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Editorial
Carlo Granados-Beltrán*

We are pleased to present a new edition of this journal. It is evident that new times bring new challenges and the educational field is not the exception. For this issue, four of the researchers approached topics connected to one of the 21st century skills, named initiative and self-direction (Trilling & Fadel, 2009); these skills imply student's capacity to set up attainable goals, to monitor and organize tasks according to priority, to be a self-directed learner, and to show commitment to life-long learning, among other skills. Our first contribution, by **Ramírez**, explored through action research ways to promote autonomy in university students, within an English course. Secondly, **García & Durán** present an inquiry about the influence students' learning experiences have on their perception as learners – or self-efficacy – and how they contributed to their reluctant attitudes towards the learning of English. In this same line, but focusing more, on the 21st century skill related to teachers and learning to create together, is **Carreño & Hernández's** contribution about co-planning and its implications for teachers' practices and their professional development.

The second set of articles is linked to specific features emerging from language skill work. **García-Ponce & Mora-Pablo**, from Mexico, focused on the ways in which the beliefs about providing corrective feedback when students engage in oral interaction in a foreign language. Additionally, **Fallas & Chaves** also decided to go beyond the matters of unity, coherence, cohesion and accurate syntax to approach the issue of students' authorial voice when writing academic texts. **Coates, Gorham & Nicholas**, in Italy, proposed the application of phonics instruction to particular phoneme/grapheme decoding, and therefore, second language learning. Last but not least, and responding to the need of delving into the ways in which the postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001) can be put into practice in the local contexts, **Bautista's** study aimed to characterize the development of socio-cultural awareness in an EFL university classroom.

We at GiST Journal hope our reader will find in our contributors' articles not only practical application for their own classroom context, but also a source of inspiration to share their research endeavours in their classrooms and institutions so that we could continue building a community of learning in the fields of bilingual education and language teaching.

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*Carlo Granados-Beltrán holds an MA in British Cultural Studies and ELT from the University of Warwick and an MA in Applied Linguistics to TEFL from Universidad Distrital. Currently, he is doing a PhD in Education at Universidad Santo Tomás. He is a teacher researcher at the BA in Bilingual Education at ÚNICA. He has been teacher of the Language Department at Universidad Central, the BA programmes in Spanish and Languages and Spanish and English at Universidad Pedagógica Nacional and the BA in Modern Languages at Universidad Javeriana. Also, he has been guest lecturer for the MA in Language Teaching at UPTC.

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Promotion of Learner Autonomy in a Freshmen's English Course at a Colombian University[1]

Promoción de la Autonomía del Aprendiz en un Curso de Inglés para Estudiantes de Primer Año en una Universidad Colombiana.

Alexander Ramírez[2]*
Universidad del Valle, Colombia

Abstract

This paper presents the results of an Action-Research cycle conducted at Universidad del Valle, which aimed at fostering learner autonomy in freshmen from a foreign languages program, within an English course. The study established the freshmen's entrance profile regarding learner autonomy, and implemented a course based on the development of autonomous behaviors. Finally, an exit profile was established to measure the impact of the intervention. The results show significant progress in the development of some behaviors and suggest that this type of initiatives need to be planned in a long-term basis.

Key words: Independent learning, learner autonomy, learning strategies, self-access centers, autonomous behaviors.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un ciclo de Investigación-Acción llevada a cabo en la Universidad del Valle, cuyo objetivo fue fomentar la

autonomía en estudiantes de primer semestre de lenguas extranjeras, en un curso de inglés. El estudio estableció el perfil de entrada de los estudiantes en cuanto a su autonomía como aprendices, y se implementó un curso basado en el desarrollo de comportamientos autónomos. Finalmente se estableció el perfil de salida para medir el impacto de la intervención. Los resultados muestran un progreso significativo en el desarrollo de algunos de estos comportamientos y sugieren que estas propuestas deben ser planificadas a largo plazo.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje independiente, autonomía del aprendiz, estrategias de aprendizaje, centros de auto acceso, comportamientos autónomos.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta os resultados de um ciclo de Pesquisa-Ação realizada na Universidade do Valle, cujo objetivo foi fomentar a autonomia em estudantes de primeiro semestre de línguas estrangeiras, em um curso de inglês. O estudo estabeleceu o perfil de entrada dos estudantes em relação a sua autonomia como aprendizes, e foi implementado um curso baseado no desenvolvimento de comportamentos autónomos. Finalmente, se estabeleceu o perfil de saída para medir o impacto da intervenção. Os resultados mostram um progresso significativo no desenvolvimento de alguns destes comportamentos e sugerem que estas propostas devem ser planejadas ao longo prazo.

Palavras chave: aprendizagem independente, autonomia do aprendiz, estratégias de aprendizagem, centros de auto acesso, comportamentos autônomos.

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Introduction

The development of learner autonomy constitutes a powerful tool to overcome social, cultural and institutional constraints that might interfere in the learning process (Benson & Voller, 1997; Abril, 2014). An autonomous learner exerts total control over what, how and when he wants to learn, and therefore will manage to surpass any obstacle that prevents him from reaching his goals. In the field of language learning, autonomy becomes doubly important, as you need to be an independent learner as well as an independent user of the language (Pennycook, 1997). On these grounds, the concept of autonomy has become a major topic in Applied Linguistics research, as societies and institutions have embraced it as an important and desired educational goal (Benson, 2001; Benson & Voller, 1997; Sinclair, 2000; Paiva & Braga, 2008). Such is the case of *Universidad del Valle*, and more particularly of its School of Language Sciences, where the desire for autonomy is formally stated in the different official documents from the program curriculum, as well as in the institutional PEI[3].

Bearing this in mind, a research was conducted through the design of two basic English courses, based on the promotion and development of autonomy, for the Foreign Languages Program, as well as the implementation and evaluation of the first course. The research had a twofold purpose: on the one hand, to give projection to previous local studies (Hernández & Quesada, 1999; Cárdenas et al., 2001, Cárdenas, 2006; Areiza, 2010), around the concept of autonomy from a theoretical perspective, and materialize an applicable didactic proposal; and on the other hand, to fulfill the need to form autonomous learners, as evidenced in various studies (Gómez & Hurtado, 2012; González, 2012; Gómez, G., 2012), also local, carried out under the Self-evaluation process for the accreditation of the program.

Throughout this paper, I intend to present a snapshot of the research design and the results eventually obtained. But beyond that, I put forward a frank reflection on some aspects, difficulties, and challenges to consider when it comes to transforming behaviors and motivate students to become autonomous subjects, hoping that this experience may serve as a tool to language teachers interested in such intricate task.

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[3] Spanish acronym for: Institution's Educational Project

Theoretical Framework

Autonomy and its Importance in Language Learning

Although the concept of autonomy is difficult to be encompassed in a short definition, several authors agree that, in general terms, autonomy in learning refers to the learner's possibility of managing and making decisions about his/her own learning process (Benson & Voller, 1997; Dam, 1995; Sinclair, 2000). The prominence given to autonomy in the field of foreign language education goes hand in hand with the rise of the communicative approach. This latter implies a change in the roles of the teacher and the students, as well as a new conception of the language and, therefore, a new understanding of the way to teach it and learn it. On this grounds, Paiva & Braga (2008) state that "in the seventies, with the emergence of a new concept of language – language as communication – and the emphasis on the cognitive processes, autonomy appeared as a central feature in FL teaching" (p. 442). The importance of autonomy lies in the fact that it equips the student to overcome obstacles of different nature that may rise between him and his learning goals. In language learning specifically, learner autonomy is especially important given that the learner of a language needs to develop autonomy to learn and autonomy to use the language (Pennycook, 1997).

Learner Training for the Development of Autonomy

For the purposes of this study, learner training was deemed a paramount element in the promotion of learner autonomy: in order for a student to become autonomous, he/she needs to be equipped, through training, to cope with a new vision of learning. There have been, however, dissenters to the view that a learner should be taught how to become autonomous, as the idea of receiving any sort of training can be understood as an automatized behavior and, therefore, an antonym of autonomy. Holec (1980), for instance, lies at the heart of the discussion by claiming that "the basic methodology for learner training should be that of discovery […] By proceeding largely by trial and error he trains himself progressively" (p.42).

As a rebuttal to this, authors like Dickinson (1992) and Esch (1997) argue convincingly that learner training can be explicitly carried out at initial stages of the learning process, and that such process does not refrain independent learning. On the contrary, learner training empowers the students with learning strategies and metacognitive tools that may boost motivation and independence towards learning.

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To portray this issue in Sturtridge's terms (1997): "those who have received learner training will have already been made aware of the need to be aware of their own goals, to be able to monitor their own progress and evaluate their own performance" (p. 76).

Along similar lines, Hernández (2016) puts forward the argument that language learners in a Foreign Language Major must be explicitly trained into the use of learning strategies at an early stage of the process. For this author, an explicit training "informs the students about their possibilities for learning, generates motivation and desire to change the way they approach new knowledge, and improves their time Finally, besides learning strategies, this type of training needs to incorporate reflection workshops on why autonomy is important in language learning, how to work in self-access centers and how languages are learned (Ramírez, 2015; Esch, 1997), all in all, "we do not expect a carpenter to learn to handle the tools of his trade, but to learn nothing of the properties of the wood" (Sturtridge, 1997, p.78).

