NEW HORIZONS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Edited by

Gabriela Trejo, Karina Godina
and Eduardo Altamirano

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The First International Congress on Language Learning (CIAL) was born as a dream from the organizers to create an event of the highest academic quality that would enrich the academic field in the region. What started as a dream would have never been possible without the support of the authorities at the School of Higher Studies (ENES) Morelia, of the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM) and its administrative staff, and we are thankful for all their help. We would also like to thank all the sponsors for their financial support and promotion of the event which was essential to turn our dream into a reality.

In an academic event such as this one, the Academic Committee has a prominent role in the success of the venture and we were truly fortunate to have an amazing group of highly qualified and compromised individuals which in turn assembled a great team, directly responsible for the high quality of the event. Equally important are all the contributors to this volume who trusted us with their papers. We want to thank them all for all the effort and knowledge they brought into the project and we are looking forward to working with them again in the future.

We want to recognize the hard work of all the language teachers and assistants at the Self-Access Center and the Language Department of ENES Morelia who were the backbone of the event and a great support for the organizers. You are the best and the most enthusiastic staff and we will be forever in your debt.

Finally, we want to thank everybody at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for believing in this project. Your assistance made this whole process an enjoyable adventure for all those involved.

Sincerely,
The Editors

INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of selected papers presented at the first International Congress on Language Learning (CIAL), organized by National Autonomous University of México (UNAM), through its School of Higher Studies in Morelia, Michoacán in April, 2019.

The congress was born from the need to bring more high quality academic events to the region, taking advantage of the institutional effort that has been made in recent years to expand the reach of the most important university of the country. The organizers wanted to grant access to innovative and groundbreaking research in the area of language learning and teaching and to provide an opportunity for the exchange and debate of ideas, proposals and innovations in the field. The event brought together a varied range of speakers and attendants: graduate and undergraduate students, educational and language researchers, school administrators, experienced and novice teachers of several languages, such as Japanese, Chinese, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Purépecha and Otomí.

The selected papers in this volume have been arranged in four chapters. The first chapter features five contributions on educational research in areas like second language acquisition in children, affective barriers in language learning, and the effect of gamification and IT in language learning. The second chapter presents two different perspectives of international language learning experiences, the first one focuses on Tandem and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and the second one focuses on making the best out of study abroad experiences. Chapter 3 confronts two opposing views on evaluation: the first one advocating a shift from standardized texts, and the second one championing the virtues of standardized certification exams of Spanish as a foreign language. Finally, the last chapter reflects on two peculiar challenges in language teaching; developing better teaching objectives that focus on the learning process rather than on the teaching process and the difficulties of teaching Japanese in a self-access center, when the role of the teacher is one of mentoring rather than provider of knowledge.

The four chapters included in this volume constitute an inspiring sample of the work done either by Latin American scholars or in the Latin American

context of language learning that can be relevant to other settings and contexts.

CHAPTER 1 –

LANGUAGE AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The Expressions of Manner and Path of Motion in the Narratives of School aged Spanish-English Bilinguals

Jimena Tena Dávalos

Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo.
tenajimena@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine if bilinguals acquiring two typologically different languages trigger different conceptualization patterns in the expression of motion events in each of their languages or if they adhered to language-specific patterns. Thus, the present study focused on the expression of path and manner in the narratives of school-aged (7-12) simultaneous bilinguals (English- Spanish). The results showed that bilingual children adhere to language-specific patterns when narrating in English and Spanish.

Key words: Bilingualism, Autonomous Hypothesis, Interdependent Hypothesis, Satellite framed languages, Verb framed languages.

1. Introduction

The question of whether bilinguals develop autonomous or interdependent systems is central in the literature of bilingual acquisition. The Autonomous Hypothesis proposes that when children receive regular input from two languages since birth (simultaneous bilinguals) they will develop grammatical structures in each of their two languages based on language-specific input (DeHouwer, 1994).This implies that bilingual children develop two independent systems and that they follow the same path and course of development in each of their languages as monolingual children. In direct opposition the Interdependency Hypothesis proposes that in situations of close language contact (e.g. the case of simultaneous bilinguals) the interactions between the two systems are bound to influence each other (Álvares, 2003a). Evidence in favor of the interdependency

hypothesis comes primarily from two types of phenomena found amongst bilinguals: (1) transfer, which involves the incorporation of one language property from one language to another, and (2) acceleration, which involves the influence of a developmental timetable between the two languages (Mori-Mishima, 2005). The literature has shown evidence for and against the existence of transfer and acceleration in the written and oral productions of bilingual children, as a result agreement on whether or not the development of each language occurs independently or inter dependently has not been reached yet.

The present study looks to examine bilingual acquisition by focusing on the expression of path and manner in the narratives of school-aged (7-12 years old) simultaneous bilinguals. The aim of this study is to examine if bilinguals acquiring two typologically different languages trigger different conceptualization patterns in each of their languages.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Motion events

A motion event consists of a situation in which an animate entity moves from one space to another (Özçalışkan & Slobin, 2003). Talmy (1985) identified six semantic components of a motion event. However in this paper we will only focus on two components: *path and manner* of movement.

The path of movement refers to the direction followed by the animate entity in respect to the ground. For example, in (1) the animate entity is the rabbit and the direction that it follows is from the interior to the exterior.

(1) The rabbit exited the burrow

The manner refers to the way in which animated figures move from one space to another, as in example (2) where the verb gives us information about the way in which the rabbit exited the burrow.

(2) The rabbit hopped out of the burrow

Although the components of a motion event are universal, the languages of the world differ on the linguistic elements they employ to express these components (Özçalışkan & Slobin, 2003).

2.1.2 Verb and satellite framed languages

According to Talmy's (1985) typology languages can be classified in two according to the lexicalization patterns which they use to encode motion events. Verb-framed languages (v-languages), such as Spanish, French and Turkish, typically encode the path of movement in the main verb as in example (3) where the verb *salir* (exit) provides information about the direction in which the animate object *conejo* (rabbit) moves. Likewise v-languages encode the manner of movement by other linguistic means such as the use of gerunds, as seen in (3) or adverbial constructions as illustrated in (4) where both adjuncts *saltando* (jumping) *and de puntillas* (tiptoes) provide information about the way in which the animated object moves.

(3) El conejo salió *saltando* del agujero.

The rabbit exited the burrow by jumping

(4) El niño entró de puntillas a la habitación.

The boy entered the room on his tiptoes

On the other hand, satellite-framed languages (s-languages), such as English, German and Dutch, typically express path by an element associated with the verb such as a preposition (go in, go out, up, down), these leaves the main verb free to encode manner as in examples (5) and (6) where the verb provides information about the way in which the rabbit and the boy moved.

(5) The rabbit jumped out of the hole.

(6) The boy tiptoed into the room.

It is necessary to remark that although Talmy's typology reflects the typical patterns of each language it is by no means absolute. For example, English does possess a number of path-conflating verbs (exit, ascend, descend). In addition, English offers the option to express manner through peripheral constructions (like v-language speakers) as illustrated in example (7). However, these options are less widespread either because they correspond to a particular register or because they are structurally more complex and as such are only used to emphasize a particular manner/path or resulting state (Hickman et al. 2009), as illustrated in (8).

(7) The frog came out of the jar jumping

(8) The boy crossed the field crawling on his knees

Similarly, in Spanish manner can be expressed in the main verb because Spanish does possess a number of manner-conflating verbs (e.g. correr, flotar, saltar / run/ float/ jump). However, as can be observed in example (6) in this sentence the figure is not moving across a boundary but rather within the same space (in the house). Slobin (2004) demonstrated that the use of manner-conflating verbs in Spanish, and other v-framed languages is restricted to situations in which the focus is "on the path itself, moving in space from one non-configured point to another". However, if the figure is actually traversing a boundary, as seen in (7), Verb –framed languages "mandate rather than just prefer path-conflating verbs" (Naigles et al. 2010).

(6) La niña corrió por la casa

'The girl ran around the house '

(7) La niña salió de la casa corriendo

'The came out of the house running '

As can be observed, each language provides a variety of grammatical options to express motion events but typological factors partially determine which of these options are more accessible and therefore more likely to be used. Research (Özçalışkan,2009; Özçalışkan & Slobin,1999; Slobin 2004; Ochsenbauer etal., 2011) has shown that English speakers prototypically lexicalize manner through verbs and path via satellites, while Spanish speakers typically encode path in the verb whilst largely ignoring manner. In the following section evidence for the existence of language specific patterns will be explored.

2.3 Language specific lexicalization patterns

There is a substantial body of research that supports the view that typological factors affect speaker's perception of motion events. In an experimental study about the mental imagery of motion events, Slobin (2004) asked a group of L1 English and L1 Spanish adult participants to narrate a film that had just been presented to them. After analyzing the narratives from both groups the results showed that the English speaking group used significantly more manner verbs than the Spanish speaking group, which in turn, used more path verbs and exhibited a tendency to omit manner when describing motion events. A similar language-specific

tendency was found by Slobin (1997) in a cross-linguistic study about the lexicalization patterns of motion events in written literary texts. In this study s-language novels written in English, German, Dutch and Russian were compared with v-language novels written in French, Spanish, Turkish and Japanese. The study revealed that the s-language writers tended to use a great deal of dynamic path and manner descriptions in comparison to v-language writers, whose narratives devoted more attention to scene setting and relatively less attention to manner of movement.

2.4 Acquisition of lexicalization patterns of motion events

Overall the research has shown that the typological differences between v-languages and s-languages have an effect on the acquisition and development of the expression of motion events. According to a number of cross -linguistic and developmental studies (Özçalışkan, 2009; Özçalışkan & Slobin,1999; Slobin 2004; Ochsenbauer et al., 2011) children as young as 3 years old are influenced by the lexicalization patterns that are most frequent in the language they are acquiring. (Ochsenbauer et al., 2011). These findings suggest that children´s earliest spatial concepts are language-specific (Özçalışkan, 2009).

 Özçalışkan and Slobin (1999) found significant differences in the linguistic behavior of children learning v- languages and children learning s-languages. In their study they used an oral elicitation task using Mayer´s (1969) picture story book *Frog, where are you?* to compare the frequency distribution of manner and path verbs across three languages (English, Spanish and Turkish). Their results showed that the narratives of the English speaking group contained a greater frequency and a greater diversity of manner verbs and a lower frequency and lower diversity of path verbs in comparison to the narratives of the Spanish and Turkish speaking group (Özçalışkan and Slobin; 1999). In contrast, the children from the Spanish and Turkish speaking groups used significantly more path verbs and less manner verbs than the English group. Their results mirrored the patterns found in previous studies with adults (Özçalışkan and Slobin, 1999).

Similarly, in a study that analyzed the spontaneous productions of motion events in two-year-old children, Choi and Bowreman (1991) demonstrated that English and Korean children show sensitivity to language –specific patterns in the way they express motion events. Their results showed that just like English speaking adults, English speaking children use path

satellites when describing motion events, whereas Korean (v-language) children conflate path and motion in the main verb just like Korean adults. Similar results were obtained by Hickman et al. 2009 whose experimental data compared how French and English children (age 3 to 7) described motion events. Their results showed that children combined manner and path within the same motion event more frequently than French children, who preferred to encode path or manner alone.

The evidence from studies about the acquisition of the expression of motion points to the existence of language-specific patterns. The fact that these patterns are set from an early age appears to indicate that children are affected by the semantic information that is more salient and more readily available in their first language.

2.4 The acquisition of the expression of motion events in bilingual children.

Assuming that the typological characteristics of our first language affect our conceptualization of motion events, it is inevitable to ask how children acquiring two typologically different languages deal with the task of learning to codify motion events in each of their languages when the semantic properties are at contrast, as is the case of bilingual children acquiring a v-language and s-language simultaneously. One possibility is that simultaneous bilingual children have two autonomous systems that develop independently from each other. An alternative possibility is that the two separate systems influence each other (Mori-Mishima, 2005).

Only a few studies have focused on the bilingual acquisition of the lexicalization patterns of motion events. Daller et al. (2010) examined the conceptualization of motion events in the narratives of Turkish-German bilinguals. Their study included two groups of German-Turkish bilingual adults. One that lived in Germany, and the other who lived in Turkey at the time of the experiment. Their results suggest that the lexicalization of motion events is influenced by the dominant linguistic environment in both languages. The group living in Germany followed the German patterns when speaking in German and showed transfer of these patterns when speaking in Turkish. Likewise, the group living in Turkey followed the Turkish blueprints for the conceptualization of motion in both Turkish and German construals. Therefore this study provided evidence in favor of the interdependency hypothesis.

A study addressing the expression of motion events in a Spanish- English bilingual child was carried out by Alvarez (2003b). In her developmental study of a single bilingual Spanish-English Child, Alvarez (2003b) found that her subject differed from monolingual Spanish and monolingual English children of the same age. For example, the characteristic attention to manner in monolingual English narratives was not present. Similarly, the characteristic encoding of source which is present in Spanish narratives was not found in the samples from her study. Alvarez (2003b) concluded that different behavior in bilingual children would indicate that they have to "learn to make different choices in order to comply with the specific patterns of each language" (Álvarez, 2003b; 348). However, the study only included one subject and it is therefore necessary to carry further studies before any generalizations can be made.

3. Research questions

 The present study focuses on the expression of path and manner in the narratives of school-aged (7-12) simultaneous bilinguals. The aim of this study was to examine if bilinguals acquiring two typologically different languages trigger different conceptualization patterns in each of their languages. The evidence so far has been inconclusive. Given the need for further research the present study will address the following questions:

1. Do Spanish-English bilingual children adhere to the apparent specific-language motion patterns in each of their languages?
2. Do bilingual children transfer the lexicalization patterns for the encoding of path and manner components from one language to another?
3. Do Spanish-English bilingual children differ from monolingual Spanish and monolingual English children in their expression of motion events?

4. Methodology

In order to answer our research questions the lexicalization patterns of motion events were examined in the narratives of school-aged children. The study included 3 groups of subjects; a group of 20 Spanish-English bilinguals who were tested twice, once in English and once in Spanish, an English monolingual control group of 20 participants, and a Spanish monolingual control group of 20 participants.

4.1 Sample

The sample for the present study comes from an already collected set of data made publically available through the CHILDES database. It consists of 80 narratives from children aged 7 to 11, that were elicited by using the picture story book, *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969)

The narratives from the Spanish –English bilingual group and the English monolingual groups were taken from the Pearson Miami corpus (2002). The 20 children from the bilingual group were of Hispanic origins. They had been born and raised in Miami, USA but had been exposed to both English and Spanish since birth. Likewise, they were all enrolled in bilingual education programs, had a medium socio-economic status and were reported to speak Spanish and English at home 50% of the time. Each bilingual participant produced a narrative of the frog story in English and Spanish. (The data did not offer indication of which language had been elicited first). 10 of the bilingual participants were enrolled in the second grade at the time of the data collection (age seven to eight) and the other 10 were enrolled in the fifth-grade (age ten to eleven).

The 20 children from the English monolingual group were also from Miami. They attended regular monolingual education programs, came from a medium socio-economic background and the only language spoken at home was English. 10 of the monolingual children were enrolled in the second grade at the time of the study and the other 10 were enrolled in the fifth grade.

The 20 children from the Spanish monolingual group were taken from the Aguilar-Spanish corpus which was collected in Mexico. All the children in this group grew up in Mexico City, had medium socio-economic background and the only language spoken at home was Spanish. 10 of the children in this corpus were ages 6 to 7 and the other 10 were aged 10 to 11.

4.2 Procedure

After each narrative was analysed the sentences containing motions events were put in an Excel spreadsheet. These sentences were then coded for motion events following the system used by Özçalışkan and Slobin, 2000 and 2003. Accordingly, the categories of motion verbs included in the sample are exemplified in table (1):

Table 1. Coding table based on the system Özçalışkan y Slobin, (2000; 2003) illustrated by examples found in the CHILDES (2002, 2OO3) Corpus

Category	Example found in the English Miami CORPUS	Example found in the Aguilar Mexico CORPUS
V:Manner	The boy climbed the rock	El niño escaló la roca
V:Manner and Path	The owl popped out of the jar	
V:Path	The frog exited the jar	La rana salió del jarrón
V:Path +Manner	The dog exited running	El perro salió corriendo
V:Path+Path	The Owl exited outside	*El búho salió (afuera).
V: Manner path conflated	Then an Owl came	Y después un búho vino
V:Neutral	The owl came out	*El búho vino afuera.
V:Neutral+Path	The bees came out flying	*Las abejas vinieron fuera volando.

4.3 Analysis

When the coding of each motion event was finalized, the total number of different types of manner and path components was counted for each group and each language.

In order to statistically compare the variation between groups (English-Spanish Bilinguals vs. Spanish monolinguals and English bilinguals) a cross tabulation with chi-square was carried out using the statistical program SPSS. The same procedure was applied to compare variation within groups (Bilinguals-English frog story vs. Bilinguals-Spanish frog story.)

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5. Results

Table 2. A Table showing the raw data and percentages per motion event category

Lexicalization pattern of motion events	Bi-English		Bi-Spanish		Mo-English		Mo-Spanish		Total
V: manera	16%	(18)	32%	(36)	19%	(21)	33%	(37)	112
V :manera + trayectoria	27%	(25)	3%	(3)	59%	(55)	10%	(9)	91
V: trayectoria	2%	(2)	47%	(42)	0%	(0)	51%	(46)	90
V: trayectoria + manera	25%	(1)	75%	(3)	0%	(0)	0%	(0)	4
V: trayectoria + trayectoria	0%	(0)	50%	(2)	0%	(0)	50%	(2)	4
V: mezclado	32%	(19)	7%	(4)	29%	(17)	32%	(19)	59
V:neutron	63%	(5)	24%	(2)	0%	(0)	13%	(1)	8
V:neutro + trayectoria	37%	(19)	15%	(8)	48%	(25)	0%	(0)	56
V:Neutro+trayectoria+manera	33%	(2)	0%	(0)	17%	(1)	50%	(3)	6
Total		92		99		119		116	430

430 motion events were coded. The results are presented in table (2).

5.1 Control groups English monolinguals vs Spanish monolinguals

As expected based on previous studies the English monolingual control group showed an overwhelming preference for the pattern V: manner + path (see figure 2) when encoding motion events. This pattern was followed by the pattern V: neutral + path. The results confirm previous findings that monolingual English speakers prefer to encode the path of a motion event via a satellite and that they tend to encode manner in the main verb. Likewise, the results from the Spanish monolingual control group replicated previous findings which suggest that the most frequent lexicalization pattern amongst Spanish speakers is V: path.

It is worth noting that the second most frequent pattern amongst the Spanish group was V: manner. At first sight this appears to contradict previous findings that claimed that V-language speakers typically ignore the manner in a motion event. However, as mentioned in the theoretical background, Spanish does possess a number of manner conflating verbs such as: brincar, perseguir, flotar (jump, chase, float) which are restricted to situations in which the focus is "on the object itself, moving in space from one non-configured point to another" (Slobin, 2004). After further consideration it was evident that the high frequency of this pattern was a result of the elicitation materials in which a boy is shown jumping and chasing animals on several occasions.

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the lexicalization patterns of both groups, a crosstab with chi-square statistical test for independence of variables was conducted in SPSS. The analysis found statistically significant difference (X^2= 110.99, df 7, p= .0002) between the lexicalization patterns of motion events in the narratives of English and Spanish monolingual groups.

5.2. Bilingual narratives in English vs. Spanish

As mentioned in the methodology, the bilingual group was tested twice. Once in English and once in Spanish. The results showed opposite lexicalization patterns when tested in their S-language (English) and their V-language (Spanish) (see figure 1). Furthermore, a crosstab with chi-square test revealed that these differences were statistically significant (X^2= 81.063, df 8, p= .00001).

When the group was tested in English the bilinguals adhered to the patterns exhibited by their English monolingual peers, preferring to encode motion events with the patterns V: manner + path and V: neutral + path. Similarly, when the children were tested in Spanish the most frequent patterns were V: path and V: manner mirroring the preferences of the Spanish monolingual group.

It is worth noting that we found no evidence of transfer or interference in the lexicalization patterns of motion events in the narratives of the bilingual groups.

Figure 1. Lexicalization patterns of motion events Bilingual groups tested in English and Spanish
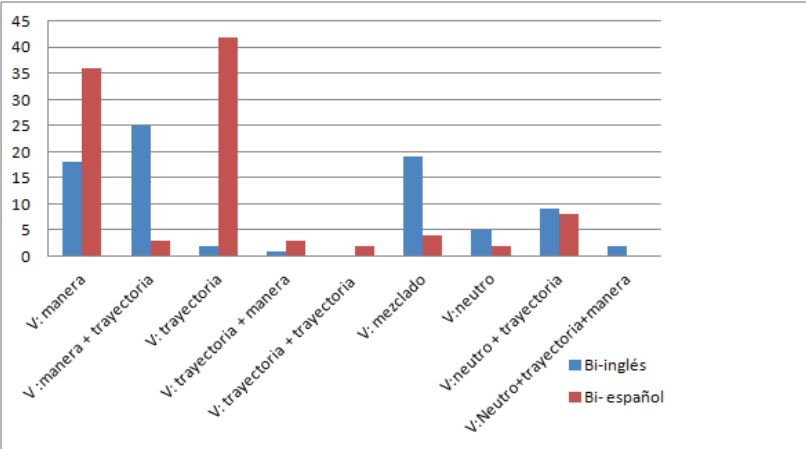
5.3 English and Spanish monolinguals vs. Bilinguals when tested in English and Spanish

The results showed that the bilingual children followed language- specific patterns in each of their languages. However, as table (2) illustrates the bilingual group tended to encode motion events at lower frequency rates than both groups of monolinguals. In order to test if there were statistically significant differences in the frequency of encoded motion events we tested the differences in frequency between the English monolinguals and the results from the English narratives of the bilingual group. The same was done with the Spanish monolingual and Spanish results of the bilingual group.

The crosstab with chi-square tests revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the frequency rates of the English monolingual and bilingual group (X^2= 16.934, df 7, p= .018). Likewise there was a statistically significant difference between the Spanish monolingual and bilingual groups (X^2= 24.118, df 8, p= .002)

This variation implies that the narratives from the bilinguals are not on target in terms of frequency in comparison to the monolinguals.

6. Analysis

The results from this study have provided interesting findings. Firstly, our study provides further evidence for the existence of language-specific patterns to describe motion events. Additionally, these patterns are not exclusive to monolingual speakers; the results from this study showed that when coding motion events bilingual children follow the same patterns as their monolingual counterparts. No evidence was found to support the claim that bilingual children transfer the lexicalization patterns of motion events from one language to another. As such, the results from our study seem to support the Autonomous Hypothesis, which claims that when children receive input from two different languages since birth their output will reflect the rules of each of the languages involved (Ochsenbauer and Engelmann, 2011). However, the results showed that bilingual children differ from monolinguals in the frequency rates at which they encode motion events. In other words, it appears that bilinguals do not behave exactly like monolinguals. The present study does not allow us to provide a definite answer as to why this occurred; as such further research is needed to provide definite answers.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to evaluate whether bilingual children who acquire two typologically different languages activate autonomous or interdependent conceptualization patterns in each of their languages. Specifically, the study aimed to examine if bilingual children followed the language-specific lexicalization patterns in each of their languages of if there was evidence of transfer or interference from one language to another.

The results appear to confirm that there are language specific patterns in the lexicalization of manner and path in motion events and those bilingual

children adhere to these patterns in each of their languages. No evidence of transfer or interference was found thus in the study. The results appear to support the Autonomous hypothesis of bilingual acquisition.

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CLIL WITHIN AN ENGLISH-ONLY APPROACH: IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

OCTAVIO FLORES OROZCO

Centro Regional de Educación Normal de Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco
octavio_f4@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper discusses the case of a series of different non-linguistic subjects taught to children (6-8 years old) in the city of Prague, capital of the Czech Republic. These CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) lessons were taught by a non-speaker of the students' mother tongue. This means that English was the only means of communication between the teacher and the students as well as being the language of instruction. This specific context resulted in a number of advantages and disadvantages, especially with the youngest students. Findings show relevant information for teachers involved in CLIL as well as for those language instructors teaching under an L2-only approach.

Key words: CLIL, mother tongue, L2-only, teaching approaches, TEFL

Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an educational approach that combines the learning and teaching of a foreign language (L2) with a mainstream subject such as Science or Mathematics (Marsh, 2012). The term was established in 1994 along with the European context to gather and design good practice from various types of school settings that involved the delivery of different disciplines using an additional language as the medium of instruction (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). Thus at its beginning, the definition was considered as a general "umbrella" under which different terms were assembled.

Currently, Dalton-Puffer, Nikula, & Smit (2010) highlight that CLIL practice in the classroom bears a resemblance to other forms of bilingual

education like Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and immersion programmes in North America. Some theoreticians acknowledge that the success of the bilingual programmes in Canada was central to the creation of CLIL in Europe (Coyle et al., 2010). However, it has been stated that what makes CLIL different from these other methodologies and approaches is its "dual-focus" (Coyle et al., 2010). That is to say that both subject and target language are to be taught with the same degree of importance rather than using content to learn L2 or vice versa.

