children and teachers. What follows is our analysis of *Inglés Enciclomedia*. We had full access to the student workbook and the teacher's guide, and semi-full access to the software via the tutorial program downloadable from Subsecretaría de Educación Básica (2009).

In the following section, we will briefly describe the three basic components of *Inglés Enciclomedia*. The focus of our analysis will be on the overall program and the software, the general pedagogical suggestions, and specifically Unit Two of Volume One.

Interactive Software

The English lessons are conducted through computers using a smart board. According to ELLIS-SEP-ILCE (2006), the software has the following characteristics allowing:

1. The students' participation in each activity.
2. The use of video, animations, games, and songs.
3. The use of a large number of attractive and dynamic materials.
4. English language learning [that occurs] in an active and enjoyable way, stimulating the use of English in each class.
5. The review of students' homework and evaluation of each unit. (p.3, our translation)

The software teaches "grammar, vocabulary, conversation, reading comprehension, listening, and pronunciation" (ELLIS-SEP-ILCE, 2006, p. 3, our translation) by following a four- or five-step sequence in each lesson: "Let's Learn," "Let's Practice," "Let's Play," and "Let's Review" (p. 9). Some of the lessons include a "Let's Sing" component.

The "Let's Learn" section includes interactive animations, videos, which can be played at normal and slow speed, with the transcription and translation of the dialogues, and lists of vocabulary. The "Let's Practice" section includes: (a) videos with multiple choice exercises, (b) listening activities, accompanied with images and with fill-in the blank exercises; (c) listening activities with sentence-ordering exercises; (d) sorting-out activities; (e) keywords review; (f) connecting audio with images; (g) audio and video conversations with multiple choice exercises; and (h) images with multiple choice exercises. The "Let's Play" section includes six different types of games such as "Hot Shot," in which students practice words while playing basketball, bingo, a memory card game, "Four in a Row," where students practice words while playing a dots game, and "Right or Wrong" activity. The "Let's Practice" section connects the games with activities in the workbook similar to the ones in the previous section. The "Let's Sing" section includes songs for some of the lessons. ELLIS-SEP-ILCE (2006) state that, "with the help of interactive tools and enjoyable activities, the learning of English becomes pleasant and fun" (p. 3, our translation).

The software of *Inglés Enciclomedia* looks appealing and appears to be grounded in "best practices" in teaching children. It provides colorful and interesting materials, games, songs, audio and video files with interactive controls. Children can even record their voices and compare them to those of so-called native speakers. It recycles the vocabulary through various entertaining activities. Nevertheless, the software has major shortcomings. Before presenting the general pedagogical suggestions, we will discuss two of them: the reinforcement of the "one nation, one language" ideology and the native-speaker ideology.

The first problematic aspect is the two flags representing the English and the Spanish language that are displayed on most screens of the software. There is a U.S. flag for English and a Mexican flag for Spanish. Mexican teachers and students click on these flags to listen to instructions in English or Spanish. With every mouse click, Mexican teachers and students are maintaining the nation-state ideology, which is usually represented by a single (*de facto*) official lan-

guage (May, 2001). First, the message sent is that English is spoken only in the United States. The software seems to ignore the fact that English is spoken in other so-called inner circle countries (e.g., England, Canada, Australia, etc.) and, most importantly, in many outer circle countries (e.g., India, Singapore, Ghana, Kenya, Jamaica, etc.) and in the expanding circle countries (e.g., Mexico, Japan, Italy, etc.) (Kachru, 1985). The symbol of the U.S. flag representing the English language may work against the resistance put up by Mexican academics and leaders against the hegemony of the United States. The teaching of English as a subject in middle schools is referred to as "Lengua Adicional al Español" (Language Additional to Spanish) and not "English." However, ELLIS, with its inclusion of the U.S. flag on every screen of the program, reminds Mexican teachers and students that "English" means the United States.

The inclusion of the Mexican flag to represent the Spanish language also reinforces the nation-state ideology and the role of Spanish as the *de facto* official language of Mexico. Constitutionally, Spanish is simply one national language of equal rank with Indigenous languages and is not the official language as it is generally believed (Hidalgo, 2006). In 2003, Mexico constitutionally recognized all Indigenous languages as being national languages and affirmed that all languages have the same rights (López-Gopar & Caballero, 2007). It took Mexican Indigenous peoples and Mexican pro-Indigenous activists almost a century to achieve this recognition. ELLIS, possibly ignorant of Mexican history and the social struggles of Indigenous peoples along with the compliance of the SEP, has placed the Mexican flag to index Spanish. They may reinforce the "one nation, one language" ideology, which first appeared following after Mexico's independence (Heath, 1972). The Mexican flag in *Inglés Enciclomedia* reminds us that the constitutional reforms are still only on paper and are far from being enacted in the day-to-day reality of Mexican society.

Another problem with the software is the validation of the English native-speaker as the possessor of the English language. McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008) argue that this is the tendency when teaching English as an international language. According to these two authors, curriculum developers choose to ignore the fact that so-called English native speakers from the inner-circle countries are the minority. In other words, there are many more speakers of English in the outer and expanding circles than in the inner circle. So-called "non-native speakers" are the majority. However, materials never include voices of speakers who speak English as an additional language, as L2 or L3. In *Inglés Enciclomedia* Mexican teachers and students pronunciation is compared to that of a "native" speaker from an inner circle. Students are presented with only one of the many varieties of the English language. McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008) argue that,

> *EIL [English as an International Language] curricula should include examples of the diversity of English varieties used today . . . which may enhance learners' receptive skills in processing different varieties of English . . . and promote an awareness that English, as an international language, no longer belongs solely to speakers of the Inner Circle. (p. 196)*

Mexican teachers and children may feel inadequate if their performance is always compared to that of a so-called native speaker.

General Pedagogical Suggestions

The Teacher's Guide lists 13 pedagogical suggestions for teachers. These are:

1. *Encourage students to participate in class.*
2. *Look for methods which enable students to connect the words or sentences that they are learning in English to their daily lives. For instance, if they have already learned greetings, start your class with simple phrases such as "good morning" or "good afternoon".*
3. *Make sure all students participate in class.*
4. *Ask them to listen and repeat the words five times while they are learning them.*
5. *Be aware of the role of corporal movements in the learning process.*
6. *Make sure students understand the new knowledge.*
7. *Do not spend too much time on a single activity.*
8. *Encourage students to practice the writing of words and sentences frequently.*
9. *Try to eliminate the use of Spanish during the class.*
10. *Involve students in all the activities as much as possible.*
11. *Motivate students to share their new knowledge of the English language with their friends and family.*
12. *Help students to feel secure when speaking English, making sure that fear and shame are not promoted while making mistakes.*
13. *Have fun with your students! (ELLIS-SEP-ILCE, 2006, p. 23, our translation).*

Most of the suggestions in the previous list are usually recommended when teaching languages to young learners. This list states that children should actively participate in class (Enright, 1991; Reilly & Ward, 1997) while having fun (Rixon, 1991). It encourages teachers to use corporal movements—Total Physical Response (TPR) proposed by Asher (1977), and to be aware that children have a short attention span (Brown, 1994). It instructs teachers to make sure children understand the new knowledge—Krashen's (1982) comprehensible input theory. It also encourages teachers to create a classroom atmosphere where students can feel safe when making mistakes (Scott & Ytreberg, 1998). Nevertheless, we find two suggestions highly problematic: "Look for methods which enable students to connect the words or sentences that they are learning in English to their daily lives" and "Try to eliminate the use of Spanish during the class." We will address the former in the next section when we review Unit Two.

Inglés Enciclomedia suggests that teachers eliminate the use of Spanish. The use of the first language in the foreign language classrooms has been a contested issue (4). In communicative language classrooms, the use of students' first language is ignored or not recommended as a practice. Teachers are encouraged to use it "judiciously" (Turnbull, 2001). García (2009) argues that the separation of languages is due to a monoglossic view of languages that has been prevalent in the second language education and bilingual education literature. In other words, languages are regarded as separate entities that must be kept apart. Cummins (2008) challenges the elimination of the use of students' first language in the classroom based on two well accepted principles: "(a) the role of preexisting

knowledge as a foundation for learning . . . and (b) the interdependence of proficiency across languages" (p. 67). Students start learning a second language using the schema that is encoded in their first language and the knowledge of one language transfers to the other language.

In the case of *Inglés Enciclomedia*, the suggestion to eliminate Spanish is problematic in three ways. First, it assumes that all children in Mexico speak Spanish. Once again, the creators of *Inglés Enciclomedia* ignore or choose to ignore the fact Mexico is a pluricultural and plurilingual society. This reinforces the hegemony of the Spanish language over the Indigenous national languages. Second, *Inglés Enciclomedia* is based on the idea that Mexican teachers with no knowledge of the English language will be able to teach it or learn it along with the students. If teachers do not know the English language and the program encourages those teachers not to use Spanish, what language are the teachers going to use to communicate with the students? Will the teachers be regarded as legitimate "teachers" when their voice is taken away from them and their intelligence is reduced to the English words, phrases, and/or sentences provided by *Inglés Enciclomedia*? The idea behind an English-only approach in their classrooms may keep teachers from venturing into the teaching process using naturally acquired language learning strategies, especially for those already bilingual teachers (an Indigenous language and Spanish).Third, Mexican teachers and children could use their knowledge encoded in their first language (be it Spanish and/or an Indigenous language) to make connections and analyze the new vocabulary, grammatical structures and functions of the English language. Both Spanish and English share a lot of similarities since both languages have Latin as one of their roots, English especially at the academic level (Cummins, 2000). Mexican teachers and children do have a lot to offer to each other when learning English. This is taken away from them if their first language is eliminated in the classroom.

Inglés Enciclomedia's Unit Two

The first unit of *Inglés Enciclomedia* focuses on six main lessons: introduction to English, greetings and numbers, countries, school subjects, school objects, and colors. Unit Two has six lessons: greetings and the alphabet, family, physical descriptions I and II, occupations, and pets. We decided to focus on Unit Two because it starts introducing more content that may or may not be grounded in Mexican's children lives. We will focus on the lessons that teach about family and occupations. We will relate this to the lives of the children at Downtown School.

Lesson Two introduces seven family members with pictures of each of them with a tree on the background. The family members introduced are grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, brother, sister, and "me." On the next pages, two different families are presented: Juan's family and Lupe's family. Juan's family includes a mother, a father and four siblings who are presented as living under the same roof. Lupe's family includes a mother, a father and three siblings who are also together under the same roof. Interestingly, the pictures of most of these family members portray people with brown skin and black hair, except for one sibling in each family, a girl with fair skin and blond hair in Juan's family and

a boy with fair skin and blond hair in Lupe's family. The lesson concludes with an exercise where students have to write about their family.

At Downtown School, children are growing in complex families. *Inglés Enciclomedia* reinforces the construct of the nuclear family that lives together. In the pedagogical suggestions teachers are encouraged to look for methods which enable students to connect the words or sentences that they are learning in English to their daily lives. Nevertheless, one of the major problems of *Inglés Enciclomedia* might be the restrictive content it provides to children. Teachers have no control whatsoever over the contents of the English program. All children in Mexico will learn exactly the same thing irrespective of their sociocultural context and their personal background. Every child in Mexico will learn how to say "grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, brother and sister." There is no room for extended family members that might be important in the children's lives. The software could have easily included an electronic bilingual or multilingual dictionary as part of the software where teachers and children could check other words that they might be interested in learning or that represent their current realities more closely. However, this is not the case. The use of dictionaries is not mentioned in the pedagogical suggestions either. Teachers appear to be simply technicians who will click on a mouse to learn/teach the words that someone behind a desk at ELLIS headquarters thought that all Mexican children should learn.

Lesson Five teaches children vocabulary that relates to occupations. It connects the vocabulary to the family members presented in Lesson Two. The occupations introduced are: artist, engineer, doctor, farmer, teacher, secretary, and taxi driver. Unlike Lesson Two, which introduced the vocabulary with cartoons, this lesson introduces the occupations with photos of "real" people. On the top right corner of the page, next to the word-bank containing the vocabulary, there is the photo of an engineer. The engineer is portrayed by a blond, fair-skinned middle aged man who is wearing glasses and a white dress shirt, a tie, and a black suit. He is holding a blueprint of a project and is giving instructions with his right hand. Next to him, there is a young black man who is wearing a casual blue shirt, jeans, and a red helmet. He is receiving the instructions from the engineer.

In the next set of photos, we find a doctor who is portrayed by an Asian-looking woman wearing a white gown. She is tending to an Asian-looking young girl who has hurt her arm. The photo of the teacher is next to the doctor's. The teacher is a light-skinned woman who has short black hair. She is wearing a preppy outfit: khaki pants, a white shirt with a blue vest on top. The children are raising their hands to answer a question. One of the hands is black, a second is brown, and a third is fair. The teacher is calling on the fair-skinned student. The photo of a secretary, who is beside the teacher, appears to be another Asian woman. She is wearing a brown blouse and glasses, and is working in front of a computer. In the last row of photos, we find a farmer, an artist, and a taxi driver. The farmer appears to be a middle-aged fair-skinned man. He is wearing glasses, a cap, and a bright red t-shirt and is standing in the middle of a golden wheat field. There is a big truck in the background. The "artist" is portrayed as a light-skinned, grayish-haired painter who is sketching a painting of what appears to be France's *Arc de Triomphe*. In the last photo on the page, we see a taxi driver. The man appears to be Italian. He is wearing a brown casual shirt and a black hat. There

is a button on his hat that reads "I ♥ NY." He is sitting in his yellow taxicab, smiling happily.

The portrayals of these occupations are highly problematic. ELLIS may be exporting the stereotypical racial, classist, and gendered practices prevalent in the United States and masked by the American dream ideology into Mexico. The engineer is giving orders to a black man, who appears to his subordinate—his employee. The doctor, the teacher, and the secretary are portrayed by women. The doctor and teacher fit the profile of the caring person who works with children. In these three pictures, there are two Asian-looking women reinforcing the stereotypical view of successful Asian people who, with their hard work and determination, achieve prestigious occupations. In the last set of photos, the farmer and artist appear to be "Anglo." The taxi driver, on the other hand, looks Italian. His portrayal of a happy man with an "unprofessional" job indexes the construct of the United States as the land of opportunity where immigrants find work, demonstrate effort, and live a happy life, the equation of the American dream. None of these photos includes African-American or Mexican-American people in any of these roles. If the black man appeared, he was a construction worker and nothing else.

Not only do these photos and occupational roles appear to reinforce stereotypes, they are also disconnected from the occupations of the parents and children at Downtown School, and possibly of Mexicans in general. At Downtown School, only two parents had university-degree occupations: an accountant and a lawyer. Some children and some parents worked in agriculture as *jornaleros*. However, the picture of the farmer is far from the reality faced by these students' families. The person in the picture represents the agricultural boss, who may take advantage of Indigenous people both in Mexico and in the United States (Díaz Cruz, 2004). At Downtown School, there were Triqui students. The Triqui mothers in Oaxaca are weaving artists, who create intricate patterns in their *huipiles* (5). However, the portrayal of an artist in *Inglés Enciclomedia* does not represent the Triqui mothers or other Mexican artists: potters, sculptors, and weavers. Later in the lesson, children are asked to connect the occupations in this lesson to family members in order to introduce them to other people. Children at Downtown School would have a difficult time in completing the exercise especially because their family members do not fit any of these profiles. One of the major problems of *Inglés Enciclomedia* might be its restrictive content that does not speak to the realities of the children at Downtown School, nor to those of millions of other children around Mexico.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified the strengths and weaknesses of *Inglés Enciclomedia*. The software offers appealing, colorful and interesting materials and games. It also provides audio and video files with interactive controls, and entertaining activities to recycle vocabulary. Most of the pedagogical suggestions appear to be grounded in best practices in teaching children. They encourage teachers to engage children in active participation while having fun, use TPR, be mindful of children's short attention span, provide comprehensible input, and create a safe classroom atmosphere.

We also criticized *Inglés Enciclomedia* because it connects English to the United States, its stereotypes, and the so-called native speakers, and reinforces the hegemony of the Spanish language over Indigenous languages. The software includes a U.S. flag to represent the English language. In the next version, the developers could include a different flag in every unit to acknowledge different inner, outer and expanding circle countries. They could also include the voices of people from different countries and encourage teachers to discuss the linguistic diversity of the English language. Regarding the use of the Mexican flag to represent and make use of the Spanish language in the software, the software could include different Indigenous languages present in Mexico. Different languages could be used in different units, so all Mexican children learn about Mexico's linguistic and cultural diversity. The teacher guide should encourage teachers to discuss Mexico's pluriligualism and interculturalism in order to change discriminatory practices against Indigenous peoples (Maldonado Alvarado, 2002; Molina Cruz, 2000; Montes García, 2004; Rockwell, 2004). Mexico is constitutionally a plurilingual and intercultural country and the teaching of English must respect, value and work towards these two ideals.