Autonomy and Self Access Centers

The use of self-access centers for the development of learner autonomy has been present for four decades now, with overwhelming evidence of their efficacy in catering to different learners' needs, which has made them grow in popularity in different countries. Reinders & Lázaro (2008), for instance, report a study of 46 self-access centers in five countries, where these facilities are perceived as "a time-, and cost-effective approach to learning a second language, or that it has additional benefits to learning not offered by other types of learning environments" (p. 56).

Self-access centers can be defined as the facilities where appropriate resources are provided to learners, on behalf of an institution, to foster the development of autonomous behaviors (Sheerin, 1997). In fact, such centers are an effective strategy, in Cotterall's (2008) words to "pay more attention to individual learners, and their unique motivations, experiences, and stories. An autonomy-fostering approach to language learning is therefore likely to focus first on individual learners' psychological relation to the language learning process, and only then on the strategies they adopt" (p.119).

Although self-access centers can be the result of evaluating and adapting previous facilities with new purposes and goals, these centers must go beyond a mere collection of books, computers, CD's and/ or software; they have to be a space where all resources are closely

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related to the activities, objectives and methodologies promoted in the classroom, so that learners find room for the independent practice of languages, by means of materials they feel familiar with.

According to Sturtridge (1997), the provision of a successful self-access center implies the training and development of both the faculty and the learners. Teachers from a given institution need to be trained in how to establish the link between the center and their courses, so that the center does not turn into a mere extension of the classroom, where learners' activities continue to be controlled (Trim, 1977). Equally important, teachers need to be trained in the design of proper materials for self-access learning, as the meaningfulness of the materials and resources found in the center will determine the acceptance or rejection on the part of the students. Furthermore, students need to be trained in how to make use of the center, how to choose suitable material, and how to select activities that are not too challenging that they may feel frustrated, or too easy as to not to make any progress at all. In other words, the teacher and the students must undergo substantial changes in the roles they have been traditionally assigned in education (Voller, 1997).

The Promotion of Learner Autonomy through Syllabus Design

Often, research in autonomy proposes rich theoretical discussions. However, when it comes to intervention issues, the promotion and development of learner autonomy can be a challenge for many teachers who are looking for a practical model to incorporate concrete actions into their course designs, as stated by Barbara (2007) and Ramírez (2015).

In this regard, Cotterall (1995, 2000) develops a solid proposal on the elements that must be intertwined in a syllabus design. The author starts from the premise that autonomy cannot be "clipped on to existing learning programs" (Cotterall, 1995, p.220) but must imply a totally new design, which must also be embraced as an institutional initiative. In this regard, Hammond & Collins (1991) argue that if a proposal based on the development of autonomy " is not institutionalized but merely tolerated as a minor aberration, it is unlikely to be taken seriously by learners or faculty, and may well fail completely" (p. 208).

Thus, Cotterall (1995, 2000) proposes a series of elements and principles (shown in italics) to take into account in a syllabus design. First, the author proposes that the course provide the opportunity to *negotiate course goals with students*, while encouraging them to set

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short- and long-term objectives at all times. *A training in learning strategies* ensures that students have the necessary tools to undertake the course successfully (Sturtridge, 1997; Cotterall, 1995, 2000, Hernández, 2016). The course should also offer a specific space for the *learner/teacher dialogue*, which is a context of tutoring, feedback and constant reflection on learning in general, and learning a language in particular. Also, the syllabus should integrate *the use of tasks and the design of materials*, by the teacher and the students, who have free access to intervene in the class and propose themselves as leaders of a particular activity. Finally, the students are encouraged to write a *student record booklet*, or journal, in which they record their experiences and can keep track of personal progress. Building on these theoretical grounds, Ramírez (2015) proposes some practical guidelines to incorporate Cotterall's elements and principles (1995, 2000) into a concrete syllabus design.

Methodology

Type of study

This research featured a descriptive-interpretive nature in its initial phases, and a propositional phase that led into an intervention. Analysis of data corresponds to a qualitative method, as the study was framed in a cycle of Action-Research, whose essential purpose is to guide decision-making and change processes that favor the improvement of educational practices (Sandín, 2003). Researchers such as Cárdenas (2006) and Fandiño (2008) emphasize the relation between action research and the development of autonomy because the former leads into didactic approaches that actively involve both students and teachers in learning experiences.

Context and Participants

The study was carried out with 20 first-semester students enrolled in the Foreign Languages (English-French) Program from *Escuela de Ciencias del Lenguaje, Universidad del Valle (ECLUV)*, in Cali, Colombia. All the students involved in the research process were between the ages of 16 and 18. Most of them finished their high school in public schools in the city of Cali, except for four students who graduated from private non-bilingual institutions.

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Research Stages and Data Collection Instruments

The Action-Research cycle comprised three stages. The first stage, or Diagnosis, started with a 1-year monitoring of two self-access centers (Resource Center and Computer Room) and the opportunities for the development of the autonomy offered by the institution. The objective was to determine if these centers actually played any role in the promotion of autonomy on behalf of the institution, and if there was relationship between these spaces and the syllabi designed by seven (7) professors who were traditionally in charge of first semester English courses. Accordingly, English syllabi were analyzed and first semester teachers were surveyed to determine if autonomy was explicitly promoted and set as a course objective. Finally, once the group of freshmen was enrolled for their first English course, they were inquired about their self-perceptions regarding their degree of autonomy and the autonomous learning behaviors they brought from their previous learning experiences, which led to the constitution of an initial autonomy profiles. Data collection instruments in this phase included the self-access centers' registration forms, one teachers' survey and documentary study of the English courses' syllabi, and one students' survey to establish the initial profile.

The second stage, also called *Design and Implementation*, encompassed the creation and execution of an English syllabus that was carefully tailored to fit the purpose of fostering learner autonomy. This syllabus design, which I report thoroughly in Ramírez (2015), accounts for a practical model in which the principles proposed by Cotterall (1995, 2000) and the methodology of task-based learning approach are interwoven into a didactic proposal for the development of learner autonomy. In a nutshell, and besides the conventional course contents, the syllabus also comprised a training program on learning strategies, specific individual and group sessions for teacher/student dialogue throughout the course, the design and implementation of tasks and learning materials by both the teacher and the students, the design of activities and materials for the self-access centers, and a series of supplementary talks that provided constant reflection feedback on autonomy-related themes. It should be noted that the integration of a Task-Based approach was paramount, since tasks encourage students to set their own goals and foster constant processes of dialogue, active participation, self-monitoring, and reflection upon feedback (Ramírez, 2015). Throughout this stage, data were collected from a teacher's diary, students' diaries and classroom observation forms.

Finally, the *Evaluation* stage aimed at assessing the effects of the endeavor at the end of the first semester. To that end, all students

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were surveyed once again with the same instrument used in the first stage, in order to come up with an exit profile. The contrast of the freshmen's initial and exit profiles evinced the impact of the course in the acquisition or improvement of autonomous behaviors, learning strategies, and new study habits towards language learning. Moreover, half of the group of freshmen participated in a focus group, in which they evaluated the experience and provided feedback for further syllabi design. Students' perceptions collected in the survey and focus group were triangulated with the teacher's journal.

Results

Self-Access Centers, English Course Syllabi, and the Institutional Promotion of Autonomy

The data yielded in the *Diagnosis Stage* the lack of an actual promotion of learner autonomy in the institutional context. During the year prior to the arrival of the freshmen, the monitoring of the self-access centers revealed that these spaces were being underutilized and did not fulfill their purpose. The former foreign languages students were submerged in a sort of institutional culture of little use of the Centers. In addition, a closer look at the behaviors of the few Center visitors showed that these spaces were used mostly for leisure and relaxation rather than for learning activities and language practices.

Most English teachers also showed very little or no participation whatsoever towards the use of the self-access centers. All of them admitted ignoring the opportunities offered by the centers for the development of autonomy and recognized that they did not establish a link between these spaces and their course designs. In general, all of them expressed not knowing how to equip students to take full advantage of the materials and resources offered in self-access centers. Two of the surveyed teachers claimed to have visited the center with their class, however the Center's registration form indicated that the teachers conducted a regular class under their total domain of class topics and activities, and in which there was no evidence of self-access activities on behalf of the students. In other words, these two teachers used the facilities of the Centers as a mere classroom swap, but failed to understand the nature of the self-access center, institutionally conceived as a venue for students to make decisions in favor of their independent practice of the language. As a result, none of the centers has material designed by the teachers themselves or specific activities that enhance the independent practice of languages.

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Although autonomy is established as a desire and purpose of the institution according to its governing documents, the analysis of 14 English syllabi revealed the lack of direct relation to the concept of autonomy; only 2 out of 14 syllabi mentioned autonomy, although none of the course objectives actually aimed at it. Moreover, the syllabi's structure features the kind of mainstream course where setting goals, establishing content and choosing an evaluation system is under the exclusive domain of the teacher with no say from his/her students.

On the basis of this evidence, one can put forward the claim that it is not possible to successfully implement a proposal for the development of autonomy if there is no institutional culture that supports such an endeavor, which must be solidly built on its teachers, curricula and resources. On these grounds, the new syllabus design and course implementation took into account the above-mentioned shortcomings, in order to provide an environment that is conducive to the development of learner autonomy.