Now that we have stated what CLIL stands for and what makes it different from other related approaches, let us share with our reader the context of this study. It was carried out in a public primary school in the seventh district of Prague in the Czech Republic. It should be noted that most schools in this country offer training in certain areas besides the national curriculum. For example, some schools specialize in ICT or environmental studies. In *Frantisky Plaminkové* however, the focus is on foreign languages. As surprising as it may seem, the school is allowed to administer an aptitude test for L2 learning. Therefore, this test determines whether the students can be accepted based on their competencies to cope with the school's syllabus.

Our duty in this school was to teach CLIL lessons to students in grades 1 through 9. This task was exciting and interesting for us, but once we started teaching we realized the challenge we had just accepted. Teaching 8–12-year-old children and adolescents was not difficult compared to delivering lessons to those aged 6–7. We found ourselves left alone in a classroom full of students who were beginners in English and a teacher who did not speak any Czech whatsoever. Given this situation, we decided to have a look at the policies regarding CLIL in the country.

As one of the conditions to be met by schools implementing CLIL, the Czech Ministry of Education states, "The expected outcomes have to be reached in both, non-language subject and the foreign language lessons." (Melihárek 2013). With this finding, we started asking ourselves if the fact that the instructor was not able to speak the students' mother tongue would interfere in the learning process, preventing the teacher from reaching content and/or language related objectives. Moreover, thanks to the literature review, we were able to identify other factors that could play an important role in this specific context: learners' anxiety caused by direct exposure to L2 and the students' cognitive development levels.

Methodology

We thought that the two instruments that best responded to our needs for this project were the questionnaire and the observation. The former was thoroughly designed based on the information of our theoretical framework. This instrument had the aim of collecting data regarding the students' reaction to the use of L2-only instruction and possible consequences that they could identify in it. The items corresponded to the stage of cognitive development of the respondents and presented six easy-to-answer and non-exhaustive statements. With the objective of assessing learners' beliefs in the most accurate way, the questions were written in Czech, which was the pupils' L1.

In **the questionnaire**, the first sentence, *Líbí se mi hodiny angličtiny s Octaviem* (I like English lessons with Octavio), was designed to get the learners' general perception of the lessons given by the L2-only teacher. The second item, *Rád/a mluvím s Octaviem anglicky* (I like to speak English with Octavio) aims to find out if the presence of a non-speaker of Czech promotes the use of the L2. The third one deals with the pupils' belief about their understanding of the L2: *Rozumím, když Octavio mluví* anglicky (I understand when Octavio speaks English). For students to answer these first statements, three possible answers are given below each of them: *Vždy, Občas, Nikdy* (always, sometimes, never). Every option has an icon with a little face to facilitate the understanding of the answers.

Two more items, 4 and 5, rephrase the previous ideas but this time they include an affective part regarding motivation and anxiety in the L2-only instruction. These sentences are: *Bojím se mluvit s Octaviem anglicky* (I am afraid to speak English with Octavio) and *Hodiny angličtiny s Octaviem jsou težké* (English lessons with Octavio are complicated). In this case, the respondents have two possible answers: *ano* and *ne* (yes and no). Thus, statements 2 and 4 are complementary to each other. Number 5 could provide clarifying information for item 1.

At the end of the questionnaire, we decided to add only one open question that could provide extra information to help us understand the students' behavior and reactions to the L2-only CLIL lessons. The question is C*o delám, když nerozumín angličtiny?* (What do I do when I don't understand English?). As our readers may have noticed, the statements given to the students were so precise that they even included the name of the teacher who taught the lesson. The reason for doing this was to make sure that students would not get confused and assess another teacher while taking

the questionnaire. Another thing that we considered important was to provide the instrument right after the lesson was taught in order to have the students' immediate perceptions and opinions.

The observation is to be understood in two moments. The first one constitutes the teaching and observation journal. (Some CLIL lessons were taught by Czech-speaking teachers too.) The second one is the result of one video recording made during a lesson given by a native teacher and an audio-recording of a lesson taught by the non-Czech-speaking teacher. Both lessons were planned under the same topic and somehow similar objectives: identify fractions, quarters and halves; express quarters and halves using mathematical expressions; talk about shapes and fractions. These two lessons were transcribed to make the process of comparison easier and as objective as possible. By doing this, we expected to clarify whether the problematic situation, the core of this research, had an effect only on the non-L1 speaker teachers or if it was a common situation among CLIL teachers in general.

Findings

The questionnaire's first sentence that deals with the general perception of the lessons given in L2-only, *I like the English lessons with Octavio,* was positively answered by 100% of the respondents. The 14 students chose "always" as their answer to this first item. It was in the more specific statements that we were able to find rather diversified responses. For example, in item 2, *Rád/a mluvím s Octaviem anglicky,* the answers show 50% of the total population mentioned always liking to speak English in the CLIL lessons given by the non-Czech speaker teacher. The other 50% marked "sometimes" in their questionnaires, and none of the respondents selected the choice "never." What is interesting is that if we divide the population according to class and level (1st and 2nd grade), this 50-50 balance seems to change.

As previously mentioned, item 4 was presented in a paraphrased form in order to find the counterpart of motivation: anxiety. Although 57% of the total population mentioned not being afraid of using the L2 to communicate, there are still 6 respondents that felt troubled by this issue. Very interestingly, two of them were first grade students and the other four in the second year. The third sentence of the questionnaire also had similar results. Considering the two groups as a whole, 9 out of the 14 students estimated that they sometimes understand when they are spoken to in the L2 during the CLIL lessons. Four other students responded "always"

understand, and only one learner from the first grade said it was impossible to comprehend the lessons given in the L2 with a teacher who did not speak Czech.

Let us now discuss the fifth item, which had the objective of learning if the pupils found it hard to cope with the CLIL lessons given only in the L2. It demonstrates that an important majority of the respondents marked the option "no" to indicate that they feel that L2-only lessons are not complicated. Only three students chose "yes." Two of them were in the first year and the other one in the second grade.

In the item that was designed as an open interrogative statement the students responded to "what do I do when I do not understand English?" The large majority of the first grade learners agreed that the most common thing to do in this situation was to ask someone else from the class to translate. The results were not different with the second graders. These findings were not so surprising; since we had already discussed in the theoretical framework that code switching among the students was an often-used technique. For example, some of their answers read:

- *Zeptám se nekoho* (I ask somebody)

- *Zeptamse svého Spolusaka* (I ask a classmate)

- *Zeptám se kamaráda* (I ask a friend)

There are, however, other answers that provide very attention-grabbing results. Among the second grade students, we were able to identify two learners that may have experienced high degrees of anxiety according to the answers they provided. For instance, one student mentioned: *ytrhnu si jen jeden vlas/ nebo nic.* The translation for this sentence can be read as "I pull out one hair or do nothing". Another student wrote: *dam si facku o nebo nic* which translates as "I slap myself and do nothing".

Throughout the lessons written down in the journal, we can see that a large variety of teaching materials were used besides the textbook. The trainee mentions different resources employed in the sessions such as videos, flashcards, interactive boards, websites, reading texts, songs, fabrics, colors, and interactive flashcards. We can also realize that these resources are largely employed in the different stages of the lessons described. The objectives are attained in most of the lessons. It is easy to observe this by reading the parts of the journals that mention how students were able to cope with the given tasks and prove that they had learnt the content taught.

Nonetheless, there is also evidence that many times the non-Czech-speaking teacher pointed out that the lesson had to be extended and finished another day because of the lack of time.

Let us draw our attention to lessons 21 and 24. In fact, the latter is a follow up lesson, created after the realization that the content in lesson 21 was not fully understood. The trainer mentioned that he had the idea to intervene with a picture and graphic organizer to help students go deeper into the classification of food. Not only did lesson 24 came up as a response to the lack of understanding but also as a need to provide more visual input as a compensation for his inability to explain in the students' L1. Below there is a paragraph that we think clarifies this situation:

> During this lesson I was feeling the need to translate to their mother tongue but my knowledge of it is almost nonexistent. At some point, I was feeling sort of frustrated because I could not find a way to make them understand the content. That's how I got to the idea of creating a mind map that could help to clarify the classification of food. (Teaching journal extract from lesson 23).

In general, the students seemed to show a positive attitude towards the activities and materials presented. The more they were involved, the more they showed interest in the lessons. Being able to handle the materials and work with them resulted in good classroom interaction and highly motivated students. It might be important, however, to put the spotlight on lesson 34. This lesson was taught by the non-Czech-speaking teacher with pupils from the first year. We can see that the facilitator says that it turned out to be a very "challenging" lesson. In spite of all the visual materials used to scaffold the instruction and the fact that the students understood the vocabulary, some of them showed frustration and lack of interest for not being able to carry out with the task they were asked to do in the production part at the end of the lesson.

The lesson is always carried out in the L2, but we can remark that as time goes by, the non-Czech speaking teacher started to learn and used some words in this language. Terms found in the journal such as *ano, opakujte, most, tak jo,* and *tiho* (yes, repeat, bridge, okay, and silence) illustrate this finding. Although very limited, they seem to have a very meaningful impact on students' reactions and the instructor mentioned that communication was strengthened by the use of these few words. Another case in which we could identify the use of the L1 is when the teacher asked for a translation from a student who had understood, so the kids that didn't process the input could rely on their classmates' translations.

Transcripts

Now, let us analyze the lesson taught by the Czech teacher. Here, we were able to observe that the teacher scaffolds her lesson with mainly visual materials. At the very beginning of the lesson it can be seen that she guides the students through a very communicative introduction that allows the students to participate and that helps them see the context in which the content will be taught: football. The teacher guides the lesson in a way that all the vocabulary needed is reviewed. It is however, in the presentation stage where more evident use of code switching happens. The following lines from appendix 3 let us understand how the terms in L2 are related to those in L1. It can also be appreciated that after stating the relation between words, the meaning is no longer discussed, and the teacher uses other examples and contexts to support the terminology, in this case the use of *quarters* and *halves* in telling the time.

111	T	Yes! So this is 45 minutes (T writes the number on one half of the circle) and this is 45 minutes. Okay. So this is one half! (T points at the first half of the circle) We know what "half" is? A half?
112	S12	*Pulka!*
113	T	*Pulka*! (Another phrase of Czech comes along with the translation to explain the relationship between the word in English and in Czech). So this is… (T starts drawing a clock on the board) What time is this, Elisko?

In the lesson given by the non-Czech speaking teacher, the procedure to make the pupils understand the terms *half* and *quarter* is different. The students are guided through a rather long process of learning by doing. In this task, each student is given a square piece of paper and they are asked to draw a line to divide it into two parts. We can observe that along with this, a lot of repetition is considered necessary by the teacher.

15	T	Okay. We will… look at your sheet. Your sheet now is… What is this? It's one half? Is it one quarter or is it one whole? Now is it one quarter, or one whole? It's one whole, right? Your page is one whole (T writes this on the board). I want you to draw one half line, one half line, one half line. So you have a square and you will cut to get two halves (He draws this as T explains). So draw a line to get two halves.
16	S2	Teacher (S2 shows his work to the teacher)
17	T	Oh, yeah! So here…So you are drawing a line here. What is this? This is one half! One half! Filip! How many halves do I have here?
18	S2	Two halves!
19	T	Two halves! So let's write here: One half. And here you write: one half. Now (pause). Which of these expressions says one half? IS this one half? (pointing at 1/4)
20	SS	No.
21	T	Is this one half? (pointing at 1/3)
22	SS	No!
23	T	Is this one half? (pointing at 1/2)
24	SS	Yes!
25	T	So here we write: one half. And on this side we will write: one half. So in mathematics, Do you like mathematics? Do you like math?

Furthermore, in this lesson we can see that some L1 is employed by both teacher and students. This code switching is the result of a need to help a student who finds it difficult to cope with what is being requested. First, we notice that the teacher tries to translate *number 4* into Czech (čtyři) to see if the student can comprehend the term *quarter*. With the objective of helping the student who struggles with the activity, one of his classmates starts translating into Czech and he finally gives an answer to the problem.

At the end of the lessons, we find that the objectives described for each of them are met. This can be said because we are able to perceive that the wrap-up and productive activities are carried out with no problem by the learners. In appendix 5, the mini-quiz answered by the participant students in the trainee's lesson is presented. All of the students provided correct answers to the exercises that were aimed at seeing if the students understood the content taught.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the majority of the students can attain the CLIL objectives in a lesson in spite of the teacher's inability to speak their mother tongue. However, the process of knowledge construction (and this is understandable) may be longer than the time it takes if some code switching occurs. Negotiating meanings through L2-only instruction requires support from media and learning resources that compensate for the lack of L1 in order to be successful and to facilitate this process. For example, teachers should employ as much visual material as possible in order to give meaning to what is being said. As a matter of fact, the construction of content and vocabulary through the use of the L2 could be understood as beneficial and more meaningful learning, and also long-lasting, as suggested in our literature review.

 Nonetheless, the results from questionnaires and observations distinguish that the younger beginner learners of the L2 (first grade in this study) might represent a bigger challenge for the teacher who does not speak their mother tongue. Besides the anxiety that some of these students can experience, the content and language taught risk being simplified and poorly assimilated. Furthermore, the absence of L1 could interfere in the development of cognitive and thinking skills in both languages as the theoretical background implies.

The roles of languages in the CLIL classroom seem not to be limited to an exclusive use of L2. In fact, thanks to observation, we saw that the learners come up with compensation techniques and they rely on their classmates to help them understand when they cannot cope with what is being said in the foreign language. It is observable that, with time, teachers may start learning useful words and expressions that can, in a difficult situation, clarify doubts or even give instruction in the students' L1, as suggested in soft CLILing models for young learners.

What is next?

Although in most cases materials seem to have a positive impact on L2-only CLIL lessons to achieve content and language-related objectives, the results indicate that this may not apply to young learners at the beginning of the pro-operational cognitive stage (6 years old).

For this reason, schools should think of other alternatives before employing non-L1 speaking teachers for the teaching of CLIL at early stages. On the other hand, students who are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development seem to feel more motivated and positively challenged by the presence of a facilitator who does not speak their L1. It is strongly recommended that these CLIL teachers employ a large variety of materials and teaching resources at all stages of the lesson. They can also learn some basic words in the students' L1 for classroom management and instruction. Moreover, teachers should use advanced students as potential language resources and rely on them to provide translations when needed. They should also allow natural code switching to happen among learners to create a more relaxed learning environment.

Given that the research took place during a three-month period and because of the limitations therein, we cannot establish if the content and language learned in an L2-only context is more meaningful than that which occurs in a bilingual environment. Therefore, this limitation opens new horizons for further research along with other questions. For example, can L2-only CLIL lessons develop young learners' language in the L1? Are these students able to produce orally in the L1 and L2 the content and language learned? Is content developed at the same level that language is?

All in all, this study has provided answers to the questions based on the problem described. The results are relevant information for all CLIL teachers and more specifically for those who teach in contexts where the students' mother tongue is foreign to them. These findings and recommendations may also be relevant to L2 teachers who adopt or work under an L2-only methodology. It also invites professionals who work in the field of teaching non-linguistic subjects to continue reflecting on their praxis to share good experiences and findings that improve the fast-growing world of CLIL.

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Barriers and Limitations to Speaking in English Reported by Students of the University of Quintana Roo, Campus Cozumel

Manuel Becerra Polanco

Universidad de Quintana Roo,
Campus Cozumel
mbecerra@uqroo.edu.mx

Juan González Martínez

Universitat de Girona
Juan.gonzalez@udg.edu

Abstract

The teaching process of learning English is related to various factors that include aspects focused on methodology, strategies, theories, resources, planning, number of students, etc. Likewise, the student must develop abilities in the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, inside and outside the classroom, students face limitations with the development of their language skills, especially in the ability to speak. Given this problem, the present quantitative-descriptive research is part of a doctoral thesis research related to adverse factors dealing with the practice of the ability to speak English. The purpose of the study focused on identifying and describing the current panorama of the main types of barriers that limit students from the University of Quintana Roo, Cozumel campus. To achieve the objectives set, the population of this study covered 100 students. For this purpose, the instrument called "Oral barriers that make it difficult for students to speak English" designed by Al-Hosni (2014) was applied. The results obtained report negative evidence in two types of barriers, in terms of linguistics, the lack of vocabulary, pronunciation,

and fluency stand out. On the other hand, the affective barriers indicate shyness, fear of mistakes, and anxiety as the main limitations.

Key words: barriers, limitations, ability to speak, English, students

Introduction

When learning English, we must take into account the practice of adjacent skills; listening, speaking, writing, and reading. It is also important to emphasize that no skill is more important than another. All skills are part of the process and are interconnected for the achievement of language functionality. Regarding practice, the ability to speak represents more effort in students; perhaps it derives from factors such as shyness, lack of teaching resources, teacher creativity, motivation, etc. Regarding the above, various authors in the literature, Madrid and Mclaren (2006), Celce (2008), Zhang (2009) and Nazara (2011), to name a few, emphasize classifying the ability to speak English as more complex and limiting for students.

Ur (1996) considers that the difficulty lies in the factors related to inhibition, and the use of the mother tongue. Concerning the same theme, Rababa'h (2005) agrees with the problem that exists in the practice of oral ability and mentions that many of the factors are related to the students themselves, teaching strategies, curriculum and environment. That is, if a student lacks grammar, vocabulary, or structures, consequently he will not be able to maintain an interaction or will not be competent enough in his communication. Coward and Miller (2010) consider that motivation, lack of opportunities for practice, lack of good pronunciation, and anxiety are other examples of factors that can be understood as barriers or adverse limitations.

Ur (1996) identifies among his research related to the subject, four factors for students that limit the ability to speak English. Those being inhibition, lack of ideas to speak about, low participation, and use of the mother tongue. In contrast, Abrar et al., (2018) classifies students' difficulties in oral English practice as follows: (1) language barriers (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and fluency); (2) psychological factors (anxiety, attitude, shyness and lack of motivation); (3) learning environment (teachers, classmates and class topics) and (4) practice with the language (practicing autonomously, practicing the language with tutors and classmates, practicing the language with means or technology, and maintaining positive motivation).

The following is a systematic report of research related to the problem described, which reflects the current landscape in various contexts under varied methodological approaches.

Additionally, the table summarizes some of the studies that focused on addressing the problem regarding barriers or limitations in oral English practice. From there, it can be gathered that the results reflect evidence on factors that can be attributed to various aspects. Based on the classification made by Abrar et al., (2018), the various findings reported emphasizing linguistic, affective, and language practice barriers. However, emotional barriers stand out, including shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and motivation. Likewise, the use of the mother tongue adjacent to the learning environment barrier stands out in most research. It is worth mentioning that the reported studies are based on the same problem. Nevertheless, the objectives and the needs of the research are derived according to the context and methodology of the study.

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Table 1. Research related to adverse factors in oral English practice.

Author and year	Objective	Methodology	Sample	Instruments	Results
Tok (2009)	Investigate obstacles in communication in English	Quantitative	139 students at a university in Turkey	Questionnaire of 66 items, related to anxiety, willingness to communicate in class and sociability in communication	Anxiety to speak in front of classmates and speakers Lack of language proficiency affects student anxiety.
Juhana (2012)	Identify the psychological factors in the practice of English.	Mixed Quantitative Qualitative	62 students from Indonesia	Questionnaire Interviews	Fear of error, shyness, and anxiety
Wei y Zhang (2013)	Identify the barriers students face through practice.	Quantitative Research	90 students from a Chinese University	Questionnaire with multiple choice questions	Lack of autonomy Excessive use of the mother tongue Lack of strategies
González y Delgado (2014)	Inquire about adverse factors in oral practice	Non-experimental, qualitative and transactional research of descriptive type.	52 students from a Mexican university	Questionnaire on aspects of anxiety and attitudes for learning English.	The anxiety factor is present in most of the samples for fear of error or criticism. Shyness when they speak English with native speakers.

Barriers and Limitations to Speaking in English Reported by Students of the University of Quintana Roo, Campus Cozumel

Author	Objective	Approach	Sample	Instruments	Barriers
Wang (2014)	Analyze difficulties in speaking in English	Quantitative	38 students	Questionnaire related to the anxiety scale in learning English	Lack of strategies, fear of speaking with native speakers and pronunciation.
Al-Hosni (2014)	Identify difficulties in oral English practice.	Qualitative	120 students	Interviews and curriculum analysis about the difficulties students face.	The use of the mother tongue and inhibition. Lack of vocabulary and grammar
Tuan y Mai (2015)	Identify the factors that affect student performance in oral English proficiency.	Mixed Quantitative Qualitative	200 students in a high school in Vietnam	Questionnaire Class observations	Use of the mother tongue. They are afraid of criticism. Lack of motivation and confidence.
Mekonge (2017)	Factors that affect the acquisition of the ability to speak in English.	Survey-based descriptive	145 students from a Kenyan university	Surveys Interviews Class observation	Use of the mother tongue. Lack of strategies in class. Motivation Lack of trust
Gutiérrez, Hernández y Medina (2018)	Analyze the factors that influence the ability to speak in English.	Mixed Quantitative Qualitative	26 students from a university in Nicaragua	Questionnaire Interview Observation	They use the mother tongue Lack of vocabulary. Lack of teaching resources to motivate students

Methodology

The present study focuses on a quantitative descriptive methodology, which includes the use of a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. Given this type of methodology, Jefferies (2004) mentions that it is used to describe a particular phenomenon, which focuses on exploring the causes. On the other hand, Jackson (2008) refers to the descriptive research method to simply observe a behavior. Observation implies a description at its most basic level. Consequently, this study aims at answering the following research questions, all of which arise from the review of the preceding literature:

- What are the main barriers that limit the practice of oral English proficiency for students of the English language degree at the University of Quintana Roo?
- What kind of barriers represent the greatest limitation in the practice of oral English proficiency of students of the English language degree of the University of Quintana Roo?

Regarding the population, the enrollment is 170 students; however, the sample consisted of 100 students of the Bachelor of English Language at the University of Quintana Roo, Cozumel unit. The sample is random, covering several semesters and at various English levels. Regarding English classes, most students attend between 6 and 8 hours of class per week.

For the data collection, the questionnaire called "Oral barriers that hinder students speaking English" will be used ("Oral barriers that make it difficult for students to speak in English"). This instrument was designed and applied by Ali Al-ma'shy (2011). The original context of the instrument included 58 Likert scale items; nevertheless, it was updated and reduced to 31 items by Al Hosni (2014) in its related research in identifying the barriers that affected the practice of English of its high school students. Given the changes and updates made, the instrument was piloted with 20 students; subsequently, validity and reliability were obtained, with a report of 0.776 on the Cronbach Alpha scale. According to the established parameters, the result is a good indicator that demonstrates acceptable reliability of the instrument in the field of human and social sciences (Garcia Cadena, 2006). The selection of this instrument is based on 2 reasons. 1) The instrument contemplates the four categories of barriers that limit the practice of oral English proficiency. 2)

The instrument has already been tested in other contexts, updated and validated for the Anglo-Saxon context.

Regarding the analysis of the data, the statistical utilities of the Excel spreadsheet program will be used, within the Microsoft Office package to process the information and obtain the graphs related to the frequency in the results of the students regarding the barriers or limitations most reported and the percentages obtained in each type of barrier, that is, to identify if students are more limited by psychological, environmental, language, or linguistic barriers.

Results

In this section, the results reported by the students in relation to the possible problems or barriers that limit their oral practice of English are discussed. For this purpose, the instrument used was divided into sections in order to obtain the four barriers classified or grouped by Abrar et al., (2018). These barriers correspond to: (1) language barriers (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and fluency); (2) psychological factors (anxiety, attitude and lack of motivation); (3) learning environment (teachers, classmates and class topics) and (4) practicing the language (practice autonomously, practice the language with classmates, or with resources or technology). On the other hand, prior to answering both questions raised in the investigation, the most representative percentages in the four sections, or limitations previously mentioned, will be described in general. With respect to the percentages obtained, in the description of each graph the strongest and weakest percentages have been unified in order to have a more integrated perspective on what students reported.

Graph 1. Affective and psychological factors
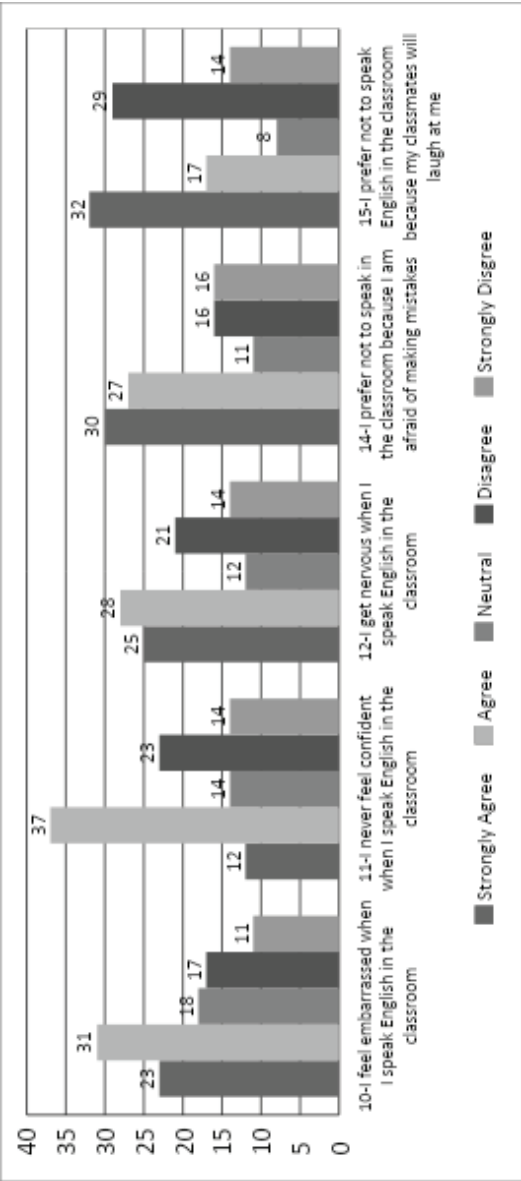
This table shows the values obtained in relation to the affective factors. As can be seen in question 10, 54% of the students express, in a unified criterion, feeling embarrassed or shy when speaking English in the classroom. However, as a second value, there is a 28% trend in a status of disagreement in this situation. On the other hand, a neutral trend is reported in 18 students. Regarding the confidence factor, the results show a 49% trend in agreement. In this sense, almost half of the students did not feel confident speaking in English; however, 37% reported feeling in a context of trust, while 14% responded neutrally. With regard to the nervousness factor, 53% of the students considered that they had this problem in their oral practice of English. On the other hand, 35% of students reported expressing disagreement about such questioning. Covering the factor, fear of peer teasing, 57% of students reported in favor, compared to 32% who disagreed. Finally, the use of the mother tongue in class in order to avoid teasing from classmates, 59% said they preferred to speak in Spanish in class, unlike 42% who reported otherwise.