We also criticized *Inglés Enciclomedia* because its contents do not speak to the realities of the low-SES children that we found in the Oaxacan urban school we took as a reference, the children that the program claims to be most beneficial for: the poor, the technologically deprived, the ones that need English to compete. If *Inglés Enciclomedia* wishes to be a cutting-edge project, it must include a multilingual dictionary in the software and become a customizable program. In other words, the content of the program needs to speak to the reality of a variety of schools. Focusing on the two lessons we analyzed, the program could list several occupations and several family members that the teachers could select from, or have teachers create their own, locally appropriate lists, so that children would be able to connect them to their real lives or the imagined lives they want to work towards. Children from across Mexico could contribute their drawings and their photos, so that the multimodalities in *Inglés Enciclomedia* are truly "Mexican" (see Figure 1 for a collage of materials created by the children in the CEAR Project). According to Avendaño Aquino, it might be possible to upload materials and texts created by Mexican children to *Enciclomedia* (Avendaño Aquino, personal communication, January 2009).

Figure 4: Materials created by the children in the CEAR Project.

Inglés Enciclomedia does not seem to take into account the English teachers graduating from the TESOL programs around Mexico. We are aware that preparing English teachers for every classroom in all public elementary schools in Mexico will require a good number of years. Meanwhile, the ministry could hire expert English teachers to support non-English-speaking elementary school teachers. For instance, one English teacher could support an entire elementary school or two according to the size. In this way, the English teacher, the elementary school teacher, and *Inglés Enciclomedia* could work together to teach English in a responsive, intercultural and plurilingual manner. It is essential for English teacher preparation programs, *Inglés Enciclomedia*, and any language policy, curriculum or materials to adopt an intercultural and plurilingual approach if we are to support *all* Mexican children, especially those who have been discriminated against.

Notes

1. Watch the whole video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoVruqiWTn0).
2. Visit www.inali.gob.mx to learn more about the linguistic rights of Indigenous peoples in Mexico.
3. See Subsecretaría de Educación Básica (2009) for the number of schools, teachers, and students in different states that piloted the project.
4. See Cummins (2008) for a historical review of the issue.
6. See López Gopar (2007) for a description of the meaning of Triqui huipiles.

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Sheltered English instruction: An Overview of the Model for Younger English Learners*

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Abstract

The authors describe Sheltered English Instruction as a set of instructional strategies designed to simultaneously teach English as a second language and academic content. After reviewing reasons why Sheltered Instruction was developed and the language and learning theories that support it, the authors review four Sheltered Instruction models used in the U.S. and internationally. Then, the authors consider the implications of Sheltered Instruction for teaching English to younger learners in Mexico, give an example of a sheltered science lesson, and recommend other strategies that teachers can use to adapt instruction. They conclude by discussing differences between teaching English in the U.S. and Mexico, whether Sheltered Instruction is appropriate in Mexican classrooms, and they suggest features of the models that can be adopted and adapted for the Mexican context.

Los autores describen "Sheltered English Instruction" (Instrucción Estructurada o Contextualizada) como un conjunto de estrategias diseñadas para enseñar inglés como segundo idioma y contenidos académicos simultáneamente. Después de analizar las razones por las cuales la Instrucción Estructurada fue desarrollada y las teorías de lenguaje y aprendizaje que lo apoyan, los autores analizan cuatro modelos de Instrucción Estructurada utilizados en los Estados Unidos y a nivel internacional. Luego, los autores consideran las implicaciones de este modelo en la enseñanza del inglés a niños pequeños en México, dan un ejemplo de una lección de ciencia utilizando este modelo, y recomiendan estrategias que los maestros pueden utilizar para adaptar su enseñanza. Los autores concluyen discutiendo las diferencias entre la enseñanza del idioma inglés en los Estados Unidos y en México, si este modelo es apropiado en los salones de clase de México, y sugieren aspectos de los modelos que se podría adoptar y adaptar en México.

Introduction

Deciding on an appropriate method for teaching English depends on a number of considerations. Some of the most important criteria educators must take into account include: the students' age, the goals of the school curriculum, and the social context of the school and community. In this article, we provide an overview of one approach to L2 instruction which has gained increased attention by language educators in different parts of the world. We start by breaking down some of the terminology used by language teachers and researchers, and then we describe the theoretical rationale for sheltered instruction. *Sheltered instruction* refers to teaching of academic content (for example, mathematics, environmental studies, or some other topic or subject area) using special, "sheltered"

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techniques so that students are learning the content as well as the language associated with the topic. Richards & Rodgers (2001) classify this as a "content-based" approach. Specifically, we consider why and how sheltered instruction has been implemented using different models in the United States and internationally, and the impact sheltered instruction has for younger language learners. We conclude by discussing the implications of using sheltered instructional approaches for teaching English to young learners in Mexico.

Sheltered Instruction in the United States: Background

There are 5.1 million English language learners (ELLs) in the United States, representing over 350 languages (NCELA, 2006) (Note that "ELL" is the most common acronym used to refer to L2 English students in U.S. schools). Within this population, students, families, and communities are emerging in areas where teachers and schools have been Anglo-American, mainstream, native English speakers (Zehler et al, 2003) in the past. Other reasons for the recent attention assigned to ELL education are the standards movement (the establishment of content area and TESOL learning standards) and the passage of the national education law *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) of 2001, which places strong emphasis on accountability systems for promoting academic achievement. A key component of NCLB is the requirement that students are tested annually, with the goal of schools attaining "Annual Yearly Progress" by 2014. For ELLs, this testing requirement demonstrates inherent bias because tests are administered using English as the medium of assessment (Menken, 2008).

Teachers are, therefore, often unprepared to support the language and content learning of the ELLs. There are a number of clearly identified and classified models used for language instruction by teachers around the world (Baker, 2006; Garcia, 2009). Notions of "sheltered instruction" and "sheltered content instruction" reflect ideas about language and content teaching that can be adopted in a variety of contexts, especially one in which minority students are taught through the majority language of instruction. In settings like these, students and teachers are held accountable not only for *language* learning, but also for *content* learning. Whereas these settings have been categorized as "immersion" or "sink or swim" models in U.S. contexts, and deemed problematic by some researchers (Baker, 2006; Crawford, 2004), "sheltering" content, or "sheltered instruction" provides an opportunity for teachers to work within today's schools in an effort to avoid compromising either the language or content learning of ELLs in the United States (Sherris, 2008).

Alternative models for the instruction of ELLs in the United States that are useful as supplements to teachers' use of sheltered instruction include bilingual, ESL pull-out, and ESL push-in. Three models of bilingual instruction have a long-standing: (a) early-exit (Transitional Bilingual Education, TBE); (b) late-exit (Maintenance Bilingual Education, MBE); and (c) dual language, or two-way instruction. In early-exit programs, the goal is to transition ELL students as quickly as possible into English. In late-exit and dual language programs, the goal is students attaining bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism. While these are primarily used at the elementary level (grades Kindergarten-6), versions of them are also used in secondary, or middle (grades 6-8), and high (grades 9-12)

school settings. Both ESL models (pull-out and push-in) include a general education teacher who may have limited to no professional development related to the instruction of ELLs, and an ESL teacher, who has a special ESL certification, training, or degree. In other words, one teacher is mainstream, and the other is a language teaching specialist. In the "pull-out" model, ELLs are kept in the mainstream classroom with native English speaking peers for the majority of the day. They are pulled out during once or more during the day to receive specialized support from an ESL teacher. This may be for work that occurs in the mainstream classroom, language learning, or other content learning. In terms of the languages represented in pull-out classes, populations may be homogeneous or heterogeneous. Critics of this model are often concerned that students do not have access to the material that is covered while they are pulled out. In push-in models of instruction, the language specialist works in the classroom with ELLs, offering support during activities or tasks that present challenges. Like pull-out settings, push-in ESL teachers are usually not present for an entire class or day. Rather, they join the mainstream group to support the ELLs for a limited period of time compared to time of overall instruction.

The Theoretical Framework for Sheltered Instruction

In many classrooms in the U.S., ELLs and English native speakers are together in the same classroom. The challenge for the teacher is how to present topics and concepts in English in a way that is comprehensible for ELLs. Generally speaking, sheltering instruction means making language and content more accessible to language learners without "watering it down," which means without diminishing the level of cognitive demands required for the student to learn the concept or complete the activity. Often sheltering involves adapting materials originally designed for native English speakers. Through sheltering, ELLs have access to the same content as native English speakers, but teachers' explanations and the classroom activities are modified or differentiated to make content more understandable. Later sections of this article provide real-world examples of how instruction can be differentiated for ELLs. Sheltering as an approach to instruction is grounded in theories about both language and learning.

A basic premise of all sheltered or content-oriented approaches is that L2 learners will acquire the language most successfully when they are using it as a vehicle or medium for gaining knowledge about other topics. Therefore, for ELLs in a Sheltered Instruction classroom, learning English is "incidental" to learning about mathematics, science, social studies, or whatever the subject area is that they are studying. It is incidental in the sense that acquiring English happens naturally as a bi-product of studying the other subjects. Therefore, it is an indirect method of L2 learning, because there is no organization of syllabus according to "language functions" or "grammatical structures" or other features common to a Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Instead, in the process of learning in other content areas, the students will learn whatever vocabulary, grammar, or language skills they need to complete their activities or assignments.

As we will see in the specific Sheltered Instruction models below, this is not to say that students' English learning is random, only implicit, or completely un-

planned. In fact, Sheltered Instruction models ascribe to certain theories about what makes L2 learning successful. For example, teachers should encourage students' involvement with activities that encourage them to practice language using various modalities: input (reading, listening) and output (writing, speaking) (Long & Porter, 1985). This means that teachers should provide students both with comprehensible input, and many opportunities for students to interact with the teacher as well as their classmates. Finally, Sheltered Instruction is based on a belief that language is learned best when it is meaningful and highly contextualized. Teachers should employ a variety of modes for presenting and explaining information, including diagrams, charts and other visuals, songs and rhymes, and even kinesthetic activities. The example of the "Habitats" lesson described below includes both visual (the chart of the deer population) and kinesthetic (the students pretend to be the deer) elements. Finding ways to contextualize language is especially important for acquiring academic language, which tends to be complex and abstract.

Sheltering in the Content Areas: Integrated Language and Content Instruction

A means of emphasizing interaction among language learners is to teach them content that supports language learning. Sheltering approaches advocate adapting the language demands embedded in mainstream teaching materials without diminishing the level of content learning. In other words, teachers change how content-related information is communicated using strategies and activities that do not rely exclusively on language (Sherris, 2008). In addition to instructional changes, assessments and assignments are adjusted so that students can communicate content knowledge without requiring students to produce complex language to demonstrate learning. For example, teachers assessing a student's understanding of the water cycle should not require a written essay test in English, but rather student-demonstrated learning through the completion of a graphic organizer that uses one-word answers and pictures. Other examples include teachers adapting reading into shorter selections, teaching students how to tease key ideas from content-specific reading, highlighting key vocabulary in the margins so that literacy demands are diminished without compromising content.

The following sections review models of sheltered instruction that are used in the United States and in international contexts with minority language learners in which the target language is English. There are four main versions of sheltered instruction used in the U.S. (SDAIE, GLAD, SIOP, and CALLA), and two more used in Europe and elsewhere (CLIL and CBI). Though they vary slightly, most are based on similar research. We will review two based on US contexts and two used in Europe.

1. Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and English Language Development (ELD)

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) is an approach to teaching academic courses to ELLs in English that originated in California. It is designed for nonnative speakers of English and focuses on increasing the comprehensibility of the academic courses typically taken by native speakers and more proficient ELLs within the standard school curriculum. Students reported in

this category receive a program of ESL instruction and a minimum of two academic subjects required to pass to the next grade level or to graduate were taught through (SDAIE) (California Dept of Education, 2008).

Sobul (1995) describes SDAIE as a model based on Krashen's notion of comprehensible input and Vygotsky's theories of the Zone of Proximal Development and learning as a socially mediated process. "SDAIE is grade-level subject matter in English specifically designed for speakers of other languages. It is rigorous academic core content required at the student's grade level; it is not watered down curriculum" (p. 2).

Gulack and Silverstein (n. d.) consider SDAIE as comparable to sheltered instruction,

to understand the purpose of SDAIE (often referred to as 'sheltered instruction'), the umbrella is a useful metaphor. After LEP (Limited English Proficient) students enter United States schools, they encounter many unfamiliar elements. As an umbrella shelters pedestrians in a rain-storm, so SDAIE/sheltered classes offer LEP students some protection from the storm of concepts, contexts, and language, thus giving them the opportunity to progress academically as they acquire English language proficiency. (p. 2)

They note areas included in the SDAIE model—higher-level critical-thinking skills, group work, multiple intelligences, curriculum concepts, the benefits of speaking English, paragraph graphic organizers, and self-directed learning. The authors' encouragement of English use in the classroom is noteworthy, given Sobul's (1995) inclusion of native language use and instruction in her overview of the SDAIE model "whenever possible primary language content instruction must be provided" (p. 6). Sobul lists the characteristics of SDAIE as: collaborative learning, contextualization of content, interaction, assessing prior knowledge and experience, scaffolding, multicultural awareness and the validation of diversity, thematic instruction, and teacher decisions and delivery focused on providing comprehensible input (related to contextualization of content and concepts) (p. 10).

Today, California's process for supporting English Language Learners to transition into mainstream settings includes both English Language Development (ELD) and SDAIE curricula. ELD teachers use the same sheltering strategies as SDAIE teachers; they are more like traditional ESL pull-out than SDAIE. ELD and SDAIE programs are viewed as sequential and transitional—the purpose is transitioning students as quickly as possible from their L1 to English (moving from ELD settings to SDAIE settings). Rumberger and Gándara (2004) describe ELD in the context of the California's ESL Teacher Credentials, "It is 'systematic' instruction of English language that is designed to (1) promote the acquisition of English-listening, speaking, reading and writing skills by students whose primary language is other than English, and (2) provide English language skills at a level that will enable equitable access to the core curriculum for English learners once they are presented with academic content. (CTC, 2001, p. A-8)" (p. 2036). Theoretically, the tenets of SDAIE and ELD are similar to other Sheltered Instruction approaches, like the SIOP Model.

2. Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model

One of the the most well known models for sheltered instruction is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model, on which a text book is based entitled, *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP Model* (Echeverría, Short, & Vogt, 2007). The SIOP is presented as an 8:30 model because it is comprised of eight broad components and thirty smaller features. The features include "Lesson preparation: Language and Content Objectives," "Comprehensible Input: Appropriate Speech," and "Strategies: High-order Thinking Questions". The components and features are listed in Appendix A.

One reason the SIOP Model is accessible for teachers is the systematic review of each of the thirty features, which lends nicely to self-reflection and self-assessment during training, early implementation, and later instruction. The SIOP Model is well-known for emphasis on connecting to practice and instruction. Overlap among features ensures that teachers are incorporating strategies that directly support ELLs in the classroom. By strategic grouping, the authors suggest that teachers consider grouping structures in the planning and delivery stages that encourage interaction among native and non-native students, students at a variety of language proficiency levels, and structures that promote different types of interaction (through all four modes of language, for example). With regard to providing ample opportunities for students to learning strategies, the authors distinguish between *teaching* strategies and *learning* strategies. Teaching strategies include the adaptations that teachers bring to lessons to scaffold instruction, like graphic organizers and hands-on materials. Learning strategies are methods that students learn to deconstruct and better understand content as they learn English, like self-adapted text, self-sustained personal dictionaries, and highlighting key vocabulary. Learning strategies are especially valuable during summative assessments. In terms of student engagement, SIOP Model contributors suggest that teachers should keep students engaged for 90-100% of a lesson. In other words, high SIOP Model implementers keep students engaged with their peers, the teacher, or the material for this percentage of time during lessons.

Perhaps the SIOP is most well known for the focus it places on language and content objectives. Introduced in the first feature of the Model (Lesson Preparation), the notion of assigning objectives based on language tasks versus content learning expectations reflects a central tenant in sheltering models. Too often, teachers who are under-prepared for supporting English language learners, particularly in mainstream settings (where native English speaking peers are also present), make judgments about ELLs' content knowledge, when in fact they are assessing the students' (lack of) English proficiency. By clearly distinguishing between language and content in the planning stages of instruction, throughout instruction, and in assessments, teachers who adopt SIOP Model strategies are more cognizant of the difference between language and content. This understanding is perhaps most clear due to the strong emphasis on language and content objectives that drive curriculum delivery and instruction. Because of language and content objectives, teachers are encouraged to take into account not only the language demands embedded in assessments, but in all daily classroom activities. Ideally, teachers therefore, plan, deliver, and assess students' learning

of language and content independent from one another, rather than confusing the two.