Autonomy Profiles Before and After the Course Implementation

Before starting the course, all freshmen were given a survey that inquired about the presence of 30 autonomous behaviors *(appendix 1)*. These behaviors were measured on a Likert scale taking into account students' previous English learning experiences in high school or language institutes. The same survey was completed by the students once they finished their first semester, in order to establish the exit profile and, consequently, the impact of the course. These 30 behaviors fit into five categories that allowed the contrast and analysis of the profiles of entrance and exit. The five categories are:

Table 1: Autonomous Behaviors Categories

	Categories
1	Setting Objectives
2	Metacognitive Processes
3	Development of Learning Strategies
4	Self-monitoring and Self-evaluation
5	Selection and Design of Materials and Learning Activities

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Table 2 displays a sample of the way the students' answers were classified on a Likert scale:

Table 2: Students' Answers in Category 1

Category 1 Setting Objectives	Behavior	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
	#2	1	2	10	9
	#8	0	1	8	12
	#17	2	1	17	2
	#23	0	0	0	22
	#25	0	1	14	7
		1%	2%	44%	53%

The first column in Table 2 indicates the category evaluated, the second column shows the numbering of behaviors on the survey chart *(appendix 1)*, Columns 3 to 6 show the four values on the Liker scale, under which the amount of students who chose each options is indicated. Finally, the total percentage of students per choice is shown at the end of each column.

The initial profile shows passive students with very little autonomy in the process of language learning. In the four categories analyzed, responses "Rarely" and "Never" obtained 38% and 53%, respectively, which means there was a 91% absence of autonomous behaviors in the population surveyed with regard to learning English experiences before reaching college. Table 3 below shows the consolidated results of the freshmen's entrance profile:

Table 3: Freshmen's Autonomous Behaviors before the Intervention

Category	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
1. Setting Objectives	1%	2%	44%	53%
2. Metacognitive Processes	5%	5%	35%	55%
3. Development of Learning Strategies	11%	2%	52%	35%
4. Self-monitoring & Self-Evaluation	9%	12%	27%	52%
5. Selection and Design of Learning Materials	0%	0%	32%	68%
	5%	4%	38%	53%

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After a semester of the implementation of the syllabus design, described in detail in Ramirez (2005), the survey was re-applied to establish the exit profiles. Table 4 shows a contrast between the percentages obtained at the beginning and at the end, only for the option "Always":

Table 4: Contrast of Entrance and Exit Profile for the answer "Always"

	Category	Initial Percentage	Final Percentage
1	Setting Objectives	1%	80%
2	Reflection, self-knowledge and metacognitive processes	5%	11%
3	Development of Learning Strategies	11%	40%
4	Self-monitoring and Self-evaluation	9%	9%
5	Selection and Design of Materials and Learning Activities	0%	12%

The contrast shows the increase in the frequency of occurrence of the behaviors comprised in each category, in this case for the response "Always". The most evident progress appears in categories 1 (setting goals) and 3 (development of learning strategies). Such an improvement may be due to the fact that the behaviors in both categories correspond to concrete actions and tasks modeled and fostered by the teacher throughout the course, and replicated by the students in both the classroom and the self-access centers. It should be noted that, although students were exposed to a wide array of strategies during the training program sessions, only six strategies were emphasized throughout the course activities and tasks. These strategies belonged to the Metacognitive, Cognitive and Memory categories proposed by Oxford (1990, 2011). The rationale behind adopting a limited number of strategies complies with recommendations made by previous research works in the same institution; the findings of Hernández (2016), for instance, suggest that working on a small set of strategies allows the teacher to monitor better their development, and provides the learners with enough practice to get a grasp of how strategies are applied, and to be able to choose wisely the ones that suit them best.

Different is the case of categories 2 (reflection, self-knowledge and metacognitive processes) and 5 (selection and design of learning materials) in which progress is much subtler, or category 4 (self-monitoring and self-evaluation), which did not show any change; some thoughts on the possible reasons behind these results are presented in the discussion section. Finally, Table 5 displays the contrast between the entrance and the exit profiles regarding all five categories, and taking into account all the answer choices on the Likert scale.

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Table 5: Contrast of Entrance and Exit Profile for all Liker Scale

CATEGORY	ALWAYS		SOMETIMES		RARELY		NEVER	
	Entrance	Exit	Entrance	Exit	Entrance	Exit	Entrance	Exit
1 Setting Objectives	1%	**80%**	2%	**9%**	44%	**11%**	53%	**0%**
2 Reflection, self-knowledge and metacognitive processes	5%	**11%**	5%	**7%**	35%	**40%**	55%	**42%**
3 Development of Learning Strategies	11%	**40%**	2%	**39%**	52%	**17%**	35%	**4%**
4 Self-monitoring and Self-evaluation	9%	**9%**	12%	**7%**	27%	**37%**	52%	**47%**
5 Selection and Design of Materials and Learning Activities	0%	**12%**	0%	**8%**	32%	**28%**	68%	**52%**

The contrast between the entrance and the exit profile of freshmen's autonomy shows evident improvement in 3 out of the 5 categories analyzed. In category 1 (setting goals), for instance, freshmen indicated that before reaching college, only a 3% of them would set out short, medium, and long term goals to improve their English proficiency (2% always and 1% sometimes); after the first semester, 89% of this population claim to have set learning goals regarding English on a regular basis (80% always and 9% sometimes). The development of learning strategies (category 3) also reveals an interesting increase of 79% compared to the initial 13% established in the entrance profile (both percentages comprise the answers "always" and "sometimes").

A more subtle -yet valuable- advancement is observed with regard to the selection and/or design of materials and learning activities by the learners themselves (category 5). Initially, 68% of students would never select or design a learning material on their own, while 32% of them would rarely do so. Answers "always" and "sometimes" in this category were not chosen by any student in the entrance profile, as the design of learning activities and the selection of materials is usually attributed to the role of the teacher. The exit profile, however, shows an encouraging 20% of students who make decisions on materials and activities in favor of their learning process (12% always, 8% sometimes). There is still a significant 52% of students who report not doing so ever.

Categories 2 and 4 comprise the behaviors related to metacognition and self-evaluation, respectively. In category 2, the entrance profile indicates that 55% of the surveyed population would never make an introspective look into their learning styles, their personal needs or

their progress towards language learning; whereas 35% of them would rarely do it, for a total 90% of people showing a rather passive attitude in terms of metacognitive processes. After the course implementation, this 90% of the population only decreased to an 82% (40% rarely, 42% never). In the case of category 4, the lack of autonomy in terms of self-evaluating and self-monitoring behaviors was evidenced in 79% of the students in the entrance profile, which increased to an 84% in the exit profile. Once again, monitoring and evaluation of learning processes are traditionally considered a responsibility of the teacher only, which might be the reason why the participants of this study struggled to take full control of these activities.

Discussion

The entrance profile of students regarding autonomy showed a self-perception that was far from the profile established by the initial survey. The students had a blurred concept of autonomy, which they often confused with responsibility. Most of them claimed to be highly autonomous because they attended classes regularly, because they handed in their homework on time, and because they did what they were asked to do; on the basis of these perceptions, it seems fair to suggest that there was certain degree of reactive –but not proactive-autonomy (Littlewood, 1999). Later, through the element of student / teacher dialogue (Cotterall, 1995) promoted throughout the course, all students reported having learned something on their own: one student had learned to play guitar by watching YouTube videos, another one learned Japanese on internet forums to interact in online videogames, another student was a self-taught cook, and so on, they all identified some kind of knowledge about which they had made the decision to acquire based on a particular need. However, when this was extrapolated to the educational field, all of the students agreed that when learning takes place framed formally in an academic institution, decisions about what, when and how to learn are delegated to the institution or teacher. Therefore, the learning strategies that they have empirically developed in other facets of their lives, as well as the self-knowledge about their learning styles and preferences, are elements that the students unconsciously leave out of the academic institution. It is a culture that has been brewed over many generations and which takes time to be transformed.

The positive results obtained in categories 1, 3 and 5 correspond to the principles proposed by Cotterall (2000), on which the design of the implemented course was based. In the first place, the setting

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of objectives by the students was one of the activities that was most emphasized during the course. In fact, students participated in the designed the syllabus's objectives, as a course based on the development of autonomy must allow learners to identify their needs and plan their learning accordingly. The idea of someone else deciding what, when and how to learn does not make much sense, yet again, in the educational field this is the idea that implicitly prevails. Therefore, every activity, every task, and every assignment students were exposed to, had an explicit objective, and throughout the course students were encouraged to set short and long-term goals for what they wanted and needed to learn. It is up to them to decide what level of proficiency they want to achieve in the language according to their personal purposes. In this sense, both the content and the pacing of the course, as well as the sequence in which the curriculum is distributed, are only a proposal that the learner can (and must, for that matter) modify and complement in favor of successful learning; this proposal is not a straitjacket with which learners must resign themselves and settle for. In fact, when a students is not willing to modify the syllabus or to complement it, he is assuming a passive behavior through which, unconsciously, the responsibility of choosing what, when and how to learn is casted over the teacher's shoulders, as well as the student's academic success or failure.

Also, the implementation of the course through a task-based approach allowed, on the one hand, for each task to be explicitly focused on the exploration and development of a specific learning strategy; on the other hand, it allowed for each task material to serve as a model for students to choose or design similar resources on their own, for their practices outside the classroom. In fact, for each task modeled in class, two or three more tasks were designed and left in the self-access centers, so that the material available for students' retrieval and autonomous practices was related to the topics and methodology that students were familiar with. Its stands to reason that this is the explanation for the positive increase of percentages in categories 3 and 5, in the exit profile, as well as the increase in visits to the self-access centers.