Graph 2. Environment factors
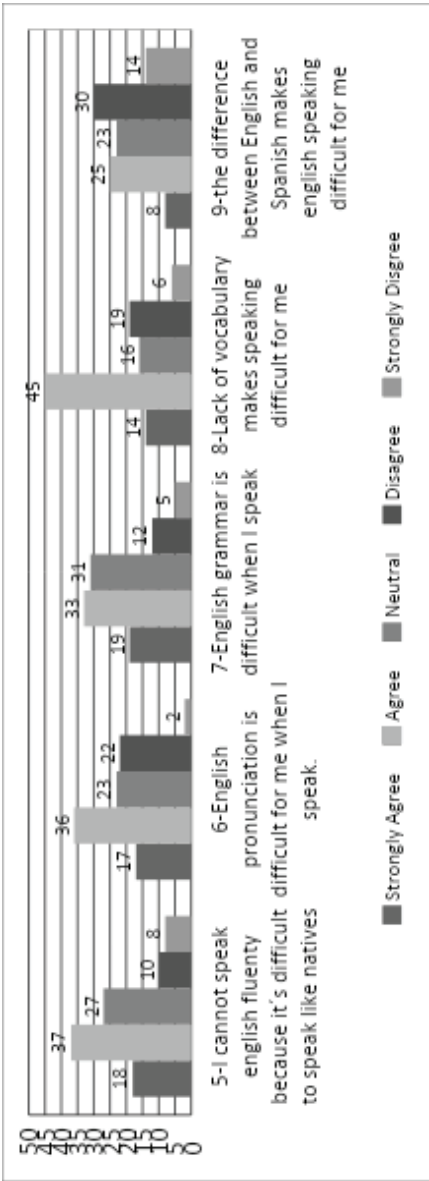
Regarding linguistic factors, 55% of students assumed a status in favor of the question about the difficulty of speaking fluently as native speakers. On the other hand, 27% of students responded with the neutral option in contrast to the 18% who reported they were at odds with this option. Regarding the pronunciation problem, 53% reported agreement while 24% reported otherwise. Neutral answers made up 23%. On the other hand, grammar was seen as a barrier by 52% of students, while 31% were neutral. In contrast, 17% did not consider grammar as a barrier. Related to the lack of vocabulary as an adverse factor, 59% agreed, as opposed to 25% who disagreed. Finally, the barrier related to the difference in English and Spanish as a difficulty in speaking English, students reported the following results: 44% disagreed, 33% agreed, and 23% were neutral.

Graph 3. Environment factors
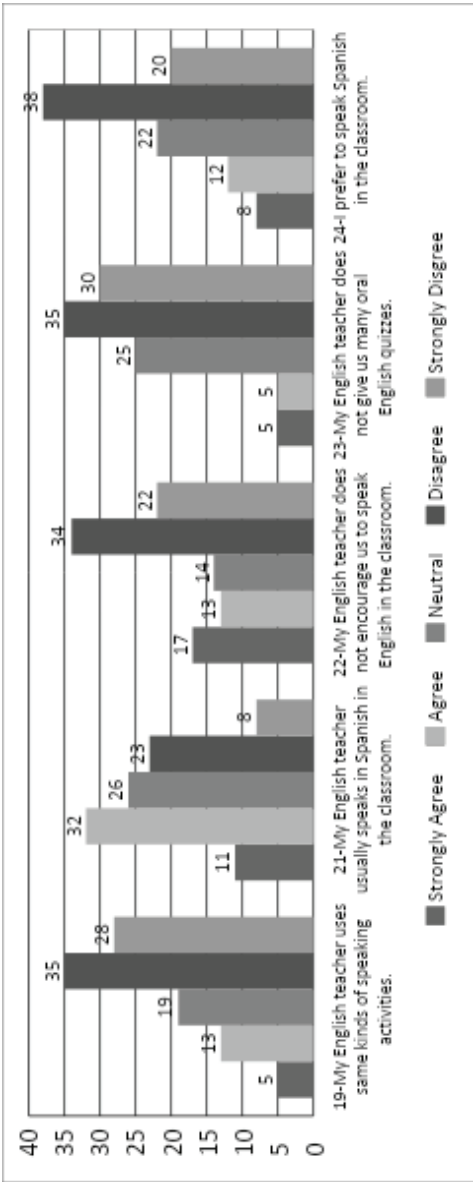
This table reports five approaches related to the barriers that students face in their learning environment. Related to question 19, the use of the same activities for the practice of speaking by the teacher, students reported 63% disagreement. Neutrality stood out as reported by 19% of students. Therefore, 18% only showed a favorable response. On the other hand, on the use of the mother tongue in class by the teachers, students reported that their teachers used 43% Spanish. Therefore, 31% of students reported otherwise, admitting that their teachers do not use their mother tongue in class. As regards to question 22, "My English teacher does not encourage me to practice English in the classroom," 58% of the students disagree. On the other hand, 30% agreed. A similar case was presented in question 23; "My teacher does not provide me with enough English oral practice exams." 65% reported disagreeing, while 10% reported agreeing. Finally, given the approach "I prefer to speak Spanish in the classroom" a percentage of 58% reported disagreeing, while 20% reported the opposite. Notably, the neutrality of 22% marked the second most representative option.

Graph 4. Practice factors
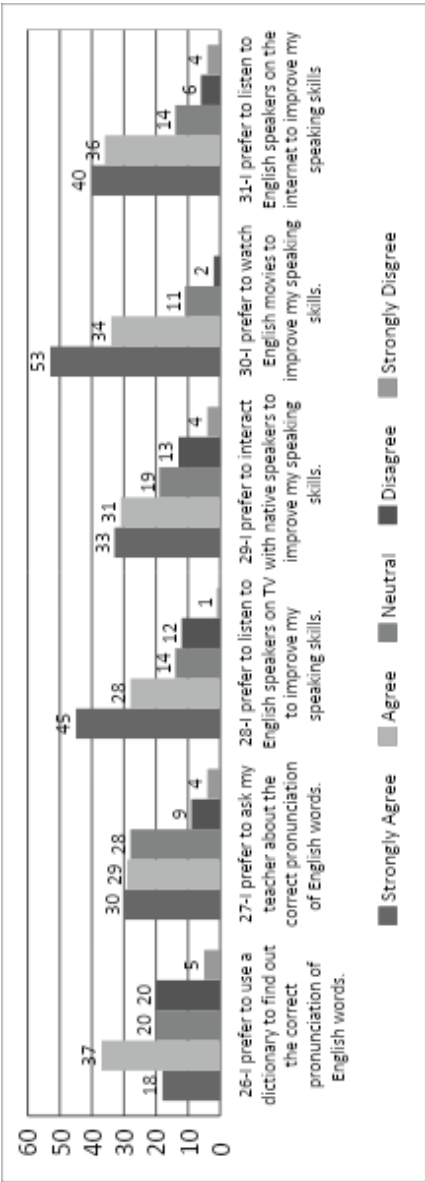
Regarding the last classification derived in the adverse factors to the practice of the language, the following data were obtained. From a general perspective, a higher percentage corresponding to favorable responses is observed in all approaches. In this sense, students reported 55% agreement with the use of the dictionary to find the pronunciation of the words, in contrast with 25% disagreement. Regarding question 27, students reported 59% favorable in asking their teachers for help for a correct pronunciation, with 13% not. Similarly, the favorable response trend of 73% occurred in relation to preference to watching television programs in order to improve their ability to speak English with a disagreement of 13%. Regarding the use of the Internet for interaction with native speakers, a favorable trend of 64% is reported. Regarding the use of films to improve oral ability, 87% and 2% are reported to be favorable. Finally, again the positive trend is presented before the approach when using the Internet, to listening to native speakers as a strategy to improve their ability to speak. In this sense, 76% reported positively, as opposed to 10% who disagreed.

After the general description of the results, we proceed to answer the two questions raised in this research's methodology.

We begin with the first research question: What are the main barriers that limit the practice of oral English proficiency for students of the English language degree at the University of Quintana Roo?

Graph 5. Main limiting barriers to oral English practice
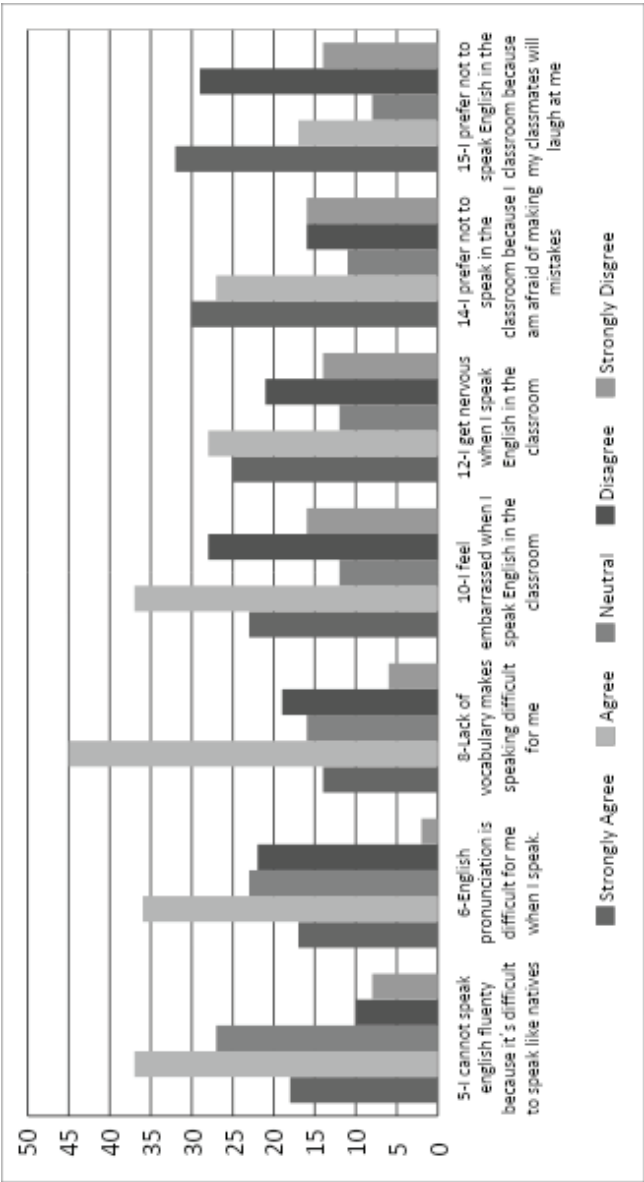
Taking the report as a reference it can be said that the main barriers that affect the students of the University of Quintana Roo can be categorized into two classifications. First, language barriers represent an obstacle for students. In this sense, the components related to fluency, pronunciation, and lack of vocabulary stand out. Regarding the results, from the perspective of Macis and Schmitt (2017), they consider that learning any language is strongly linked to the knowledge of vocabulary. From this point, it can be said that the lack of vocabulary hinders the learning process and of course its oral practice. Therefore, a lack of vocabulary equally affects the limitation or deficiencies in fluency. In the same position, Adam (2106) mentions that lack of knowledge about vocabulary greatly hinders the real communication of students of English as a foreign language. Therefore, it is predictable that undergraduate students of English as a second language have knowledge of the appropriate vocabulary for the development of subsequent skills. Regarding the pronunciation factor, Hornby (2008) highlights as part of his research that many students believe that pronunciation is a limitation for learning English. However, students who have good pronunciation in English are more likely to be understood even if they make mistakes in other aspects. On the other hand, students with poor pronunciation should try harder to be understood, even if their grammar is perfect.

In reference to the results, the second most reported barrier classification is derived from emotional or psychological factors. According to what has been reported, the main obstacles lie in shyness, anxiety, and the fear of making mistakes. Emphasizing such barriers, Tiono and Sylvia (2004) state that anxiety when speaking a second language can affect student performance and influence the quality of oral language production. Therefore, despite having a good knowledge of the language, students make mistakes derived from the anxiety they reflect while being exposed to oral communication situations. Accordingly, Horwitz (1986) defines the anxiety factor in learning a second language as an integrated complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom learning. In addition to anxiety, the fear of making mistakes is part of the same problem. Given the above, Mehmoodzadeh (2012) reports results found in his research regarding anxiety, mentioning that, students faced with the fact of facing real situations with native speakers, are generally predisposed to making mistakes or to being criticized in a manner negative for their pronunciation or poor articulation in the communicative aspect.

And then we proceed with the second research question: What kinds of barriers represent more limitation in the practice of oral English

proficiency of students of the English language degree of the University of Quintana Roo?

As previously reported in question 1, the results mark a trend in language and affective barriers. However, affective barriers represent higher rates and even more presence in reported items. This statement can be seen in graphs 1 and 2, which have been previously described. Given this perspective, it can be said that the students in the sample surveyed have as main barriers factors related to shyness, self-esteem, confidence, anxiety and above all fear of making mistakes. Regarding the percentages reported, the results are between 50% and 60% of the total students. Given what was reported, Brown (1994) considers that psychological or affective factors, such as self-esteem, anxiety and motivation, are urgent aspects that must be taken into account, since much depends on them, including the success or failure in the learning of English for the students. On the same subject, Juhana (2012) states that there is evidence in previous research results, which show that the emotional side, in this case the affective factor, influences the attitudes and participation of students during their learning process, especially in their ability to speak. For their part, Minghe and Yuan (2013) mention that, the fear of making mistakes, anxiety, shyness and lack of motivation are barriers that limit the participation of students in the communicative part of English; However, these factors can be gradually reduced by means of strategies and mechanisms that allow for students to gain better practice in a more pleasant environment.

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the general results reported in this study, it can be said that the environmental barriers related to the use of strategies, teaching materials, and use of the mother tongue by the teacher and student, do not demonstrate significant evidence. Therefore, they do not represent barriers or limitations for students. In addition to the aforementioned, the same case can be observed in what is reported in the context of the barriers related to practice.

From this perspective, it is observed that students use technological resources to practice the language. In other words, student autonomy allows them to explore other resources outside the classroom, which could be motivating and of great interest to improving the ability to speak in English. However, as regards to language barriers and especially those related to the affective factor, they represent a real and tangible limitation

in the study sample. On the part of language barriers, emphasis is placed on vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency; however, those with the greatest negative impact are caused by the affective barrier, highlighting the fear of making mistakes, anxiety and shyness.

Finally, derived from the results and previous research carried out on the subject, it can be said that, adverse factors to the practice of the ability to speak in English represent challenges. Likewise, these challenges also represent areas of opportunity for continuous improvement and integration of strategies that could be options for reducing certain barriers. Given the above, the central ideas of Al Hosni (2014) are validated in the results, mentioning that teachers should know the background of their students in relation to the needs and barriers that affect their performance. With this perspective, teachers will have a more detailed picture based on the context of the students. Then they can work towards positively improving the learning environments which will allow students to concentrate more on their ability to speak the language.

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An Exploratory Study on the Use of Gamification in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults at the Ecatepec Campus from the ENALLT UNAM

Lilia Estela Briones Jurado M.A.

FES Acatlán UNAM; UAM-Azcapotzalco
liliabriones@gmail.com

Juan Javier Bautista Rodríguez M.A.

Centros y Programas ENALLT UNAM; UAM-Azcapotzalco
juanjabautista@gmail.com

Carmen Lucía Tomasini Bassols M.A.

UAM-Azcapotzalco
corsicatomasini@yahoo.com.mx

Abstract

In recent decades, there have been a number of efforts to develop abilities in a second or foreign language through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), considering the growing contexts of education mediated by technology. Gamification, understood as the use of game elements and dynamics in professional and educational contexts, is considered nowadays as an innovative alternative to improve user experiences. In the first stage of this study, gamification strategies were used in the teaching of English to an adult Level 1 class (A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference) at the Ecatepec branch of Centros y Programas at the Escuela Nacional de Lenguas, Lingüística y

Traducción (ENALLT). There were 10 students in the class (8 women and 2 men), with ages ranging between 17 and 46; their occupations were: high school students (6), university professors (1) and administrative professionals (3). The results obtained were compared with a control group including 6 adult students whose ages were between 17 and 35 years old (3 women and 3 men); they were professional workers (2 teachers, 1 engineer, 2 administrators) with only 1 high school student. Gamification was used in three activities with the aid of mobile applications, and the results were gathered through a diagnostic test, a progress test, and a post-activity questionnaire. In general, the results show that the experimental group accomplished higher achievement in the progress test after the use of the gamified activities than the control group. In addition, students regarded the activities as having a positive effect on their learning. The results obtained are an important step in order to apply similar gamification techniques in other contexts. In this form, it will be possible to contrast data and determine their effect on the learning of English as a foreign language more broadly.

Key words: Second language, foreign language, gamification, ICT, game mechanics, mobile applications.

Introduction

In recent years, due to the increasing familiarity of students with the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and its wider use in education, teachers have acknowledged the need to develop additional abilities to increase students' attention and motivation. Teachers have the opportunity to incorporate different uses of ICT in their courses, which is essential to achieve digital competences in strategic and critical use (Cobo, 2009). One of the recent teaching proposals embodies the use of game mechanics for the teaching of languages to diversify teaching methodologies and consolidate learning. Thus, the purpose of this first approach is to investigate the applicability of gamification strategies to enhance the learning of English as a foreign language. During the activities, different online applications were used, considering the features of gamified activities for the learning of specific grammar and vocabulary topics.

Gamification

Gamification, understood as the application of game elements such as rewards, feedback, and competition within a no-game context (Taylor,

2015), has been used in education in order to increase motivation, and consequently to achieve a positive impact on learning. Games are an important element in everyday human life since they convey a sense of satisfaction and relaxation. However, they imply features that should be considered in the design of game-like activities. In order to be applied in class, gamification requires being prepared as a goal-oriented activity. For this purpose, Matallaou, Hanner and Zarnekow (2017, p. 8) mention four important features to be taken into account: clearly and consistently defined goals, a steady feedback system, and free participation in the game. Such elements enhance students' experience as they are aware of their progress and receive appropriate feedback.

One important aspect of games is that their users usually respond differently; consequently, game mechanics have been related with emotional, social, and cognitive responses. A number of studies have shown the use of gamification and its effects on students' participation (Contreras-Castillo et al, 2015). According to AlMarshedi et al (2017, p. 21), students find feedback and rewards appealing when they start gamification activity. Eventually, they discover the intrinsic value of the activity, and find it rewarding by itself.

Additionally, several authors (Aguilera, Fúquene and Rios, 2014; Garland, 2015) acknowledge that the development of gamified activities can cause a change in behavior but also in cognitive structures, and, consequently, learning. Nevertheless, more research is needed in order to contextualize its effects, and make other correlations.

Methodology

Gamification strategies were applied to beginner students (A1) at Centros y Programas de Extensión Programa Fundación UNAM-ENALLT (Escuela Nacional de Lenguas, Lingüística y Traducción) Ecatepec. Two groups participated in the study; each consisted of college students and professionals from different areas who take a five-hour lesson every weekend to improve their competences in English for work and study purposes. Gamified activities were used in Group A (experimental group) with a total of 10 students, while Group B (control group) with a total of 6 students, did not receive any gamified content.

First, students answered a questionnaire regarding their use of ICT. Additionally, students from both groups answered a diagnostic test and the institutional progress test, in order to compare their results and to identify

the possible effects of the use of gamification in their general competence in the language.

Activities with gamified content were applied every two weeks with the following topics, and with the aid of different applications:

- **Activity 1**: The vocabulary of the topic 'Countries and Nationalities' was practiced through *Educaplay*. The activity consisted of a game where students were shown a country flag and they had to write that country's name in the spaces provided according to the number of letters in the name. Students had to produce the most correct answers within a time limit. They could compare their results with their peers, and a winner was recognized in class. This way, gamification was added to the activity.

  Educaplay is an online resource application that allows students to practice language skills through the use of different activities like memory, word search, matching and video quizzes, among others. All this depended on the learning purpose and the language area or skill to be developed.

- **Activity 2**: Present simple verb forms were practiced through *Kahoot*. In this activity, students were presented with a sentence in which the verb was missing. Learners had to choose the correct form out of four options. The student with the most points was the winner. To include the pronunciation of the verbs, a different student was asked to read the sentence each time. If he/she pronounced the verb form correctly, he or she would get two hundred points at the end of the game.

  Kahoot is known for being a clear example of gamification in teaching. Besides, its different tools allow the addition of some variety to the topics. It can be used for presenting, practicing, or evaluating contents.

- **Activity 3**: The vocabulary of family relationships was practiced through *Whatsapp messaging*. The activity consisted of sending an oral message in which students described a family relationship, e.g.: "My father's sister is my ___". The student who received the message had to complete it with the correct family word, and to send the completed sentence back through an oral message to the sender. Correct answers were evaluated by the sender and points were awarded in a general scoreboard shared in class.

The use of social media is an everyday issue for people nowadays. They are very familiar with their use, but only a few see them as a way to develop their skills in learning a language. This activity gave learners the opportunity to experience it that way.

In order to apply the activities, students were explained the goals and the rules to make sure they could use the applications. They were told to complete the activities as many times as necessary, and to keep information about their progress and feedback.

Preliminary results

At the beginning of the course, students were asked to answer a survey about their use of ICT (see Annex 1). The results from the questionnaire about the use of ICT are presented in Table 1. It is important to highlight that both groups have a similar use of ICT in terms of their familiarity and purpose of use. The only aspect that shows difference is the habit of playing online, which shows a minor percentage in the control group.

Table 1. Use of ICT by the Experimental (A) and Control (B) groups

ASPECT	GROUP A	GROUP B
Computer at home	100%	100%
Number of computers at home	1.8	1.5
Internet at home	100%	100%
Software commonly used	Office	Office
Computer used most for	Homework General search	Homework General search
Social networks	100%	100%
Most used social networks	Facebook WhatsApp	Facebook WhatsApp
Use of computer: • Learned by self • Learned at school	 50% 50%	 40% 60%
Play online	50%	40%

Note: Results reported from the initial survey (Appendix 1).

In order to determine the effect of gamified activities on students' learning, the scores from the Diagnostic and the Progress tests were compared. Although both groups obtained similar scores in the Diagnostic test, there is a gap of ten points in the results from each group in the Progress test. As it can be observed in Figure 1, the experimental group

achieved higher scores in the Progress test (Group A). Also, it is worth noticing that the control group lowered their scores.

Figure 1. Results from the Diagnostic and Progress tests
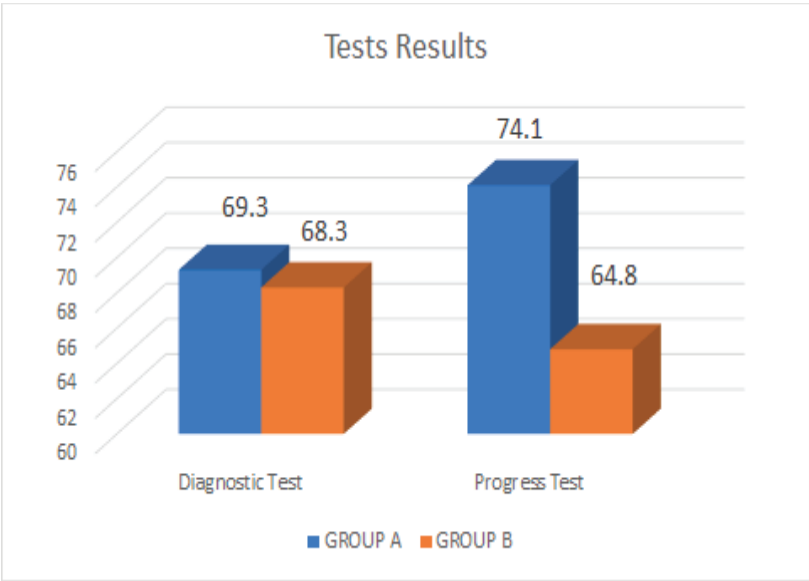
Note: Differences in the scores obtained in the Diagnostic and Progress tests by the experimental (Group A) and the control group (B).