3. International Models: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning,

> *is an umbrella term adopted by the European Network of Administrators, Researchers and Practitioners (EUROCLIC) in the mid 1990s. It encompasses any activity in which 'a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and the subject have a joint role.' (Marsh, 2002, p. 58;Coyle, 2007, p. 545)*

This label was intended to frame CLIL as a model comparable to other widely accepted methods for language instruction, like bilingual education. "Whilst CLIL shares some elements with many of these approaches, in essence its distinctiveness lies in an integrated approach, where both language and content are conceptualized on a continuum without an implied presence for either" (Coyle, p. 545). Unlike the U.S.-based models and methodologies described above, CLIL may be projected into a wide variety of contexts—elementary, secondary, adult education, vocational education, and with any native and/or target language populations. Baetens Beardsmore (2007) "identified five dimensions (culture, environment, language, content and learning) which determine how different programs are constructed. These dimensions account for multiple variables which led to a diverse range of CLIL programs" (cited in Coyle, 2007, p. 546).

Coyle (2007) developed the 4Cs Framework for CLIL. The four Cs are: content, communication, and cognition, which are connected and exist around the central C, culture. A revised version of this framework advocates that CLIL adequately regard the *use* of language where "CLIL teachers and learners in using and developing language *of* learning, *for* learning and *through* learning (Coyle, 2007, p. 552, emphasis in original). This sort of distinction is similar to the idea of teaching language through content, which is the basis of Sheltered Instruction in the US. Of CLIL, she writes, "The strength of CLIL focuses on integrating content and language learning in varied, dynamic and relevant learning environments build on 'bottom-up' initiatives as well as 'top-down' policy" (Coyle, 2007, p. 546). Here, Coyle is drawing from other work (Nikula, 1997) noting that there is no single, structured, large-scale example of CLIL implementation across different countries and contexts (therefore, it occurs on a "bottom-up," rather than top-down basis. Jappinen (2005) researched the use of CLIL methods for foreign language instruction in Finland using the content areas of math and science:

> *In CLIL, learning the foreign language is not the direct objective of education but a natural part of the whole learning process. Because of their diversity, European CLIL programmes have various aims related to culture, environment, language, content, and/or learning. This means that, in many cases, language learning or teaching is not the focus point of the CLIL programmes although language is always one of the key features of a CLIL environment. (p. 149)*

Jappinen (2005) also notes that CLIL settings typically have four key characteristics: a large zone of proximal development, specific socio-culture-psychological

factors, special discovery learning related settings, and informal and natural language learning development (p. 151)

A key difference between the European CLIL model and U.S. models is the integration of culture and its central role in integrating language and content instruction. While culture is acknowledged in SDAIE and SIOP, its role as a core value is not the aim in these models. An explanation for this disparity may be the conservative ideology in the U.S. that results in overt value ascription to English over other minority languages. In other words, transitioning ELLs into majority, mainstream, monolingual English speaking U.S. society remains the central goal of these programs, unlike late-exit and dual language programs, which usually place the development of biculturalism as a central goal.

4. Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

Schleppegrell, Achugar, and Oteíza (2004) characterize Content-Based Instruction (CBI) as "an approach to teaching ESL that attempts to combine language with disciplinary learning, suggesting that teachers can build students' knowledge of grade-level concepts in content areas at the same time students are developing English proficiency" (p. 67). Similarly, Song (2006) describes CBI as "language instruction is integrated within specific academic contexts as students enroll concurrently in linked language and discipline-specific content courses" (see also Brinton et al., 1989). Although utilized in both ESL and EFL contexts, Davies (2003) describes CBI as a model that might utilize both a content area teacher and an ESL teacher for EFL in higher education. He outlines a syllabus for a psychology course to demonstrate what he terms theme-based CBI:

> *One of the strengths of theme based CBI is its flexibility; teachers can create units with specific learner needs in mind. For example, Unit 3 began with some textbook readings followed by questions and written work. After this the students were given some advertisements to analyze and also brought in their own examples for use in group discussions. Finally, for a small group project, they designed their own advertisements and then presented their work to the other class members with a rationale for how they had chosen their project and who the target customers would be. (Davies, 2003, p. 2)*

Like CLIL, the primary goal in CBI is teaching language *through* content instruction. Though research supports its use in a variety of settings, from Kindergarten through postsecondary levels, most research CBI concentrates on university level EFL contexts.

Implications of Sheltered Instruction for Mexican contexts

CLIL, CBI, as well as the versions of sheltering described above – SDAIE and SIOP – are all content-oriented models which attempt to teach English as an additional language through content instruction (and content through English). Though similar, they serve slightly different purposes and ELLs in different contexts. Sheltered English instruction has become a popular way of integrating content and language instruction for younger L2 English students in American classrooms. But how appropriate is sheltering as a method for teaching English to younger students in Mexico? Often, new language teaching methods from Eng-

lish-speaking countries are assumed to represent more advanced pedagogical practices, and other countries are eager to adopt them. However, before implementing sheltering in Mexico, we need to evaluate its suitability for the needs and realities of the Mexican context.

Some important questions to consider are:

In what ways are the contexts of L2 English learning in the U.S. and Mexico similar or different?

When should we recommend using sheltered instruction to teach English in Mexico? In what situations is it not recommended?

What are appropriate adaptations to make sheltered English instruction relevant in Mexican classrooms?

In the remainder of this article, we will discuss these questions related to the feasibility and drawbacks of implementing sheltered instruction for young learners in Mexican classroom settings.

Main differences between American and Mexican contexts for learning English

Sheltered Instruction was developed to respond to the needs of English language learners in public schools in the United States. Therefore, before implementing Sheltered Instruction in other settings, we must explore differences between the two contexts. One main distinction between the American and Mexican contexts in terms of learning English is that the U.S. is an ESL (English as a Second Language) context, (because English is the language spoken by the majority population) whereas Mexico is an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context (because English is not the language spoken by the majority population). This means that in the U.S., English is the dominant language of the wider community, and children outside the classroom are exposed to English in their daily lives – through television, in public places, and interacting with friends and peers. On the other hand, in an EFL setting such as Mexico, generally the only exposure students have to English is for the limited time they are in the EFL classroom. Outside the classroom, opportunities to hear or use English are often limited.

In fact, studies show that because of the increased exposure to the L2 in ESL settings, children often learn conversational English relatively quickly – within one to three years (Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000). Often, it takes ELL students longer to learn academic English; studies show that in most cases children need from five to seven years to learn the kind of standard, academic English that they need to be successful in U.S. schools. Cummins (2000) points out that this distinction between **social language** (the conversational language of social interactions in our daily lives) and **academic language** (the standard and literate language used in school) is an important one for understanding the often lower achievement rates that immigrant and minority-language students experience in American schools.

Sheltering methods were developed to address the problems of language minority students falling behind in mainstream American classrooms because they could not understand or use English well enough to keep up with their grade-level peers. Because they had not acquired enough English to learn the academic content, they were falling behind in both language and content. However, we should appreciate that students learning English in Mexico are not immigrants or

language minority students. The main design feature and purpose of sheltering – a set of instructional strategies to help ELL children cope with mainstream English-only classrooms – is not present in a Mexican EFL classroom. Therefore, we recommend making careful modifications when adopting Sheltered Instruction in Mexican classrooms. This is not to say that the Sheltered English Instruction has nothing to offer EFL teachers in Mexico. In fact, most of the features of sheltering content described above are based on sound pedagogical principles that improve English language instruction for all.

In what ways is Sheltered Instruction useful for EFL in Mexico?

Since Sheltered English Instruction is a content-based approach, there are several criteria necessary for its success. First and foremost, teachers must adapt language to fit the proficiency levels of the students. This is a major challenge, since students in Mexico may have more limited access to English, and it is hard to teach a lesson entirely in English using only basic-level vocabulary. However, by relying on visuals such as pictures, models, and graphs, as well as realia, and multiple ways of presenting the content, teachers can make input comprehensible and deliver effective Sheltered Instruction lessons even to beginner-level students. Obviously, this is easier to do with some ages and topics than others. The lesson about "Animals of the Forest" presented to kindergarten-aged children described in another article in this issue (see Pisler, this issue) uses stuffed animals to model language forms in a way that is accessible for younger children.

The theme of HABITATS is a common unit of study in science for fourth grade students. Even with a complex topic like habitats, where the cognitive and linguistic demands are higher, an effective teacher can use sheltering strategies to scaffold both the language and content learning. For example, the teacher would start by clearly stating both the content and language objectives (from the SIOP model, see Echeverría, Short & Vogt, 2007). The content objective for a lesson might be:

1. Students will be able to identify three basic characteristics of a habitat.
2. Students will be able to explain why there are fluctuations of animal populations in a habitat.

Although this language is quite complex, notice that words like "characteristics" and "fluctuations" are cognates shared by English and Spanish. If students have studied similar topics in Spanish, such as "Life Cycles" or "Endangered Animals," then they will be familiar with some of the main concepts in the lesson, and will not need to re-learn the concept, but rather transfer their knowledge while learning about the new topic in English. The language objectives for this lesson might be:

1. Students will be able to discuss related habitats using key vocabulary.
2. Students will be able to describe in writing the life cycles in certain habitats.

Again, the sheltered lesson should be dynamic. In this example, after presenting the objectives, the teacher would introduce the key vocabulary by using pictures. For instance, to show the characteristics of a habitat – food, water, and shelter –

the teacher might show a picture or video of a deer eating grass, drinking water, and sleeping under a tree.

Students could take an active role by playing a game that demonstrates the concept, thus integrating Total Physical Response (TPR) in the lesson. In this "application and review" activity, some students take the role of deer, and stand facing the wall at one end of the classroom (or even better if you can play this in the patio). The other children represent the habitat: they stand at the other end of the classroom, and choose one of the three elements: they put their hands over their stomach to indicate food, hold their neck to indicate water, and hold their hands above their heads to indicate shelter. Each "deer" decides which element he or she is looking for: they turn around and run quickly to catch a "habitat" student at the other end whose hands are showing the element that they are looking for. Any "habitat" student who is caught by a deer becomes a deer during the next round. Any student who is not chosen by a deer stays where she is. Any deer who cannot find the element she is looking for is "dead," and she becomes a habitat element during the next round. For each round, one student must be the recorder, and write the number of deer on a large graph. If you repeat the activity for five or ten rounds, the graph will show the natural fluctuations of a deer population. This activity idea is from Project Wild (2007).

The habitat lesson is a good example of a Sheltered Instruction lesson. The purpose of the lesson is to learn why populations of animals fluctuate in the wild, however in order to learn this content students must also use the English necessary to get this knowledge: in this case vocabulary related to habitats, as well as carefully listening to the teacher's instructions in order to be able to do the activity. Both the vocabulary learning and the listening comprehension become more effective because they are highly contextualized within the activity that the students are doing. Although the teacher is modeling L2 structures for the students, there is little direct teaching of grammar in sheltered lessons. However, for content-based lessons in EFL settings the teacher may want to include a "focus on form" component which isolates and explicitly teaches some aspect of grammar or one of the four skills. This approach to instruction includes overt recasts, clarification requests, and other methods that strategically and systematically identify and correct grammatical errors in language learning. Another way to embed focus-on-form in the classroom is for teachers to correct children's speech errors when they occur, including mini-lessons regarding language structure. Such instruction would not be appropriate in an ESL setting; rather, teachers would recast students' statements modeling correct language structures. In the habitat lesson example above, the teacher may ask the students to produce a report based on the graph showing the population fluctuation, and focusing on the grammatical structure of the past tense of the form *there is/there are.* The report would include information like: "In the first year there were eight deer. In the second year, there were five deer…" The final product would be evaluated on the students' use of the particular language form and key vocabulary from the lesson, as well as their ability to transfer the information from the graph into a written report.

Conclusions: Recommendations for Incorporating Sheltered English Instruction

Although Sheltered Instruction is not feasible for teaching English in Mexico at all levels, some elements can be incorporated in English lessons for younger learners. First of all, a content-oriented approach works well for the youngest learners. Students in the earliest grades (from four to six years old) have not yet learned literacy skills or have gained linguistic awareness (for example about what a noun or a verb is) in their first language. Hence, it makes sense to have their English lessons mirror what they are learning in their regular lessons: for instance, learning shapes and colors and practicing motor skills by cutting colored paper; or learning about the calendar while practicing counting and days of the week and names of the months in pairs or small groups. This adaptation of the model, which utilizes hands-on manipulatives and grouping structures while teaching English demonstrates how key components of Sheltered Instruction may be effective in the Mexican contexts with children learning English.

For students in primary grades, Sheltered Instruction can be used selectively to teach English and reinforce content learned in Spanish. We offer the following list of five features of content-oriented instruction that can represent what we consider "best practices" for teaching English as foreign language to younger learners:

*1. Specifying learning objectives for each lesson***.** This helps orient the children's attention and shows them what they are expected to learn. For content-based lessons, you as the teacher should have a clear idea about both the *content objectives* and *language objectives* for the lesson. For example, when small children are learning colors, the teacher would carefully distinguish between children understanding the difference between red, blue, and yellow (content) and using new English vocabulary words to point to the colors (language).

*2. Extensive use of the L2***.** Learning an L2 depends on having enough exposure to the language. This is most limiting factor in EFL classrooms, since students generally do not have exposure to the language outside the classroom. Sheltered Instruction lessons use the L2 as the "medium of instruction," meaning that the teacher uses English almost exclusively for explanations, questioning, instructions, and even routine classroom management. For example, one way teachers can use more English in classrooms in Mexico is careful and strategic paraphrasing and providing definitions for new words using simpler language within instruction and the integration of realia and visuals. For example, a teacher might say: "Types of transportation, or how we get from home to school and back to home, might be a car (holding a toy car), a bus (holding up a toy bus), or to walk (holding up a photo of someone walking)."

*3. Selective focus on language forms***.** The teacher should keep in mind that the focus of the lesson should be on the content, whether it is understanding feelings (sad, mad, happy) or learning the difference between the senses (touch, smell, taste, see, hear). Thus, the teacher should limit the amount of time focused on the language itself, and instead concentrate on the topic or theme. Any language forms that the students need – especially key vocabulary – should be presented within the context of the lesson. For example, instead of strictly teaching voca-

bulary like sad, mad, and happy, teachers might play games and sing songs that have physical movements that mimic those feelings. This way, children are learning the vocabulary while they play, instead of rote repetition.

4. Multiple ways of presenting and exploring content. In order for Sheltered Instruction to be effective, students must have multiple ways of engaging with the content. This must include activities that engage students, including models, graphs and visuals like concepts maps and Venn diagrams, as well as realia and manipulatives like puppets, blocks and figures. For example, if children are learning about parts of the body, instead of only reading a book or looking at pictures, students might trace their own bodies on butcher paper, then identify arms, legs, the head, and hands in partners.

*5. Make connections across the curriculum***.** Children will be able to learn the content and language objectives faster if there are connections to other things that they are learning in their first language. For example, if the students are learning about endangered animals in Spanish, reading a story or playing a game about polar bears in English will be more meaningful, and allow them to transfer their knowledge from one language to the other.

In conclusion, rather than adopting Sheltered Instruction completely in Mexican classroom as a method for EFL instruction, we suggest that it can be strategically incorporated into EFL classes in Mexico. It offers teachers an effective way of integrating language learning into instruction with little need for major curriculum or system-wide changes. Once teachers develop materials for lessons with young learners, they can be used for other groups over years to come. Sheltered Instruction practices do not require significant funding resources or outside support. Rather, teachers can make straightforward adaptations to instruction that result in more effective English language development. Through emphasizing the five features of best practice and related strategies outlined above, teachers can better support English development, especially for younger children. When teachers specify objectives, increase the use of L2 in instruction, focus on language forms in ways that are meaningful, present content in a variety of ways, and make connections across the curriculum, Sheltered Instructional approaches will benefit young children learning English in Mexico.

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Appendix A: Features of the SIOP Model

1. Lesson Preparation
    - Content objectives
    - Language objectives
    - Appropriate content concepts
    - Supplementary materials
    - Meaningful activities
    - Adaptation of content
2. Building Background
    - Concepts linked to students' backgrounds
    - Links between past learning and new learning
    - Developing key vocabulary: Academic language
3. Comprehensible Input
    - Appropriate speech
    - Clear explanations of academic tasks
    - A variety of techniques used
4. Strategies
    - Learning strategies
    - Scaffolding techniques
    - Higher-order questioning
5. Interaction
    - Frequent opportunities for interaction
    - Grouping configurations
    - Sufficient wait time
    - Clarify concepts in L1
6. Practice/Application
    - Hands-on practice with new knowledge
    - Integration of all language skills
    - Application of content and language knowledge in new ways
7. Lesson Delivery
    - Support content objectives during lessons
    - Support language objectives during lessons
    - Promote student engagement
    - Pace lesson appropriately
8. Review and Assessment
    - Key vocabulary
    - Key content concepts
    - Regular feedback on student output
    - Assess student comprehension of objectives

Teaching English to Young Learners in Colombia: Policy, Practice and Challenges

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Abstract

This article discusses the impact of a recent policy initiative, the *National Bilingual Programme,* aimed at helping all high school and university graduates in Colombia reach an acceptable level of English language proficiency at the end of their studies. After an initial overview of key developments in language and education policy over the last 200 years, there is a review of the current state of the teaching and learning of English in public elementary schools, as evidenced in recent research. This indicates that, although the bilingual policy covers all grade levels from elementary to high school, resources are concentrated mainly in the upper grades and therefore, primary school teachers suffer from a lack of opportunity to develop their expertise. The article concludes with a recommendation to value the voices of elementary school teachers in processes of decision taking to improve teaching of English to their young learners.