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Conversely, categories 2 and 4, which did not evince a meaningful change, imply a challenge for the constant promotion of learner autonomy through the curricula. Making a student aware of the need to evaluate both his own learning and the type of learner he/she is, give rise to a change in the traditional roles that have been culturally delegated to the teacher, as well as a gradual transfer of responsibilities to the domain of the learner. The challenge here lies in the fact that, in turn, the teacher

has to be aware and willing to transfer such responsibilities, without fear of losing control of the class, the group or even the institution.

The biggest challenge, however, is not just for the students, but for all the people who make up the staff of a given institution. In administrative terms, the promotion of autonomy implies the commitment of the directives and the teachers towards the design of curricula in which the development of the autonomy is a transverse axis, with initial training that equips the learner to be gradually released into the decision-making path. In instrumental terms, this implies the design and implementation of courses that are closely related to the promotion of self-access, which will result in designing materials for the classroom and self-access centers, and thus could represent a little more work than a regular course. It is also very important to remember that any initiative to promote learner autonomy involves the joint effort of a whole team, and not just a couple of teachers, or a couple of isolated courses. If autonomy is a desire and an institutional goal, then the whole institution and its academic apparatus must concentrate on this aim, so that the learner perceives that autonomy is part of the general environment of the institution, and not of the preference of some isolated teachers.

Finally, the weaknesses and limitations of this study mainly lie on two facts. First, this study offers a snapshot of autonomous behaviors before and after an implementation, but the impact of such behaviors on language proficiency hasn't been measured. Future works, consequently, should observe students' progress in their language proficiency; this however, needs to be done after students have been exposed to at least three or four courses based on the promotion of autonomy. Second, the endeavor was undertaken by one English professor, in a major where students learn two foreign languages (English and French) compulsory and simultaneously. In this sense, future work needs to focus on implementing the proposal at a greater scale, involving teachers from the French department and other subjects, and monitoring the students' progress in a wider scope comprising at least the first 3 semesters.

Conclusion

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The promotion of learner autonomy in a university implies a previous process of diagnosis and evaluation of the institution, the opportunities this latter offers for the development of independent learners and an introspective look into the institutional culture. These aspects should be taken care of before designing a curricular proposal. Secondly, the curricular proposal must have a robust apparatus in

favor of autonomy at all levels of the instruction. In other words, the implementation must go beyond a single course, or a small training.

Although autonomy might be stated as a desirable goal, institutions are not always clear about what is needed to implement a true promotion of independent learning. Both teachers and students are often the product of a culture and a long tradition, characterized by the lack of autonomous behaviors in formal educational context. Therefore, changing the conception and roles points toward the adoption of new habits on both sides; but above all it points toward the implementation of long-term plans to beget the seed of an institutional culture, that goes beyond the personal desire of a teacher or the particular design of a single course. A good training program in autonomy and learning strategies at a university level should take place in a medium-term process, in which at least the first three semesters serve as the foundation, and from then on, the student will be empowered and released, little by little, into his/her own decision-making path. Ideally, however, the endeavor of learner autonomy, in language learning and in all fields of knowledge, should be implemented as early as possible, starting in primary school and high school.

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Author

***Alexander Ramírez Espinosa** holds a Bachelor in Foreign Languages and a Master's degree in Linguistics, both degrees from Universidad del Valle (Colombia). Currently, he works at the School of Language Sciences, Universidad del Valle, as an English and Linguistics professor for the Foreign Languages Teaching Program, the Master Program in Crosslinguistic and Intercultural Studies, and the Technology Program in Interpretation for the Deaf and the Deaf-Blind.

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Appendix 1: Autonomous Behaviors Survey

Note: this survey has been taken from Ramirez (2015), who designed each utterance by adapting the characteristics of autonomous learners proposed by Aparicio et al. (1995), Cárdenas (2003), Dam (1995), and Dickinson (1992).

Read the following statements and choose the option that better describes their degree of certainty, as appropriate	Always	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
1. At school, you were able to determine your level of English proficiency.				
2. At school, you reflected about the relationship between English and the cultures associated to this language.				
3. You discovered and explored your favorite ways of relating to the language.				
4. At school you discovered your particular learning style and strategies to learn English effectively.				
5. You used your knowledge, preferences, habits, and strategies to select and plan activities to learn English on your own.				
6. You expressed your preferences for certain types of learning activities in class.				
7. You used diaries or language portfolios to monitor your progress in learning English.				
8. You set out short, medium, and long term goals to improve your English proficiency.				
9. You used all resources available to study and practice English on your own (libraries, internet, software, music, literature, television, etc.).				
10. You devoted time to study and practice English while you were not being monitored by your teacher.				
11. You took on extra assignments or academic activities to learn English, even if this did not represent a course grade.				
12. You looked for opportunities to learn and practice English outside of school.				
13. You carried out extracurricular activities when you considered necessary to learn or reinforce a particular topic.				

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	Always	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
14. You organized an English study group outside of the class.				
15. You made use of your teacher's tutorial schedule to consult, seek advice, and answer questions about your learning process.				
16. You sought and attended courses, seminars, conferences, or conversation clubs to practice English outside of school.				
17. You planned and executed projects related to any of the topics proposed in the English class.				
18. You reflected objectively about your performance as a learner.				
19. You made proposals to change the way class issues were carried out.				
20. You contributed with your ideas to improve the dynamics, activities, and materials of the English class.				
21. You selected and analyzed critically materials and books for your personal use in learning English.				
22. You participated, with your teacher and classmates, in making decisions about program design, contents, and evaluation of the English class.				
23. You accepted responsibility for planning and preparing a class topic or activity.				
24. You made use of the teacher's feedback on assessments, workshops, and/or tests to study on your own and reinforce a topic.				
25. At school you were aware of your short, medium, and long term level of proficiency you wanted to get in English.				
26. You identified your mistakes in English and corrected them on your own.				
27. You cooperated informally in the learning process of your classmates.				
28. You proposed materials for the English class.				
29. You used the technology to learn and practice English.				
30. You discovered materials that best suited your learning process and looked for the way to access these materials.				

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The Efficacy of Phonics-Based Instruction of English as a Second Language in an Italian High School: A Randomised Controlled Trial[1]

La eficacia de la Instrucción Basada en Pronunciación en una Clase de Inglés como Segunda Lengua en una escuela secundaria italiana: Una Prueba Controlada Aleatoria.

Robert Alexander Graham Coates, Judith Gorham,
and Richard Nicholas[2]*
Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, Italy

Abstract

Recent neurological breakthroughs in our understanding of the Critical Period Hypothesis and prosody may suggest strategies on how phonics instruction could improve L2 language learning and in particular phoneme/grapheme decoding. We therefore conducted a randomised controlled-trial on the application of prosody and phonics techniques, to improve phoneme-grapheme decoding, to test these findings on a typical late high school cohort of Italians. A trial group of 24, 17-18 year-olds followed a short 10-week, 20-hour trial course and were compared to a control (14 students) preparing for the Cambridge First Certificate exam. The trial group were given phoneme/grapheme decoding material and event-related-potential reinforcement in substitution of traditional exam practice, taught from a current textbook and web-site material. Results showed that the trial-group significantly improved in both orthography (p=0.048) and pronunciation (p=0.000), in particular in the long vowel and digraph categories.

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Furthermore, they significantly improved in a shortened interview category (p=0.024), for lexis, discourse and pronunciation. Due to the trial's small size, we concentrated on reducing type 2 statistical errors to a minimum. We believe that our results confirmed the neurological findings of the use of prosody in TESOL and confirmed the validity of phonics techniques for L2 teaching. We also consider that the results are sufficiently robust to warrant a full-sized trial of phonics and prosody as a valid TESOL teaching technique.

Key words: Critical Period Hypothesis, prosody, phonics, orthography, pronunciation, phoneme-grapheme decoding, TESOL.

Resumen

Los recientes avances neurológicos en la comprensión de la Hipótesis del Período Crítico y la Prosodia pueden sugerir estrategias en como la instrucción en fonética puede mejorar el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua L2 y, en particular, decodificar los fonemas/grafemas. Por tal razón, se condujo una prueba controlada aleatoria sobre la aplicación de técnicas de prosodia y fonética para mejorar la decodificación fonema-grafema y probar estos hallazgos en una cohorte normal de una escuela secundaria italiana. Un grupo de prueba de 24 estudiantes entre los 17 y 18 años siguieron un curso corto de 10 semanas de 20 horas en total y se comparó con un grupo de control de 14 estudiantes que se preparan para el examen Cambridge First Certificate. Al grupo de prueba se le entregó material para la decodificación de fonemas/grafemas y refuerzo potencial relacionado con el evento en sustitución de la práctica tradicional para el examen que se enseña de un libro de texto y material web. Los resultados mostraron que el grupo de prueba mejoró significativamente tanto en ortografía (p=0.048) como en pronunciación (p=0.000), en particular en la vocal larga y categorías de dígrafos. Además, mejoraron significativamente en una categoría de entrevista abreviada (p=0.024) en léxico, discurso y pronunciación. Debido al pequeño tamaño de la prueba, nos concentramos en reducir los errores de tipo 2 al mínimo. Creemos que nuestros resultados confirmaron los hallazgos neuronales del uso de la prosodia en TESOL y confirmaron la validez de las técnicas de fónica para la enseñanza de la segunda lengua L2. Consideramos que los resultados son lo suficientemente robustos para garantizar una prueba a gran escala de fónica y prosodia como una tecnica válida de enseñanza en TESOL.