When the different sections from the tests (which were evaluated on a 100% basis each one) are analyzed, it is possible to observe that in the Diagnostic test, the control group shows an advantage in Language Use, obtaining 76% of correct answers compared to 70.5% from the experimental group. However, in the Listening, Reading and Writing sections, the experimental group obtained higher results than the control one, being Listening the area with the highest gap, 12-point difference, as it can be observed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Results from the Diagnostic test per section
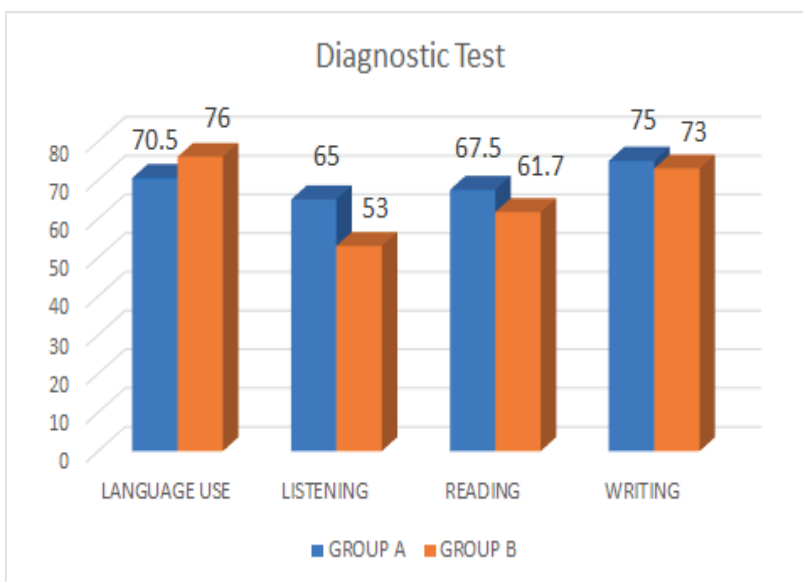
Note: Differences in the scores obtained in each section from the Diagnostic test by the experimental (Group A) and the control group (B).

Regarding the Progress test, the biggest difference can be identified in the results from the Listening and Reading sections, with 25 and 11 points of difference respectively, as it can be observed in Figure 3. Moreover, in the Language Use section, the Diagnostic test results were reverted; the group with the highest score was the experimental one with a 5-point difference. This change is considered to be a consequence of the use of gamification in the lessons, considering that all the other activities were the same for both groups. The three activities used were focused on vocabulary (Educaplay and Whatsapp), and on grammar (Kahoot!), which were part of the Language Use section of the tests. Thus, the use of these activities is considered to have had an effect on students' scores.
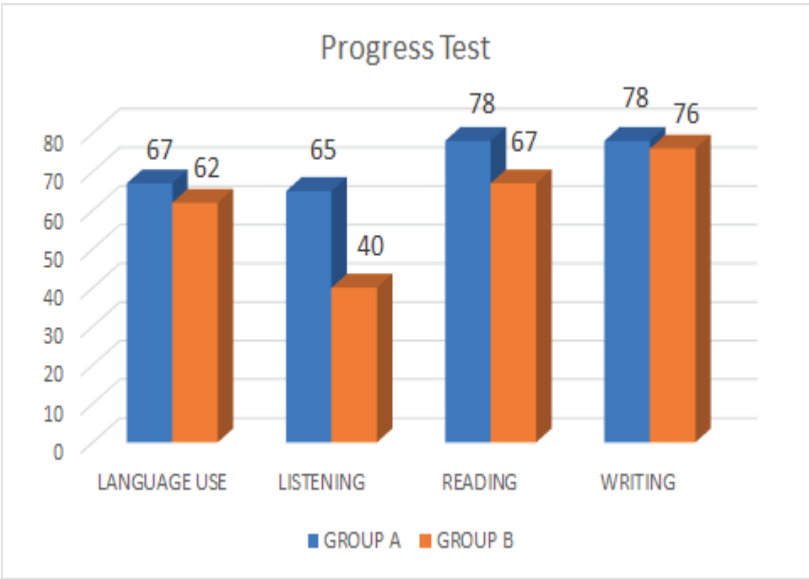
Figure 3. Results from the Progress test per section

Note: Differences in the scores obtained in each section from the Progress test by the experimental (Group A) and the control group (B).

It is important to mention that after the three activities, students were asked to complete a post-activity survey, which included open questions and a Likert scale to learn about their opinions after participating in gamified activities (see Appendix 2). It is noticeable that for the three activities students expressed positive comments regarding their usefulness. As it can be seen in Table 2, most of the students' answers fall within the options *Totally Agree* and *Agree*, especially regarding the characteristics and dynamics of the activities (items 1, 2, 3 and 10), their positive effect on their learning (items 4 and 9) and a desire to continue practicing this kind of activities (items 5, 6, 7 and 8). In the case of items 9 and 10, they were also marked with the option *Indifferent*, considering that not all the activities required students to practice their speaking skills or involved interaction with their peers.

Table 2. Students' perceptions of the activities

Item	Totally Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Totally Disagree
1. I liked the activity.	51%	49%	-	-	-
2. I like the challenge of the activity.	58%	42%	-	-	-
3. I like to compete.	45%	55%	-	-	-
4. I learned through the activity.	71%	29%	-	-	-
5. I recommend doing the activity.	78%	22%	-	-	-
6. I feel motivated through the use of these activities.	71%	29%	-	-	-
7. I feel motivated to use the app again.	65%	35%	-	-	-
8. I would like to do this kind of activities again, soon.	85%	15%	-	-	-
9. I feel more capable of speaking in English through this kind of activities.	70%	25%	5%	-	-
10. This activity promotes collaborative work.	65%	30%	5%	-	-

Note: Results reported from the post-activity survey (Annex 2).

In addition, in the post-survey, the question "Do you think teachers should use this kind of activities?" was marked with a 100% of positive answers, and students complemented it with comments regarding their experiences in the activities. They expressed that all the applications were easy to use,

and that the activities were interesting, fun, and helpful to practice what was seen in class. The opinions and perceptions expressed by students are an important element to be explored in the following stages of this investigation.

Conclusions

Gamification is a useful teaching alternative because it offers benefits for students in terms of diversification and learning. The results obtained in this preliminary study indicate a trend in this direction. By using an experimental and a control group, it was possible to compare the results across groups with similar backgrounds and competence in the language. In general, the experimental group reported higher achievement scores in language use regarding grammar and vocabulary, and also positive experiences with the use of gamified contents.

Regarding the design of the activities, it was important to include gamification elements such as challenge, progress, and feedback to make students' experience more meaningful. In addition, it is considered necessary to balance gamification with regular instruction, and to make sure that evaluation is always carried out based on learning goals.

Finally, it is acknowledged that the results obtained in this first step of the study should be complemented, and contrasted with the impact of gamification strategies in other instructional contexts, purposes of instruction, and types of learning motivation, in order to confirm trends, and possible limitations to this teaching alternative.

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Appendix 1: Survey Use of ICT

School: _____

Date: _____

Occupation: _____

Age: _____

1. Do you have a computer or tablet at home?
    YES: _____   NO: _____

2. How many computer devices do you have?
    _____

3. Do you have internet service at home?
    YES: _____   NO: _____

4. Which computer programs do you use more often?
    _____
    _____

5. What do you usually use your computer for?
    _____
    _____

6. Do you use social networks?   YES: _____
    NO: _____
    Which ones?
    _____
    _____

7. How did you learn to use a computer
    _____
    _____

8. Have you played online or on a language app?
    YES: _____   NO: _____

9. If your answer was 'yes', which app did you use and
    when?
    _____
    _____

Appendix 2: Post-Activity Survey

School: _____

Date: _____

Occupation: _____

Age: _____

App: _____

Topic: _____

    1.   Could you participate in the activity?
        YES: _____   NO: _____
    If not, why?

_____

	Totally Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Totally Disagree
2. I liked the activity.					
3. I like the challenge of the activity.					
4. I like to compete.					
5. I learned through the activity.					
6. I recommend doing the activity.					
7. I feel motivated through the use of these activities.					
8. I feel					

motivated to use the app again.					
9. I would like to do this kind of activities again, soon.					
10. I feel more capable of speaking in English through this kind of activities.					
11. This activity promotes collaborative work.					

12.   How often do your teachers from other courses use this kind of activities?

Frequently ___   Sometimes ___

Rarely ___   Never ___

13. Do you think teachers should use this kind of activities in their classes?

YES: _____   NO: _____

Why?

_____

Use of Two Online Applications to Promote Speaking Skills in the Learning of English as a Foreign Language

Juan Javier Bautista Rodríguez M.A.

Centros y Programas ENALLT UNAM; UAM-Azcapotzalco
juanjabautista@gmail.com

Lilia Estela Briones Jurado M.A.

FES Acatlán UNAM, UAM-Azcapotzalco
liliabriones@gmail.com

Carmen Lucía Tomasini Bassols M.A.

Abstract

Learning how to use and to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language teaching has become an urgent need for language teachers in order to keep up to date with technological developments. Research on the field shows that integrating ICT in language lessons benefits learners' involvement in their own learning. Thus, teachers constantly look for opportunities where they can learn about more options to achieve this. Workshops are the best hands-on spaces where language teachers can experience how to include ICT in their classes and apply different tools from both, the student and instructor's sides. This paper starts with an introduction on the challenge "digital-natives" represent for language instructors. Then, it describes the applications Flipgrid and Hangouts, worked on during the session presented at the First International Language Learning Conference (CIAL, in Spanish) held at Escuela Nacional de Estudios Profesionales (ENES) Morelia on April 10, 2019. Also, some aspects of gamification that could

be considered when using the applications were integrated. Later, a step-by-step description of the activities carried out during the workshop is provided, and finally, a conclusion. This final part reflects on how the workshop went and the outcomes from it.

Key words: ICT, language teaching, applications, gamification, workshop(s)

Introduction

As the use of Internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has grown, so has their insertion in education. ICT gives students the opportunity to interact with teachers and classmates outside the classroom and to experience real-life tasks. This is one of the reasons why teachers are more and more interested in learning how to include them in their teaching practice. As Premarathne (2017) states, "ESL teachers should positively accept the challenge to integrate ICT in their classrooms to find new avenues to fulfill the expectations of 21st century learners."

Furthermore, the studies report a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement as well as on learning. And these results are inspiring for language teachers because "Digital natives can no longer be motivated through traditional language games" (Premarathne, 2017). The number of studies referring to the use of ICT in language teaching is constantly increasing and the purpose of this workshop adds to the field. During the session carried out at the First International Language Learning Conference (CIAL, in Spanish) on April 10, 2019, English teachers were presented with step-by-step procedures to use Flipgrid and Hangouts applications and a first-hand experience to value their applicability in language teaching, and to outweigh their advantages and drawbacks.

Gamification

Traditional games are an important part of teaching, but there is a new way to interact with the inclusion of ICT; this interaction is achieved through the integration of gaming elements into non-gaming environments as an educational setting is. This is better known as gamification. Gamification allows for teachers to use rewards, competition, scoreboards, points system, instant feedback, etc. in order to motivate students and to have better academic achievements. As Garland (2015) states it: "Simply put, gamification involves using elements from games in the classroom, and

can be done in numerous ways." This opens a wealth of possibilities for teachers to integrate ICT in their lessons and to involve students by including some game elements. Stieglitz et al (2017) consider gamification to be "an interdisciplinary approach seeking to motivate users to achieve certain behavioral or psychological outcomes (e.g., learn faster, complete their personal profile, daily use of a specific platform).

Kahoot!

This app is a clear sample of what gamification is about. It includes: a scoreboard, points system, competition, time limits, and immediate feedback. It offers three tools: survey, jumble, and quiz; being this last one the most commonly used. The survey allows having a quick review on a specific topic. Jumble and Quiz can be used for different purposes in a lesson: to introduce, to practice, to review or to evaluate a topic. The first focuses on structural patterns because sentences can be divided into four parts and students have to put the elements in the right order to form a correct sentence. In the second tool, learners have to choose the precise option in order to comply with directions. After each question, the correct answer appears and then, there is a scoreboard which shows the five players with the most points. At the end, there is a podium with the general results. Quiz is the only tool whose results can be downloaded in an Excel file to have a more detailed review on the students' performance. Furthermore, Quiz can be assigned as homework through the challenge option. Results can be downloaded as well.

Although the use of this application was not the objective of the workshop, it was selected to be used for a survey to raise awareness on the use of online applications in English language teaching and to get an idea on the current use that teachers make of ICT.

Flipgrid

This resource is based on the use of videos, links and topics to prompt discussions among students through short video reflections ranging from 5 seconds to 5 minutes. Among its many advantages, it promotes equal participation and prompts discussion. Its use is relatively simple, since students can be granted access to the videos through their email address, given the fact that they have access to a digital device with an Internet connection. Students can be asked to record short, authentic videos, and can reply to their classmates' videos with a video reply, too. Besides, they

can practice and pause while recording, and add reviewing before their final version is posted. The role of the teacher is a designer of topics for discussions, a selector of resources and attachments. Flipgrid also gives teachers the opportunity to enhance feedback by the use of stickers, drawings, and assessment rubrics.

As formerly mentioned, the learning potential that mobile devices have brought to language teaching is huge. This app is useful to develop students' oral production skills, since they have the opportunity to asynchronously interact with their classmates and/or other people on real life topics. In order to integrate gamification aspects in this app, students can be asked to "beautify" their videos through the use of some customizing features Flipgrid offers and be given badges to the best ones through a voting process. These are some of the reasons, among others, why this app was selected.

Hangouts

This app is video-based and allows participants to record a synchronous session in which they discuss a given topic. They can program the interactive meeting and prepare their arguments in the meantime. Among other advantages this app offers, it can be mentioned that it develops organizational and leadership skills because members need to agree on who programs the session, which gives a leading role to the assignee. Furthermore, they also agree on time and date depending on their responsibilities. When the discussion topic takes them to find a solution, collaborative work can be observed because everybody has to contribute to solve the problem.

Programing a session only takes a few steps, and "programmers" can give a title to their session, write a description, and make their video conference "public", "not listed" or "private". Once this is done, they share the video gathering URL to their partners for them to join. The date for the session, the "programmer" has to start the video recording and to stop it when done. Finally, he/she opens the "product" and shares the link to the teacher and partners. As it can be seen, this app, opposed to Flipgrid, allows for synchronous oral interaction which demands more complex processes in oral exchanges in order to be successful during the task. The role of the teacher is a designer of the task, a monitor of the development of the sessions and an evaluator.

The workshop

The objective of this workshop was to present and show attendees how to exploit the applications Flipgrid and Hangouts with the aim to develop students' speaking skills. For this purpose, first, attendees used their smartphones or computers to answer a survey on their experience with ICT. This opening activity gave presenters an overview on the participants' prior knowledge about the use of ICT in their daily teaching. The application used for this warm-up exercise was Kahoot.

Afterwards, they participated in an introductory activity using the application Flipgrid. The presenter guided participants to access a *Grid*, an online learning community, in order to be able to record a one-minute video introducing themselves. Afterwards, each partaker watched other participants' videos and recorded a video response to them. When done, the presenter asked attendees for their experience on using the app and the possibilities they consider it might have when applied in their lessons.

This practical part of the workshop showed attendees all the potential this app has in order to develop students' oral skills. As a matter of fact, teachers shared additional ideas on how to further exploit the app at different educational levels as well as at different linguistic competence levels by means of setting an appropriate time limit for the video, creating communicative tasks that encourage creativity and interaction, promoting collaborative work among peers, suggesting alternatives to use the application in the classroom and modifying the grading rubric and eliciting feedback.

Later, they were presented, step-by-step, on how to sign up as an educator. Once they signed in, they were explained on how to create grids and topics as well as how to use the different options offered by the app. Participants were asked to create a grid around a topic they would like to work with one of their classes. Then, they shared the code to access their grids so that the other members could perform their task. Finally, they were asked on their opinion about the other activities and if they considered they were feasible.

The second application worked on was Hangouts. Here, some participants took part in a live session for them to experience it from the students' side. The members discussed the use of ICT in language teaching. Subsequently, everybody had the opportunity to watch the recorded video and, in order to apply gamification, a winner was chosen: the partaker with the best

argument, who was given a digital badge. As with the previous application, participants agreed that it is possible to make students express their ideas without the fear of being instantly corrected by the teacher, which allows for students to gain self-confidence on their use of the target language.

Next, the presenter explained how to program a session and record it, also, how to share the link to join a live session. After this, attendees got in trios and had the chance to program a live session. Once the session was ready, they shared the link among the trio members. Trios carried out their synchronous meeting, recorded it, and shared their final product to the whole group. A couple of videos were watched, and trio fellows shared their experience on the whole process. Finally, a discussion was carried out on the possibilities to use Hangouts in a language learning setting.

The use of interactive videos for developing oral skills

The common feature in the two applications selected for the workshop is the production of videos by learners. Videos, commercial or public service, have been used in foreign language teaching in spite of difficulties with equipment or the lack of it to project them in the classroom. The use of videos has allowed teachers to expand the social practices of language already familiar to students, to make language more memorable by accompanying it with actions, and, consequently, to motivate students with instances of real use (Hambrook, 1986). As critics have pointed out, the very first videos created for second language teaching lacked authenticity. Another drawback was the limited interactivity the videos allowed, since they were mainly used for repetition or for answering comprehension questions. Nowadays, students are expected to do more than just watch, as they are able to interact with the creator of the video and with others watching it. Videos "can be used to augment in-class instruction, support blended learning, flipped and online learning" (Janzen in Bakla, 2017).

Nowadays, the availability of mobile devices has facilitated the production and dissemination of videos in numerous platforms. By encouraging students to create their own videos, they are able to see their own work, interact with peers, compare their speech with their classmates and develop self-critical skills to evaluate themselves (Kirkgöz, 2011). So, videos are no longer only a way to practice listening, but oral skills, which allow students to exploit all their creativity potential.

On the other hand, speech processing characteristics are present in the development of videos. Bygate (2001), based on Levelt's model, points out the major processes that speakers carry out in the production of speech: conceptualization, formulation, articulation and self-monitoring. In the use of videos, students should be allowed to plan their message content, according to the topic and situation given (conceptualization). In fact, in Flipgrid students can rehearse their video before recording it, and they have access to their speech notes as part of the features of the application (formulation). Videos also allow students to be more aware of their articulation and can self-monitor their speech in terms of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and content. For example, Flipgrid includes a Grading Rubric feature focused on the criteria of Ideas and Performance rated from 1 to 5. There is also an option to customize the rubric and add other indicators.

There are other interactive features that videos offer in order to develop speaking skills and that should be included in the planning of oral tasks (Richards, 2008). Students should be encouraged to use elements to open and close conversations and react to what their classmates say. Tasks should also promote feedback elicitation. The online applications presented in the workshop offer this possibility in two forms: through comments and reactions (mark as favorite) in the case of Flipgrid, and through synchronous interaction in Hangouts.

Thus, both applications can be used to enhance oral skills in different activities as it can be seen in the following table (characteristics ranked between low, medium and high potential):

Table 1. Comparison of speech production characteristics in the two online applications

	Flipgrid	**Hangouts**
Improvised speech	Low	High
Editing oral skills	High	Low
Communication strategies (negotiation of meaning, repair, circumlocution, etc.)	Medium	High

Focused on accuracy	High	Medium
Focused on fluency	High	High
Peer response	Medium (Delayed)	High (Instant)
Interaction	Medium	High
Task complexity	Medium	High

Considering the synchronous characteristic present in one of the applications (Hangouts), there are some differences in the aspects presented in the table. However, they are not very far apart from each other, only improvised speech and editing skills being the ones with the biggest gap in between them. Such differences represent an opportunity for the teacher to better select the appropriate tool according to the learning aim and type of interaction sought.

Conclusions

Through the first-hand experience of the two online applications presented in the workshop, teachers reflected on their advantages to develop speaking skills in language learners. With this experience, they became aware of the challenges learners face when performing this kind of tasks during the planning, formulation, articulation and self-monitoring stages of speech production. Regarding the features that applications offer, teachers agreed on their ease of use and access. Besides, they were offered suggestions to gamify the use of the applications to promote students' engagement in the activities.

Each application offers the opportunity to engage in different types of discourse and interaction, but always focusing on the development of specific oral skills. It is advisable to use this kind of tasks more frequently during a course in order to instill a more fluent and natural use of the language. For this purpose, it is important to highlight the unobtrusive role of the teacher as a designer, planner, and evaluator in the use of these applications, promoting interaction among peers.

Although there might be infrastructural difficulties in using online applications in the language classroom, teachers can look for alternatives

to offer learners more meaningful learning experiences focused on particular language skills.

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CHAPTER 2 –

INTERNATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Developing Deeper Connections: Tandem and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) in the Teaching of Languages

Vanessa de Veritch Woodside

University of Washington Tacoma
vdw@uw.edu

Bethzabé López Peñaloza

Escuela Nacional de Estudios Superiores, Campus Morelia UNAM.
blopez@enesmorelia.unam.mx

Abstract

This presentation describes the development and evolution of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a Tandem initiative that has connected Spanish students from the University of Washington Tacoma and English students from la Escuela Nacional de Estudios Superiores de la UNAM Campus Morelia. The presenters also discuss the findings and applications of a preliminary study examining the effectiveness and benefits of implementing COIL components in both the traditional language classroom and the distance-learning context. The emphasis is on the rationale behind, and specific ideas for, developing innovative and low-cost ways to enable students to benefit from high-impact international learning experiences. While students' feedback and data about the impact of COIL/Tandem on student learning are shared, the presentation's focus is on introducing specific tools, projects, and ideas for incorporating COIL in order to spark enthusiasm for continuing the study of Spanish and English beyond the required courses, to develop linguistic proficiency, and to foster intercultural competencies.

Introduction

It is a pleasure and honor to share a bit about our adventures with the experience of developing an innovative program to help our students develop their linguistic capacities, establish international connections, and foster intercultural competencies with minimal investment of our institutions' resources. Beyond describing the evolution of our Tandem/COIL program, we will identify tools, projects, and specific ideas to pique students' interest in, and enthusiasm about, continuing their study of languages.

It seems as though every day we hear something in the news about the conflicts and tensions between the U.S. and Mexican governments and an emphasis on constructing obstacles, whether they be new economic or immigration policies or physical structures. Instead of proposing ways to separate us, it would be much more effective and logical to look for strategies to further connect us. While it may be idealistic and optimistic, we recognize that the study of language and cultures helps us to embark upon an odyssey of linguistic, cultural, and personal learning and that such studies are a fundamentally important element that enables people to connect with one another. Studying a language goes far beyond memorizing vocabulary and conjugations; it opens the door to the world—to new cultural artifacts, to new perspectives, and to new interpersonal connections. We all know that learning foreign languages is vital in our time and it is critical to consider how we can best equip ourselves with more, and better, strategies for the teaching of languages. When we speak of learning or teaching a foreign language, we generally find ourselves in a constant predicament in which the students continue advancing through their courses and accumulating knowledge, but lack the use of such in a different context and with people beyond the walls of the classroom or the language lab. The perceived need to use a second language as a method of communication has many limitations if we are not immersed within the culture or location in which it is spoken. For this reason, cultural exchanges are so successful.

There is no lack of stories—perhaps you have your own—that confirm the immense impact of studying abroad. Decades ago, there was greater emphasis on participating in exchange programs for at least a semester or

an entire academic year. Recently, however, more and more programs of shorter durations have become available and various studies have identified both the increase in student participation in such short programs as well as their positive impact on the development of intercultural sensibilities, even when the program does not focus on language study (Anderson et al., 2006, p. 467). Laura Donnelly-Smith (2009), for example, notes that between 1990 and 2005, short-term international exchange experiences increased from 3% to more than 55% of study-abroad programs (p. 12). We are likely in agreement with respect to the value of exchange programs, but what happens when—for professional or academic reasons, family obligations, or a lack of resources or time— students cannot travel to the country in which the target languages are spoken? Tandem language learning may be the best option in these cases, as it offers the opportunity to participate in a linguistic and cultural exchange without leaving one's own city, neighborhood, or even one's own home.

Tandem, COIL, and Autonomous Language Learning

Tandem is an effective and flexible form of autonomous learning that enables each participant to be responsible for his or her own communicative and intercultural learning process while developing linguistic abilities through chats and video conferences with native speakers of the target language. Taking advantage of various online programs and platforms, such exchanges permit students to experience authentic aspects of the target language and culture while also sharing those of their own. Inspired by the cooperative nature of the tandem bicycle, Tandem language learning refers to the joint effort of two or more individuals "pedaling" toward their similar linguistic and cultural goals. As such, individuals work collaboratively toward their shared objective of the acquisition and effective use of the target language as well as knowledge of its sociocultural context via authentic communication with a native speaker ("Definición," n.d.; Lewis & Walker, 2003; Little, 2007). Upon participating, individuals also inherently become representatives of their own cultures. The Tandem approach thus aligns well with the objectives and execution of similar approaches to enhancing cross-cultural learning via technology like Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and may be adapted for individuals to develop a joint project in which the target language will be the instrument of communication. Another potential adaptation of the Tandem model involves the incorporation of various modalities. This is precisely the approach we designed for our students to

engage in both oral and written communicative exchanges, thereby practicing reading, writing, listening, speaking, and pragmatics, while simultaneously developing cultural knowledge and intercultural competencies in our COIL-enhanced courses.