En este artículo se discute el impacto de una iniciativa reciente, *El Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo*, cuyo objetivo es ayudar a todos los graduados de los programas de bachillerato y de educación superior en Colombia a alcanzar un nivel aceptable de inglés al final de sus estudios. Después de una visión general de acontecimientos claves en las políticas lingüísticas y educativas durante los últimos 200 años, se presenta un análisis del estado actual de la enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma inglés en los colegios públicos de nivel primaria, con base en los resultados de investigaciones recientes. El análisis indica que, aunque la política bilingüe abarca todos los niveles desde primaria hasta bachillerato, los recursos se concentran principalmente en el nivel de secundaria y por lo tanto, los profesores de primaria no tienen oportunidad de desarrollar sus habilidades de enseñanza. El artículo concluye con una recomendación: valorar las voces de los profesores de primaria en los procesos de toma de decisiones enfocados en el mejoramiento de la enseñanza del inglés a los alumnos de primaria.

Introduction

In contrast to the situation in most European countries, where the education system is mainly concerned with state or public education, Colombia has a strong tradition of private educational initiatives. Places in the state system are extremely limited in relation to demand so middle and upper middle class families generally decide to enroll their sons and daughters in private schools, which are often classed as bilingual. As Tomasvski (2004) notes,

> *In Colombia state investment in education is equal to private (investment); both represent nearly 4% of the GDP [Gross Domestic Product]…Nearly 30% of pupils are at private schools at primary level, 45% at secondary level and 75% in higher education. (p. 9)*

According to figures released by the Ministry of Education in 2007, there are currently 15,723 public primary and secondary schools and 10,812 private schools in the country.

This article provides an overview of how initiatives within the recent *National Bilingual Programme* policy have affected the teaching of English at primary (elementary) school level in public schools in Colombia, a sector traditionally excluded from the successful development of English-Spanish bilingualism associated with the private sector. After a historical review of key events in the progress of languages within the Colombian educational system there will be a discussion of the current state of English Language Teaching (ELT) at public primary schools as detailed in recent research studies. Finally, there will be an assessment of positive and negative features of this initiative and a consideration of ways forward for the future.

The National Bilingual Programme was initiated by the Ministry of Education (MEN) in 2004 with the aim of offering all students in Colombia the possibility of becoming bilingual in English and Spanish, because, hitherto, as noted above, access to bilingualism had been the privilege of students in private schools catering for the higher socio-economic strata. According to the Ministry, "to be bilingual means to have more knowledge and opportunities to be competent and competitive and to improve the quality of life of all Colombians" (Al Tablero, 2005, p. 3).

Thus, the main objective of the National Bilingual Programme is:

> *To have citizens who are capable of communicating in English, in order to be able to integrate the country within processes of universal communication, within the global economy and cultural openness, through [the adopting of] internationally comparable standards. (MEN, 2006, p. 6)*

As part of this policy, a document entitled *Basic Standards of Foreign Language Competences: English*, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), was drawn up in 2006. The idea was to adopt a common language in which to establish levels of language performance throughout the different stages of schooling. The CEFR was considered suitable as a model because it has been widely researched in the European context.

According to the Ministry of Education (2005), traditionally less than 1% of the population reaches a level of proficiency in English which allows them to understand and write different types of texts, express themselves fluently, or be able to achieve their social and professional goals through English. The need to do this is seen as related to the development of a social competitive capacity and a personal advantage relating to competence and competitiveness.

Bearing in mind the above, it can be seen that the National Bilingual Programme's aims are quite ambitious. The idea is that by 2019 (the commemoration of the second centenary of independent political life in Colombia) 100% of school graduates will reach a B1 standard (according to the scales of the CEFR, see following section for an explanation of these levels). Moreover, the goal is that all teachers of English in the public school system and all university graduates will reach a B2 level.

One of the big differences between previous formulations of language and education policies by the Ministry of Education in Colombia and the National Bilingual Programme is that for the first time, English language teaching and learning is a State policy (*Política de Estado*). As one of the advisors in the Department of Bilingualism at MEN, Rosa María Cely (2007) acknowledges,

> *For the first time English is State policy. [Before] there was not an established programme in the Ministry. There were only isolated strategies depending on who was there. Now, the programme will continue, independently of who will be the next government. (par. 32)*

The Development of Bilingualism in Colombia

Although the National Bilingual Programme is a recent initiative, which is specifically directed to the development of Spanish-English bilingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism in indigenous languages have had a long history in Colombia. The plurilingual composition of Colombian society has been in evidence since the 15th Century and even today there are around 65 separate indigenous languages in existence, as well as two native Creoles, Colombian Sign Language and Romani. In the constitutional reform of 1991, the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country was officially recognised for the first time and indigenous languages were awarded co-official status in the territories where they are spoken (Title 1, Article 7, Article 10; Title XI, Article 286-287) (2). A policy of Ethnoeducation, sponsored by the Ministry of Education for the minority communities in Colombia, promotes the notion of, "a permanent social process of reflection and collective construction, by means of which the Indian communities would strengthen their autonomy within an intercultural framework" (Trillos, 1998, p.73).

During the period of the colonisation of Colombia, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Spanish was the principal language of education for the indigenous communities. Similarly, educational provision for the descendants of the Spanish settlers was in the hands of the Catholic missionaries who followed in the wake of the *conquistadores* (conquerors). Most schools were private and the languages taught were mainly Latin, Greek and Spanish. The sons and daughters of the wealthy were sent to study abroad, in France and England, and on their return, promoted the spread of these languages in the country, particularly French, which was considered the language of culture and society (Zuluaga, 1996).

Following independence from Spain in 1810, the *Escuelas de Primeras Letras* (First Letters Schools) were set up, based on liberal principles derived from the French Revolution. These later became primary schools. Then, the *Escuelas Superiores de Artes Liberales* (Higher Schools for the Liberal Arts) were established at secondary level.

After the Second World War, English became the most important foreign language in Colombia, due to economic expansion, social, political and economic influence and the technological development of the United States. It was taught at secondary school level, alternating with the use of French. Thus, in 1979, after a visit by the Colombian president to France, a decree was issued, making English compulsory for Grades 6 and 7 and French mandatory for Grades 10 and 11,

with a free choice of either English or French in Grades 8 and 9. As a report compiled by the British Council (1989) reveals,

> *The Colombian Ministry of National Education has no firm foreign language policy for the secondary school curriculum…concerning the place of English and French, with decisions being made as a result of political pressures rather than educational considerations. (p. 7)*

In practice, most schools chose to teach English for four years and French for two, with an intensity of three hours per week at all levels, except the final two years, when foreign languages were taught for two hours.

More recently, with the General Education Law (1994) foreign languages were introduced at primary school level, usually in Third Grade Primary, and it was stated that at this level attention should be focused on: "The acquisition of elements of conversation and reading in at least one foreign language" (Article 21, m). Although no particular foreign language is specified by law, most institutions have adopted English.

As noted above, the publication of the *Basic Standards of Foreign Language Competences: English* envisages "the integrated gradual development of the language throughout the different levels of education" (MEN, 2006, p. 10). Thus, the levels have been grouped together from Grade 1 Primary onwards (see Table 1) in accordance with the desired levels of proficiency on the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR, see full description in Appendix A).

Table 4: Grade levels and expected CEFR proficiency levels

Grades 1-3	Beginner	A1
Grades 4-5	Basic 1	A2.1
Grades 6-7	Basic 2	A2.2
Grades 8-9	Pre Intermediate 1	B1.1
Grades 10-11	Pre Intermediate 2	B1.2

Each of the five levels has descriptors relating to the areas of listening, reading, writing, monologues and conversation. In addition, each descriptor is characterised as referring to linguistic competence, pragmatic competence or sociolinguistic competence (or all three). To give an example, by the end of primary school (Grade 5) students should be able to:

1. Read and understand simple authentic texts about concrete events associated with cultural traditions that I know (birthdays, Christmas, etc)
2. Write short texts which describe my state of mind and my preferences
3. Politely greet according to the age and status of my interlocutor

As can be noted, each of these descriptors is not only concerned with grammatical accuracy but also with sociolinguistic appropriacy.

For many schools, particularly inner city schools or country schools, these types of competences are new and demanding. In spite of calls since the 1980s to implement a communicative vision of language teaching and learning, many

schools still promote a formal, grammatical approach to English teaching. As Silvia Valencia (2005, p. 13) has noted, "Previous research has demonstrated how despite language policy reforms, traditional pedagogical orientations in ELT (e.g. Grammar Translation) still prevail. This observation has been confirmed in this study."

In addition, many of the teachers who have worked in the public school system for many years have not done well on the Ministry of Education tests based on the CEFR scales. In fact, the majority of those tested in the different regions of Colombia fall into the A1 and A2 ranges, as shown in Table 2.

Language level	Number of teachers per level	Percentages
A1	2,476.68	22%
A2	3,660.66	34%
B1	3,367.04	30%
B1+	1,559.48	14%
Total	11,063.86	100%

Table 5: Teachers' Language Levels (Adapted from Ministry of Education, 2008)

These figures do not differentiate between teachers who teach English at secondary school (high school) level and those who teach at primary school. However, there is evidence from a recent study carried out with 552 teachers in the country (Romero Medina, 2009) that the situation of primary school teachers is dramatic in terms of their low English language proficiency, as current educational policy is to concentrate resources at high school level.

The Ministry has taken a series of measures aimed at improving teachers' proficiency in English as well as helping them to analyse how to implement the English Standards in their particular contexts. Among these are English immersion workshops carried out in different parts of the country, particularly in the Caribbean island of San Andrés, where the native Islander population speak Standard English as well as Creole, English language courses offered by the local education authorities, and a teacher development programme sponsored by MEN.

The Current State of ELT in Public Primary Schools in Colombia

Although the Ministry of Education has not carried out studies specifically on the development of English in primary schools, there is some evidence of developments in different parts of the country, particularly in Medellín (in the northwest of the country), in Neiva (in the south) and in Bogotá.

In Medellín, a group of researchers at the Universidad de Antioquia conducted an ethnographic study in seven public elementary schools in the city to establish by means of observation, document analysis, and teacher interviews the relationship of teachers´ methodological principles and practices. It was found that the 12 English teachers who participated in the project all held Bachelor of Education

degrees: five in elementary or preschool education, four in areas such as Spanish, Math, and Social Studies, and three in foreign languages. However, the latter had had no training in teaching English at primary school level (Cadavid, McNulty, & Quinchia, 2004; Quinchia & Cadavid, 2006). Hence, none of the 12 teachers had received training specifically for teaching English for younger learners. This situation is fairly typical of randomly-selected urban public school teachers at the present time.

One of the findings from this study was that most of the class periods were spent on organisational or affective activities, which were generally carried out in Spanish. As the authors noted, "Teachers tend to use the target language only when presenting a topic or reviewing vocabulary with children in class" (Cadavid et al., 2004, p. 42). Teachers often modelled and organised, while the pupils generally answered the teacher's questions, or repeated individually or chorally after the teacher. There was little pair or group work noted.

The researchers conclude that the teachers' generally low level of proficiency in English led to restricted use of the target language for basic vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation activities, while comprehension is assured mainly through translation into Spanish. They consider that, "it is important for elementary school English teachers and policy makers to gain understanding of our reality if we are to attend our real needs and the specific challenges of teaching English as a foreign language in elementary public schools" (Cadavid et al., 2004, p. 45). In a later presentation on the same topic (Quinchia & Cadavid, 2006, p. 10) the authors observe:

> *it is surprising to note the relevance of the results found here when sharing these findings with public school teachers in regional and national congresses…Teachers feel they are not sufficiently qualified to face a task they see as important in the education of boys and girls.*

In the light of the diagnosis presented in the previous study, it is interesting to note Cadavid's (2003) comments on attempts to introduce a spiral thematic curriculum to teach English at primary school level. In Grade 1, the aim was to get the pupils to introduce themselves, talk about themselves, their pets and toys, while in Grade 2 the focus was expanded to include the school and the neighbourhood (Cadavid, 2003). In Grade 3, there was a stronger connection made with the area of Natural Science (the body, the senses and health). In Grades 4 and 5, the focus was on the country and the world.

The researcher found that the implementation of a thematic curriculum was an effective way of helping primary school children learn English and increase motivation towards the process. As a Grade 3 student commented, "Sí me gusta [la clase de inglés] por la razón de lo que la profe Catalina nos enseña es para un vien (sic) de nosotros y si de pronto nos mandan para un país poder utilizar todo lo que nos enseño." (*Yes I like [the English class] because the teacher, Catalina, teaches us things which are useful for us and if maybe we are sent to a country, we can use everything we have been taught.*) (Cadavid, 2003, p. 32)

However, there was a felt need for continuity in this process and articulation of this type of theme based approach with the teaching and learning of English at

high school, as well as the need to increase the number of hours per week devoted to the target language. (During the study, the English classes were scheduled once a week for 45 minutes.) Furthermore, the author called for a greater degree of reflection among teachers with regard to their beliefs and practices in order to enhance understanding of a complex reality and help to "move towards a more enlightened approach to teaching" (Cadavid, 2003, p. 96).

A slightly earlier study, carried out by two teachers from the Universidad Surcolombiana in Neiva in 2002 confirmed many of the findings of the Medellín study. The researchers sent a questionnaire to 65 primary school teachers in the Department of Huila. They found that none of the 65 teachers who completed the questionnaire had been trained to teach English at primary school level and that they reported a wide variety of methodological practices, which ranged from translation and memorization to Total Physical Response (Guzmán Durán & Insuasty, 2002).

The authors concluded that English teachers at the primary school level needed an integrated professional development programmme involving "the acquisition of communicative and linguistic skills in the foreign language, deepening of human development, the development of reflective skills and strategies, and exploration of methodological alternatives" (Guzmán Durán & Insuasty, 2002, p. 72).

Valencia Giraldo (2007) has also alluded to the type of pre-service preparation offered to foreign language teachers (both primary and secondary) in universities, which often does not prepare them to face classroom realities and which sometimes engenders low self-esteem in relation to the gulf perceived by the teachers between their own level of foreign language proficiency and that of "native speakers" held up as models. In a similar vein, Cárdenas has condemned "the prescriptive practices for teaching and learning and the promotion of teacher qualification by the [National Bilingual Programme]" in contrast to "the critical dimension of language education" (2006, p. 5).

Recently, there have been attempts to try to come to terms with some of these difficulties. In an initiative directed specifically at primary school teachers, two teacher educators at the Universidad de Antioquia decided to implement a professional development course for six months aimed specifically at their needs (McNulty & Díaz, 2006). This programme involved the exploration and reflection on their practice by the participating teachers, courses on the teaching and learning of foreign languages, as well as opportunities to develop foreign language skills. By means of group discussion, the presentation of methodological alternatives and the keeping of participant diaries, the teachers gradually got to the stage where they felt confident enough to try out some of the activities in their classrooms and report back on the experience. In general, this was seen as a very fruitful experience, as the researchers noted that, "various teachers shared that their students enjoyed the activities that they took to class and that they seemed to be more motivated to learn English" (McNulty & Díaz, 2006, p. 12).

Another project related to primary school teachers, which is still ongoing, is concerned with finding out how teachers in Bogotá position themselves in relation to language policies, such as the National Bilingual Programme (Quintero Polo &

Guerrero Nieto, in progress). The researchers maintain that the top-down model applied in language and education planning in Colombia leaves many voices silenced and does not allow for participation in these processes. Therefore, they are interested in finding out how primary teachers, whose knowledge and experience is often undervalued, have reacted to developments of the National Bilingual Programme, and what their felt needs are for professional development. This project resonates with the concerns of researchers such as Valencia Giraldo (2007) about the imposition of policy demands on teachers who are unprepared to assume the implications involved. Ignoring the contributions of in-service teachers and their perception of needs and experience, she maintains, results, in some cases, in tension between institutional expectations and teachers' perceived abilities to respond, and in others, in passivity and lack of commitment. As Canagarajah observes with regard to the value of locally constructed knowledge, "A clear grounding in our location gives us the confidence to engage with knowledge from other locations as we deconstruct and reconstruct them for our purposes" (2005, p. 15).

Discussion

Those who defend the introduction of the Standards for English in Colombia argue that they provide a common language to talk about different proficiency levels. Five years ago, if you had mentioned A2 or B1, people would not have known what this meant. Also, I would submit that the descriptors at the different levels have given teachers the possibility of sequencing and integrating their teaching in ways that perhaps they did not recognise before. So that now there is less excuse for the famous observation that students study the verb "to be" in different ways at different levels throughout their school career.