Palabras clave: Hipótesis sobre el Periodo Crítico, prosodia, fónica, ortografía, pronunciación, decodificación fonema-grafema, TESOL,

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Resumo

Os recentes avanços neurológicos na compreensão da Hipótese do Período Crítico e a Prosódia podem sugerir estratégias em como a instrução em fonética pode melhorar a aprendizagem de uma segunda língua L2 e, em particular, decodificar os fonemas/grafemas. Por esse motivo, conduziu-se uma prova controlada aleatória sobre a aplicação de técnicas de prosódia e fonética para

melhorar a decodificação fonema-grafema e provar estas descobertas em uma coorte normal de 7ª a 9ª Série e Segundo Grau na Itália. Um grupo de prova de 24 estudantes entre 17 e 18 anos seguiram um curso curto de 10 semanas de 20 horas em total, e foi comparado com um grupo de controle de 14 estudantes que se preparam para a prova Cambridge First Certificate. Ao grupo de prova foi entregue material para decodificar de fonemas/grafemas e reforço potencial relacionado com o evento em substituição da prática tradicional para a prova que se ensina de um libro de texto e material web. Os resultados sinalaram que o grupo de prova melhorou significativamente tanto em ortografia (p=0.048) quanto em pronúncia (p=0.000), principalmente na vocal longa e categorias de dígrafos. Além disso, melhoraram significativamente em uma categoria de entrevista abreviada (p=0.024) em léxico, discurso e pronúncia. Devido ao pequeno tamanho da prova, nos concentramos em reduzir os erros de tipo 2 ao mínimo. Achamos que os nossos resultados confirmaram as descobertas neuronais do uso da prosódia em TESOL e confirmaram a validade das técnicas de fônica para o ensino da segunda língua L2. Consideramos que os resultados são o suficientemente robustos para garantir uma prova a grande escala de fônica e prosódia como uma técnica válida de ensino em TESOL.

Palavras chave: Hipótese sobre o Período Crítico, prosódia, fônica, ortografia, pronúncia, decodificação fonema-grafema, TESOL.

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Introduction

The use of phonics techniques as defined as *'a system for encoding speech into written symbols.*" (Mesmer & Griffith, p 2. 2004), is well established, as a means of teaching the basis of literacy in most L1 English speaking countries (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl & Willows, 2001, Stuart 2005, Torgersen, Brooks & Hall, 2006). However, despite a long tradition (for example, Chomsky & Halle, 1968, Jones, 1996) of acceptance that the relationship between phonology and orthography and in particular the phoneme-grapheme code is crucial, decoding skills are still considered peripheral in the TESOL literature. There has been recent neurological linguistic research that points to the link between prosody and the application of teaching methods (Nickels, Opitz, & Steinhauer, 2013). These are in effect basic phonics techniques, specifically related to improving both orthography (phoneme-grapheme decoding PG) and pronunciation (grapheme-phoneme decoding GP). The aim of this randomized trial was to create a classroom environment to test the validity of these inter-disciplinary findings on a group of students who would normally be beyond the usual primary age considered as benefitting from L1 phonics techniques, i.e., 17-18 year old students.

The Problem in Italy

In Italy, the classroom approach to teaching English is still heavily influenced by the grammar-translation method, with a supplement of communicative strategies principally taught by native-speaker (NS) teachers *(Ministero d'Istruzione dell'Universita e della Ricerca' - 2012)*. Furthermore, Italy regularly ranks below the OECD average and recently results have been worsening (PISA 2015).

The problem with all instruction (NS or NNS) is that there is no or little possibility to teach PG/GP decoding. This lack of instruction on the phonemic structure of English or phonics rules, means that there is no systematic knowledge at any level or age of basic literacy skills as conceived in L1 educational systems (Ehri et al. 2001). We could therefore consider that both spelling and pronunciation errors derive directly from an L1 interpretation of the decoding system. This is particularly a problem for Italians, and with other similar 'transparent' languages such as Spanish, (Martinez, 2011) given the relative lack of correspondence between vowels and digraphs, as a quick glance at the respective phonemic charts will illustrate (see Appendix 1). We therefore hypothesize that a short classroom course concentrating on these decoding skills could improve basic communication and literacy skills, even for older students.

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Definitions

It is important to define the basic aspects of our argument to clarify the link between decoding skills and improved communication for young adult TESOL students. We concentrated on phonics techniques which taught both PG decoding, the ability to recognise and spell correctly any given oral expression, and GP decoding, or the ability to pronounce written sentences correctly. These phonics techniques, according to Nickels et al. (2013), concentrated on the prosodic emphasis of supra-segmental phrasing. Thus, in the terms of this trial, prosody is defined as a series of exercises (see appendix 3), which use the natural prosody of rhymes, songs or dictation to reinforce phonic patterns. These in turn, create Event Related Potential (ERP) events, which Nickels et al. (2013) among others, describe as being crucial to open neurological circuits for efficient learning. ERPs can be defined as neuro-imaging, which potentially show effective events/ methods that could scaffold an individual's learning process. Finally, in the context of this trial, we define meta-cognitive phonics techniques as the concentration on exercises that teach phonics patterns rather than sight words (Khabiri, and Rezagholizadeh, 2014), so that the students, when taught for example, '–ment' or '–tion', would be able to recognise or even invent new lexis intuitively (see for example, Dickerson, 1975), rather than relying on memorized sight words. This would give classroom confirmation of Hensch's (in Bardin 2012) interpretation of how older students could overcome CPH barriers to learning by relying on cognitive reasoning rather than rote learning.

Problems of apply phonics for L2 instruction

There are several possible explanations of why phonics-based approaches in L1 English teaching have not led to research in TESOL. Perhaps the most obvious is that L2 learners, especially at low levels, have much less English phonemic awareness than L1 primary learners. In particular the L2 creates interference patterns in their ability to decode English phonemes (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006). Using phonics to establish phoneme and grapheme decoding skills simultaneously is clearly very different from building literacy skills from already established L1 phonemic patterns. Therefore, our first task was to establish how and whether it was useful to translate typical PG/GP decoding skills from typical L1 phonics techniques into L2 teaching methodology in a TESOL classroom.

It is evident that GP correspondences in English are less overt than in other more transparent languages such as Spanish (Martinez, 2011)

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and Italian, or even relatively closely related languages such as Dutch (De Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman & Veraven, 1999), which have simpler phoneme-grapheme correspondences. Martinez (2011), did show the advantages of using English L1 phonics techniques for Spanish TESOL learners. She found that for successful L2 acquisition, students used their own L1 phonics patterns, which coincided with English patterns. A secondary aim of our research was to discover precisely which phonics patterns should be taught to improve English orthography and pronunciation for Italian learners.

While the term 'phonics' is not common in TESOL literature, many important aspects of it have been dealt with comprehensively under other guises. Ur (2012) amongst others, very clearly recognized the importance of phonemic awareness and in particular decoding skills, in L2 language learning. There is some recognition of phonics in the TESOL literature (for example, Khabiri; Roqayeh Rezagholizadeh, 2014 and Johnson, R. C., Tweedie, G. R, 2010); it is however rarely considered a valid technique in itself. Other phonics-related research, is now dated (for example, Dickerson, 1975 and Wong, 1992) but did touch on elements such as prosody and decoding.

More recent work by Jenkins (2002), looked at the distinction between core and peripheral pronunciation skills, although this does not consider the importance of phonemic decoding. She pointed out that intonation and especially the use of schwa sounds is not always core for understanding. This may be so for general comprehensibility but overlooks the importance of the systematic nature (Ehri, 2001) of the GP decoding process. Interestingly, Venezky (1999), looked at the link between spelling and pronunciation, but still considered it as a separate written norm, not an essential part of the whole. Another interesting exception is Gardner's (2008) discussion of phonics techniques in EAL (English as an Additional Language) lessons. She discusses the changes in the UK curriculum concerning languages, which we also consider, and shows how they transformed teaching practice in the US and the UK, as she notes –

(phonics) "*..produced the transformation that here benefitted, the linguistic, sociocultural and cognitive development of learners, particularly EAL."* (Gardiner 2008, p 263).

Our thesis is, if this is so for EAL (English as an Additional language) and L1 language learners, why is phonics not considered for L2 TESOL learners? Another secondary aim was to investigate the link between decoding skills and to explore whether they could improve L2 communicative strategies.

Finally, recent and pertinent neurological and psychological research has re-proposed the importance of both the cognitive and prosody-related aspects of phonics for L2 English learning. The neurologists Hensch and Bilihoral (for example, 2008) looked at neurological aspects of language learning in their work on the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). This has redefined the age-old linguistic problem of how languages are learned and offers glimpses of how learning problems may be overcome, even outside critical periods. This is best summarized by Bardin (2012) in an editorial in the journal Nature. The use of prosody, rhyme and music has been shown to switch on the neurological processes as also shown by Nickels, Opitz and Steinhauer (2013). They found in a class of adult German L2 English learners, that by creating Event Related Potentials (ERPs), neurological links were created that made L2 language learning easier. These findings are buttressed by the extensive work of the British neurologist Goswami (2004) and co-workers, who established the role of rhyme and music in overcoming dyslexia in L1 English speaking children. The psychologist, Suggate (2016) also considered the importance of phonics for the retention of reading capacity for children with learning disabilities. We believe that these inter-disciplinary insights, considering neurological and psychological data need to be tested empirically in a TESOL classroom in order to consider their full practical significance.