Collaborative Online International Learning, also known as globally-networked learning or virtual exchange, is a "teaching and learning methodology that provides innovative, cost-effective internationalization strategies" ("About COIL," n.d.). At its core, COIL is a pedagogical model that is fundamentally international, interactive, and virtual. Partnered instructors based at institutions in distinct geographic regions co-create and manage course curriculum in which both student groups share material for at least four weeks and interact meaningfully with their international peers, often working to resolve problems or to accomplish specific objectives via synchronous and/or asynchronous tasks. Instructors utilize technology that is available at both institutions, and students receive grades from their own instructors at their own universities ("Course models," n.d.). The possibilities of COIL are particularly exciting because they enable faculty to incorporate interdisciplinarity within the language classroom and beyond. Across disciplines, COIL enhances traditional course content and facilitates the development of global perspectives, thereby functioning as a local and cost-effective alternative to international exchange programs. Noting the positive impact of international programs on learning experiences more generally and specifically on the development of intercultural competencies, the University of Washington (UW) Bothell established a competitive initiative to support faculty from any academic discipline at any of its three campuses (Seattle, Tacoma and Bothell) to incorporate elements of COIL in their courses. Thus began the formation of the initial group of "COIL Fellows," a cohort of colleagues that participates in "community of practice meetings to deepen learning and facilitate the sharing of ideas, resources, and strategies" (UW COIL fellows, n.d.), in 2014. Since then, UW faculty members and their international partners have developed more than 25 courses across the three UW campuses. My colleague and I were selected to be members of the second cohort of COIL fellows in 2015, and the initiative facilitated my partner's visit to Tacoma, Washington, in 2016 to develop concrete plans for our pilot program for using COIL for the teaching of languages. We have since adapted and offered our Tandem/COIL program four times since its initial iteration in both elementary language and more advanced content-based courses.

COIL, Access, and Equity

The University of Washington has championed COIL because of its potential to substantially expand student access to high-impact global learning and exemplify the mission and vision of the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) with regards to global citizenship, access, equity and diversity. Moreover, it complements the UW initiative to develop hybrid and distance-learning courses, another means to improve access to learning opportunities for our students, particularly those who identify as "non-traditional." High-impact international learning experiences may also improve integration of culturally diverse students within the classroom and increase student retention and graduation rates. Nevertheless, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers indicates that only 1.68% of U.S. university students study abroad ("Study abroad," n.d.). At the national level, the discrepancies between the percentage of U.S. university students that study abroad based on categories of race and ethnicity are alarming. A recent report by NAFSA: Association of International Educators indicates that 70.8% of U.S. students participating in international programs in 2016-2017 were Caucasian, 6.1% were African American/Black, and 10.2% were Hispanic/Latino American despite respectively constituting 56.9%, 13.7%, and 18.2% of U.S. postsecondary enrollment for the same year ("Trends," n.d.). This becomes, then, a question of access, inclusion and equity—or the lack thereof—particularly in the case of our student population at the University of Washington Tacoma.

At UWT, we are proud of the remarkable diversity of our students, not only in terms of race and ethnicity, but also with respect to age, socioeconomic status, military affiliation, and more. A 2018-2019 snapshot of student demographics of our urban-serving university indicates that 56% of our undergraduate students are "first-generation students" (e.g., the first of their family to attend college or the first to obtain a degree), 32% self-identify as underrepresented minorities, and 56% as students of color ("UW Tacoma 2018-2019," n.d.). With respect to engagement with global learning, 141 of 4,530 undergraduate students participated in programs abroad or away (in a separate domestic location) from Early Autumn 2018 through Summer 2019 ("Study abroad data," n.d.; University of Washington Office of Academic Data Management, "Quick stats Autumn 2018," n.d.), up from 130 of 4,411 undergraduates who participated in an international exchange program in 2017-2018 ("Study abroad data," n.d.; UW OADM, "Quick stats Autumn 2017," n.d.), and just 70 of 4,252 undergraduate students to do so in 2016-2017 ("Study abroad data," n.d.;

UW OADM, "Quick stats Autumn 2016," n.d.). How, then, could our university better serve the overwhelming majority of our unique student body—those who do not participate in more traditional international learning experiences? Moreover, how could we incorporate authentic language learning within the context of global learning opportunities? COIL afforded an opportunity to put into practice our broader institutional goals of access, innovation, high-impact practices, and global citizenship while also contributing to the achievement of specific course-level linguistic and cultural learning objectives in the UWT Spanish Language and Cultures program.

COIL-Enhanced Elementary Spanish and English Curricular Design

We first experimented with COIL in the summer of 2016, when I was teaching an entirely online elementary Spanish (TSPAN 102) class and was searching for ways to incorporate communicative activities in an authentic context since we would not have a traditional classroom in which we could consistently communicate in the target language. Beyond this, TSPAN 102 is the second of the two language courses that are required for our undergraduate students to graduate, and the vast majority of students enroll in the course because they have not previously fulfilled the requirement, not out of their desire or interest in Spanish. For this reason, I wanted to help my students develop an awareness of how fascinating and relevant studying Spanish is through personal explorations of the Spanish language and Mexican culture, to challenge some of their preconceptions about Mexico and Mexicans, and to motivate them to embrace the value of the required course and perhaps even continue their linguistic and cultural studies. My colleague was similarly hoping to provide her beginning English students with opportunities to practice their target language in meaningful ways outside of the classroom with native speakers and to learn more about culture(s) in the United States. We designed a curriculum that included synchronous and asynchronous activities, selecting the tools and platforms for these activities based largely on our specific learning objectives associated with Tandem/COIL and ease of access and use. We established pairs of conversation partners, and our students were required to converse about topics of their choice with their assigned partner weekly for 30 minutes via video chat using Facebook Messenger, alternating between the use of English and Spanish for six weeks. They would also submit brief weekly reflections in their native language about each conversation to provide accountability and to

allow the time and space for processing their thoughts about their interactions. Though not specifically directed to do so, most students wrote about their perceived linguistic limitations and/or progress, interesting personal details that their partner shared, observations about culture and daily life, and their emotional response to each conversational experience (e.g., nervousness about communicating in the target language, excitement about discovering common interests, or surprise at their recognition of previous misconceptions about Mexico).

For the asynchronous tasks, all students were required to be members of our private and closed Facebook group and to publish posts in the target language based on prompts we instructors created to correspond to the specific vocabulary and grammatical topics we were covering throughout the term. For example, students described their daily routine, the foods they typically eat throughout the day, or their homes and neighborhoods. Students were invited to include photos along with their written posts, and in one instance, students were required to post a video about a favorite object in order to practice oral production of the target language. To encourage additional interaction and language use, UWT students were also required to provide written comments or questions for at least 2 fellow UWT students' posts in Spanish and 2 of the Mexican students' posts in English for each of the prompts. Many students far exceeded this minimum requirement, often engaging in extended virtual conversations with several students. Satisfactory completion of the synchronous and asynchronous COIL assignments constituted 15% of the overall course grade for the Spanish students at UWT in lieu of the traditional "cultural assignment," and students' use of vocabulary, grammar, and orthography were not evaluated or even commented upon in order to lower students' affective filter. The English students in Morelia who participated in our pilot program were volunteers from various classes and institutions, and thus their participation was not evaluated as a component of their course performance. However, they received an official certificate of participation in the COIL program from the University of Washington Tacoma to include in their portfolio of evidence of academic and professional development.

In addition to requiring the video chats and informal Facebook posts, we adapted the traditional topics and format of UWT's more formal written assignments (i.e., compositions) to enable students to showcase elements of their region while also practicing with relevant vocabulary and grammar points. Students from Washington and Michoacán utilized the free, web-based platform Padlet to create virtual bulletin boards, upon which they

"pinned" photos, GIFs, and/or videos to accompany the text boxes with descriptions in the target language. For one such written assignment, students described what they did during a friend's hypothetical recent visit to their hometown, sharing elements of their daily lives and various unique activities or destinations in their region while also incorporating verbs in the preterit tense and vocabulary related to leisure and the city. They then shared the Padlet with fellow COIL group members in the Facebook group, and wrote questions and comments for the creators of the posted Padlets in the creators' target languages. In this case, students were evaluated for the content and clarity of expression and precise use of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling/orthography.

Generally speaking, we instructed our students to avoid potentially sensitive or polemic topics that may broach politics, religion, sexual orientation, etc., in all of their oral and written interactions. Notably, this was not the case when we adapted COIL for use with more advanced students who participated in other COIL groups composed of intermediate and/or advanced English students and UWT students enrolled in Spanish Stylistics and Composition or Mexican Literature and Culture. As with the beginning language courses, we designed prompts that required these students to utilize their target languages to engage in oral and written dialogue about curricular themes. However, the more advanced COIL-enhanced courses incorporated in-depth exchanges about topics like cultural stereotypes, traditional celebrations, academic projects and professional plans, as well as sociopolitical issues like immigration, gender inequities, violence, and impunity. Nevertheless, we established the same clear ground rules regarding appropriate and respectful etiquette for interactions, closely monitored written exchanges in the Facebook group, and followed up with individuals if we noticed (or any students brought to our attention) any problems.

Assessment of Effectiveness and Benefits of COIL-Enhanced Language Learning

Throughout the design and implementation of our COIL-enhanced courses, we were interested in exploring the impact of the incorporation of the COIL components outlined above on 1) students' perception of their development of linguistic and communicative competence; 2) enthusiasm for continuing with language studies; 3) desire to study abroad; 4) worldview and perspectives; and 5) student learning experiences. To that end, we adapted the materials of the International Cross-Cultural

Experiential Learning Toolkit (Chandra et al., n.d.), which measures students' changes in behavior and attitudes as a result of cross-cultural interactions, to create mandatory pre-COIL and post-COIL surveys for UWT students. We also wanted more general feedback from students about the experience. Examples of survey items related to perception of linguistic abilities are below:

> Rate your overall ability to perform tasks in each of the specific skill areas in Spanish. Possible options for students to select are Excellent, Good, Fair, or Weak.

> Listening comprehension: My ability to understand language spoken to me in a full range of situations with older adults, peers, and young children alike is _____.

> Speaking: My ability to use the language appropriately in a full range of situations with older adults, peers, and young children alike is _____.

> Reading comprehension: My ability to read academic texts with comprehension is _____.

> Reading comprehension: My ability to read texts from the popular press, social media, etc., with comprehension is _____.

> Writing: My ability to write intelligibly and coherently on academic themes (for example, in compositions for class) is _____.

> Writing: My ability to write intelligibly and coherently in an informal email, Facebook post, etc., is _____.

Other survey items focused on students' assessment of the degree to which COIL components were helpful in achieving a variety of course-specific linguistic and cultural learning objectives. For example:

> Please rate the degree to which the COIL components of our class contributed to the following: (Options are Very Helpful, Somewhat Helpful, Neutral, Not Very Helpful, Not Helpful)

> Growth in linguistic or Spanish language skills

> Understanding how to interact with people from different cultures

Learning and understanding other ways of seeing the world

Gaining a different perspective on U.S. culture

Growth in self-awareness

Various survey items elicited open-ended responses, as in the examples below:

Based on your interactions with your COIL partner and other members of our COIL group, did anything about life in Mexico surprise you? Please elaborate on this.

Do you think that your interactions with your COIL partner and others in the COIL Facebook group contributed to your Spanish proficiency in ways that wouldn't be possible in a Spanish class that doesn't incorporate COIL? How did the components help (or not)?

What was the worst part of the COIL component of our class?

What was the best part of the COIL component of our class?

These open-ended answers were helpful in understanding how we can modify the COIL-enhanced courses to be more effective and contribute to better student learning experiences. Moreover, they may help to explain the basis for students' responses to the following questions:

How much have your COIL interactions impacted your desire to travel or study abroad?

I definitely want to go abroad now.

I'm more interested in going abroad.

My feelings about going abroad haven't changed.

I'm less interested in going abroad.

I thought I wanted to go abroad, but after this class, have changed my mind.

You were one of the lucky "guinea pigs" who got to experience COIL in TSPAN 102 for one of the first times at UWT this quarter. Should we include COIL components in future TSPAN 102 classes that we teach?

Yes, in all 102 classes

Yes, but only in some sections of 102 (and let students know ahead of time)

No, but make it available for 102 students who want to participate

No

In the future, it will be interesting to see correlations from before and after experiencing COIL with a more objective evaluation, rather than one that depends on students' perceptions of their skills. We initially did not intend to compile statistics based on these assessments, but we did discover a statistically significant relationship between the COIL experience and student perception of an improvement of linguistic capacities (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Individualized Sum Differences of Pre- and Post-COIL Self-Evaluation of Elements of Linguistic Competency (Paired Samples Tests)

		Paired Differences				
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper
Pair 1	PreQ1 - PostQ1	-.643	1.008	.269	-1.225	-.061
Pair 2	PreQ2 - PostQ2	-.500	.650	.174	-.876	-.124
Pair 3	PreQ3 - PostQ3	-.857	.663	.177	-1.240	-.474
Pair 4	PreQ4 - PostQ4	-1.071	.616	.165	-1.427	-.716
Pair 5	PreQ5 - PostQ5	-.857	.770	.206	-1.302	-.412
Pair 6	PreQ6 - PostQ6	-.714	.726	.194	-1.134	-.295

Table 2. Paired Samples Test

		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PreQ1 - PostQ1	-2.386	13	.033
Pair 2	PreQ2 - PostQ2	-2.876	13	.013
Pair 3	PreQ3 - PostQ3	-4.837	13	.000
Pair 4	PreQ4 - PostQ4	-6.511	13	.000
Pair 5	PreQ5 - PostQ5	-4.163	13	.001
Pair 6	PreQ6 - PostQ6	-3.680	13	.003

Moreover, of the first group of UWT students that participated in COIL (n=14), 93% indicated that the COIL components were helpful in learning about and understanding other perspectives. When the students learned at the beginning of the course that they were going to have to interact with native speakers, many were nervous. Yet, at the end of the course, all of them indicated that the experience was a positive one. Ten of fourteen students indicated that they were more interested in studying Spanish after the experience with COIL (the remaining four indicated "no change"). Furthermore, when we posed the question about whether we should offer classes with COIL in the future, they each responded affirmatively. Again, this was a bit of a surprise, given the concerns that many students expressed initially in the pre-COIL survey. We were pleasantly surprised by our students' comments, a sample of which are included below:

> Having the online FB [Facebook] group was really fun and a great way to engage with our friends in Morelia since many people use it already as a main source of communication with friends and family […]. It definitely kept me engaged and [I] loved being able to see what everyone shared with the group. It definitely tailors to introverts like myself and allows me to comfortably engage. Great experience!! :)

> I thought the COIL program was a refreshing twist with academic learning. I have not had much experience with people who live in other countries and have never been to the US. It was interesting to learn more about his culture and the differences and similarities between our two cultures.

Not surprisingly, not all students were as enthusiastic about the incorporation of COIL in the course:

> Had this been incorporated with an on-ground class that had more structure, I would have definitely learned more than I did this quarter- (I didn't learn much. That isn't really the fault of the class, it's my own shortcomings with distance learning). Maggie was great in helping me out

though, and it was really nice to have a bunch of peers in the group that
knew the language, and were also coming from the same place of wanting
to learn more.

It was okay I guess.

No. Unfortunately, I was only able to have one conversation with my
COIL partner because they were either unavailable on the agree[d] times,
or the connection was unusable.

The general consensus from this UWT group and more recent ones,
though, was that there is value in implementing COIL within the language
curriculum to make it more effective and engaging. Other UWT students
have commented:

COIL is extremely beneficial and I do believe that it was overwhelming at
first[;] however, this is also how I learned the most about Mexico and this
really helped me stay engaged with the class. I had something to look
forward to every week from other students and I knew that we all had
different lives to share.

I thought COIL was helpful because it was somewhat informal. We
weren't just reading out of a textbook but actually communicating with
people who speak Spanish as their first language.

Thank you for a wonderful learning experience.

Conclusion

It is clear that COIL offers benefits: flexibility of scale and scope, access
for geographically-bound students, lower costs, and development of virtual
communicative skills. However, should COIL be considered a second-
class alternative to more traditional exchange programs (or "study abroad
light"), or something completely distinct? Whatever the case may be, we
hope that making authentic connections to improve linguistic and
intercultural competencies encourages our students to continue with their
language studies. Admittedly, as instructors working with COIL, we can
encounter a variety of obstacles while we swim against the current to
develop new strategies for the teaching of languages and cultures.
Nevertheless, it is well worth instructors' time and energy as well as the
financial and philosophical investment of our universities[1]. With adequate

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institutional support, just imagine the possibilities for developing profound international connections.

Dyba (UWB Director of Global Initiatives), Colleen Carmean (UWT Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Innovation), and the UW COIL Fellows Program.

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Study Abroad: Augmenting the Experience and Gaining College Credit

Michael F. Dillon

Morehouse College
michael.dillon@morehouse.edu

Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to introduce strategies for faculty and students on how to maximize their study abroad experience into learning a foreign language while receiving credit for their academic transcripts.

When students participate in study abroad programs for a short-term period, less than a month, they are likely not aware of their proficiency level nor the tools or strategies to help them broaden their language acquisition. Two evaluation tools students can utilize prior to travel are the *Can-Do Statements* or *The Oral Proficiency Interview* (OPI) developed by *The American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages* (ACTFL). These instruments raise students' understanding related to different proficiency levels -from novice to superior- and make students aware of their proficiency level. With this knowledge, students, along with their language professors, can create a practical plan of activities during their study abroad time: from structured learning formats (language courses, language tutor or private lessons) to less formal learning (conversation partners, interactions with the host family or local internships).

Upon their return from their study abroad program, students and professors can again evaluate the proficiency level achieved and continue their language learning.

Key words: Foreign Language, Study Abroad, Academic Credit, Course Credit, Assessment, Learning Activities

Presentation

This presentation explores practical answers to essential questions related to language acquisition and study abroad programs: what is study abroad? how is foreign language proficiency assessed? what is the anticipated impact of studying abroad on student language skills? And how can faculty maximize the study abroad experience? In other words, what is the anticipated effect of studying abroad as it relates to language acquisitions and how can faculty maximize the study abroad experience before, during and upon returning home from travel? The last *Open Doors Report* (2018) on *International Educational Exchange*, published by the Institute of International Education, shows there is still only a small fraction of minorities who participated in any study abroad experience in comparison to White students. White students participated in study abroad programs at a rate of 70.8% compared to African-American students at 6.1% and Multiracial students at 4.3%, without taking into account that only 1 in 10 undergraduate students in the United States participate in a Study Abroad program. In addition to that, only 32.7% of college students who choose a study abroad experience is male. In other words, there is a 1:3 ratio between male and female students studying abroad (Institute of International Education, 2018).

These interrogations are particularly crucial for minority service institutions such as HBCU institutions where only a small population of students participate in study abroad programs. The Mexican scene is similar to HBCU institutions although there is no complete statistical information. [1] In the case of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), there are 213,004 undergraduate students and 30,089 graduate students. Only 1,458 undergraduate students and 246 graduate students are studying abroad this year. (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2019); which means that less than 1 of every 100 students (0,68% of the student population) participates in these experiences.

The benefits and demand for more comprehensive internationalization for higher education institutions in the United States, Mexico and the rest of

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[1] There is not a complete number of undergraduate students studying abroad in Mexico. However, the year 2017-2018, 3.3 million of students registered in higher education institutes. Secretaría de Educación Pública. (2018). *Sistema Educativo de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Principales Cifras 2017-2018* [PDF file]. Retrieved March 15, 2019

http://www.planeacion.sep.gob.mx/estadisticaeindicadores.aspx

the world which is a product of an increasingly globalized world is well documented.[2] A core way to infuse internalization is in study abroad experiences. This experience facilitates the learning of a foreign languages and foreign language is a key skill needed to move through the world as it is explained in the framework of 21[st]Century Learning (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011).[3]

Furthermore, *The National Education Association* stresses the importance of learning languages as part of global competence in American Students:

> Global competence refers to the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of international issues, an appreciation of and ability to learn and work with people form diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, proficiency in a foreign language, and skills to function productively in an interdependent world community (National Education Association [NEA], 2010).

Additionally, the *'Lead with Language'* initiative by the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages* (ACTFL) summarizes its importance:

> Imagine waking up one day to a new reality. A world where English is only one of thousands of languages and 95% of Americans are left out of the conversation. Realize that that day is today. In the world shared by 7 billion people, 75% don't understand any English and the fastest growing economies across the globe are non-English speaking. How can we succeed? [answer] With Languages (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], 2015a).

The terms *study abroad* or *education abroad* can be defined broadly. Here, we use the definition from the Education Abroad Glossary by *The Forum on Education Abroad* as:

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[2] See: Stewart, Vivien. (2012). *A World-class Education: Learning from International Models of Excellence and Innovation.* Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.

[3] For information about the impact of study abroad in second language acquisitions, refer to: Longcope, Peter Duncan, "What is the impact of study abroad on L2 learning? A descriptive study of contexts, conditions, and outcomes" (2003). *Dissertations available from ProQuest.* https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3087425; Burns, R., Rubin, D., & Tarrant, M. A. (2018). *World Language Learning: The Impact of Study Abroad on Student Engagement.* In D. Velliaris (Ed.), Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-5225-3814-1.ch001

Education that occurs outside the participant's home country. Besides study abroad, examples include such international experiences as work, volunteering, non-credit internships, and directed travel, as long as these programs are driven to a significant degree by learning goals (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2011).

One essential characteristic of study abroad programs are the contact students have with different culture(s) from their own. One common difference among culture is the language. Approximately 80% of American students are abroad in destinations where English is not the first language (Institute of International Education, 2018).[4] This fact creates a great opportunity to acquire an additional language, not only for everyday use in the destination but for academic purposes such as advancing general education requirements and students with a double major or those minoring in languages.

In organizing a study abroad experience, faculty and study abroad practitioners take countless factors into consideration such as educational objectives, costs, financial matters, time of year and duration among others. This presentation focuses on the following factors: duration, type, accommodation and student's language level. All these factors are directly related on maximizing language acquisition as they are related to the amount of exposures (and practice) students have to the target language. I will review each of them in more detail:

a) *Duration factor*.- This factor is defined as the length of the education abroad experience. This can be classified into three types: short-term, up to eight weeks (typically in Summer or Winter break), mid-term, from 9 weeks to 26 weeks (one-two quarters or academic semester) and long-term, more than 26 weeks (two semesters or academic /calendar year). The *Open Doors Report* shows that short-term represent 65%, followed by 33% mid-length and finally long-term 2% (Institute of International Education, 2018). The length of the study abroad is directly correlated with language acquisition as students will have more time to interact with native speakers and use the target language. Research has shown that even short-term programs can have an impact on their language, especially in novice and intermediate levels. T.A. Hernandez (2016) explains:

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[4] However, there are popular abroad location where English is the first language or lingua franca such as United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland and South Africa. These are the top 15 destinations, and it represents around 20% of the American students abroad.

…the findings suggest that colleges and universities might consider a two-tiered approach to study abroad. Students with beginning and intermediate coursework could be advised to participate in a short-term program, whereas it might be advantageous for those students with more advanced coursework or more advanced language competence to participate in a semester or longer. Although service encounter exchanges might be sufficient for lower level language users to make linguistic progress during a short-term immersion experience, more advance students must be provided with opportunities for extensive interaction with native speakers (p. 60).

b) *Type factor.*- This factor refers to the language used to teach courses whether it is the target language or the student's native language, in addition to the content of the course. The Open Doors Report shows the most popular academic areas taught abroad: 25.8% for Stem Fields, 20.7% for Business, 17.2% for Social Sciences, 7.3% for Foreign Language & International Studies and 6.3% Fine and Applied Arts (Institute of International Education, 2018). In addition, there are study abroad experiences that do not carry credit (non-credit education abroad) but they do complement the academic curriculum. There were 36,975 U.S. students in non-credit work, internship and volunteering abroad in the year 2016. Mexico, Nicaragua and the Dominic Republic are the top 3 hosts of U.S. non-credit education abroad (Institute of International Education, 2018).

c) *Accommodation factor.*- This factor is defined by the type of accommodations used in the study abroad experience. There is no related data, however we can make the distinction between homestay (staying with a family or locals) or independent housing such as hostels, residence halls, hotels, apartments, etc. The type of accommodation will also affect the time of interaction between students and native speakers, a language contact during study abroad. Other activities that can limit the level of language interaction are guided tours, interpreters, student interaction among themselves in their mother language and translation services. Although these activities can be necessary for the proper operation of the program, faculty and students can implement activities that can promote interaction with native speakers such conversation exchange partners, community service or internship with local people.

Finally, the student's language level will also determine what needs/ activities to be implemented in the program. The level of language proficiency in students can vary from non-existent (novice) to near native speakers (superior). In this presentation, I will use the ACTFL 2012 Proficiency Guidelines for this range of proficiencies:

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are descriptions of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The levels of the ACTFL Guidelines describe the continuum of proficiency from that of the highly articulate, well-educated language user to a level of little or no functional ability (ACTFL, 2012).

The ACTFL Proficiency levels and all their sublevels have similar *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) equivalences.[5]

The majority of undergraduate students will be in the range of novice to advanced. The Oral Proficiency definition for Novice is:

Novice-level speakers can communicate short messages on highly predictable, everyday topics that affect them directly. They do so primarily through the use of isolated words and phrases that have been encountered, memorized, and recalled. Novice-level speakers may be difficult to understand even by the most sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to non-native speech (ACTFL, 2012).