There have been criticisms too voiced about the use of the CEFR particularly with respect to contextual aspects, such as its use in remote rural areas, where there is little opportunity for students to use a foreign language for authentic purposes (Cárdenas, 2006). In addition, the country has more than three million internally displaced people as a result of the violence between left wing guerrilla forces, right wing paramilitaries and the drug mafias. In these circumstances, the development of bilingualism is not a priority for the education system.

According to Cárdenas (2006), there is also a tendency to depend only on the results of examinations based on the CEFR to make decisions about student foreign language proficiency, rather than to consider other indicators of the process of language learning. Furthermore, teachers, who frequently work in very difficult situations in remote areas, without access to material resources, are often blamed for their students´ foreign language deficiencies based on performance on the standardised examinations and tests. Another criticism, this time taken from a recent critical discourse study refers to the standards as conceived for "an imagined and ideal group of students who differ greatly from the real students who attend schools" (Guerrero, 2008, p. 42).

However, it must be said that the initiative of the Ministry of Education has certainly helped to make bilingualism a household word in Colombia. Although officially interest has centred on English-Spanish bilingualism, there have also been initiatives which demonstrate increased sensitivity towards other types of bilin-

gualism, particularly involving indigenous languages. Furthermore, the increased attention on developing bilingualism generated by the *National Bilingual Programme* has also had the positive side-effect of stimulating collaboration between the departments within the ministry that deal with Bilingual Education and those responsible for Indigenous Intercultural Ethnoeducation.

In addition, the National Bilingual Programme has helped to promote an inclusive vision of bilingualism by requiring that by 2019 all school and university graduates should reach a certain level of English language proficiency at the end of their studies (either B1 or B2). Thus, bilingualism is seen as a possibility for everyone, not just for graduates of private bilingual schools.

As always, though, the achievements of the initiative must be seen in the light of the challenges that remain. Cely (2009) referred to some of these in a recent presentation. Three of these relate particularly to the situation of primary English teachers:

1. The current lack of primary school English teachers.
2. How to solve the teacher supply problem at primary level.
3. A mismatch between stated National Standards and their implementation in the classroom.

As we have seen in our discussion, although there have been interesting initiatives in certain parts of the country aimed at helping primary school English teachers come to terms with the demands of the *National Bilingual Programme*, the fact that current Ministry policy is focused on the high school level means that the elementary school sector is under-resourced. This leads to the rather paradoxical situation where the Standards for English are formulated as applying from Grade 1, yet the training and development opportunities are largely available only to those who teach in Grades 6-11.

Although evidence in the age debate (Singleton & Lengyel, 1995) and from the evaluations of early and late immersion programmes (Genesee, 2004) indicates that a high level in second and foreign language proficiency may be achieved starting later, the prevailing belief in Colombia is that "the earlier, the better". As a teacher from the Atlantic Coast explains, "los niños vienen siendo trabajos desde maternal…Ellos no van a producir mucho sino que son como una esponja" (We have been working with the children since the beginning of preschool… They will not produce much but they are like a sponge) (de Mejía, Ordoñez & Fonseca, 2006, p. 51).

Conclusion

What can we conclude from the above considerations? First of all, I think there is evidence to suggest that the implementation of English language standards based on the European framework has helped educators to have clearer goals and common ways of talking about what they want students to achieve as a result of their EFL studies. There are, however, significant challenges which still remain and the 2019 goal of B1/B2 level for all may not be feasible for some students, particularly those who come from rural areas or from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The Ministry of Education recognises that the level of contact with English in the primary school is often very low, often just one hour a week, even though for most students this is the only point of contact with the language. Nevertheless, the idea is that, "mediante un proceso de equipo, en el cual se brindará formación y acompañamiento, tanto a los docentes como a las instituciones, sería posible, paulatinamente, formar nuevas generaciones que logren comunicarse en este idioma [inglés]" (By means of a team process in which training and accompaniment is provided, to the teachers as well as to the institutions, it will gradually become possible to educate new generations who will be able to communicate in this language.) (MEN, 2006, p. 31).

If this is to become a reality in a situation in which primary teachers are the least prepared of all teachers to take on the challenge of teaching English to their young learners and who also receive few opportunities to develop their expertise, I submit that it is important to focus at least as many resources on teacher education and development at this level as those designated for high school teachers. Furthermore, it is time to begin working in concerted fashion with both pre-service and in-service elementary school English teachers so that they may be helped to channel their efforts and that their voices may be heard and valued in the taking of decisions for the improvement of English language teaching and learning in Colombia.

Notes

1. Author's translation of this and other quotations from the Spanish original

2. Title 1, Article 7 of the Colombian Constitution states, "The State recognises and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation." Article 10 states, "Spanish is the official language of Colombia. The languages and dialects of the ethnic groups are also official in their territories. The teaching in communities with their own linguistic traditions will be bilingual." Title XI, Articles 286 and 287 state, "The Departments, Districts, Municipalities and the Indian territories are territorial bodies. . . Territorial bodies enjoy autonomy in the management of their interests, and within the limits of the constitution and the law."

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Appendix A. Common European Framework for Languages

		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
UNDERSTANDING	Listening	I can recognize familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialized articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialized articles and literary works.
SPEAKING	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
WRITING	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Five Elements of Teaching English to Young Learners: An Example from Little Red Riding Hood

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Abstract

The author presents her approach to teaching English as a foreign language to kindergarten-aged children. The article describes five elements of the approach. According to the author it is of vital importance to create a positive learning environment in the classroom for young learners and to help them associate learning English to having fun. That can be very helpful later when children learn English at a higher level and when they communicate in English to other people. Learning through stories, arousing children's interest to learn English, using a play as a teaching method, introducing rhymes and songs and preparing well designed worksheets can be achieved when a teacher of English introduces a simple story in English: the *Little Red Riding Hood*.

La autora presenta su enfoque de enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera a niños de pre-escolar de 5 a 6 años. Según la autora es muy importante crear un ambiente de enseñanza positivo en la clase de niños pequeños y ayudarles a experimentar el aprendizaje del inglés de una manera divertida. Esto puede ayudar a los niños más tarde cuando ellos aprendan el inglés en un nivel más alto y cuando se comuniquen en este idioma con otras personas. El aprendizaje a través de los cuentos, el despertar el interés por el aprendizaje del inglés, el uso de los juegos como método de enseñanza, la introducción de las rimas y del cuento, y la preparación de materiales bien diseñados se pueden alcanzar cuando el profesor de inglés introduce un cuento sencillo en este idioma – *La Caperucita Roja*.

Introduction

In this article I present story-based activities I have developed from my experience as a teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL) to young beginners aged five to six years old. By introducing a simplified story adapted from the traditional fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* (LRRH) I try to include different amusing activities in my teaching. My objectives are to create a positive learning environment for children and to help them learn as much English as possible. My approach to using traditional narratives to teach young EFL children integrates five main features:

1. Learning through stories
2. Arousing children's interest to learn English
3. Using play as a teaching method
4. Introducing rhymes and songs
5. Carefully prepared worksheets

I will describe each of these features as I implemented them using the LRRH story.

Five elements to teaching English to younger learners

1. Learning through stories

Telling stories in a foreign language is an essential part of language learning. It is of great importance to tell stories to children in mother tongue and it is also a very important aspect of any foreign language learning. Stories help young students to concentrate, memorise and practise linguistic structures in a spontaneous and relaxed way. For young beginners it is a great pleasure to hear a story in English that has already been read to them in their mother tongue with their parents or with their teachers. I deliberately choose a story I am sure all children are familiar with.

At the beginning of the lesson I use the students' L1 to explain to them that we are going to learn the story of the Little Red Riding Hood. First, I invite them to tell the story in their mother tongue. I encourage all children to participate and to say at least one simple phrase, so that no one is left out of the activity. Therefore, in order to activate their background knowledge about the story, I will have a short question and answer session in their mother tongue, which would include the following kind of interaction:

Teacher:	Who can tell me something about the story Little Red Riding Hood?
Marie:	It's about a girl who wears a red coat.
Teacher:	Which animals are there in this story?
Ana:	There is a wicked wolf who wants to eat the Grannie and the little Red Riding Hood.
Teacher:	Why does the girl visit her Grannie?
Jan:	Because her Grannie is ill
Teacher:	What presents does the girl bring to her Grannie?
Tjaša:	Sweets, cakes and fruits.

Then I start telling the story in English: I use simple sentences, gestures and mimics and I show them pictures from the book. Although the children cannot understand many of the words in English, it is important for them to hear the story, and I am very conscious about how I model the pronunciation and intonation. I then tell the story again, but this time I tell it using story characters made out of board paper. I give the figures to the children, and as I tell them that they can actively take part in the story by acting out what the characters are doing as I narrate it. They really enjoy this acting-out of the study, and this technique allows students to participate in the study, and has two elements that are important for young beginner students. First it minimizes the demands on them to produce language, since this is difficult because they lack confidence and vocabulary to express themselves. Second, it exposes them to contextualized input.

2. Arousing children's interest to learn English

Children find the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* motivating and engaging. Even though I read the story with them multiple times, each time presenting the same book we can use different follow-up activities. Since the LRRH story involves a forest setting with animals, one way that I introduce the story and get the children's attention is to use my collection of stuffed animals. I bring a bag full of the

soft toys in the classroom without showing them what is inside: when children see it they are very curious to know what is in the bag. They start asking in their mother tongue: "Teacher, what have you got in your bag? What are we going to learn today?" They are allowed to put their hands in the bag and they to try guess what is inside, without looking. Lightbown and Spada (1993) stress that "the most important factor in second language acquisition success is motivation" (p. 160). Thus the children are motivated to find out what is inside the bag and at the same time they are willing to gain new knowledge. The guessing game helps draw them in to be more curious about what happens next. Then I explain to them that we are going to learn about animals living in a forest.

3. Using a play as a teaching method

I often look for ways to incorporate elements of play into my teaching. All play is good for learning, especially for kindergarten-aged children, but the types of play that I use are specifically designed to help students with the English language acquisition. In particular, I like to use stuffed animals, puppets, dolls, and figures to stimulate interaction in the target language. Little kids are natural role-players, and using toys is an excellent way to bring out certain words and expression in English. For the LRRH activities, we sit in the circle: I take a teddy bear out of the bag and I introduce the word ***bear***. I point to the toy and introduce the colour. I say very clearly in English: "The bear is brown. Hello, bear." I repeat my greeting and then pass the toy around the circle so that each child can greet and pet the toy.

Two or three new vocabulary words for animals are introduced each lessons. Children repeat new words by playing a simple game called *Little Red Riding Hood, can you catch me?* Each child is given a soft toy from my bag, and one pupil acts the Little Red Riding Hood. We say the words for all the animals we have learned so far, then the child acting the Little Red Riding Hood tries to catch the children holding soft toys in their hands. When she/he catches the child who is holding the bird, for example, the child repeats the word "bird." She/he takes a seat and then the Little Red Riding Hood puts the toy into my bag and continues catching the other children.

We also play a hide and seek game. One child acting as the Little Red Riding Hood has to count to ten or to fifteen and the others hide. They are holding soft toys in their hands. Then the Little Red Riding Hood walks around the classroom and finds different animals. The activity ends when all the animals are recovered. Children have a lot of fun playing these games and fun is always motivating. They learn without realizing they are doing so.

Finally, I extend this game by adding a little more language to reinforce the vocabulary and introduce some more words in context. For this game, all the children cover their eyes, while they count to fifteen (in English to reinforce the numbers) I hide the soft animals so that they are not very difficult to find, such as behind the books, behind the curtain, under the chair, or under the table. Following this, we walk around the classroom and look for the animals. When we locate the animal I say: "Look! Where is bird? Bird is under the table." This is how children not only repeat the words but also playfully learn another language. Another important fact is that through playing children learn social skills: they

learn to cooperate, to be tolerant and to listen to each other. All that leads to better discipline in the classroom.

4. Introducing rhymes and songs

For some small children it is rather difficult to sit during the lesson, that is why I include a lot of movement, singing and saying rhymes in my lesson planning. From my experience working with kindergarteners, I have found that lessons for young beginners should not be longer than 20 to 25 minutes, or even shorter. Therefore when planning lessons for young learners, teachers should also consider their short attention span.

We begin lessons standing in a circle and we greet each other with a *Hello Song* (Graham, 1994). The lessons are ended with a *Goodbye Song.* In this way English teachers can establish their own routines and organisation of the lesson, and songs are also an effective way of introducing input. Halpern (1999) stresses that "of the many factors that influence learning, few are as far-reaching – or little understood – as sound and music" (p. 1). Language from songs can be used to encourage children to converse and to give their opinions. One of the children's favourites is *Listen Carefully* (Graham, 1994, p. 7). When dancing and singing the song children learn words for body parts, including the correct pronunciation. They learn to act out the instructions, such as: *sit down, stand up, turn around, touch the ground, be quiet, listen, look, draw,* and so forth. The instructions can be presented with pictures. As children enjoy acting out the instructions the teachers can find many various ways of doing this activity.

For my *Little Red Riding Hood* lesson, I choose a song that I can adapt to fit the story, or in this case adapt the story to fit the song. With the song *The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round* (King, 1989, p. 39), I invite children to join the Little Red Riding Hood on her visit to her Grandma's house. We sing the song and play a game that we call "Bus game." We make a column and we walk around the room singing the song. Then we learn the words for some other means of transport: I prepare pictures of vehicles and ask them: "How shall we travel to Grandma's today? Shall we travel by train? Let's travel by train!" I show them the picture of a train. I repeat the word "train" to them a few times and have them say it back to me. Again we make a column, all the children repeat the word train, and we walk around the room making rhyming train sounds. In the same way we learn some other words for vehicles, such as car, helicopter, bicycle, boat, plane, and motorbike. Not only do the children find this activity very amusing and relaxing, it also enables the teacher to take advantage of children's energy and channel it into learning. Murphey (1992) stresses the importance of using kinesthetic activities for L2 acquisition with younger learners: "with young children, language divorced from action seems to be mostly forgotten" (p. 17).

Another successful follow-up activity is preparing gifts for "Grandma's birthday party." I invite children to help Little Red Riding Hood choose presents for her Grandma. Children like to listen and explore the same storybook several times, which reinforces key vocabulary and simple phrases. This activity enables the teachers to introduce any input they find suitable for the children's needs. I choose the words for fruits and other kinds of food. I show them a picture of a

banana and I say: "This is a banana. It's very good. Do you like a banana? Bananas are very healthy fruits." Using this technique, children learn the words very quickly, I help them to expand their vocabulary and to learn to implement it with some new expressions. For instance, I ask them questions: "What colour is a banana? It's yellow. Do you like banana ice-cream? Who likes banana fruit cake?" When I do these kinds of activities, I talk a lot in English to my pupils, since they need to hear English to be able to copy it. Not everything I say – the input – will be comprehensible input for them, but by carefully using intonation and stress to emphasize key words, they can understand what I mean. Children, unlike older L2 English students, are much better hearing and tolerating language that they don't understand, because their affective filters are lower. I follow up this activity by bringing realia to the classroom. I invite children to name the fruits and other kinds of food in my bag and then we put them into the Little Red Riding Hood's bag.

In a very similar way as the previous mentioned activity, we act out Grandma's birthday party. We start the activity singing the *Happy Birthday Song* (Graham, 1994, p. 25). One child acts as Grandma and all other children act as Little Red Riding Hoods offering her fruits and other presents from the basket. Children learn new expressions such as *here you are, thank you very much*, and *what a lovely present*. At the same time they repeat words for fruits. The activity enables them to repeat and revise the language they have learned so far. According to Cameron (2001), "vocabulary needs to be met and recycled at intervals, in different activities, with new knowledge and new connections developed each time the words are met again[…] A new word needs to be met at least five or six times before it has any chance of being learnt" (p. 84).

5. Carefully prepared worksheets

We usually start the English class with circle time as a whole group, then pupils are invited to take their seats and do the worksheets. This is usually called "seatwork." It prepares students for the extended individual academic work they will do in later grades; however for five and six-year-olds I limit seatwork to less than 20 minutes. Sitting at the tables they work individually or they do group or pairwork. In order to enhance both mother tongue and foreign language learning, teachers should work on fine and gross motor skills, observational skills, memory skills and on eye-to-hand coordination. All of these can be provided by carefully prepared worksheets. Worksheets should allow children to revise the English language learnt in previous activities and give the children practice in skills for their general development. Children like tracing, colouring, sticking, cutting figures of board paper, matching and drawing. Doing the worksheets allows them to enjoy the pleasures of a task well-done. The worksheets are then hung on the classroom walls or children put them in their folders to take them home. I take particular care to prepare special worksheets for special occasions, such as different festivals like Shrove Tuesday (an important holiday before Easter celebrated in Slovenia), Easter, Christmas, Celebration of Spring, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. Children are also very happy to get a special worksheet for their birthdays.