By using a quantitative approach, we aimed to establish measurable criteria, applied to a recognized TESOL certificate, in our case the Cambridge First Certificate exam (FCE). We also needed to eliminate as far as possible, any type-two statistical errors, i.e., bias between the content of the trial and control cohorts, bias in the teaching techniques and bias in evaluation criteria and marking. If we could establish that a phonics-based approach was at least as effective as a traditional exam preparation approach for the FCE, then we could look in more detail at the content and material of phonics in TESOL.

Review of the literature

There are relatively few studies pertaining strictly to phonics in the TESOL literature, in a meta-analysis, Shanahan and Beck (2006) found 52 studies concerning phonemic awareness and 38 specifically on phonics instruction for L1 literacy. In contrast, they found only five empirical studies on phonics instruction for L2, all on reading skills, and no qualitative work. Since then (Suggate 2016), there has been some additional research which we will consider here. To fill this gap in the literature, we carried out an inter-disciplinary approach following

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four basic streams: 1) inter-disciplinary work mainly from a medical (neurological, paediatric and psychological) perspective on language learning and language disorders, 2) phonics in the L1 literature and how it may relate to TESOL; 3) elements of a phonics and decoding in past TESOL literature, including prosody and meta-cognitive approaches; 4) research on decoding in L2 language learning.

Neurological and Psychological developments on language learning

There has been some ground-breaking research on medical aspects of language learning that under-scores this trial. In particular, the neurological work of the Japanese American neurologist Hensch, summarized in Bardin (2012) on the 'ungluing' of the neural circuitry implicit in the CPH, fixed in childhood, is fundamental to understand the changes in conception of CPH for language learning. Hensch and Bilihorial (2008) previously showed how it would be possible to shift emphasis away from a simple linguistic approach to an abstract cognitive one as the receptive neurological window remains open longer. Thus, older students could benefit from the staggered opening and closing of their relative 'critical periods'. Linguistically, Singleton and Muñoz (2009) and indeed Nikolov (2009) also noted the importance of CPH on various elements, (motivation, age group etc.). Interestingly, Zang (2009) in an article on semantic prosody also called for EFL educators to be instructed in semantic prosody and for it to be integrated into EFL curricula.

In another neurological slant on language learning, Nickels et al. (2013) looked at the effects of Event Related Potentials (ERP), neurological events which aid retention, on L2 acquisition. They show that prosodic activity neurologically 'switches' language acquisition on through ERPs, even in a classroom-only environment. They came to the conclusion that by using the advantages of prosody in learning, even older TESOL students could benefit.

Finally, in a series of significant neurological research studies, Goswami (2004), Huss, Verney, Fosker, Mead, and Goswami (2011) and Cumming, Wilson, Leong, Colling and Goswami (2015), look at the importance of rhyme and song on developing prosody in children with dyslexia. They showed that it may be an inability to recognize prosodic clues rather than 'word blindness', which is a cause of dyslexia, a factor which can be largely overcome by learning nursery rhymes and songs. Summarizing, both segmental and supra-segmental elements have been shown to modify the neuro-cortex that influences language learning.

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L1 Phonics Literature

Due to the vast depth of L1 phonics literature, we have been highly selective in the choice of many sources, considering here only a small selection of seminal work. Ehri, Nunes, Stahl and Willows (2001), established the fundamental link between grapheme and phoneme decoding and literacy, as did Byrne, Fielding and Barnsley (1989) and Kidd, Villaume and Brabham (2003). Furthermore, phonics instruction is not only explicit but also systematic. De Graaf, Saskia, Bosman, Hasselman and Verheaven (1998) and Mesmer and Griffith (2005) looked at the importance of systematic and analytical phonics. They found that a systematic approach was more efficient than a random introduction of phonics patterns. We relate this systematic nature to an L2 environment where many phonics patterns are already established thanks to the subjects' L1 phonics patterns. However, in contrast to de Graaf, we recognize that 'systematic' in L2 phonics is fundamentally different to L1 instruction, based primarily on the interference between the English and Italian phonetic systems.

Torgerson, Brooks and Hall (2006), stated that systematic phonics training can benefit children at different achievement levels. We developed this insight here, as our cohort was older than a typical phonics cohort (i.e., early primary or even pre-school children). In terms of the actual methods used during instruction, Rasinski, Rupley, Nichols Christensen and Bowey (2005) proved instrumental in the choice of material. These authors looked at the link between phonics and fluency and in particular the use of rhymes and songs, an aspect well developed neurologically by Huss et al. (2011) and Cummings et al. (2015).

There has also been some specific work on decoding, relevant to this study. Morgan, Moni and Jobling (2006) look at the implications of using phonics for young adults with learning difficulties. The implications of their work is that phonics can be a valid technique for this age groups. Furthermore, Rasinki, Rupley and Nichols (2006), link the two basic elements of phonics and prosody, in their case, phonics and fluency as an element of reading and performing poetry.

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Elements of Phonics in the TESOL literature

As already mentioned, while the term 'phonics' is not common in TESOL literature, many important aspects of it have been dealt with comprehensively. As mentioned earlier, the link with phonemic awareness is amply explored by Ur (2012). However, this recognition

is not followed up by examining phonics in L2 teaching or any specific reference to PG decoding. Other research did explore other aspects related to phonics but these were generally before the full development of communicative language teaching developed in the 80's and 90's. This early work included, for example, the role of pronunciation (Dickerson, 1989) reading skills (Wong, 1992), the development of self-monitoring skills implicit in explicit/systematic phonics (for example in Firth, 1987) and prosody (Wang, 2009). Wong (1992) looked at spelling and generative phonology and made the connection between listening comprehension and reading, all are crucial in phonics.

The importance of self-monitoring and meta-cognition, emphasized by Morley (1991) and Hall, Myers and Bowan (1999), amongst others, could directly be considered an element of explicit phonics instruction. As mentioned earlier, Zang (2009) called for an integration of semantic prosody into EFL instruction anticipating Nickel et al (2013). Venesky (1999) also made the link between spelling and pronunciation. However, he still considered orthography as a discipline in itself rather than making the logical step of considering PG decoding as being a fundamental element of literacy. Ur (2012), states in no uncertain terms the importance of phonemic awareness and hence the need to empirically test a phonics-based course to evaluate its effects on phonemic awareness.

Finally, Kaushanskaya, Jeewon and Van Hecke (2013) looked at whether phonological familiarity exerted any effects on lexis **learning** for familiar versus unfamiliar referents and whether successful vocabulary **learning** is associated with an increased second-**language** experience. If decoding skills is based on the introduction of familiar references in word groups, then it follows that this could rationalize instruction for lexis learning. Another approach to pronunciation moved away from L1 pronunciation patterns to L2 user models (Cook, 1999:185). This is acceptable for L2 pronunciation models but does not recognize the affect that decoding patterns may have on production or on literacy skills. Here, we attempted to look at the link between decoding ability and general communication skills.

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L2 Phonics research

There has also been a limited amount of work on phonics in the L2 classroom. Jones (1996) pointed out the potential advantages of using phonics for L2 instruction, also illustrated in Heidi (2014). They both describe the basic similarity of L1 and L2 phonics instruction and the possibility of students benefitting from L1 instruction insights. Martinez

(2011) described the specific benefits of explicit and systematic TESOL phonics for Spanish speakers, particularly for literacy skills and reading comprehension. The difficulty her Spanish-speaking subjects had with long vowels is comparable with the problem our Italian students had with short vowels. This point was also developed by Helman (2004). Considering Spanish learners' pronunciation of English, he noted the importance of considering L1 interference (Helman, 2004). This would suggest that L2 phonics instruction involves discovering how an L1 may either interfere or aid PG decoding in English.

Certain L2 meta-cognitive studies suggest how phonics could be applied in TESOL. Samuel (2010) expands on the importance of meta-cognitive techniques and in particular conscious pattern-finding exercises. This approach is also shared by Gardner in what she describes as student 'experience and empowerment' (Gardner, 2008). Share (1999, 2001) also emphasized the importance of self-teaching, important in language learning and an essential aspect of phonics' patterns acquisition. Kahraman, (2012) showed the importance of pronunciation correction for L2 Arab speaking teachers and therefore GP decoding. Meta-cognition is also treated by Nishanimut, Johnston, Joshi, Thomas and, Padakannaya, (2013) who found that using L1 metalinguistic knowledge seemed to benefit literacy skills in English for ESL students. Finally, Pittman (2007) also noted a phonemic approach could overcome these difficulties with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers, which would occupy the middle ground between L1 and L2 instruction. Finally, Alshaboul, looks at how L1 phonemic awareness relates to L2 literacy. In particular Alshaboul, Asassfeh, Alshboul and Alodwan (2014), investigate the difficulty that Arab speakers have due to L1 phonemic interference on reading EFL texts. They explain that the recognition process leads to slow and less accurate L2 lexical recognition.