For Intermediate speakers:

Speakers at the Intermediate level are distinguished primarily by their ability to create with the language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life. They are able to recombine learned material in order to express personal meaning. Intermediate- level speakers can ask simple questions and can handle a straightforward survival situation. They produce sentence-level language, ranging from discrete sentences to strings of sentences, typically in present time. Intermediate-level speakers are understood by interlocutors who are accustomed to dealing with non-native learners of the language (ACTFL, 2012).

And for advanced speakers:

Speakers at the Advanced level engage in conversation in a clearly participatory manner in order to communicate information on autobiographical topics, as well as topics of community, national, or international interest. The topics are handled concretely by means of narration and description in

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[5] For more information visit:
https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/reports/Assigning_CEFR_Ratings_To_ACTFL_Assessments.pdf

the major time frames of past, present, and future. These speakers can also
deal with a social situation with an unexpected complication. The
language of Advanced-level speakers is abundant, the oral paragraph being
the measure of Advanced-level length and discourse. Advanced-level
speakers have sufficient control of basic structures and generic vocabulary
to be understood by native speakers of the language, including those
unaccustomed to non-native speech. (ACTFL, 2012).

Before traveling, students and faculty should assess their level of proficiency
using the *Can-Do Statements Progress Indicators for Language Learners*
by the ACTFL.[6] With the results, students can be advised to take an
appropriate language class if time allows or reading and online resources
can be assigned to refresh vocabulary or concepts. No matter what the
length of the experience, all students can benefit from the experience

During the study aboard program, faculty and students can utilize different
opportunities to interact with target culture in order to maximize their
amount of exposure.

Finally, after the education abroad experience, students can reassess their
level retaking the *Can-Do Statements Progress Indicators* and taking the
ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The interview is a live 15–30
minutes conversation (in person, by phone or online) between a certified
ACTFL tester and the interviewee. It is a reliable assessment that measures
how well a person speaks a language. The procedure is standardized in
order to assess global speaking ability, measuring language production
holistically by determining patterns of strengths and weaknesses. Through
a series of personalized questions, a sample of speech is elicited and rated
against the proficiency levels described by ACTFL or CEFR (Language
Testing, 2017). Depending on their level, students can receive credit thus
advancing their academic curriculum not only in their major but in general
education requirements (foreign language requirement) or advancing their
language skills.[7]

*The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation
Service* (CREDIT®) offers a summary credit recommendation for ACTFL
OPI *Ratings* (ACTFL, 2016). A common recommendation is seen in Table

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[6] For more information visit: https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Can-Do_Statements.pdf
[7] The most common general education requirement for foreign languages courses
is 6 credits at elementary level or first year courses in American Higher
Institutions.

1, which each academic institution can establish with input of their language department/program:

Table 1. Recommendations for academic credit based on proficiency levels

ACTFL Proficiency Levels	CEFR Proficiency Levels	Credits	Course Equivalencies
Novice Low	0	0 credits	-
Novice Mid	0	0 credits	-
Novice High	A1.1	3 credits	First year
Intermediate Low	A1.2	6 credits	Second Year
Intermediate Mid	A2	6 credits	Second Year
Intermediate High	B1.1	9 credits	Third Year
Advanced Low	B1.2	9 credits	Third Year

In conclusion, faculty can use different resources to help students maximize their education abroad gaining practical language learning use and credits, no matter the objectives of the abroad experience.

The aim will be to help students acquire intermediate level if the study abroad program is short-term and intermediate high or advanced for long-term programs (see Table 2). Intermediate level is the minimal functional level in school and in the workplace (ACTFL, 2015b). In the private and public sector, a minimum of an intermediate level is required for promotion or salary increase. In addition to that, learning a second language complements all majors or minors and is the most popular of double majors (Pitt & Tepper, 2012). Again, this does not particularly tie into study abroad programs for language studies purposes but rather for any program. This will help to start or strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration among academic departments in higher education institutions.

Table 2. Recommendations while participating in a study abroad program

ACTFL Proficiency Levels	Interaction	Duration Factor	Ideal Context	Accommodation Factor
Novice	Daily conversation with native speakers	Short-term	Conversation Exchange Partners Intensive Language Courses Interaction with host family	Host family
Intermediate	Requesting information	Mid-term	Conversation Exchange Partners Community service Language courses	Host family
Advanced	Reporting	Long-term	Content Area Courses Internships	Dormitory Apartment

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CHAPTER 3 –

EVALUATION

Towards a Transformation of Language Teaching Evaluation into Meaningful Assessment: A Subject to Matter in Contemporary Higher Educational Systems

Luis Gustavo González Martínez

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
luis.gonzalez.teacher@live.com

Abstract

Governments and educational institutions are urging teachers to prioritize the development of students' competences and, simultaneously, being subjects of summative behavioral and accountable evaluation instruments, locating them in the middle of a philosophical and theoretical controversy, which sets them so far from their formative growth. This situation has prompted discussions on the importance of transforming current educators' evaluation into a meaningful assessment as part of the changes to be implemented, which implies a profound revolution in the prevailing schemes. Therefore, this paper intends to establish a framework of strategies to settle meaningful assessment for teachers' didactic performance.

Key words: Accountability, assessment, behaviourism, competences, evaluation schemes, meaningful assessment, teachers' performance, teaching.

Introduction

The prevailing educational policies on evaluation, emerged from the agreements reached at international conferences, and as a consequence, implemented by Governments and Institutions, have opened a debate on the effectiveness of teachers' performance as the unique cause of the crisis of education.

All the public policy and institutional actions have been directed towards the design and operation of standardized instruments centered on the appreciation of the development of students' competences to face future life challenges and problems; and simultaneously, have worked on the design of quantitative means to value how teachers do their jobs.

At higher education institutions, despite the acceptance of new trends in the field, standardized and general tests and other quantitative and summative instruments to grant grades and notes have been kept as the main means to prove the achievement of syllabus objectives focusing on the outcomes they generate; and in teaching, quantitative reports, records and students' opinion questionnaires are still implemented to account teachers' labor effectiveness. Undoubtedly, this represents a serious controversy that has weakened the obtainment of real improvements in the quality of teaching, and has contributed to strengthen the controversies between the positions held by the different actors in education.

At first, it is necessary to distinguish and prioritize what changes are urgent to be made in contemporary educational systems, as teachers' pedagogical intervention is not the only factor to be put to the test. Nevertheless, teachers' performance evaluation is still confusing, controversial, unfair and partial in pedagogical terms.

Educators, whether as teachers or facilitators, have been trained and demanded to design alternative ways to grant grades and notes beyond tests, by offering their students a wide variety of formative instruments to value their progress and consolidation of competencies, all of which end up being recorded as numbers; and on the other hand, the evaluation of their pedagogical performance is still carried through positivist instruments, most of them related to academic activities which keep a distant relation with teaching.

Besides standard questionnaires of students' opinions, vague reports made by coordinators or heads of department; and general checklists built on criteria mainly related to the amount of academic outcomes they have finished in a specific term of time designed, and operated by boards of directors or management staff who do not always hold any training in assessment that would enable them in focusing on real improvement goals, the sorrowful reality has demonstrated that teachers have not obtained any enriching and respectful feedback from the evaluation processes they have been subject to.

The facts mentioned have led to unfortunate results, so it is important to establish that no legal amendment or transformation in this field can take place if pedagogical aspects are ignored or taken for granted; in other words, top-to-bottom policies are not likely to be successful if educators are seen as simple objects more than fundamental actors of changes. Then, teachers have to be taken into account in all the stages of any process of evaluation of their performance, from the design of the instruments to the decision- making stage.

Based on the previous facts, this paper intends to establish a framework of formative strategies and actions to prompt meaningful assessment processes for language teachers' didactic performance, in order to achieve real improvements in their work, and as a consequence, the quality of education.

Development

Academic and government perspectives clashed, as both referred to the same topic from opposite positions. This relies on the purposes each actor uses teachers' performance appraisal for. As a matter of fact, "there are two main purposes of teaching evaluation in higher education, namely for accountability to stakeholders and improvement of teaching effectiveness." (Center for Education Innovation, n.d.)

For scholars and researchers in the field,

> "A comprehensive teacher assessment and evaluation system should have two distinct components: 1) ongoing, consistent, formative assessments of performance for the sole purpose of fostering professional growth and improved practice; and 2) periodic summative evaluations of teacher performance for the purpose of approving continued employment. These two assessment components should share the same standards for growth and performance. However, they must remain distinctly separate from one another" (National Education Association, n.d.:5)

Fortunately, opposite points of view have made movements to get closer. Indeed,

> "education stakeholders are beginning to find some agreement in the idea that teacher appraisal can be a key lever for increasing the focus on teaching quality and continuous professional development for teachers, in keeping with the growing recognition that the quality of teaching affects student learning outcomes. (OECD, 2013:9)

While the researchers' position holds that an educational purpose must be kept as a priority in teachers' evaluation and assessment, establishing that "Though accountability matters, learning still matters most" (Angelo, 1999: 3); Governments, despite the flexibility shown recently, still consider that teachers' performance appraisal is vital to guarantee the quality of education. This debate can be recognized by the fact that "Current systems for assessing, evaluating, and supporting teachers too often fail to improve teacher practice and enhance student growth and learning", which is mainly caused by common practices in which, for example, "observations are often performed by school principals who are not adequately trained to conduct classroom observations and are unable to provide teachers with constructive, actionable feedback" (National Education Association: 2)

In addition to the previously stated, the use of student evaluation of teachers' performance in higher education institutions may have a positive impact if teaching improvements are intended, as "This practice only works well in some cultures and settings". This means that its general use may be undermined, threatening or discouraging for educators. If it is used as a means to collect information, institutions must be aware that any evaluation based on students' opinions must include clear guidance about the feedback expected to obtain, specific focus on teaching standards rather than on personal aspects, and precise questions related to school standards and course objectives (Stobie, 2018:51).

In Mexico, student evaluation of teachers' performance is one of the most used instruments; then, if institutions want to continue with this practice, a *rationale* has to support it; otherwise, it is a matter to be analyzed and redefined if real improvement in teaching is intended to be achieved.

As theoretical foundations for this paper, a distinction between what evaluation and assessment mean plays a key role. In this matter, *evaluation* should be conceived as "judgment with a view to improve. Evaluation can also refer to a judgment that holds an individual or group into account. Evaluation involves a process of enquiry based on evidence leading to judgments."

For *assessment*, we should recognize that it is a continuous process which main goal is to understand and improve educational performance by setting visible and explicit expectations, all of which are to be drawn through specific and contextual criteria to be recovered by means of a system prepared to collect, analyze and interpret information, which will lead to an aim-achievement matching; and afterwards, to be used for

documenting, explaining and improving the performances appraised, with the main purpose of assuring the quality of education. (Angelo, 1995:7). Additionally, "This includes providing feedback and questioning during the learning process, allowing teaching and learning activities to be modified to improve learning." (Harlen, 2012:98).

Definitely, in this paper it is not intended to diminish the importance of evaluation over assessment, but to clarify what means must be used to appraise teachers' performance in order to transform any evaluation and assessment process into a meaningful and visible source of information that will allow them to improve as "Teachers need to have a clear knowledge and understanding of the standards and criteria against which they can evaluate their own performance and against which they will be evaluated by their managers" (Stobie, 2018:48)

Different educational institutions present various contextual features which have to be considered when preparing evaluation and assessment processes. This is an important reason to found this paper on the Social Psychology perspective on which Vygotsky's socio constructivist theses are based; under which as well as teachers, "Learners are believed to be enculturated into their learning community and appropriate knowledge, based on their existent understanding, through their interaction with the immediate learning environment" (Hua Liu & Matthews, 2005:388), which is expected to impact positively in the subject's motivation as learning is likely to take place in an atmosphere in which they feel comfortable and secure, better known as *Zone of Proximal Development*, referred to which the author stated "Studying what the child is capable of doing cooperatively, we ascertain tomorrow's development. The area of immature, but maturing processes makes up the child's zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky,1998: 202); Hence, this is righteous to be considered for teachers.

The importance of that relies on the fact that "if the aim of education is to promote the learner's development, teaching in classroom should address not to what is manifestly achieved, but to those capabilities, functions and skills that a child has neither yet expressed nor attained. (Guseva & Solomonovich, 2017:776). Therefore, these principles are highly important for understanding the transformation that current educational systems require to be implemented to assess teachers' performance in terms of making the most of it by re-orienting the current processes towards a meaningful and enriching one. To support this, it is possible to assure that "the zone of proximal development has more immediate significance for

the dynamics of intellectual development and for the success of teaching than the actual level of development" (Vygotsky, 1982:247).

Referring to this, it is of paramount importance to consider that "The notion of the zone of proximal development has been known as a core concept for the learning development" (Giest and Lompscher, 2003:269-270), and teachers' performance appraisal has to be an opportunity to learn, improve and evolve.

Educators have to feel respected, motivated, involved and supported when being evaluated, assessed or appraised in their performance in the classroom. Just as institutions expect educators do their tasks which consist of "creating conditions under which the learning activity makes sense for the students and may be formed according to the learning object (e. g., science), of organizing the students' learning activity as interaction and cooperation, of giving the necessary learning means or leading the process of finding and further developing them". At this point, it is convenient to state that institutions are expected to set up similar environments for teachers, as these have "to guide learners in such a way that they experience learning as a meaningful, necessary activity that makes them increasingly competent and independent"(Giest & Lompscher, 2003:270), leading to a meaningful assessment and learning experience.

In contemporary education, meaningful learning is a key concept coined by Ausubel which leads to learning by taking what learners already know, it goes beyond memorizing, and it happens when humans link new concepts to previous familiar concepts; as a result, changes are produced in the cognitive structure of the learner when what is already known is modified by new links are established. The great advantage it offers consists on the possibility to create real learning by facilitating the application of new concepts in other real-life situations (Ballester, 2014: 199); and in the field of teaching appraisal, it is convenient to state that meaningful teaching evaluation "involves an accurate appraisal of the effectiveness of teaching, its strengths and areas for development, followed by feedback, coaching, support and opportunities for professional development.", which therefore establishes that any teaching meaningful assessment must include aspects such as "Societal, school system, and school-level factors", as they all "influence the design of teacher evaluation policies"(OCDE, 2009:3-4)

By the previously stated, it is necessary to mention that a teaching appraisal, based on meaningful assessment theory, must be considered by

all actors as a great opportunity to improve educators' performance by making the most of the process in such a way that they can see it as an advantage to learn, and simultaneously, to get information for making decisions and taking action to strengthen their competencies for what they do in the classroom.

If teachers are given the chance to foster their knowledge, skills and values to improve their labor in the specific disciplinary field they work, the process of their performance appraisal will be more enriching and valuable, and having a positive impact on their performance, besides a real validity and reliability.

As a first close-up, it is important to mention that "every teacher should demonstrate subject-area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and professional teaching ability" (National Education Association, n.d.: 2); under this circumstance, it is possible to establish that educators are required to hold specific competencies, which may be conceived whether "as a combination of knowledge, skills and behavior used to improve performance"; in other words, "as the state or quality of being adequately qualified and capable of performing a given role" (Nessipbayeva, 2012 : 149), which educators display based on the educational context they are immersed. Indeed, "the process of teaching and learning is influenced by many interrelated contextual factors in which learning takes place" (Drakulić, 2013 :158)

In the field of foreign language teaching (FLT), "the role of context plays a very important, if not the most important role. Consequently, it influences learning results", so all educational actors have to be aware that "the learner's contact with the target language and culture is not direct"; as a consequence, educators must be competent to "possess and establish positive interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships in the classroom", which implies for teachers the fact that "The quality of the teaching process therefore depends entirely on the teacher's professional competences as well as on his/her personal characteristics" (Drakulić, 2013:158).

Despite foreign language teachers must hold certain professional and personal competencies, it is of paramount importance to consider that the local characteristics of the campus in which they display them, and those of the students they teach, play a key role. However, there are general perspectives related to Foreign Language Teachers competencies; one of

which was issued by the Government of Croatia, and can be summarized as follows:

Competences of Primary School Foreign Language Teacher			
Subject-specific competences		Educational competences	
Language & Culture	Subject-specific	Pedagogical-psychological competences	Competences related to lifelong learning
✔ Communicative language competences ✔ Intercultural competence	✔ General theories of language acquisition ✔ Application of the knowledge of modern foreign language teaching theories	✔ General pedagogical-psychological competences ✔ Competences related to classroom instruction ✔ Competences related to out-of-class activities ✔ Intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics and skills	✔ Competences related to knowledge of educational systems ✔ Competences related to the development and improvement of language teaching skills ✔ Competences related to the improvement of language skills

(Drakulić, 2013: 160)

The present moment in education, which highlights diversity, offers a great opportunity to design assessment instruments, available, flexible and open to be pilot-tested in their reliability and validity, in such a way that, as it is fostered for classes, an evolution of teachers' performance can be appraised by cooperative clusters or teaching communities among those who teach in the same socio-cultural-educational environments. This implies being aware that "The notion of community implies a group with shared goals and values, that inform decisions and actions."(Bragg, 1999 :10); this undoubtedly matches Vygotsky's socio constructivist view.

Therefore, it is necessary that all actors of education understand that "The core purpose of teacher assessment and evaluation should be to strengthen the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and classroom practices of professional educators" (National Education Association, n.d.: 2), rather than just the completion of meaningless and behavioral checklists; therefore, institutions have to be ready to tailor assessment to be flexible and

understanding of educators' teaching styles, just as it has been promoted to be done for learning.

Education has evolved, so has teaching; and as a consequence, it is a must in teachers' performance appraisal instruments and tools because educators have made evident efforts their will to foster students' competencies by displaying a wide variety of teaching and evaluating strategies, techniques and methods. In other words, "most academics 'do assessment', personal and professional values motivate them. And the strongest of those intrinsic motivators is undoubtedly the desire to improve student learning." (Angelo, 1999: 4).

The time has come to keep evaluation and assessment combined systematically to promote improvement in teachers' performance, going beyond forms and checklists, and considering Angelo's model to make the most of teaching appraisal due to the great opportunity it means to keep teachers developing their competencies by adopting these actions:

- Engage actively — intellectually and emotionally — in their academic work.
- Set and maintain realistically high, personally meaningful expectations and goals.
- Provide, receive, and make use of regular, timely, specific feedback.
- Become explicitly aware of their values, beliefs, preconceptions, and prior learning, and be willing to unlearn when necessary.
- Work in ways that recognize (and stretch) their present learning and teaching styles or preferences and levels of development.
- Seek and find connections to and real-world applications of what they're learning.
- Understand and value the criteria, standards, and methods by which they are assessed and evaluated.
- Work regularly and productively with the other members of the faculty.
- Work regularly and productively with other teachers.
- Invest as much engaged time and high-quality effort as possible in academic work.   (Angelo, 1999:6)

The model presented can be materialized if qualitative instruments for appraising teachers' performance are designed. Some of the most common may be:

- value-added models that try to measure gains in student achievement
- teacher self-evaluation
- teacher portfolios of work.   (Stobie, 2018:47)

Based on the social constructivist approach, general standardized instruments for assessing teachers' performance have demonstrated to be ineffective and inefficient, so "it is important for schools to develop their own and not just copy a system designed for another context". This aspect requires institutions to call for their educators with wide *expertise* in the field, and trained as evaluators in order to "identify the sorts of attributes teachers need to be effective at" (Stobie, 2018:48).

For the reasons presented, it is important to focus teaching meaningful assessment on areas such as: a) Planning and Preparation; b) The Classroom Environment; and c) the labor of Instruction, which can be done by the use of a wide variety of formative and qualitative instruments like: a) Classroom observation; b) Objective setting and individual interviews; c) Teacher self-evaluation; d) Teacher portfolio; e) Standardized forms to record teacher performance across a range of dimensions; f) Teacher testing on general and subject-matter competencies; g) Student results; h) Surveys of students and parents; among others (Organisation For Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2009:13-16), all of which if implemented as peer- evaluation and co- evaluation will be more enriching, useful, goal-oriented, collaborative and favorable for all the actors of all higher educational systems.

Conclusions

The improvement of the quality in education, and the corresponding changes in the area, rely on the responsible performance of all the actors, and in such a matter as teaching; because the main roles are played by the institution and the educators. In order to be more precise, it is necessary to establish that "teachers are held to play a key role in assessment reforms" (Hidri, 2016:20); therefore, if recent reforms are intended to cause a real change in educational practices, a profound transformation in current practices is necessary.

In the field of teaching evaluation, the strategies to gather information on teaching performance as well as the perspectives and the instruments used have to be redesigned towards a view in which all appraisal procedures and practices require to be focused on meaningful learning as punishment

and rewards for educators are no longer the goals to achieve, but real modifications for more efficient and effective performance in the labor educators do in the classrooms.

Governments, institutions and campuses are to call teachers to participate actively and responsibly in the design, implementation, monitoring and appraisal of the instruments used to assess their peers' performance, as teaching in a specific school is likely to present particular features, circumstances and features; so standardized instruments and techniques are not reliable sources of information about teaching.

Based on the aspects explained in this paper, there is no doubt that the current trends and approaches in education demand a huge transformation in all the policies related to the field, as time passes by and the changes expected cannot be delayed any longer, unless political and economic interests are more important matters than pedagogical and educational reasons.

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THE ROLE OF THE SFL TEACHER AS AN EVALUATOR: THE EXPERIENCE AT CEPE

AMÉRICA DELGADO ESPINOZA

Center of Teaching for Foreigners (CEPE), UNAM
adelgado@cepe.unam.mx

Abstract

Within the key competencies that every language teacher must have, there is the one of knowing how to evaluate, that is to say, know what, whom, how, and when to evaluate, as well as the why and what for of this activity. In this article, the role of the Spanish as a foreign language teacher (SFL) as an evaluator is looked at from the experience in the Center of Teaching for Foreigners of the UNAM.

Key words: definition of evaluation; evaluation in the language area; the key competency of knowing how to evaluate in languages; evaluation system at CEPE; placement tests; achievement and certification tests

At almost 100 years of existence, the Center of Teaching for Foreigners (CEPE) has diversified its mission because, in addition to teaching the language and culture to non-Spanish-speaking foreign students from all over the world, it also trains teachers in Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) and certifies language proficiency. In this context, the evaluation and the way in which it is instrumentalized, as well as the role of the SFL teacher as an evaluator, acquire special relevance in our Center. This paper aims to answer satisfactorily the following three questions: why must the teacher of SFL also know how to evaluate?, what does it mean to know how to evaluate in the area of languages? and, finally, what is the evaluation experience in SFL at the CEPE?

Why should the SFL teacher also know how to evaluate?

It is an indisputable fact that evaluation is part of the teaching-learning process. That's right, the only way to recognize that students have learned is through evaluation. Then, teaching and learning cannot be properly conceived without evaluation since the three processes are linked. And that is why, at present, within the framework of education, the teaching-learning-evaluation process is discussed.

It must be clear then, that the teacher, any teacher, obviously including the SFL teacher, must know not only to teach, but also know how to evaluate, and insofar as he has a deep understanding of the evaluation he will be able to enrich his teaching (De la Herrán, 2014).

The importance of evaluation is evident in the close relationship it has with education. Indeed, the experts from both latitudes coincide in affirming categorically that in order for education to change, evaluation must first change. In such a way that, the Spanish author Ma. Antonia Casanova (2012) argues that "the real educational change will come from the modifications that are made in the methodology and in the evaluation of the teaching and learning processes". On the other hand, Mexican authors Díaz Barriga and Hernández (2010) point out that "if the evaluation practices are not modified, the supposed pedagogical changes in teaching will not have any impact on the students or the educational system".

To improve the evaluation constitutes, then, a task of first order in educational matter. And this task we must assume also in the area of language teaching, specifically SFL, if we want to have better results.

What does it mean to know how to evaluate in the area of languages?

Before answering this second question, we will define what evaluation is. Firstly it should be noted that there are three key elements in any definition of assessment: data collection process, the formation of value judgments and decision making. Let's see now a concept of evaluation from the didactic: "(...) is an activity or process of identification, collection and treatment of data on elements and educational facts with the aim of assessing them first and, on said assessment, making decisions (García Ramos, 2000).

The evaluation applied to teaching and learning consists, according to Casanova (2007), "in a systematic and rigorous process of data collection, incorporated into the educational process from its beginning, so that it is possible to have continuous and meaningful information to know the situation, forming value judgments with respect to it and making the appropriate decisions to continue the educational activity improving it progressively. "

In the area of languages, Bordón (2015) argues that second language assessment constitutes a field of applied linguistics and its evolution is linked to the teaching of the language. In the same vein as other authors, he argues that evaluation is an indisputable part of the teaching-learning of a second language, both because of its educational value and because of its practical need.

For Bordón (2006), the evaluation is a type of assessment that consists of collecting and analyzing a series of data to arrive at a decision, and can use both exams and other procedures.

On the other hand, Neus Figueras and Fuensanta Puig (2013) make reference to two quotes about the concept of evaluation:

> *Evaluation is the systematic collection of information with the intention of making decisions (Weiss, 1972, in Bachman, 1990: 22).*

> *The evaluation is the emission of a judgment on a set of data in relation to reference values (Pedró: 2005: 14).*

For Figueras and Puig (2013:15) 15), "evaluating -whatever the context- requires, collecting information (systematically) and the making of decisions. And there is no possible decision making without reference values ".