Conclusion

In this short article, I have used the example of unit of lessons I have developed around the story *Little Red Riding Hood* to illustrate five main elements of my approach to teaching younger children: Learning through stories, arousing children's interest to learn English, using play as a teaching method, introducing rhymes and songs, using carefully prepared worksheets. The types of activities mentioned do not just concentrate on linguistic skills, but provide development of the whole child. All the children in the group are involved, from the shyest to the most outspoken and particular care is being taken that no one is left out. There are many opportunities for development of social skills through different forms of interaction: pairwork, groupwork and whole class. Seeing the actions, hearing the words and acting out movements all make the lessons enjoyable and richer ones. Young learners experience at an early age that learning English can be associated as a lot of fun and they become more confident in their use of language. That is of vital importance and can be very helpful later when they learn English at a higher level and when they communicate in English to other people. Since children enjoy hearing the language of story-books, different stories can be introduced, according to children's needs and according to the local context. I find this type of work with children a rewarding experience and it results in my professional and personal growth.

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Using the Internet as an Analytical Tool in ELT: WebQuests for Children

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Abstract

This article introduces the concept of WebQuest and presents the advantages of using it with children who are learning English as a foreign language. First, the author discusses why it is necessary to incorporate this tool into classes in order to help children achieve their language learning goals. After providing a definition, the author provides a specific example of a WebQuest that she created and used with her students. The author also discusses the essential parts of a WebQuest, where to find prepared WebQuests on the Internet, how to evaluate them, and how to adapt them to specific contexts.

Este artículo introduce el concepto de *WebQuest* (Búsqueda en la Red) y presenta las ventajas al utilizarlo con niños que están aprendiendo inglés como lengua extranjera. Primero, la autora discute por qué es necesario incorporar esta herramienta en las aulas para ayudar a los niños a alcanzar sus metas en el aprendizaje de esta lengua. Después de definir el concepto, la autora da un ejemplo específico de una Búsqueda en la Red que ella creó y utilizó con sus estudiantes. También, la autora discute las partes esenciales de una Búsqueda en la Red, dónde encontrar Búsquedas en la Red preparadas en el Internet, cómo evaluarlas, y cómo adaptarlas a contextos específicos.

Introduction

In these modern times, it is almost impossible to conceive a class without the use of some sort of digital technology; electronic blackboards which were recently installed in elementary school classrooms (sixth and fifth grade) are a good sample of it. Computers can be very useful for teachers once we become skillful in using them. It is not too complicated; however, some educators are still having a hard time when working with them. But the twenty first century is here, so we'd better adapt our teaching to the new digital technologies.

The way we incorporate computers to our language classes efficiently will depend on the training courses that language teachers have taken and their willingness to try present-day digital technologies. Ideally a language instructor should be trained in one or more full courses in CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). There is a vast amount of resources, tools, and activities on the web to incorporate into our teaching: blogs, hotlists, scrapbooks, electronic portfolios, electronic mails, videos, audios, pictures, and WebQuests, which I personally found very useful and attractive to children.

The purpose of this article is to present many of the advantages of using WebQuests with children who are learning English as a foreign language. First, I will discuss why it is necessary to incorporate this tool into classes in order to help children achieve their language learning goals. For some educators, the concept of a WebQuest might be new. For this reason, I will provide a definition according to its creator, Bernie Dodge. One of my goals is to make my presentation of

Webquests more understandable and clearer. Hence, I will provide a specific example of a WebQuest I created and used with my students. I will also discuss the essential parts of a WebQuest, where to find prepared WebQuests on the Internet, how to evaluate them, and how to adapt them to your specific context.

Working with Young Children

Getting a child's attention and keeping him or her consistently motivated is hard. The question then is how to get and keep their attention. Children get bored easily with the same kind of tasks. Schoolwork has usually included fill-in-the-blank exercises, matching columns, puzzles, and so forth. Our children's natural ability to explore and create could decrease because of our rudimentary teaching techniques. It does not mean that the traditional way of teaching is entirely wrong. This is how many of us were instructed and finally learned a second language, but what if things could become more interesting for students?

Children like everybody else, differ in their ways of learning. Each individual has different learning styles like visual, auditory, tactile, and more. It is important to satisfy all this variety when teaching. Children are always expecting something new and interesting to do in the classroom, and they demand everyday a new way to work and to interact with their classmates. We can expand our way of working by making use of digital technology. This will satisfy our children's interests and needs and provide them with learning experiences that are varied and meaningful. Indeed, the Internet is a very powerful tool. Once we know how to take advantage of what it has to offer, there is an immense world of authentic material that can be used to enhance our teaching.

It is amazing to see how well digital technology works with children. To illustrate this, I would like to share an experience of my own. Not very long ago, I had the opportunity to work with a group of elementary school students. Some of them had discipline problems. There was one particular student who was not interested in the class. His attitude changed when we worked at the computer lab. The reaction of the rest of the children was positive when they noticed that that something new would be incorporated into their lessons. The attention that was needed for the class had finally been achieved. Their performance and interest in the class got better, especially for this child who became one of my best students later in that year.

Defining a WebQuest

Although Webquests have recently gained popularity, they have been around since the early days of the internet. Dodge (2007) gives the following definition: "A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet." Starr (2007) adds that

> *A WebQuest is built around an engaging and doable task that elicits a higher order thinking of some kind. It's about doing something with information. The thinking can be creative or critical, and involve problem solving, judgment, analysis, or synthesis. The task has to be more than simply answering questions or regurgitating what's on the screen. Ideal-*

> *ly, the task is scaled down version of something that adults do on job, outside school walls.*

In other words, a WebQuest is attractive in many different ways; for instance, students can make use of resources on the Internet, which are original and accessible. Also, there are different types of files like videos, audio clips and charts. Each of the parts included in a WebQuest have a specific purpose that helps students to awaken their sense of independence in learning a second language.

Some of the main characteristics of a WebQuest are that they are interactive, visually friendly and interesting. Students have many options to choose from like where and when to work on something and which links they would like to explore. As it was mentioned before in the introduction, most elementary sixth and fifth grade classrooms in our schools have a computer, equipped with the well known *Enciclomedia*, which allows teachers to conduct their classes more effectively due to the different tools that are integrated in *Enciclomedia*. Even in a classroom with only one computer, a teacher may be able to make use of WebQuests in a collective way, having the students complete the different tasks assigned in the WebQuest, in which the students can be asked to work in groups or teams (Adell, 2004). Other schools have more facilities and they have a computer lab that can be used for the class. In this case, students can work individually or pairs.

Basically there are two types of WebQuests: short term and long term. Each type is defined according to the time it will take the students to go through the entire process.

1. *Short term WebQuests*: The objective is to acquire and integrate knowledge; it is usually carried out in one or four sessions.
2. *Long term WebQuests:* In this type of WebQuest, students have to put into practice some cognitive processes such as comparison, analysis, classification, and others. It usually takes longer than four sessions.

In the following section, I will provide an example of my own work in this area, designing a short-term WebQuest for children in elementary school.

An Example of a WebQuest

After making the decision to use WebQuests, we have to start designing one that will fit to our needs. Even before starting a project with WebQuests, the best thing to do is to analyze the syllabus that you are teaching and try to make connections with the topics you are covering in your class. In this way, your WebQuest will not be isolated or disconnected from your overall class objectives. It also shows how willing you are to promote innovation in teaching a second language to children. For instance, based on the content of the syllabus of my English course, specifically the unit on "workers and occupations of community servers," I designed a WebQuest where my students would find the vocabulary and grammatical structures related to this unit of study.

The topic in the following example is science. My students explored and investigated about how some experiments can be done. Some of these experiments were "the colors of a rainbow," "the magic comb," and "how sound travels." They had the chance to observe, classify, and compare and contrast the different ele-

ments involved when doing the activities. In this WebQuest, they made use of their previous knowledge about colors, shapes, and the five senses. They also took note of the new vocabulary learned while performing the tasks. Students were asked to present their research to the class, either using construction paper or power point presentations. This task was completed in pairs; therefore, collaborative work was promoted. The use of WebQuests is an effective path to promote autonomy in our children, catch their attention, and work with enthusiasm.

Here is my WebQuest on science. In figure 1, you will see the introductory part of my WebQuest. In figures 2 and 3, you will see a couple of the websites visited by my students. The sites that children visited are listed in the Resources Section.

Figure 1. The Introductory Part of my WebQuest.

Webquests can provide a hands-on experience. In many ways, it will be easier for the learners to make use of what they have learned by doing the activities. It is also very important to keep our students motivated through the entire process of the tasks in the WebQuest. Let's keep in mind that motivation is a crucial factor that allows the learners to go on with their activities. In addition, successful WebQuests must have essential components. I will discuss these in the following section.

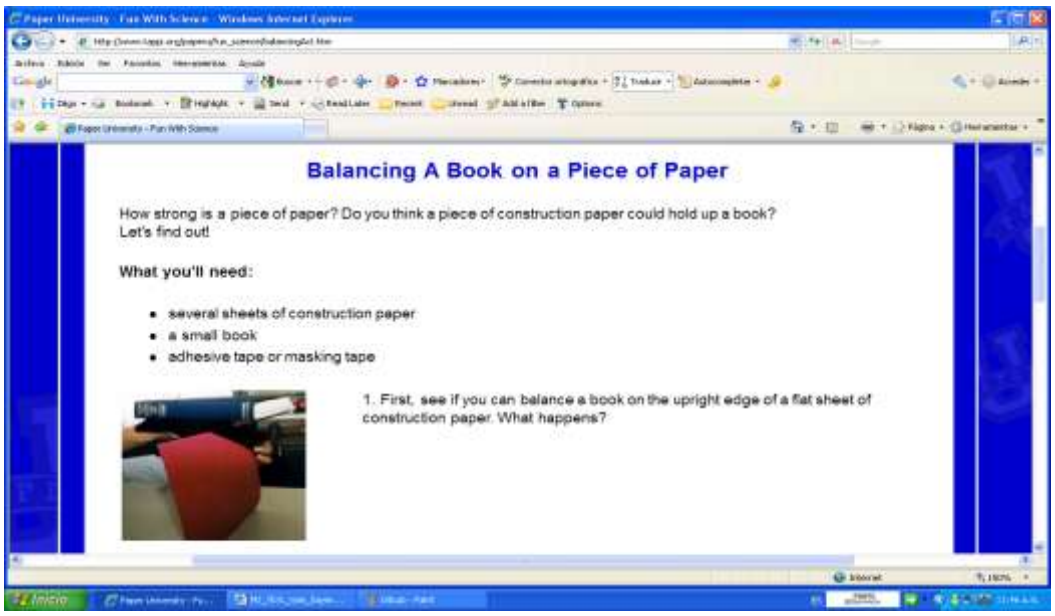

Figure 2. A Website Visited by my Students.

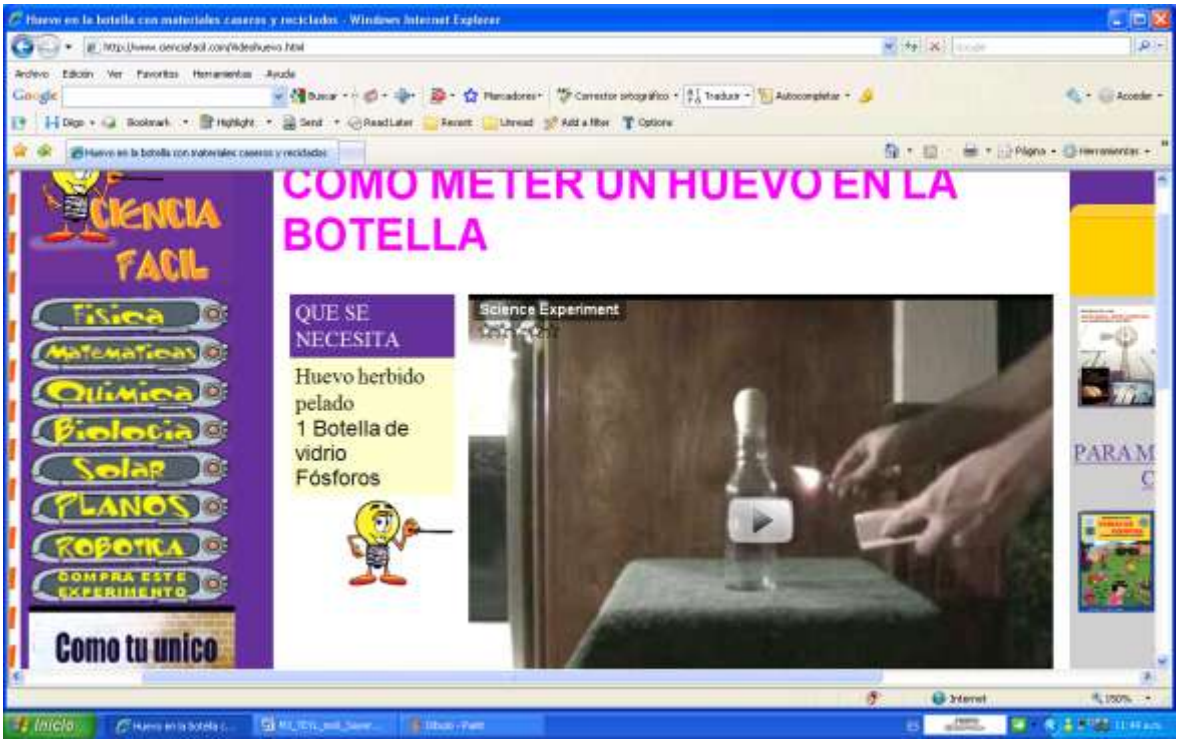

Figure 3. Another Website Visited by my Students.

Essential Parts of a WebQuest

There are six important parts in every WebQuest. They are the following:

1. *Introduction.* The background and the students' roles are provided in this section. An overview of the learning goals is also displayed for them. Write the big

question here: what it is that learners are expected to do or to solve. How can we be sure that we have a good question for students? First, it should not simply include a "yes" or "no" question, but one that will require the student to do some research and analysis. Second, we need to make sure that our big question will allow the learners to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. In the WebQuest on experiments that I presented earlier, the introduction was elaborated with questions that allowed students to gain some previous knowledge of the activities to come. This gave them an idea of what they were supposed to do. In my WebQuest the following was the introduction:

> *Hello Scientists Kids. My name is Jim. I am a scientist, I like to make experiments. I am a very intelligent student, just like you are. Do you know how the sound travels? Can you make a cloud? Can you see through a sheet of paper? What happens if you mix red and yellow? Can you create a rainbow at home? I have many experiments to do, and I need your help. Would you help me?*

2. *Task*. In this part, the teacher explains in a formal way what the students will accomplish. We have to keep in mind that providing a clear objective for the task is an essential part of creating an interesting WebQuest for the students to complete; otherwise, our purpose will get lost. Having a good project to work with is very important. The task in the WebQuest was to select two experiments and present them to the class and share with them what they had learned. The following is the example of the task in my WebQuest:

> *You need to select two experiments from the links. Present them to your classmates in class. If it is a simple experiment that doesn't need much time to do, you can actually do it for your classmates on the day of the presentation. If your experiment needs more than one day, then bring pictures of the changes you observed while doing your activity. Share with your class what you have learned about the experiment.*

There are other task types that you could incorporate into your WebQuest. Some types of tasks are the following:

- Retelling: Students report on what they have learned.
- Compilation: Students compile information from different sources, put it together, and publish it on the web.
- Mystery: Children absorb information from different sources and put it together by making inferences.
- Consensus Building task: Students take information from different resources with a different perspective on a topic.
- Persuasion: Used to persuade someone to agree with an opinion.
- Analytical: Students look for differences and similarities, relationships, or cause and effect, and discuss their meaning.
- Scientific: Children observe how events take place.

3. *Process.* Here the teacher explains the steps the learners are to follow in order to accomplish the task. Links are also included in this section as well as files, templates, graphic organizers, and others ways of scaffolding. In this section, students work together to solve a task by using different techniques according to their learning style. In my WebQuest, the students were provided with a list of

websites (listed in the Resources Section) and they selected different experiments and followed the instructions. They worked in pairs and filled a chart (see chart 1) with the characteristics of the experiments.

Student's name:					
Name of the experiment	Material used	Steps followed	Observations	New vocabulary	Time
Name of the experiment	Material used	Steps followed	Observations	New vocabulary	Time

Chart 1. Sample of the Chart Used by my Students.

4. *Resources***.** Websites, printed resources, videos, and all kind of resources that learners will need to complete the task are included in this section. Some links to work with are also included in the previous section (process).

5. *Evaluation***.** Every WebQuest needs a rubric, keeping in mind that standards are to be fair, clear, consistent and specific to the task. Chart 2 is the rubric that I used for my science WebQuest,

Category	Poor	Needs improvement	Good job!	Outstanding!
Presentation of the experiment	No presentation was apparent or important details were overlooked. No physical evidence of the experiment.	Students provided a presentation with some reference to the experiment selected Some elements of the experiment were presented to the class.	Students provided a somewhat detailed presentation clearly based on the experiment.	Students provided a detailed presentation clearly based on the experiment Use of power point presentation
Team work	It was difficult to work in pairs. Members did not work together at any time of the experiment.	Only one member of the duet participated. No parents involved in the process.	Only students participated, no parents' assistance.	Both students participated. Parents formed part of the group work.
Things discovered	No new interesting things were found by any of the members of the team	Very few things were new and caused interest in the members of the team.	Few things were new and fascinated the member's attention. Some words new for the member	Many things discovered by team. They seemed very interested all the time. Lots of vocabulary learned with the experiments.