Methodology

Study design

Our study design, a randomised controlled trial, directly compares a control and trial group of 17-18 year-olds during an extra-curriculum preparation for the FCE exam. The FCE exam was chosen because the teaching and testing criteria are well established and widely available and therefore both the experimental protocol and materials can be replicated. It is also an exam used by many schools internationally as a communicative adjunct to curriculum L2 English. Given our need for direct comparison, the Student 't' test was considered the most

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appropriate statistical tool to show the significance between the delta of an initial test and final test after the teaching period. The deltas were compared to examine the relevance of orthography, pronunciation and a general oral skills test based on independent criteria, i.e., on criteria published on the FCE resources for the teacher web-site (Cambridge ESOL, 2016), that is criteria based on grammar, discourse, lexis and pronunciation. These comparisons would indicate whether phonics could be a valid tool for TESOL instruction. We then applied an ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) multi-factor analysis of the control and trial cohorts to find whether there was any relative advantage of the teaching techniques used. All statistic calculations used the applicative program (primer) *Statistica per Discipline Biomediche* - Stanton A Glantz, (Italian edition Adriano Decarli). Obviously, this would then need to be verified on a larger scale, precisely as occurred in the large L1 studies in the US and the UK (Ehri et al. 1999, Torgensen et al. 2008).

The study groups were initially between 17–24 (both trial n= 24 and control n=17), 17-18 year-olds from the same school, randomly assigned to each group by the school. There was a slight majority of female students and all students were pre-tested at B2 level, according to the Council of Europe criteria (2001), intermediate level. A level of B1 (lower-intermediate) or C1 (upper-intermediate) were considered exclusion criteria, although no students were excluded on this basis. Each student signed an informed written consent agreement, which explained the purpose of the research. As the study classes were optional, attendance was not compulsory and there was a certain degree of random dropout (final numbers: trial n= 23, control n=14). However, attendance remained high enough, especially for the trial group, to consider the results to be statistically robust. As Winter (2013) points out, it is not the size of the samples in these cases that is important when considering statistical relevance, but rather the avoidance of type 2 statistical errors, a point we explore in depth in the discussion.

Trial lessons consisted of 10 two-hour extra-curriculum sessions. All students followed their regular English lessons during class hours. These regular sessions generally followed a grammar-translation method with non-native language teachers concentrating principally on grammar, syntax, sentence level structure and literature. The students came from a variety of different classes and were randomly assigned to the trial lessons by the English teacher organising the course and the school administrative staff.

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Both the trial and the control lessons were taught by two NS teachers. Both control and trial teachers had passed through the schools' selection process, had the same amount of experience teaching these courses. The difference in teaching materials was based on the type of lessons involved, principally phonics for the trial course and only exam practice for the control course. Thus, the content of the exam practice for the FCE exam included oral, listening and writing exercises, as well as recognition of exam procedures and mock exams. These exercises can be found in the text (Brook-Hart, 2008) used as well as from the Cambridge English ESOL web-site (2016).

In the trial class, phonics techniques replaced the oral exam practice components and consisted of at least 60 minutes of the two-hour lessons. It should be noted that all students were still given other exam preparation tasks. These included essay writing skills (paragraph writing and construction), sentence construction and exam procedure recognition. However, the main difference between the trial and control cohorts were the phonics techniques summarized in appendix 3. It should be noted that with the exception of the dictation exercises (a common technique for all students during curriculum lessons), there was no explicit instruction in orthography. We tried to assure that the testing material excluded any specific items that had been introduced during the trial class, so these students had no direct advantage in the orthography test. One exception was the word 'Love' for the vowel + 'v' group, a high frequency lexis, which should have been recognised by all students regardless of experimental group. Furthermore, both cohorts received approximately the same amount of time spent on the oral skills inherent in the pronunciation and interview FCE tests.

The general pattern of the phonics component of the trial lessons was as follows: Each lesson concentrated on one phonics pattern, for example the first being the CVC rule, consonant + vowel + consonant = short vowel. The patterns deemed to create problems for Italian learners had been identified in preliminary work at the school and can be summarised in table 1. Briefly, these areas were phonemic areas which differ from Italian to English, i.e. there was L1 interference in the decoding process. The students were asked to recognise the phonics pattern in question by using word games or other devises (for example, Pelmanism, word family recognition etc.) based on drilling the phonics pattern in question. Much of this material was very similar to the 'silly questions' material described by Gardiner (2008). The patterns were reinforced and peer corrected using either dictation or exercises the phonics text book used in class (Hornsby, Shear and Pool, 2007), or other reinforcing exercises, for example inventing words (De Graaff et

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al. 2009), to strengthen meta-cognitive retention. Finally, an ERP was created either using pre-existing learning rhymes or songs (for example *'The digraph chant'*), or adapting other online material (for example, the adaption of the Beatles' song, *'All you need is Love'*). A full list of the material used can be seen in Appendix 3.

Table 1. Phonemic categories presenting problems for Italian L1 students

Short Vowels	Long Vowels	Digraphs	Consonants changing vowel sounds 'l', 'r' 'w'
Consonant – vowel+ consonant = short vowels	'-ight'	sh/ch/th-	'ar', 'ir- 'er', 'or- 'ur-
o+ve*, 'o+ th'	Double vowels 'oo' 'ee'..	-ng/-nk	'war-'/'squa-'
Initial vowels	Two vowels together 'ai', 'oa', 'ea', 'ia'..	Grammar morphemes, -s/- ed/-er/-ing/'ve..	'wor-'
	Terminal 'e'	Etymological digraphs, ph-, th-..	'-lk', '-al'..

Trial

There were three basic statistical tests in which improvements in the delta (difference between pre- and post-test scores) per cohort were first analysed individually using a Student 't' test and then compared to each other using an ANOVA analysis. The Student 't' test was the basic statistical test used, as we wanted to find the relative improvement of the trial and control groups, although the ANOVA data also measured cohort improvements relative to each other. The tests were sub-divided based on the principal phonics categories (short vowels, long vowels, consonant-plus-vowels, digraphs), we had previously identified as being the principal GP decoding problem areas for Italian speakers. These categories can be categorised as differences between English and Italian phonemes and therefore decoding and are not meant to be definitive but rather a start for possible future research into L2 decoding problem areas, although not restricted to Italian (Martinez, 2009).

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Overall results

There were statistically significant improvements overall for both pronunciation and orthography for the trial cohort compared to the

control. These general improvements were concentrated statistically in two categories, long vowels and digraphs, with improvements in the other categories, which however were not statistically relevant. Thus, large improvements in long vowels (p <000) in the digraph category for both pronunciation and orthography) compensated for relatively weak results in the short vowel and the consonant-plus-vowel sections. These weaker areas were as much interest as the areas that did improve and will be subsequently analysed in detail.

The interview section also improved statistically significantly for the trial cohort compared to the control. This section was originally conceived to incentivise the students, by giving them a test more similar to the oral test in the final FCE exam. The test also highlighted the course content's relevance for general spoken skills. It must be pointed out that the general improvement was quite surprising as only the pronunciation category (p <0.000) of the four categories described in the Cambridge criteria was considered core to our phonics' instruction criteria. Only the grammar section did not improve significantly (p = 0.203), with statistically significant improvements for discourse (p =0.034), lexis (p <0.000) and pronunciation (p <0.000). To understand these and to eliminate any statistical bias we need to look at the sub-categories for each test separately.

Orthography (phoneme-grapheme decoding)

The orthography test consisted in an examiner reading out aloud twice, a series of 32 sentences, each of which contained three or four elements of one phonics pattern. The students were instructed to write these sentences down and urged to write what they had perceived, even if they felt they had not fully understood the sentence. This was important as we did not want the students to leave gaps whenever a group of phonemes was not recognised, but rather we wanted to see the students' perception of unfamiliar phonemes. Each of the 3-4 elements of the pattern had to be correct in order to score one point. The rationale of the marking system was to test recognition of phonics patterns rather than individual words. One correct word may have represented a learned 'sight word' (an individually learned word with no recognition of the pattern). Thus, the first eight sentences tested short vowels, the next group, long vowels and so on. It was important to perform the orthography test first, in order to introduce the lexis and context, thus aiding comprehension and giving a cognitive schemata for the subsequent pronunciation test.
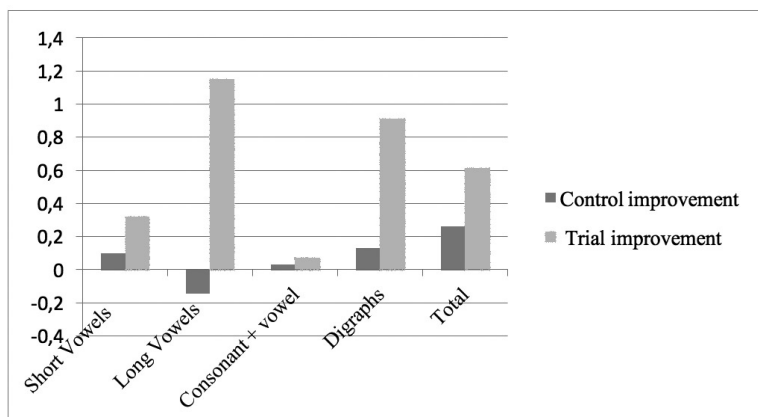
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Figure 1. Cohort compared improvements in amounts of errors made (Orthography)

Graph shows improvements (fewer errors) with the exception of the Long Vowel category in the control cohort.

Improvements in the long vowel and digraph categories were statistically significant (p values both p<0.000). Indeed, there was no appreciable improvement at all for the long vowel section in the control cohort (+ 0.17 errors), underlining that generally spelling is a persistent and stubborn problem to overcome. We believe the improvement for the trial group was due to the recognition of the relatively simple morphophonemic patterns, the mainstay of phonics in L1 learning. The richness of material, even considering the obvious cognitive gap (the material was designed for 8-12 year old L1 learners, compared to our older cohort) also helped reduce the affective filter of the trial group making the whole course seem more 'fun'.