Well, to answer the question, what does it mean to know how to evaluate in languages? We are going to take as reference two recent documents that have been published in Europe.

The first one is the grid profile of the language teacher. In this grid, within the category of key teaching competences, the subcategory of the evaluation is included in second place.[1] It is presented this knowledge and skill that all language teachers must have in three phases of development

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[1] In English, *European Profiling Grid*, 2011.

(1, 2 and 3), presented horizontally. Each phase is subdivided into two phases (1.1 and 1.2; 2.1 and 2.2; 3.1 and 3.2), to cover teachers with more and less experience, and with different levels of competence. In this way, a new teacher, who is in phase 1.1, which is the first, only "can carry out and correct the tests of the end of the manual unit", while another more advanced, more experienced, and who is in phase 3.2, which is the last, can do, in terms of evaluation, many more things, such as:[2]

- elaborate tasks of evaluation of knowledge and use of the target language, for all levels and skills.
- use the criteria of the CEFR to reliably evaluate the linguistic domain, both oral and written, of the learners at any level and can help in this work to colleagues who have less experience.[3]
- design formal evaluation tests to determine validly whether the learners have reached a certain level of the CEFR.
- direct standardization sessions with the CEFR.

On the other hand, in the key competences of the teaching staff of second and foreign languages of the Cervantes Institute, published in 2012, eight competences are included. The second key competence is "to assess student learning and performance", which in turn includes four specific competences:

1. Use evaluation tools and procedures.
2. Guarantee good practices in the evaluation.
3. Promote constructive feedback
4. Involve the student in the evaluation.

In accordance with this model of key competences, evaluate the student's learning and performance:

"It refers to the ability of teachers to assess the communicative competence of the student as well as their progress in learning the language according to ethical principles in evaluation. This implies that the teacher integrates the evaluation in the learning process; makes use of tools and procedures appropriate to the purpose of the evaluation, the context and the student; uses evaluation to improve student learning,

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[2] http://egrid.epg-project.eu/sites/default/files/files/EGRID-Guide-ES-web.pdf
[3] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

promoting constructive feedback and engages students in the evaluation of their own and their classmates' learning. "[4]

We see, then, that within the key competences that every language teacher must have is to know how to evaluate, that is, to know what, to whom, how and when to evaluate, as well as the why and what for of this activity. The teacher must also know how to apply the different types of evaluation (diagnostic, continuous/final, etc.), and use and design the various assessment instruments that are used in the classroom and those that are administered in the proficiency exams, in the certification exams. And it is a reality that, in order to acquire the competence to know how to evaluate, with all that this implies, a constant and specific training is required in the area of SFL evaluation.

What is the experience in evaluation in SFL at the CEPE?

The CEPE is a dependency of the National Autonomous University of Mexico that has 98 years of teaching language and culture. It was founded in 1921 with the aim of:

> "Offer courses for foreigners, especially for Americans who are dedicated to the teaching of Spanish in the United States to affirm and expand their knowledge in this language, and to also visit the Mexican Republic and become familiar with the customs and the life of a country with a Latin tradition" (Sánchez, 2013: 23).

After nearly a century of uninterrupted work, the CEPE mission has diversified because currently not only the Spanish language and the Mexican culture are taught to non-Spanish-speaking foreign students from all over the world, but also teachers are trained in SFL (through specialization and two graduates) and the proficiency of the language is certified (through exams, one of which is international in scope, as will be seen later in the section on Certification Exams).[5]

In particular, the CEPE evaluation system is currently made up of three types of exams: placement, exploitation and certification.

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[4] https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/competencias/default.htm
[5] Specialization in the Teaching of Spanish as Foreign Language. (http://especializacion.cepe.unam.mx/web/). Basic Diploma in Teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language. (DIBEELE, http://dibeele.cepe.unam.mx/). Advanced Diploma Teachers of Spanish as a Foreign Language (DIAPELE, http://diapele.cepe.unam.mx/).

Placement exams

Placement or classification tests serve to distribute new students in different courses according to their language level. The CEPE designs its own placement exams. In the year 2017 in our Center the exams were computerized, leaving behind the instruments printed on paper, as far as the grammar part is concerned. This exam was developed by the Evaluation Department and expert teachers in the Spanish language teaching of the CEPE. The purpose was to have a valid and reliable instrument that would help to quickly and efficiently place new students at the level that corresponded to them.

To do this, the corresponding specification tables were prepared, which were subsequently validated. Likewise, items for grammatical systematization were elaborated. From the Fall 1 course in 2017 this test was piloted and a psychometric analysis of the behavior was carried out and it was concluded that there was an acceptable correspondence between the three tests that were applied (grammar, oral and written) and the final level at which new students were placed. The majority of the statistical indexes of the exam and its items were adequate, which allowed to affirm that the grammar exam or EXCOL possessed a good validity and reliability.[6]

Another task that was done in relation to the placement exams was to prepare questionnaires for each of the eight levels taught at the Center so that they could be applied in the oral examination to new students.

Exploitation exams

The exploitation or achievement exams are aimed at gathering information about what a student -who is receiving formal instruction for the acquisition of the target language- has managed to learn ("take advantage of" their instruction) (Bordón, 2006: 74).

In 2011[7], the computerized modality of a battery of seven exams was implemented in the CEPE of the University City, which are applied at the

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[6] Report of the pilotage of the General Grammatical Knowledge Placement Exam (EXCOL), Evaluation Department, CEPE-UNAM, September of 2018.
[7] For this part I'm basing myself in Campos, Espinosa and Jurado's article (2011). "Exámenes de aprovechamiento computarizados. Un paso más en la evolución

end of each intensive course that lasts six weeks.[8] These exams were designed based on the graduation profile defined in seven of the eight programs that make up the CEPE Program of Studies, which follows the guidelines proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference.

The achievement exams consist of three objective tests applied in computer (listening comprehension, reading comprehension and language system) and two subjective tests (written expression and oral expression).

According to Campos, Espinosa and Jurado (2011), "the construction of computerized proficiency tests was a process in which the experience accumulated by the Department of Spanish in relation to two of the main institutions projects that developed over the last decade crystallized. : the design of a study program and the development of evaluation instruments, both complying with international standards ".

Among the achievements of this innovation that the authors pointed out we can highlight the following: the collegiate evaluation of productive skills (written and oral expression) favored processes of homologation of criteria among teachers in the Spanish area; the definition of the seven examination models contributed to the standardization of the courses; there is greater certainty and control over the level of performance reached by students with respect to the profile defined in the CEPE study program; there was a positive effect of the incorporation of the technology.

Following Campos, Espinosa and Jurado (2011), the elaboration of the computerized exams was the result of a collegial work carried out by the CEPE Spanish teachers. In addition, the development of these instruments meant another step in the process of updating and adapting to international standards.

In general, these computerized achievement exams continue to be administered in the same way, although some adjustments have been made in the years following 2011 for example, an examination has been included for the Initiation level or zero and only in the oral expression test

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académica del departamento de Español", in *Decires*, Revista del Centro de Enseñanza para Extranjeros, vol. 13, número especial, pp. 121-158.

[8] Back then, from Basic 1 until Intermediate 3. It would be now from Spanish 1 until Spanish 7, that is, A1 and B2, respectively in the CEFR. It is not included the Superior level, now E8, because the learning approach is by projects and in this one a final exam is not administered.

does the collegial evaluation in which two ELE professors evaluate students who have not taken the course with them.

On the other hand, in February 2018 the behavior of the exams was evaluated to verify their validity and reliability. It was found that there are inadequate items which will be replaced by new ones. In March 2018 a workshop was held to elaborate the specifications table and later work teams were formed to make these tables for each of the levels, in which professors from CEPE-CU and Polanco participated. The elaboration and validation of the specifications tables for the final exploitation examinations was finalized and soon workshops will be held to design items and tasks.

It should be noted that in the current Study Program of the Spanish and Culture courses, which came into force in 2007, the summative evaluation and the formative evaluation are adopted. The summative evaluation is related precisely to the final exams of achievement and the formative evaluation with the entire teaching-learning process that takes place in the classroom. Regarding this last type of evaluation, it is still pending to standardize among the professors the procedures that can be carried out for their application (portfolios, self-evaluation, peer assessment, etc.).

Certification Exams

The certification or domain level exams aim to find out what the person doing the exam knows at that moment. Unlike the proficiency exams, which are linked to teaching-learning processes, in the domain level exams it does not matter how the candidate has acquired the language, but what is interesting is the goal achieved (the what), regardless of the way to reach it (Bordón, 2006:79-80) 79-80).

Regarding the certification exams, the CEPE develops and implements three exams: the Certificate of Spanish as an Additional Language (CELA), the Examination of Spanish as a Foreign Language for the Academic Field (EXELEAA) and the International Service of Spanish Language Assessment (SIELE).

The CELA is a system of exams that assess the level of mastery in the knowledge and use of the Spanish language to interactively communicate in the personal, public and academic spheres. These are three domain-level exams that are designed based on the CEFR levels: Independent that

corresponds to level B1, Advanced level B2 and Competent C1.[9] The candidate chooses the exam he wants to present. This exam evaluates the four communicative skills of the language (oral and written expression and listening and reading comprehension), as well as linguistic competence.

The EXELEAA was designed by the CEPE with the collaboration of the University of Guadalajara and the University of Costa Rica. It is an exam of Spanish for academic purposes that serves "to diagnose the degree of suitability of candidates based on their linguistic competence in Spanish, to pursue higher education taught in Spanish."[10]

According to information from the official CEPE website, "EXELEAA is aimed at applicants for scholarships from non-Spanish-speaking countries and candidates for exchange programs who wish to pursue a bachelor's or postgraduate degree that requires a document that shows their level of proficiency in Spanish."" The exam is designed based on the communicative competencies of the Common Curriculum Framework for the Baccalaureate (CCFB), published by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) and in the CEFR standards."

In the same way as in the CELA, this exam evaluates the four communicative skills of the language, as well as the linguistic competence. Likewise, both exams, CELA and EXELEAA, can be done in an exam application center (CAE) accredited by the UNAM both in Mexico and abroad.

Finally, there is the SIELE, which is the most recent exam and has international scope since it has been developed by the UNAM, the Cervantes Institute, the University of Salamanca and the University of Buenos Aires. It is a multilevel exam and online application, which assesses the mastery of the Spanish language based on the CEFR levels, which allows obtaining an international certificate, through four tests (reading comprehension, listening comprehension, expression and written interaction, oral expression and interaction).[11]

Since 2017 SIELE has also been applied at the end of each Spanish course at CEPE-CU, and subsequently at Polanco. This is the S1, exam modality, which includes reading comprehension and listening comprehension.

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[9] https://www.cepe.unam.mx/cela/
[10] https://www.cepe.unam.mx/exeleaa/
[11] http://132.248.130.129/certificacion/siele/como_es.php

In May 2018 the Evaluation Department presented a report on the analysis of the results of the SIELE exam applications up to that point, both in CEPE-CU and in Polanco, five and four times, respectively. According to this report, when the level obtained in the SIELE exam was compared with the level expected at the end of the course, less than half of the students obtained an expected level. In fact, most of the students were one level above or one level below. In both campuses, the students' performance was higher in the Reading Comprehension (CL) ability compared to the Auditory Comprehension (CA) ability. However, the difference between the scores of these two skills (CL and CA) decreases as the level increases.[12]

Even though the SIELE application data refers to only two receptive skills, it can be a reference for the student's level of graduation according to the CEFR.

A great effort

The documents (syllabus and series of eight books according to the new curricular structure) and actions (courses, workshops and working groups in different areas, among others) that have been produced and recorded since the new millennium show the great institutional effort to consolidate us as a leading institution worldwide in the teaching of Spanish as second language, as well as in the certification of the language and the training of teachers in SFL.

As already indicated, after a collegial work that began in 2000, in 2007 the Program of Studies in which the summative evaluation and the formative evaluation is adopted became effective. In 2011 the computerized achievement exams began to be applied. In 2014 the organization of the Spanish area was consolidated with the creation of three new departments: Academic Support, Teacher Training and Evaluation, the latter consisting of experienced SFL professors and technicians in methodology of instrument construction and psychometric analysis. Also since that year, workshops have been held again for the preparation of specification tables, validation exercises of the specification tables; workshops for the preparation of items; workshops for the preparation of tasks for the SIELE.

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[12] Report on the analysis of the results of the application of the SIELE Exam in the S1 modality in students from the Center of Teaching for Foreigners, Evaluation Department, CEPE-UNAM, May of 2018.

Likewise, among the professors of CEPE there are markers/graders, designers and reviewers of the SIELE.

Another important aspect is that in the year 2017 they also began to apply computerized extraordinary exams, computerized placement tests (grammar), and SIELE exams (in reading comprehension and listening comprehension tests) together with the final achievement exams.

Conclusions

In the CEPE, great steps have been taken to optimize the action of the evaluation in its different types. In this framework, it is evident that there is a tendency in the institution to incorporate technology throughout the evaluation system (placement exams, achievement tests and certification), which raises the need for further development among SFL professors. the competence of knowing how to evaluate with everything that implies.

In this perspective, the pending tasks and in which we will continue working are the following: standardize the procedures for the formative evaluation in the Spanish level courses; continue to give workshops among the SFL teachers of CU and Polanco in order to unify the criteria for the evaluation of oral expression and written expression; and develop new items and tasks for placement exams, final achievement exams, and extraordinary exams.

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CHAPTER 4 –

TEACHING CHALLENGES

Learning Objectives Aligned to Teaching

María Guadalupe Guerrero Calderón

Escuela Normal de Educación Física (ENEF), Morelia, Mich.
gugueca@yahoo.com.mx

Abstract

Is it the student who has to adapt to the teacher's style of teaching? Or is it the teacher who has to adapt his/her teaching strategies to the learner? For the past two or three decades we have been reading about learner-centered teaching, but it seems that we, the teachers, refuse to stop being the center of attention in the classroom.

Learning takes place in a cycle. Based on a review of the literature on learning and teaching, our purpose is to present some alternatives on how to deal with the learning process in order to align our teaching to the specific needs of the class. First, in order to reach the desired learning outcomes, we should go through three stages: diagnosis, treatment, and assessment. Second, we highlight the advantages of approaches for language teaching in the "Post-Method" era. We have to get ready to accept the downfall of methods to teach languages and to adopt a principled approach based on pedagogy and educational psychology findings, as Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian hypothesize in the second part of their publication which is labeled as "Cognitive Factor of learning" (2012). Although recent research on learning directs our attention to learner-centered approaches, we have not seen the shift in the real classroom yet. Third, relying on an outline or diagram that illustrates the learning process might become a helpful tool to clearly write learning objectives conducive to learning. Learning demands management and teaching demands the inclusion of all learning preferences and styles. Having clear learning outcomes will, progressively, result in assisting learners develop the competencies they need to use a foreign language properly and efficiently. The teaching strategies must not condition how

much learning occurs in the classroom, but learning must condition how we teach.

Key words: learner-centered, learning objectives, learning outcomes, pedagogical principles, approaches.

Introduction

The opinions about effective teaching may vary from personal ones to what a Language Department or Institution might establish from interpreting cold data (statistics) at the end of a course, the student's feeling about learning, or the effectiveness of our teaching might even be labeled according to how many students passed the course. The question here is should we tailor our classes according to the strengths we have as teachers rather than focusing on what the theories of learning and the theories of second language acquisition are telling us to do?

We have been reading about learner-centered teaching from the past two or three decades and some teachers still refuse to shift from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm. Through this brief research paper, we theorize, first, that *good* teachers must be good because they know how to diagnose, treat and assess the learning process. As a second point, we will take a look at the advantages of substituting the concept of *method* by the concept of *pedagogy*. And finally, we will examine learning objectives as well as learning outcomes to align our teaching strategies accordingly.

Through time we have tried to make our lives easier and to assure the best results, the language teaching profession has been involved in what some experts call a search for the transcendental method in the classroom that guarantees the desired learning outcomes. We only have to take a look back into the second half of the XIX century to the second half of the XX century to see how many methods were designed to teach languages. H. Douglas Brown cites a definition of a method by Edward Anthony in 1963 which, in Douglas' own words, has "*withstood the test of time*". (in Richards and Renandya, 2002, p.9). Such concept of a method, says Brown, is defined in the second of his three hierarchical elements, explicitly, *approach*, *method* and *technique* (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

> An approach, according to Anthony, was a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. Method was defined as an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based on a selected

> approach. It followed the techniques were specific classroom activities consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. (p. 9)

Although there might be some disagreements over this definition, the adaptations are quite minimal. What is important to analyze here is that, in general, experts have come to the conclusion that methods are too prescriptive, presupposing too much about a context; instead of thinking that there will someday be a method that fits all. In the first decade of the XXI century, we saw more research on the development of classroom tasks and activities that correspond with what we know about language acquisition, and which are consistent with the dynamics in the classroom itself, claims Brown (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Once we are convinced of the demise of methods in English language teaching in the "Post-Method" era, we will review a principled approach that has to do with three essential concepts (diagnosing, treating, and assessing) to align our teaching accordingly.

To start, we need to understand that there is no such thing as an "enlightened" teacher; there are just teachers that read more and are in constant updating. These teachers tend to share the characteristic of tailoring their classes underlying theoretical or pedagogical rationale that produces more optimal outcomes; the result of consistent and ordered teaching, has very high possibilities to produce meaningful learning output. Then, once we are given a syllabus that corresponds to the semester or course we are going to teach, we engage in planning, whose aim is to map out learning (not teaching yet) activities in a coherent, logical way so that students understand, learn and practice concepts and skills that will help develop all their abilities in the target language.

The three principles Douglas Brown (in Richards and Renandya, 2002) suggests are: diagnosis, treatment, and assessment. *Diagnosis*, is divided into three steps. The first recommendation is to start with an analysis of the curricula; is it centered on learners' activities or is it subject-centered? Whichever the case, the curricula content refers to the macro level of planning while the micro level has to do with the lesson itself. In the macro level, we go through a situational (context) needs analysis where we consider the country, the institution, the students' socioeconomic and educational background, the students' self-motivation, the purposes the learner has to learn the language, among other reflections such as imposed institutional restraints.

As a second step, it is advisable to pay careful attention to linguistic needs, i.e. specific language forms, functions, communicative competence, etc., which are programmed in the curricula. Consider the level of contrast between L1 and L2; anticipate to what degree interlanguage systematicity and variability can affect curriculum design. The diagnostic assessment of each student upon entering a program is of equal importance with the pedagogical options, so we can become specialists in making diagnosis. Once we have analyzed this, we carefully have to elicit language production and comprehension on the part of every student. The significant implications of the diagnostic stage of language courses impede any consideration of methods that are prepackaged for delivery to all learners. After having a clear idea of what the learners' linguistic needs are, we are ready to move into the treatment stage.

Again, you might feel tempted to think of *treatment* as the appropriate moment for the application of methods. "One can still find people arguing, for example, that if in the diagnostic phase, it was discovered that learners who need a great deal of physical activity, little metalinguistic explanations, and a strongly directive teacher, then surely the Total Physical Response (TPR) is the treatment that should be offered." Douglas Brown (in Richards and Renandya, 2002, p.14). The problem with methods is that they are too restrictive and the acquisition process of a second language needs a multiple-treatment, continues Douglas Brown, a multiphase approach to language learning, without discarding that certain learners might benefit from occasional doses of TPR of course. The best way, then, to choose the appropriate treatment is to think to what extent certain technique promotes a desired goal.

An interesting example to reflect on is to imagine that the teacher needs to foster or to strengthen intrinsic motivation in the students. The principle of intrinsic motivation in psychology implies more than a few natural results that act as a *test* of a technique's potential for creating and/or sustaining intrinsic motivation. The following checklist represents a facet of the principles of intrinsic motivation suggested by Douglas Brown (in Richards and Renandya, 2002. p.15).

1. Does the technique appeal to the genuine interest of your students? Is it relevant to their lives?
2. Is the technique presented in a positive, enthusiastic manner?
3. Are students clearly aware of the purpose of the technique?

4. Do students have some choice in: a) choosing some aspects of the technique? And/or b) determining how they go about fulfilling the goals of the technique?
5. Does the technique encourage students to discover for themselves certain principles or rules (rather than simply being "told")?
6. Does it encourage students in some way to develop or use effective strategies of learning communication?
7. Does it contribute –at least to some extent –to students' ultimate autonomy and independence (from you)?
8. Does it foster cooperative negotiation with other students in the class? Is it a truly interactive technique?
9. Does the technique present a "reasonable challenge"?
10. Do students receive enough feedback on their performance (from each other or from you)?

One can easily infer from the principles above that there is no language teaching method that specifically deals with this psychological principle (intrinsic motivation) that we took as an example. This is a far more sophisticated and effective option designed to accomplish the goal of fostering intrinsic motivation once you have diagnosed. Another effective way of looking at the relation between approach and treatment, asserts Douglas Brown (in Richards and Renandya, 2002, p.16-17), is the next list of principles of language learning and teaching. (Each principle is highlighted in bold).

1.   **LOWER INHIBITIONS**
Play guessing and communication games; role-plays and skits; sing songs; use group work; laugh with your students; have them share fears in small groups.

2.   **ENCOURAGE RISK TAKING**
Praise students for making sincere efforts to try out language; use fluency exercises where errors are not corrected at that time; etc.

3.   **BUILD STUDENTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE**
Tell students explicitly (verbally and nonverbally) that you believe in them; have them make lists of their strengths; etc.

4.   **HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**
Remind them about the rewards for learning English; describe (or have students look up) jobs that require English; play down the final

examination in favor of helping students see the rewards for themselves beyond the final exam.

5. PROMOTE COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Direct students to share their knowledge; play down competition among students; get your class to think about themselves as a team; do a considerable amount of small-group work.

6. ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO USE RIGHT-BRAIN PROCESSING

Use movies and audios in class; have students read passages rapidly; do skimming exercises; do rapid free-writes; do oral fluency exercises where the object is to get students to talk (or write) a lot without being corrected.

7. PROMOTE AMBIGUITY TOLERANCE

Encourage students to ask you, and each other questions when they do not understand something; keep your theoretical explanations very simple and brief; deal with just a few rules at a time; occasionally you can resort to translation into native language to clarify a word or meaning.

8. HELP STUDENTS USE THEIR INTUITION

Praise them for good guesses; do not always give explanations of errors –let a correction be enough; correct only selected errors, preferably those that interfere with learning.

9. GET STUDENTS TO MAKE THEIR MISTAKES WORK FOR THEM

Record students' oral production and get them to identify errors; let students catch and correct each other's errors; do not always give them the correct form; encourage students to make lists of their common errors and to work on them on their own.

10. GET STUDENTS TO SET THEIR OWN GOALS

Explicitly encourage or direct students to go beyond the classroom goals; have them make lists of what they will accomplish on their own in a particular week; get students to make specific time commitments at home to study the language; give "extra credit" work.

As with the principles of intrinsic motivation, the principles that have to do with learning and teaching are not found in a single method, instead pedagogy principles based on the theories of learning and how we grab and construct knowledge are more consistent and they directly lead us to practical classroom techniques. These ten maxims can direct teachers to sound and reliable classroom practices for the desired results. We shall now proceed to the *assessment* part of this analysis.

Lastly, how do we know if we are on the right way to accomplish the desired outcomes? The requiem for methods has, fortunately, moved into a new domain of language pedagogy with improved approaches and techniques for assessing students' progress.

In the past decades, we were accustomed to summative, end-of-term or end-of-unit tests alone, luckily *formative evaluation* (ongoing assessment of learners' doing as a course is progressing) is becoming more and more accepted because it is more informative and it fits a more diverse type of students.

Nowadays, portfolios, oral production inventories, cooperative student-student techniques and other testing rubrics give us a wider view of how each student has progressed in a course of study. With formative assessment techniques, teachers can make appropriate pedagogical changes in the middle of the course (or whenever necessary) to reach goals more effectively. We are not neglecting or disdaining summative assessment, but we are sure that it might be too late to try something new at the end of the unit or the end of the course. Besides, a final written or oral test would have to be very long in order to measure what we have seen in a whole unit or a whole course of study.

We agree with Douglas Brown (in Richards and Renandya, 2002), that summative assessment should continue to exist, but not as the only source of evaluation. It is then smart to think that if we see the learning process as consecutive stages in progress, assessment would have to happen in a similar way –a process of documenting, in measurable terms, the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the learner. Then, formal as well as informal assessment will have to coexist to balance and fulfill the needs of teaching and learning, as well as institutional needs. We both, teachers/learners and institutions require to constantly verify learning.

Over the years, teaching styles have changed in a significant manner. In a traditional teaching classroom, we can still see techniques that go from

memorizing to reciting chunks of information and, the most surprising thing is that this seems enough for some teachers, convinced that *that* is learning. We want to make it clear that we have nothing against memorizing and reciting information due to the fact that these actions can serve certain purposes throughout the learning process, specifically when talking about lower order thinking skills, but it is time to accept that a modern way of doing things involves more interactive approaches if we want to reach higher order thinking skills, which are necessary for analytical, inductive, deductive, critical thinking, among other kinds of reasoning. Hence, the scientific and technological advances must be taken into consideration.