Chart 2. Rubric Used for my Science Webquest.

6. *Conclusion***.** This is the wrap up section, which allows the learners to reflect about what they have just learned. You can include a rhetorical question or extra link for the student in case they want to increase their knowledge about the topic.

Remember the task itself is the most important part in a WebQuest design, and therefore it is essential to take some quality time exploring our possibilities and options that we have.

Where to Find Prepared WebQuests

As we have seen, we have to make sure our WebQuest has essential parts in order to create a successful WebQuest. To elaborate one from scratch is something that some people might find difficult, especially if a person is not very skillful in working with technological resources or if having the time to do so is an issue.

Therefore, adapting a WebQuest similar to the one we have presented would be the best option in order to solve these problems. There is a great number of WebQuests in existence out on the Internet. Once we decide which sample to use, we have to give credit to the author of the WebQuest. In the Resources Section, you will find a collection of WebQuests to adapt to your own needs. Once you find a WebQuest that fits your need, try to complete the tasks yourself. Pay attention to the structure of the WebQuests. In the following section, I will discuss how to adapt the WebQuest you find on the Internet in order to meet the specific needs of your class.

How to Adapt Existing WebQuests

Creating a WebQuest from scratch is not impossible, but can be rather difficult. The lack of time for finding the appropriate links, making rubrics for evaluating students, designing the tasks, and putting everything together are some of the issues that might interfere when making a WebQuest. Fortunately, the Internet has enough samples to choose from, but we have to be careful when selecting one in particular in order to adapt it to our needs. The following are the steps that you will need to follow in order to select and adapt a WebQuest from the Internet:

*Step 1. Choose a topic***.** The main thing is to keep in mind the goal that you have to achieve or better said the goal you want your students to reach. This can be done by looking on the Internet for some topics included in the syllabus of the course you are teaching, according to the kids' grade. For instance, sixth grade elementary school students could compare and contrast the country and the city. In addition, other content areas can be used such as art, mathematics, social studies and more. In other words, choose a topic that you think will be easy to find on the web and above all, a topic that will encourage and help your students to reflect on their learning, to solve problems, to be creative, and to analyze the results obtained.

Step 2. Search for existing WebQuests. This is one of the most time consuming activities for a teacher to do when designing a WebQuest, since there are thousands of examples with the same topic. Finding a good site that includes WebQuests to choose from might take more time than you expected. However, I have surfed the net and been able to find some great sites with WebQuests that can be easily used in teaching English to children in elementary school. Two sites for primary level are listed in the Resources Section.

At these sites, you will find a wide selection of WebQuests organized by topic, alphabet, animals, color, body, health, numbers, and nutrition among other topics. Some of these are the same topics that are included in the English textbooks in the state of Tamaulipas for the elementary English program. They also fit into the topics that are covered in kindergarten education. You might be lucky and

find a WebQuest that will include exactly what you were looking for. If that is the case, then go ahead and use it as is.

Step 3. Select WebQuests with high potential only. Once you think you have found what you were looking for or something that gets close to your expectations, then the WebQuest has to be fixed or used as it was found. It is important to check that it includes certain qualities; for instance, links that are working, pages that are free of spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, and attractive designs. Make sure that the task is engaging and requires higher level thinking, the topic fits with your goal, and it matches with your students' interests and needs.

Step 4. Identify changes needed. The next step is to check the entire WebQuest for parts that you think need to be modified or improved. For this purpose, you can use the table of rubrics to evaluate a WebQuest developed by Dodge (2001). This table focuses on the main parts of a WebQuest that I previously discussed. It can be easily adapted for different situations. According to this format, a perfect score on the rubric is 50 (see the complete table in Appendix A).

Step 5. Download, modify and enhance. So far, the WebQuest that best meets our needs has been selected. Now it is important to ask the author's permission to use some of her work. This can be done by contacting her by email and explaining the purpose of your work. After getting permission, you can download the WebQuest. If it is a simple one you can just copy and paste the page to the editor of your choice (Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat). For complex web documents use specialized software to capture the pages. For example, for Windows there are Winweb, Offline Commander, and HTTTrack. Once you consider that all the pieces are together and you are ready to work on your own WebQuest, you can modify it according to your personal needs. You can change the graphics, the rubrics, the design of the WebQuest and the tasks, and anything that needs to be changed. In the Resources Section, I have listed a link with several WebQuest design patterns.

This site classifies the patterns according to the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy: design, decide, create, analyze and predict.

Step 6. Evaluate and revise. Most of the hard work has been done. Before we publish our work, it is important to have a second opinion. Ask someone else in your working context to take a look at your work and make some comments on the parts of the WebQuest. Take notes and make the changes. Or you can do it yourself by checking the WebQuest Evaluation Rubric (Appendix A).

Step 7. Publish and share. Congratulations, your work is almost done! The last thing to do is get it published, so your students can have access to it. I have listed several free publishing sites in the Resources Section.

Conclusion

In this article, I have explained what a WebQuests is and how the implementation of such a wonderful tool, as part of our lesson, could help students engage in meaningful language learning. A WebQuest is also a tool which promotes collaborative work among students, approaches problem solving from multiple perspectives, and helps students keep their motivation in acquiring a second lan-

guage. It can be adapted to different learners, from kindergarten to adolescents. The twenty first century is here, and children seem to know everything related to technology. They surprise us every day. They demand new ways of teachings from us. Let's not forget the old fashion ways that some of us are used to including in our teaching, but let's try innovations as well. The incorporation of the Internet into our classroom is one of the best choices to achieve our goal in teaching children nowadays. After incorporating these types of activities into your lessons, your students will ask for more. Be prepared for their insisting demands for the use of the Internet in your English language teaching.

Resources

Using a WebQuest in Your Classroom: http://www.internet4classrooms.com/using_quest.htm#definition.- Divided in 16 categories. In this site you have a clearer concept of the components of a WebQuest. You can choose topics and locate resources for your project.

PHP WebQuest:http://phpwebquest.org.- After you register to this site you can design, edit, and create your own WebQuest. Two main menus contain the type of WebQuests and the educational level you need to aim your WebQuest to.

WebQuest.Org: http://webquest.org/index.php The most complete source of information about WebQuests.

Web Quest Website Design: http://imet.csus.edu/imet2/wheelerc/webquests/resource.htm WebQuest site design.

a WebQuest on WebQuest: http://www.creative-learner.com/

WebQuest: http://www.zunal.com/ . I strongly recommend this site, where the steps are illustrated and easy to follow. You will have to create an account to start designing your WebQuest.

Discovery Kids: http://www.tudiscoverykids.com/actividades/experimentos/index.shtml

Websites used by students in Sample Science WebQuest

Fun with Science: http://www.tappi.org/paperu/fun_science/balancingAct.htm

This site includes the example of balancing a book on a piece of paper.

WebQuests (Please note that few of the WebQuest links on this site are no longer available):

ESL WebQuest Links: http://www.station05.qc.ca/css/Cybersite/webquest/workshop/jocelyn/Jocwbqts.htm

WebQuests: What Are They?: http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/wes/webquests.html

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Appendix A

Excerpt from Dodge (2001).

	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Score
Overall visual appeal	0 points There are few or no graphic elements. Or Color is garish and /or typographic variations are overused and legibility suffers. Background interferes with the readability.	2 points Graphic elements sometimes, but not always, contribute to the understanding of concepts, ideas and relationships. There is some variation in type size, color, and layout.	4 points Appropriate and thematic graphic elements are used to make visual connections that contribute to the understanding of concepts, ideas and relationships. Differences in type size and color are used well and consistently.	
Navigation and flow	0 points Getting through the lesson is confusing. Pages can't be found easily or the way back isn't clear.	2 points There are few places where the learner can get lost and not know where to go next.	4 points Navigation is seamless. It is always clear to the learner what all the pieces are and how to get to them.	
Mechanical aspects	0 points There are more than 5 broken links, misplaced or missing images, badly sized tables, misspellings or grammatical errors.	1 point There are some broken links, misplaced or missing images, badly sized tables, misspellings or grammatical errors.	2 points No mechanical problems noted.	
	INTRODUCTION			
Motivational Effectiveness of Introduction	0 points With not relevance or social importance. The scenario posed is transparently bogus and doesn't respect the media literacy of today's learners.	1 point The introduction relates somewhat to the learner's interests and/or describes a compelling question or problem.	2 points The introduction draws the reader into the lesson by relating to the learner's interests or goal and or engagingly describing a compelling question or problem.	
Cognitive Effectiveness of the Introduction	0 points The introduction doesn't prepare the reader for what is to come, or build on what the learner already knows.	1 point The introduction makes some reference to learner's prior knowledge and previews to some extent what the lesson is about.	2 points The introduction builds on learner's prior knowledge and effectively prepares the learner by foreshadowing what the lesson is about.	
	TASK			
Connection of Task to Standards	0 points The task is not related to standards.	2 points The task is referenced to the standards but is not clearly connected to what students must know and be able to do to achieve proficiency of those standards.	4 points The task is referenced to standards and is clearly connected to what students must know and be able to do achieve proficiency of those standards.	
Cognitive level of the task:	0 points Tasks requires simply comprehending or retelling of information found on web pages and answering factual questions.	3 points Task is doable but is limited in its significance to student's lives. The task requires analysis of information and/or putting together information from several sources.	6 points Task is engaging and elicits thinking. The task requires synthesis of multiple sources or information, and taking a position.	
	PROCESS			
Clarity of process	0 points Process is not clearly stated. Students would not know exactly what they were supposed to do.	2 points Some directions are given, but there is missing information. Students might be confused.	4 point Every step is clearly stated. Most students would know exactly were they are at each step of the process and know what to do next.	
Scaffolding of process	0 points The process lacks strategies and organizational tools needed for students to gain the knowledge needed to complete the task. Activities are of little significance to one another and to the accomplishment of the task.	3 points Strategies and organizational tools embedded in the process are insufficient to ensure that all students will gain the knowledge needed to complete the task. Some of the activities do not relate specifically to the accomplishment of the task.	6 points The process provides students coming in at different entry levels with strategies and organizational tools to access and gain the knowledge needed to complete the task. Activities are clearly related and designed to take the students from basic knowledge to higher level thinking. Checks for understanding are built in to assess whether students are getting it.	
Richness of Process	0 points Few steps, no separate roles assigned.	1 points Some separate tasks or roles assigned.	2 points Different roles are assigned to help students understand different perspectives and/or share responsibility in accomplishing the task.	
	RESOURCES			
Relevance and quantity of resources	0 points Resources provided are not sufficient for students to accomplish the task. OR There are too many resources for learners to look at in a reasonable time.	2 point There is some connection between the resources and the information needed for students to accomplish the task. Some resources don't add anything new.	4 points There is a clear and meaningful connection between all the resources and the information needed for students to accomplish the task. Every resource carries its weight.	
	EVALUATION			
Clarity of evaluation criteria	0 points Criteria for success are not described.	3 points Criteria for success are at least partially described.	6 points Criteria for success are clearly stated in the form of a rubric. Criteria include qualitative as well as quantitative descriptors.	

Alternative assessment: Portfolio assessment for young learners*

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Abstract

This paper explores and reviews different researchers' views on portfolio assessment and its implications to young learners' assessment. First, it states what portfolio assessment is as an important part of alternative assessment. Then, it describes young learners and the different points of view towards assessing young learners' language development, focusing on writing specially. Later, this paper illustrates some important aspects teachers should take into consideration about using portfolios with children. Finally, the paper discusses the significance of this type of alternative assessment.

El presente escrito explora y revisa las diferentes perspectivas sobre el uso de portafolios de evaluación y sus implicaciones en la evaluación de niños pequeños. Primeramente, se define el término de portafolio como una parte importante de la evaluación alternativa. Luego, describe a los alumnos pequeños y los diferentes puntos de vista sobre la evalación del desarrollo de un idioma, enfocándose especialmente en la escritura. Después, este escrito aborda los aspectos importantes que los maestros deben considerar cuando utilizen los portafolios con los niños. Finalmente, este escrito discute la importancia de este tipo de evalución.

Introduction

In recent years, several forms of alternative assessment have gained a considerable place in the language teaching process. As stated by Huerta-Macías (2002), alternative assessment is a different option of evaluation. According to Kingore (2007), alternative assessment "is more similar to a videotape than a photograph; it is a view over time rather than a moment-in-time snapshot" (p.1).This unorthodox way of assessment requires students to demonstrate what they can do, but the difference from alternative assessment and other types of testing is that in alternative assessment students are evaluated on what they have produced over a period of time, rather than in a single moment. Alternative assessment may include a variety of forms such as performance assessment, authentic assessment, informal assessment, situated assessment, assessment by exhibition, and portfolio assessment (PA henceforth) (García & Pearson, 1994 as cited in Huerta-Macías 2002).

It is the purpose of this paper to explore and review a number of researchers' points of view regarding PA applied to young learners. This review supports its value and challenges the limitations that language teachers may have encountered in traditional tests and the effects in young learners. As Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou (2003) point out, traditional tests, although widely accepted and generally considered objective, are not the ideal solution for children. Then, it is the intention of the present paper to expose PA as a healthy, enjoyable alternative to assess young learners.

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* This is a refereed article.

What is Portfolio Assessment (PA)?

Portfolios, as defined by Applebee & Langer (1992, as cited in Peñaflorida, 2002) are a cumulative collection of the work students have done. There are several forms of portfolios, but for young learners a language portfolio is a collection of work samples produced by the child over a period of time (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003). These samples can include written work, drawings, projects, a record of books read, tests results, self-assessment records, and teacher and parent comments. PA is then the assessment based on students' cumulative work. This does not mean, however, that PA should be carried out only once and at the end of a course; actually it should be done along with the process of students' language development, including all the different areas.

In terms of reading and writing specially, portfolios should be developed in such a way that they meet the goals of literacy assessment. According to Farr & Lowe (1991, as cited in Peñaflorida 2002), portfolios should embrace the following characteristics:

- Teachers and students add materials to the portfolio.
- Reflections of both teachers and students are kept in the portfolio.
- Portfolios need to reflect a wide range of students' work and not only those pieces of writing that the teacher or the student consider the best.
- Samples of the students' reading and writing activities are collected in the portfolios, including unfinished projects.

Portfolio Assessment for Young Language Learners

Assessing Young Learners

According to Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou (2003), young learners are children aged from six to twelve, and in this case, learning English as a second or as a foreign language. Children in this age group can sometimes be negatively affected by assessment techniques used for older learners. Language teachers should strongly consider that children are different form other groups of learners. For example, Hasselgreen (2005) argues that young learners will frequently need language input and tasks that consider their maturity, and the fact that they constantly require short-term motivation. Moreover, Cameron (2005) mentions that different factors make the assessment of young learners different from the assessment in other language learning situations. These factors are age, content of language learning, methods of teaching, objectives, and learning theories.

According to Shepard, Kagan, & Wirtz (1998, as cited in Kingore 2007), the main purpose of children's assessment is to guide and improve instructional practice while providing a means of understanding how young learners are developing. This issue leads language teachers to seriously consider fairness when assessing young learners. Cameron (2005) points out that assessment plays an important role in the child's learning career. It may determine whether a child chooses to continue or not learning the foreign language and it may affect his or her motivation and interest on it.

Young Learners' Writing

Peñaflorida (2002), states that a typical portfolio contains the student's total writing output to represent his or her overall performance. These samples of students' work allow both teachers and students to assess how much their writing has progressed. As it has been mentioned, young learners' skills at this point are still in the process of development. Regarding to writing, most students aged from six to twelve are still learning the basics of how to write in their native tongue, knowing the grammatical rules, vocabulary, and so forth. A number of comments have appeared with regard to this subject. For instance, Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou (2003) argue that writing is considered "the most difficult language skill," since it includes many other elements such as handwriting, spelling, syntax, grammar, paragraphing, ideas, etc. For young learners the most important writing skills are mastering the alphabet, copying, handwriting, spelling, and basic sentence formation. Additionally, Scott & Ytreberg (1990) assert that writing is a long not always easy skill to master. Most of young learners still struggle with the mechanics of writing as well as with thinking about what to write.

Sometimes, language teachers may forget this fact and focus their attention on correcting handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation over content, and this may result in children associating writing only with error correction. Scott & Ytreberg (1990) suggest that writing, like all other language activities, should be enjoyable. They also list a number of advantages of having young learners write. These are:

- Writing gives a different physical dimension to the learning process.
- Young learners can express their personality traits through writing.
- When students write, they will naturally reflect on what they write allowing the conscious development of language.
- Many children will be proud of seeing their work in print, feeling satisfied in having the written form of what they wanted to say. No matter the level and the number of errors.

Assessing Young Learners Through Portfolios

The activities used to assess young learners should be good learning activities in themselves. Children's attitudes towards learning English can be severely damaged when it comes time for assessment. Kingore (2007) mentions that the use of norm-referenced tests should be limited, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE). Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou (2003) propose that assessment should be carried out in a way that protects the positive atmosphere and attitudes towards English and learning in general. Thus, PA is among the methods that Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou (2003) propose as a healthy option to assess children.

When applying PA, teachers need to specify a set of criteria in every task defining what the children should be able to do in order to demonstrate their knowledge of the particular features assessed. The assessment criteria should be expressed as actions through which the children demonstrate their development. Thus, after carrying one task for a PA, a teacher will know exactly what each child can or cannot do in terms of the predetermined aims of the activity.

Consequently, language teachers should have clear what the learning goals are. Thus, the value of each lesson will be more explicit and aims will be easier to reach. For instance, Cameron (2005) states that teachers can use a list of questions to plan assessment. In this list, teachers should consider the following issues: purposes and objectives of assessment (i.e. relevant significant content), methods of assessment (i.e. gathering and interpretation of work samples to be assessed, involving students), quality management in assessment (i.e. validity, reliability, and fairness) feedback (i.e. who and how to communicate the outcomes), uses of assessment (i.e. future references obtained from outcomes), and impact of assessment (i.e. washback effects and motivation).

Furthermore, language teachers need to design a sequence for implementing portfolios by prioritizing, organizing, communicating, and integrating (Kingore, 2007).

Prioritize. Language teachers should discuss along with their colleagues and principals about what and how portfolios will be managed in each classroom and in the school. Additionally, they should decide the number and kind of products wanted in portfolios (See Kingore, 2007 for a list of possible discussion questions).

*Organize**.*** Organizing involves determining the portfolio containers, storage location, and management procedures. In the same way, teachers need to organize an ongoing schedule for when children's work go home and communicate that schedule to parents.

*Communicate**.*** Children, parents, other teachers, and school authorities may benefit a lot by seeing the student's work. A portfolio may serve as the actual proof of the students' development and learning progress. Accordingly, the language teacher should communicate with other teachers and administrators, the children's families and, of course, with the children.

*Integrate**.*** Language teachers should make every effort to make portfolios a part of the regular routine in class rather than something extra to do. Also, they should involve children in the filling and management of their portfolio products, set time to give feedback, and integrate portfolios with assessment goals and topic objectives.

Finally, a language teacher could make use of a "generic curriculum" (see Schcolnik, Kol & Abarbanel, 2006). This type of curriculum lists the strategic knowledge that need to be learned. To evaluate children's work, after using PA a language teacher can use this constructivist model because it focuses on reporting what the students did and what the tasks included, not only on what the teacher taught.

Conclusion: What is the significance of a portfolio?

As part of alternative assessment, PA involves a considerable number of benefits for young learners, language teachers, parents, and school administrators. For instance, this record-keeping tool serves also as a concrete evidence of the students' progress. According to Kingore (2007), a portfolio documents a child's achievements and celebrates his or her learning, and it enhances learner autonomy. Additionally, children are motivated when they see for themselves that they

are making progress and their work is resulting in success. This way, Kingore (2007) states that significant advantages result when children review products to decide which to include in their portfolios. Thus, children:

- Practice decision making.
- Develop self-assessment skills.
- Assume responsibility for their learning.
- Engage in goal setting.
- Increase their self-esteem and motivation towards learning.

At the end, of course, language teachers' role bringing into play PA will significantly facilitate learners to be better prepared to persist on learning beyond the classroom throughout their lives. The number of advantages mentioned in this paper hopefully will encourage language teachers to implement the use of portfolios and thus make their young learners' language development experience as beneficial and enjoyable as possible.

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Bringing English to Life: Motivating Young EFL Learners with Readers Theater*

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Abstract

The article describes a classroom technique called Readers Theater. It is a literature-based activity that incorporates reading, listening and speaking in a way that is motivating and builds student confidence. The author explains to how organize a Readers Theater activity and gives examples for how the technique works.

El artículo describe una tecnica para el salón de clase llamado "Reader's Theater" (Teatro del Lector). La actividad se basa en la literatura, y combina las habilidades de lectura, comprensión auditiva, y producción oral de una manera que le da al alumno motivación y confianza. La autora explica cómo organizar una actividad de "Reader's Theater" y da ejemplos de cómo funciona esta técnica.

Introduction

Imagine a classroom strategy that incorporates speaking, listening, and reading, builds student confidence, is easy for teachers to use, and can be applied to literature as well as nonfiction and content-based texts. It may sound like the impossible dream, but the answer lies in Readers Theater!

What Is Readers Theater?

Readers Theater is a communicative classroom strategy that incorporates stories and other texts with oral reading and drama (Shepard, 2004; Worthy and Prater, 2002). In Readers Theater, students read a script out loud, using their voices, facial expression, and gestures to convey the story's meaning and mood. They do not memorize their lines. While it was designed originally for native speakers of English, it has proved to be a powerful motivator for my English Language Learner students. I have seen it boost student enthusiasm and confidence in using English. If students can read, they can participate in Readers Theater!

Readers Theater scripts include parts for characters and narrators. The narrators play a big part in telling the story, providing the necessary background information about the setting and action of the story. The number of parts in an individual script can be varied by adding additional narrators or adding or deleting characters.

Presentations can take the form of students reading the script in an informal setting, e.g. in front of their peers in the classroom, or as a more formal production presented for parents or other classes. Some teachers include work with Readers Theater as part of their ongoing literacy instruction. It can be a "regular instruc-

* This is a refereed article.

tional activity rather than limited to special occasions" (Worthy and Prater, 2002).

There are many scripts available online and in books, but I have found that young learners greatly benefit from Readers Theater scripts based on stories they already know or information they are familiar with. The use of such texts and content provides important background knowledge that helps to support students' understanding of the vocabulary and script. For example, if students already know the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears", they will be able to more easily "hook" onto a Readers Theater script of the story. Or, if they are studying the rainforest in class, they will already have the schema of rainforest vocabulary and content to apply to a Readers Theater script based on that topic.

Why use Readers Theater in the English Language Teaching classroom?

Research has shown that repeated reading of a text can improve oral reading fluency, increase sight vocabulary, and aid in reading comprehension (Rasinski, 2003; Worthy and Prater, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000). However, teachers know how difficult it can be to motivate our students to reread the same text over and over and over again. Rereading is inherent in Readers Theater as students rehearse their parts and refine their skills in oral expression.

Readers Theater "not only combines several effective research-based practices, but also leads to increased engagement with literacy" (Worthy and Prater, 2002). Some of these effective practices, as defined by the National Reading Panel Report (2000), include guided repeated oral reading, teacher modeling of fluent reading, and the use of predictable text. Predictable text is repeated language such as that found in nursery rhymes and some children's literature. For example, predictable text in the story "The Three Little Pigs" includes:

> *"Little pig, little pig, let me come in!"*
> *"Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin!"*
> *"Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in!"*

For other examples of predictable text, see "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear" and "Little Red Riding Hood" below.

Readers Theater offers an authentic opportunity for students to use English in the EFL classroom. Students cooperate, collaborate, and communicate with each other as they assign the different roles, practice and improve their reading, interpret their lines, and provide feedback to each other. In addition, it allows students of all proficiency levels to participate. In a mixed-proficiency class, beginning students can read words or simple phrases, lines that are repeated, or be part of a group or chorus. Higher-level proficiency students can help to support their peers by partner-reading or even help to write scripts. Using a text previously used in class or creating a script from their own writing allows higher-level proficiency students to understand such features of writing as summarizing, editing, and revising as well as the elements of a story such as characters, setting, plot, and conclusion. The creation of their own scripts also provides opportunities for students to exercise their critical thinking skills as they delve deeper into the story, analyze the characters and the theme, and synthesize the information.

Development of oral proficiency is another benefit of using Readers Theater. While rehearsing and performing their parts, students perfect their oral expression, pronunciation, and inflection. Students use intonation, facial expression, and gestures in order to express their character's emotions and actions rather than acting out the script in a traditional way.

Teachers are able to address their students' varied learning styles and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993) through Readers Theater. For example, Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence is addressed as students read, write, and engage in storytelling. Interpersonal Intelligence is acknowledged through student collaboration and cooperation and Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence through performance and the use of gestures and facial expression. Teachers may wish to give students with Visual-Spatial Intelligence the opportunity to create costumes, masks, props, or staging.

Lowering the affective filter

It is not uncommon for students learning a new language to feel shy or anxious when confronted with the task of actually using the L2 (Young, D.J. 1991; Scovel, 1978). Readers Theater helps to lower the "affective filter" (Krashen, 1983) in the classroom in several ways. First, repeated reading of a text builds student confidence. "Rehearsals" make reading purposeful, meaningful, and enjoyable. With each reading, students gain a deeper understanding of the text and improve their comprehension and fluency.

In addition, since they hold their scripts while reading their parts and do not have to memorize their lines, students feel more secure and less anxious about making errors. Working in small groups encourages cooperation and collaboration between students as they practice and refine their parts.

Brain-based learning principles point to the powerful role that emotions play in learning, including the positive effects of the use of novelty (something new and different), humor, and fun to lower anxiety in the class (Sousa, 2006). A positive classroom environment includes activities that help students get emotionally connected to classroom content while lowering their anxiety level. Lowering student anxiety is crucial in several ways. When students feel stressed, blood flows away from those parts of the brain responsible for thinking and analysis and towards those parts responsible strictly for survival. A classroom that is high in challenge and low in perceived threat (Caine, R., Caine, G., McClintic & Klimek, 2009) also helps to release endorphins in the brain which stimulates the frontal lobes and fosters higher-order, critical thinking. In addition, the use of movement is not only fun for students, but can increase the flow of blood to the brain by 15% (Sousa, 2006).

The beauty of Readers Theater for teachers

Including Readers Theater in the EFL classroom is relatively easy for teachers to do. As compared to putting on a play, Readers Theater does not require costumes, props, or a stage. With a computer and a short text or story, Readers Theater scripts can be easily created by teachers.

While costumes are optional in Readers Theater, I have found that young learners often enjoy wearing something that represents their character. This can be

as simple as hanging a sign with the name or picture of their character around their neck (for example, a picture of a duck for the Ugly Duckling), wearing a headband with paper ears attached for an animal, or wearing a crown for a king. Masks are another creative option; students can also make the mask as part of the lesson. Any props or stage sets used can also be very simple.

There are many Readers Theater scripts available online for free. There are also many scripts available in books. However, scripts can be easily adapted by teachers from a wide variety of stories and other texts, including poetry and non-fiction. Texts that can be effectively used for young learners include books and stories with predictable text as well as fairy tales, fables, and folk tales. The use of fairy tales and folk tales that students are already familiar with taps into their background knowledge, which further supports their understanding of the text. Stories that are somewhat short, with a simple structure that has a clear beginning, middle, and end, are a good choice.

How to create a Readers Theater script from a text

Teachers can easily create a Readers Theater script by following these steps:

1. Choose a story or short section of a book. Text that includes dialog can be especially suitable for Readers Theater scripts.
2. Circle the characters in the story.
3. Underline or highlight the dialog.
4. The text that remains is the narration. You can choose to give these lines to the narrator(s) or to the character that they apply to.

As mentioned before, a script can have one or more narrators depending on the number of students presenting the script. Extra characters can also be added, if necessary.

The following are some examples of scripts using stories with predictable text and content-based student writing. The first is from the traditional children's rhyme "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear". The second is a part of a script based on "Little Red Riding Hood". The final script was created from a portion of a compare/contrast student essay about elephants.

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear (Author: Unknown)

A Readers Theater example for younger children. In this example, the students are divided into 8 groups.

Original Text	**Readers Theater Script**
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Turn around.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 1: Turn around.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Touch the ground.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 2: Touch the ground.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Touch your nose.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 3: Touch your nose.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Touch your toes.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 4: Touch your toes.

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Climb the stairs.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 5: Climb the stairs.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Say your prayers.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 6: Say your prayers.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Turn out the light.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 7: Turn out the light.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Say goodnight.	Whole Class: Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Group 8: Say goodnight!

Little Red Riding Hood (by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm)

The following is a portion of a Readers Theater script based on "Little Red Riding Hood":

Original Text	**Readers Theater Script**
Little Red Riding Hood walked into Grandmother's room. She saw her Grandmother in the bed.	Narrator: Little Red Riding Hood walked into Grandmother's room. She saw her Grandmother in the bed.
Little Red Riding Hood cried: "Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"	Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother, what big eyes you have!
"The better to see you with, my dear!" replied the wolf.	Wolf: The better to see you with, my dear!
Then Little Red Riding Hood said, "Grandmother, what big ears you have!"	Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother, what big ears you have!
The wolf said, "The better to hear you with, my dear!"	Wolf: The better to hear you with, my dear!
Then she said, "Grandmother, what a big nose you have!"	Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother, what a big nose you have!
The wolf answered, "The better to smell you with, my dear!"	Wolf: The better to smell you with, my dear!
Then Little Red Riding Hood cried, "Grandmother, what big teeth you have!"	Little Red Riding Hood: Grandmother, what big teeth you have!
The wolf growled, "The better to eat you with, my dear! GRRRRR!!!!"	Wolf: The better to eat you with, my dear! GRRRRR!!!!
Little Red Riding Hood ran out the door. She yelled for help.	Narrator: Little Red Riding Hood ran out the door. Little Red Riding Hood: Help, help!!!

While traditional Readers Theater scripts are based on literature, non-fiction, content-area texts, and student writing can also be used. In these cases, the text can be easily adapted into a script by assigning short passages of the text to individual readers or groups of students. Dialog can also be created as desired. The following script is based on a student writing sample about elephants:

Elephants A Content-based Readers Theater Script

Original Text	Readers Theater Script
The Asian elephant and the African elephant are the same and different in several ways. First, they are the same because they are both huge mammals. The African elephant is the largest living land animal. They are also the same because they live in family groups and the female leads the group.	Reader 1: The Asian elephant and the African elephant are the same and different in several ways. Reader 2: First, they are the same because they are both huge mammals. African Elephant: I'm an African elephant and I'm the largest living land animal! Reader 3: They are also the same because they live in family groups. Asian Elephant: I'm a <u>female</u> elephant and I lead the family group!
Female and male African elephants both have tusks, but only the male Asian elephant has tusks. The ears of both kinds of elephants help keep them cool. They are different because the African elephant's ears are bigger than the Asian elephant's ears and they are shaped like Africa!	Reader 4: Elephants have tusks. African Elephant: Both female and male African elephants have tusks. Asian Elephant: But only <u>male</u> Asian elephants do! Reader 5: The ears of both kinds of elephants help keep them cool. African Elephant: But African elephants' ears are bigger than the Asian elephant's and they are shaped like Africa!

How do we prepare students to do Readers Theater?

Readers Theater brings a story to life not only for the audience, but for the readers as well. While first introducing the script to the students, the teacher should demonstrate fluent reading. It can be useful for students if the teacher models non-expressive versus expressive reading; e.g. first, reading lines from the script in a monotone and then, reading with expression, using intonation, facial expression, and gestures. The teacher can underline or italicize words that should be stressed and add commas or exclamation marks to help students remember where to add expression. Sound effects can also be included to add expression and humor to the script.

If the script is based on a story, the teacher should read the story to the students ahead of time. This provides important background knowledge for the students which will aid in their comprehension of the story. It is also important to pre-teach any unknown vocabulary or concepts in the script.

Each student should be given a script with their part highlighted. This makes it easier for students to follow along and read their part at the correct time. Following the first modeled reading by the teacher, students often benefit from reading the script aloud as a whole group with the teacher, either choral-reading in unison or echo-reading (reading each phrase after the teacher reads). They may

then read with a partner or in small groups. You can choose to have students take turns reading all of the parts or just their own part.

Usually, students simply stand or sit in chairs in front of the class with the narrators on the right and left sides. Students do not need to move from their place in line; however, it is often irresistible for them to move during the actual performance in order to more fully express their character's lines. It is entirely up to each teacher to decide which model to use.

Conclusion & Resources

The use of Readers Theater in the EFL classroom scaffolds opportunities for students to use English in an authentic, motivating, and non-threatening context. It helps to promote oral expression and can increase reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Research-proven strategies (National Reading Panel, 2000) such as teacher modeling of fluent reading, the use of predictable text, and guided repeated reading are inherent in Readers Theater. In addition, it can be adapted for many language proficiency levels and incorporate stories, poems, and traditional children's rhymes as well as non-fiction text.

Teachers who are seeking an instructional strategy that can build their students' confidence in using English and boost their students' interest in reading should look no further than Readers Theater. Give it a try and let the fun begin!

The following are some great websites that offer scripts, tips, and ideas for assessment for Readers Theater:

Reader's Theater Editions: http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html

Literacy Connections: Reader's Theater: http://literacyconnections.com/ReadersTheater.php

The Reading Lady: (click on "Readers Theater" on menu at the left) http://www.readinglady.com/

Teaching Heart: Reader's Theater Scripts and Plays: http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm

Whootie Owl: http://www.storiestogrowby.com/script.html

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