Learner's centered approaches to teaching do not employ a single teaching method; they focus on what the students are learning or are supposed to learn. We are talking about students who take their share of responsibility for their own learning. As for pedagogical learning principles science has also made interesting contributions.

To fully understand learner-centered teaching, it is essential to start with teacher-centered approaches, which are strictly related to the behaviorist principle. It theorizes that learners are passive and become active by reacting to stimuli in the environment. This is why the teacher's role is to simulate a context which stimulates the desired conduct and discourages the ones that are believed to be undesirable. Such role makes the teacher the center of attention. Conversely, the learner-centered approach presupposes that learners are active beings who have unlimited potential for individual development. In consequence, the individual learner rather than the body of information is the center of teaching. But, in order to get to the learner better, we must consider different learning theories.

Defining learning is definitely not an easy task. There is not a single definition that can be completely accepted by all the theorists, researchers, and education professionals. Nevertheless, we can all agree that, from a cognitive perspective, learning has to do with the learners' beliefs and higher and lower thinking skills. In the second half of the twentieth century, cognitivism appeared as a reaction to behaviorism. Since then and up to now we can find definitions that are quite similar.

An analysis that is worth seeing is the one that Schunk (1997) offers as a result of detailed breakdown. He cites a definition by Shuell (1996) which states that *learning* is a long-lasting change of conduct or change in the capacity of conducting yourself in a given way as a result of the practice of

other forms of experience. Schunk breaks down his interpretation into three criteria. The first point is that when somebody becomes able to do something different from what he/she did, there is *learning*. Learning demands the modification of present actions or the development of new ones. From a cognitive point of view, he continues, we do not observe learning directly, but its products; thus, learning is *inferential*. We can assess people's learning by scrutinizing their verbal expression, their writing, and their conduct.

The second criterion is that the *change* of conduct *persists*. This aspect of the definition excludes temporary behavioral changes (let us say, slurred speech because of drugs, alcohol, or fatigue); they are temporary because once the cause does not exist, neither does the conduct. Schunk (1997) comments that this is controversial because no one has agreed on how long a change of conduct should persist to be classified as *learned*. What is clear and accepted by almost all the theorists is that, with a high level of probability, changes that last only a few seconds do not imply learning.

The third and last point of analysis is that learning occurs as a result of *practice* or as a result of *other forms of experience* (observational learning). Conduct changes that seem to be determined genetically; for example, when a child crawls or stands straight as a result of physical development are excluded. Nonetheless, the distinction between genetic heritage and maturation, on one side, and learning, on the other, is not very clear since it might be possible that the organism is predisposed to act in a certain way or that the real development of particular conducts might depend on a sensible environment, such is the case of language, for example. It is only when the vocal system matures that it is capable of uttering sounds, but articulated words are only acquired through interaction with others.

We can infer from the earlier analysis that the interpretations of learning might vary depending on what theory we are studying, i.e. are we examining a behaviorist, a sociocultural, a communitarian, a constructivist, a holistic, or cognitive theory (only to mention some), etc. to understand learning? What we cannot deny is that the functions the brain performs to learn are intrinsically related to the role of the memory in the process of acquiring or integrating knowledge. This is why, as we mentioned before, a single teaching method is not enough to get the learning outcomes that we are looking for when teaching. We confirm, then, that approaches and pedagogy itself come to the rescue of the teaching practice and how

important it is to state clear learning objectives and learning outcomes from the moment we start planning our course.

Since the very beginning of our professional practice, we teachers start building a kind of catalogue of activities and dynamics that we prefer and we start classifying them according to the class stage or the content we are teaching. This catalogue could be compared to a figurative *backpack* of tools to be used and to be implemented according to our teaching styles and what the institution, the course book, the learning context, or the learners themselves demand from us. The real question here is how to adapt all these tools and where and how to squeeze them in the design of the lesson plan so we can get the best results when it is time for assessment. This is the moment when our pedagogical knowledge on how learning takes place becomes helpful. In the upcoming paragraphs, we will present the differences between a competency and a learning objective, as well as the distinction between a learning objective and a learning outcome.

In teaching languages, we are familiar with the four abilities that students have to develop to become successful speakers and users of the target language. We know that reading and listening are receptive skills while writing and speaking are productive ones and we also know that in order to cultivate them, different strategies have to be learned and used. These four abilities must definitely be assessed at certain moments to make sure how much they have evolved through the course or semester we are teaching. In other words, we need to verify the level of competency the students have acquired once certain period has passed. The definition of competency may vary from author to author, but they all go from the set of knowledge, skills, and experience necessary when performing certain activity, to attitudes, values, motivation and beliefs people need to be successful in a job.

Now that you have reviewed what competency means, we are sure that you immediately thought about the level descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and you are right, they describe the level of competency students must reach after certain number of hours of instruction in the target language. Acquired competencies are, then, one form of verifying that we have stated clear learning objectives which, one by one, have helped us reach the final purpose, i.e. the learning outcome.

To make sure we are drawing right conclusions, we will examine learning objectives and learning outcomes separately. Learning objectives are descriptions of what the learner should be able to accomplish at the end of a learning period, they are specific, assessable statements written in behavioral terms. We usually find them stated in the teacher's guide, as well as in the student's book.

Independently of how you see things, we all can understand that a learning period can be as short as a lesson or, even, as short as an activity can last. From our experience, every single activity the teacher decides to do and each activity in the course book (if we use one) should underlie a learning principle, which, little by little conducts us through the learning process from the easiest to the most difficult aspects to master the most complex cognitive domains.

As specified in the cognitive domain of the "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the classification of educational goals" (Bloom, 2008), a learning outcome is what results from the learning process. Learning outcomes are stated as measurable achievements on the side of the learners. But they should specify the minimum acceptable standard for a student to be able to pass a module or course, which is known as the threshold level.

To summarize, what we have presented here is that competencies help us judge the ability of the learners to do something successfully and efficiently. They are most frequently evaluated after students have reached a certain level. On the other hand, learning objectives are statements that specifically define the expected goals in the curriculum, a course, lesson or activity in terms of demonstrable skills or knowledge that will be acquired as a result of instruction. Finally, learning outcomes describe significant and essential learning that learners have achieved, and can unquestionably demonstrate at the end of a course or program, something similar to the accumulation and integration of successful learning experiences directed at forming competent second language speakers and users.

To further illustrate what we have just brought to light, we will look at an adaptation of Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives of the cognitive domain.

Creating
- The student can put elements together to form a functional whole, create a new product or point of view : **assemble, generate, construct, design, develop, formulate, rearrange, rewrite, organize, devise.**

Evaluating
- The student can make judgments and justify decisions: **appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, evaluate, debate, measure, select, test, verify**

Analyzing
- The student can distinguish between parts, how they relate to each other, and to the overall structure and purpose: **compare, contract, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, question, classify, distinguish, experiment**

Applying
- The student can use information in a new way: **demonstrate, dramatize, interpret, solve, use, illustrate, convert, discover, discuss, prepare**

Understanding
- The Student can construct meaning from oral, written and graphic messages: **interpret, exemplify, classify, summarize, infer, compare, explain, paraphrase, discuss**

Remembering
- The student can recognize and recall relevant knowledge from long-term memory: **define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, reproduce**

The learning process illustrated in Bloom's taxonomy is quite simple to follow. The lower order thinking skills (LOTS) are represented at the bottom of the diagram while the higher order thinking skills (HOTS) are represented at the top. The verbs in the pyramid exemplify the stages of learning to complete the learning cycle. On the right, you can read a brief explanation of what the learners are supposed to be able to do, which are comparable to the learning outcomes we want to reach. These learning outcomes combined with higher steps of the pyramid are little by little defining the competencies we talked about earlier. Finally, the verbs in bold are classified as action verbs, which are measurable and observable and help us design the learning objectives.

Conclusions

To conclude, traditional teaching techniques such as repetition or memorization of information, which belong to the LOTS according to Bloom's taxonomy adaptation, are only the beginning of the learning cycle. If we intend to form autonomous learners, we have to go through all the cognitive domains (from LOTS to HOTS). As teachers, we have to constantly verify and retrieve students' previous knowledge as a way to assess how much they already know when we present something *new*. This means that most of the times we do not necessarily have to start a topic from zero, but we can continue to help developing learners' skills from where they are to make sure they acquire the competencies courses are designed to. We have to assume that learning depends on our acquiring the capacity to constantly diagnose, treat, and assess our students' progress.

A second conclusion has to do with us accepting the downfall of methods as the only way to guide our teaching. Although most methods to teach languages have withstood the test of the scientific method, they are too prescriptive and not necessarily present, form in diverse contexts, or address to learning preferences or styles of learners. Pedagogy and educational psychology offer a wider range of principles that favor learning.

Finally, relying on an outline or diagram that represents the succession of the learning process might be an excellent tool to guide the design of our lessons and to prioritize learners' needs. As with most things, designing our lesson plans around learning requires balance, we need to understand when a traditional method strategy works best and when it is right to try new and innovative approaches. That *backpack* full of tools that we have collected through time has to be updated. You cannot justify the presence

of certain activities in a lesson plan only because they work well or because students seem to enjoy them; you have to really pick them because they underlie a learning principle that leads you to reach the ultimate goal, which is meaningful and effective learning. Having clear learning objectives, will take us to select our best learning strategies and will shape our teaching to make all the pieces fit. Teaching strategies must not condition learning, it should be the other way around; learning must condition our teaching.

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Challenges to Japanese Language Learning and Teaching: A Case Study of the Self-Access Center of the National School of Advanced Studies Morelia, Mexico

Rie Arimura

Escuela Nacional de Estudios Superiores, Unidad Morelia, UNAM.
rie_arimura@enesmorelia.unam.mx

Dalia E. Camacho Jiménez

Escuela Nacional de Estudios Superiores, Unidad Morelia, UNAM.
filoshi@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper addresses the experiences we have had as Japanese language students and teachers in the Self-Access Center of the National School of Advanced Studies Morelia Campus, Mexico. The first part is from our students' perspective. According to a survey we conducted, Japanese animation, popularly known as *anime*, is a key factor to awaken curiosity and interest in both Japanese culture and language. The main challenges that our students face while learning the language are the complexity of the writing system and the enormous differences in the grammatical structures and vocabulary in comparison to western languages. The second part states the instructors' point of view. We clarify the concept of "autonomous learning," which is the educational model of our self-access center. We also highlight why today learner autonomy has gained such importance. Then, we rethink how this learning model can be promoted and how to adapt our teaching according to our social, cultural, and educational environment.

Keywords: autonomous learning, Japanese, students and teachers experience, motivation to study Japanese, challenges

Which is the most difficult language to learn? The answer to this question depends on the linguistic distance between the language we are trying to learn and our mother tongue, in addition to the knowledge of other languages one might have. Considering this, learning a completely different language such as Japanese poses a great challenge for native speakers of western languages. The main difficulty lies in the broad differences in both the written system and the grammatical structure, combined with vocabulary that does not share the same etymological origins, with the exception of a group of words introduced later from foreign languages or created recently under western influence. According to the Foreign Service Institute of the United States, English speakers learning similar languages requires between 24 and 30 weeks (600-750 classroom hours), while learning Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean takes around 88 weeks (2200 classroom hours).[1] We believe that this estimate might be similar for our Spanish-speaking students, given our experience.

For us, the people supposed to give academic advice in the self-access center instead of teaching the language as if it were a class, these are the questions we want to answer: How useful and effective can be the "self-learning" educational model for a language that requires numerous hours of on-site course to reach proficiency? How should we adapt our advising hours, taking into account the language resources available in Morelia, as well as the diversity of ages and profiles of students? In this paper, we explore these questions from two different points of view: as students and as advisors, based on our experience in our school's self-access center.

Motivation and difficulties when learning Japanese

After surveying our students, it became clear that most of the people who start learning Japanese do it because of *anime*. Japanese cartoons tend to be the first contact with the language and the main motivation to learn it. Through *anime,* we get to learn about Japanese culture, language, values and more. But no matter how much a student loves Japanese, this will not cancel out the complexity of learning an utterly different foreign language.

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[1] "FSI's Experience with Language Learning".
https://www.state.gov/m/fsi/sls/c78549.htm (Date of access: 21 March 2019)

We have identified three main difficulties. After surveying and interviewing some students, we found that the greatest difficulty is reading and writing. Japanese writing has three different systems: two syllabic ones, known as *kana,* and the *kanji* system. *Kana* is a compound of two sets of 46 characters that each represent syllabic sounds with the exception of the vowels and the "n", "shi", and "tsu" sounds, among others. At the beginning, it is imperative to learn how to write and read the 92 *hiragana* and *katakana* symbols. This is the first challenge we encounter. Unlike Spanish or English, the order in which you write a letter matters, and it is important to learn the correct way. This allows us to write legible and well-proportioned letters. Furthermore, it makes learning new *kanji* easier due to the replicability of the writing patterns both share.

After learning to write and read *kana* students face a new challenge: *kanji*. These Chinese origin characters were incorporated into the Japanese writing system around the 5th century A.D. (Hirakareta rekishi kyoiku no kai, 2007: 65). Each of them represents an idea, which constitutes ideograms. For example, the character for water is 水 and in reading it can be represented in *hiragana* as みず or in Latin characters, "*mizu*."

Nonetheless, learning *kanji* gets even more challenging because you have to learn the *kakikata* (way of writing) or *kakijun* (stroke order). You have to link a new image to a word or idea, and at the same time you are expected to learn the different readings of a single character. To do that, we have to consider the fact that when putting two characters together, new words are formed for which the reading of each *kanji* usually changes.

Readings are divided in *on-yomi* and *kun-yomi*, the first coming from the Chinese pronunciation or sound and the latter representing old Japanese. The reason for this is that when the decision to incorporate *kanji* was made, they already had their own language, so instead of changing how to refer to things they already had words for, they decided to preserve both readings for the same meaning. In addition, writing is not the only challenge we encounter. Some students also mentioned the difficulty they have structuring sentences, because in Japanese the verb goes last, with the exception of the anastrophe.[2]

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[2] Anastrophe refers to inversion of the usual syntactical order of words for rhetorical effect.

Furthermore, verb conjugation determines whether a sentence is affirmative or negative, and the time in which the action is occurring. Nevertheless, this is not as hard as writing and reading because even if one has a medium level grammar comprehension and a fairly decent vocabulary, if you do not learn the equivalent *kanji* for that medium level of domain, reading becomes impossible and therefore you cannot be considered fluent. On average, in order to read an ordinary newspaper you must know around 2,000 *kanji*. This is why even if a student has B2 level grammar, if they don't learn *kanji,* they will not be able to read. The difficulty of memorizing *kanji* is one of the reasons why many students abandon learning Japanese.

This takes us to the second challenge we have identified: Being a language that requires more hours of study, making progress takes time and can discourage many students. After a few lessons, a student who is learning French, for example, can read, write and say "*je suis étudiant*" but with the same amount of time, the average student of Japanese will probably just be able to say its equivalent in Japanese "*watashi wa gakusei desu*" o "*gakusei desu*," and maybe a very dedicated student, who spends extra hours studying, could manage to also write in *hiragana* "わたしはがくせいです" or "がくせいです" but without extra study it is practically impossible to expect that the student will be able to use the corresponding kanji after the same amount of study hours. The *kanji* version would be the following: "私は学生です" or "学生です."

The third and final challenge is remembering what you have learned because living outside Asia it can be very hard to become immersed in the language. That is why it is necessary to constantly invest time in practicing and reviewing what we have learned so far. We have realized that when students stop practicing during the summer breaks, which last a month or two, they usually forget how to write *hiragana,* and for this reason they cannot make real progress in the language.

Other students mentioned the difficulty of learning vocabulary and grammar. Aside from "*gairaigo*" (words from other languages) and commonly known words like "*sushi*" or "*sayonara*" we rarely hear Japanese and vocabulary that resemble ours. Let's take table 1 as an example. In French, "no" is "*non*", in Spanish "*no*", in Portuguese "*não*", in German "*nein*" but in Japanese, it's either "*iie*" or "*uun*". Of course, this will not apply to every word and every language, but it is part of what can make it easier or more difficult to learn. For example, in French, Spanish

and English "red" is a bit similar but it's completely different in Japanese and Portuguese.

Table 1. It's possible to find similarities in some words of different languages sometimes.

Spanish	French	English	Portuguese	German	Japanese
No	Non	No	Não	Nein	Iie / Uun
Rojo	Rouge	Red	Vermelho	Rot	Aka
De nada	De rien	You're welcome	De nada	Bitteschön	Douitashimashite

If we cannot connect the sound of a new word to a concept we already know, we can think of it as a synonym that sounds completely different. For some, it can be easier not to find a relationship for new vocabulary in an already known language.

Regarding grammar, as we mentioned before, Japanese requires us to construct sentences in a different order. For example, the sentence "*I eat rice*" turns into "*I rice eat*," "*Watashi ha gohan wo tabemasu*." Now, this was a very simple sentence but as grammar gets more complex it can be very confusing and mentally challenging.

 Another interesting aspect of Japanese that differentiates it from either English or Spanish is that in order to say "*I don't eat rice*" instead of adding a word that indicates the negation, in this case "*don't*," we have to modify the verb to turn it into a negative verb. For example, "*tabemasu*" = Eat → "*tabemasen*" = don't eat. This also happens to indicate time, "*tabemasu*" can be either present or future while "*tabemashita*" represents a past action. These small details are some challenges every Japanese student faces. The use of intransitive and transitive verbs is also difficult to grasp. The former indicates that the subject of the sentence performs the action by itself (e.g. *Doa ga aku* ドアが開く The door opens.); the latter shows that the action is executed by the subject on the object (e.g. *Doa wo akeru* ドアを開ける− Somebody opens the door.) Similarly, the use of honorific verbs, which fall into three categories: respectful, humble and polite forms, can be fairly complex. For instance, the respectful form of the verb *miru* 見る (see) is *goranninaru* ご覧になる, while the humble form is *haiken-suru* 拝見する.

In the following section, we want to analyze how teaching and learning this language has taken place in our self-access center, also known as the

multimedia center, in order to conclude our proposal on how to improve both processes.

Definition of autonomous language learning

As mentioned above, the educational model of our self-access center is characterized by autonomous learning. The term "learner autonomy" was first coined by Henri Holec. According to him, it refers to "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." He explains it as follows:

> To take charge of one's learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of this learning; i.e.:
> - determining the objectives;
> - defining the contents and progressions;
> - selecting methods and techniques to be used;
> - monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.);
> - evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1981: 3).

The success of education depends on the responsibility students take for their own learning, controlling their language study according to their personal needs and goals. This educational concept is often confused with "self-taught learning." However, "autonomous learning" is neither studying alone nor choosing, deciding, and planning alone, but having the support of teachers, classmates, friends, and institutions, avoiding isolation in learning processes. This educational model aims to cultivate the ability to learn autonomously through "positive interdependence," which means collaborative learning to achieve shared goals together with members of a group or community (Okuzaki and Narumi, 2018: 57). Under this educational model promoting learner autonomy, the teacher ceases to be the "knowledge authority," taking on new roles as "facilitator," "information counselor," "learning administrator," and "consultant who deals with problems of emotional and social dimensions" (Cranton, 1992; Scarcella and Oxford, 1992).

It is also worth mentioning a similar concept called "self-guided learning." This is a term of andragogy,[3] namely, adult-oriented teaching methods and continuing education. Leslie Dickinson applied this concept to refer to education in a second foreign language. According to the state of autonomy, the degree has been classified into the following categories:

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[3] Andragogy means adult education or the method of teaching adult learners.

"self-instruction," "self-direction," and "autonomy" (Dickinson, 1987). But today, there has been a growing recognition of the role of the other, in particular the teacher, thus giving greater importance to mutual decision making.

Why is autonomy important in current education?

Recently, a system that allows the development of students' autonomy is promoted at various educational levels and in many areas, instead of relying only on traditional classroom teaching. This trend exists for different reasons. One of the most important is that planning a language course before it starts might not be appropriate for learners. The ideal thing would be to adapt the course according to the level of language skills, the environment, and the needs of each student during the course. In addition, the content that can be covered in a single course is limited and does not meet individual needs. But it is not feasible to open several specific courses to meet each student's level. Furthermore, today it has become important to identify "the particularity of the individual learner" and to give personalized attention according to the needs and profile of each student, learning environment, and social background (Umeda, 2005: 59-77).

How feasible is the autonomous learning model in our context?

The autonomous learning model arises in part from the need to complement classroom courses. However, in the case of Morelia, Michoacán State University is the only public institution that offers basic Japanese courses due to a lack of teachers. Many students cannot take these courses because of the limited class schedule. In addition, the pre-intermediate course is not always offered because it does not reach the minimum number of students.

In the case of our self-access center, the majority of Japanese language students are at a basic level and do not take regular Japanese classes. So far, there have been students who studied the first steps of the Japanese language on their own, using books, applications or other materials available online. Unfortunately, the problem of self-taught learning is that they learn basic elements poorly (i.e. the order and proportions of writing). Once they get accustomed to incorrect ways of writing *hiragana* and *katakana* syllabaries, it is difficult to fix errors and correct what they have

learned. Sometimes, the distribution of lines and spaces of writing are incorrect; the basic order of lines in *hiragana* and *katakana* is applicable to learning to write *kanji*, which are characterized by a much more complex structure. Learning the basics wrong can lead to more serious errors when trying to learn more complex parts of written Japanese.

Moreover, the most commonly used Japanese textbooks in Mexico (e.g., *Minna no Nihongo* and *Genki*) are designed to be used in face to face classes and we do not really have proper materials for the students to learn Japanese autonomously. Although the first one has a grammatical volume in Spanish, and the second one is a bilingual edition with grammatical explanations and translations in English, both textbooks require further clarifications that only a teacher can provide. Learning without academic support can discourage students because they cannot answer questions easily, which can make them feel stuck. To improve a foreign language, besides correcting pronunciation and continuous conversation exercises, it is necessary to address issues in syntax and semantics that arise when translating Japanese words into a western language. That is, although the first meaning of the word matches, a second one and a third one are no longer the same.[4] In order to use expressions correctly, it is necessary to learn different nuances of each word that are not explained in detail in the standard textbooks, and in many cases, it is also important to have cultural explanations too.

In summary, self-taught learning is not recommended for students at the basic level. Taking courses would be more appropriate if they aim to achieve proficiency in Japanese. It is precisely for this reason that since we began our counseling on Japanese language in 2015, we divided our students into groups according to their language levels, giving class one hour per week. Up to now, the autonomy exercised by students has been limited to choosing educational materials such as children's stories as well as songs that they want to learn.

There are, however, broad possibilities for promoting autonomous learning. Holec, for example, classifies autonomous exercises into three categories: 1) class-type learning; 2) non-class type learning; 3) combined type. The first one refers to learning based on educational material designed by the teacher according to the profile and needs of students and

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[4] To cite an example, the adjectives "*akarui* 明るい" and "light" share the meaning of "they have abundant light." But when the Japanese word *akarui* is applied as a qualifier of a person, it means "vivid" and "cheerful" (Nishiuchi, 2013: 43-48).

guided by the same teacher. It is a collaborative method that allows the full participation of students in the direction of learning, thus increasing their responsibility in the administration of educational programs. The student decides when, where, with whom, how often and how long he/she will study, and also participates in the evaluation of his/her own progress. The "non-class type learning" is, instead, under absolute control of students. Learning is not limited by teacher's advices or didactic materials. Students are encouraged to develop the ability to decide on their own educational programs. However, there are limitations in terms of both the availability of materials and the learning environment (Holec, quoted by Abe, 2013: 1-9).

In our case, it is better to apply the first model, "class-type learning." The main obstacle, however, lies in students' lack of understanding of the educational policy of "learner autonomy". If there is no mutual understanding, autonomous learning can neither be developed nor valued. Therefore, it is necessary to create an information meeting so that both students and their families (because in the case of the Japanese language students, several students are underage) understand this educational philosophy. It is also useful to organize workshops for students to share their concerns and experiences.

Conclusion

Finally, how should we adapt our counseling according to the social and cultural environment as well as the diversity in age and student profile?

1. The best thing would be that our advice in the self-access center is a complement to the course. Otherwise, the pace of progress will be very slow. This can cause students to become demotivated to study Japanese. However, as long as there are no Japanese courses in our school, we should continue class-type training. Unlike other languages, we cannot receive new students performing below the basic level during the whole semester, since the content of each session is not dedicated to answering specific questions, but to teaching general knowledge of the language. It is important to think of ways in which we can boost student autonomy both in the selection of didactic materials and topics to address, as well as in the control and evaluation of their learning. It is necessary to create an informative meeting or workshops to promote the educational philosophy of "autonomous learning," so that this method becomes effective.

2. It is important to increase students' responsibility in learning, since several students drop out of the language consulting throughout the semester because it is not a compulsory subject. Moreover, the period between semesters and vacation breaks do not favor our students because most of them stop studying the language and forget what they have learned. Therefore, it is advisable to plan strategies to take advantage of these periods.

3. Japanese language students vary in age from elementary school children to adults. The difference in age is not a problem, since the effectiveness of counseling depends mainly on the study habits of each student as well as his/her motivation to learn.

4. *Manga* and *anime,* because of which most of our students are interested in Japanese, can be used as teaching materials as long as specific objectives are established in each session.

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