There was virtually no improvement in either cohort for the consonant-plus-vowel category (score +0.17). At the time of the study, we had no specific material to aid instruction so this category was introduced in a more traditional explanation-practice technique with no ERP inducing material. Subsequently, we found material for this category, which we intend to use in future research. It should also be noted that in L1 teaching these categories are systematically taught within a considerably longer time framework, whereas here, they were introduced as stand-alone lessons.

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Table 2. Cohort compared improvements in orthography
All statistically significant (p < 0.05) differences are shown in gray,

	F (Anova)	t-test	P	Statistical significance
Short Vowels	2.71	1.645	0.109	n.s.
Long Vowels	20.13	4.486	0.000	
Consonants + vowel	0.05	0.232	0.817	n.s.
Digraphs	18.29	4.295	0.000	
Total	4.21	2.053	0.048	

n.s. = not significant, statistical significance set at p<0.05

Pronunciation (grapheme-phoneme decoding)

The pronunciation test consisted of each student reading sentences aloud, and was assessed on the same series of 32 sentences used for the orthography test. This test follows the Orton-Gillingham method (1997) (in De Graaff et al. 2009: 322-323) for testing pronunciation. There was an important exception in that we tried to give all words a context (that is they were given in sentences rather than individual words) and were chosen from lexis that the students' regular teachers had indicated should have been familiar and had been introduced during their regular curriculum lessons. This was important as it is generally recognized that it is difficult to pronounce unknown vocabulary or lexis out of context (Yule, 2010).

Graph shows improvements (fewer errors) with the exception of the Long Vowel category in the control cohort.
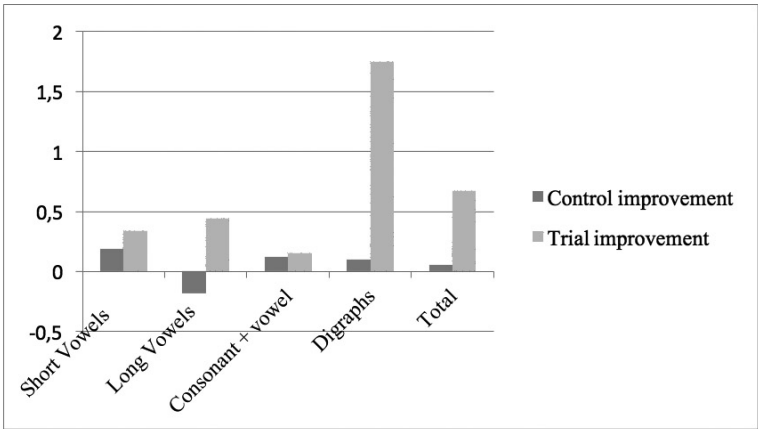
Figure 2. Cohort compared improvements in amounts of errors made (Pronunciation)

There was a statistically significant improvement for both long vowels and digraphs (both p<0.000). We believe that this was due to the large amount of material available as reinforcement (see appendix 3) and to the relative ease of relating to new grapheme representations (such as, /ð/, /θ/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/) which, although different in Italian, do not constitute a serious phonological problem. While short vowels did improve, they did not do so statistically (p = 0.283). We believe that this may be due to the fact that the Italian vowel system does not have true short vowels but what can rather be considered allophones (especially the /i/, /ɔ/ and /u/) (see Italian phonemic chart, Appendix 1). The consonant-plus-vowel area also did not improve significantly. Again, during the trial we had had no access to additional ERP material, which we intend to include in the future.

Table 3. Cohort compared improvements in pronunciation

Delta post – pre-test of Control and trial cohorts difference in number of errors.

	F (Anova)	t-test	P	
Short Vowels	1.19	1.089	0.283	n.s.
Long Vowels	6.01	2.452	0.019	
Consonants + vowel	0.03	0.186	0.854	n.s.
Digraphs	119.01	10.856	0.000	
Total	20.93	4.575	0.000	

n.s. = not significant, statistical significance set at p<0.05

The interview

The interview test was based on four categories outlined in the Cambridge syndicate's guidelines i.e., grammar, pronunciation, discourse and lexis. For our purposes, we were mostly interested in pronunciation and to a lesser degree lexis, due to the introduction of word families in the trial cohort. The other categories were not considered to be related to the trial methodology except in as much as they affected the overall significance of the test results. The interviews were shorter (between 3-5 minutes) than the actual oral tests carried out during Cambridge exams, although the criteria used were the same and both examiners were qualified and experienced FCE examiners. It should be noted that the interviews were not meant to replicate the FCE oral exams and cannot be considered a direct indicator of final FCE oral score. The marking system was expressed as a score from 1-5, divided into half points. So, unlike the previous two tests where the reduction in errors was counted, here, there was a positive score count.
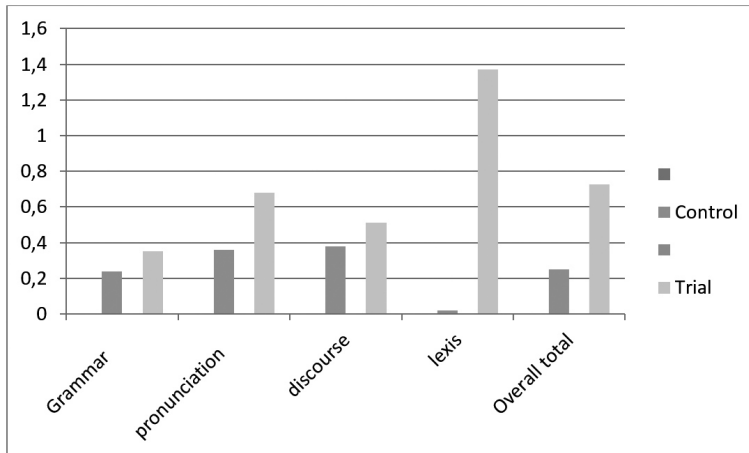

Figure 3. Improvement (average improvement in scores) for the Interview

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The improvement in the trial cohort was statistically relevant for the overall score (p = 0.024) and for pronunciation (p <0.000), discourse (p <0.034) and lexis (p <0.000), although not for grammar (p <0.074). As already mentioned, the improvement for pronunciation was the main category we were interested in. The improvement for the lexis group may have been due to the inclusion in the trial group of

teaching word families and word creation, typical phonics' exercises. Thus, once the construction of a suffix (or prefix) such as, for example, '–ment' or '–tion' were understood, then students could 'invent new lexis intuitively' (Dickerson, 1989). The improvement in discourse for the trial group is less easy to explain. Possibly, the emphasis of supra-segmental pharsing as explained by Nickels et al. (2013) in prosody exercise, aided oral discourse. However, given that this category was not under examination here except as being part of the global interview score, we cannot make any assumptions about the efficiency of phonics techniques to improve discourse.

Table 4. Cohort compared improvements for the interview (ANOVA).

	F (Anova)	t-test	P	
Grammar	3.39	1.841	0.074	n.s.
pronunciation	37.83	6.151	0.000	
discourse	4.86	2.205	0.034	
lexis	518.31	22.766	0.000	
Total	5.59	2.364	0.024	

Improvement in score (1-5), n.s. = not significant, statistical significance $p<0.05$

Overview

The results of the test clearly showed that the trial cohort improved in all three overall categories significantly more than a traditional, exam practice course of 10 weeks. Furthermore, long vowels and digraphs improved remarkably for both orthography and pronunciation, whenever abundant prosodic material was available. It was only the short vowel and consonant-plus-vowel categories, which did not improve significantly. The short amount of time available could explain our inability to statistically improve short vowel recognition due to the recognised problem for all L2 learners to improve allophone recognition and production. The consonant-plus-vowel category on the other hand was complex, had no readily available material on line to create ERP exercises and had relatively little time dedicated to it during the ten-week course. However, the difficulty of improving this area does emphasize even more the relative success of the other categories. It also poses the question of why certain areas improved considerably while others did not. We will now exam these differences.

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Discussion

We need to return to our primary objective to consider the implications of these results. As we noted, phonics and a prosodic approach to TESOL is not currently the object of widespread research, so many doubts remain concerning its efficacy or indeed theoretical base. Recent neurological research on the role of CPH (Bardin, 2012) and the opening of language reception windows, prosody for L2 classroom learning (Nickels et al. 2013) and prosody, rhyme and music (Cummings et al. 2015) in treating dyslexia, have established a theoretical base which could indicate an important role for phonics-based instruction in TESOL. Our primary objective was to relate these results directly to the TESOL classroom. If positive, we could move on to try to understand how phonics works in TESOL, how it differs from L1 phonics teaching and finally, what materials need to be developed to exploit any possible benefits of a phonics-based approach. This would need to be examined, in more extensive and intensive research than this current work was designed to fulfil.

Before considering the validity of these results, we need to examine the possibility of any type 2 bias in the statistical results, especially given the relatively small size of the cohorts involved. We therefore need to look at the study trial design to gauge whether these results are valid and what needs to be improved in future research. We will consider cohort composition, both teachers and students, the course content and finally the testing methods and variables.

The classes

Both classes were of comparable age, sex, motivation and ability and had been randomised by the school before the trial began. While the randomisation process had not used computer-randomising programs, there is little reason to expect any bias in composition, as the school had no knowledge of the protocol or which cohort (control or trial) the students were assigned to. The trial teachers were of comparable experience and the only difference between the cohorts was the trial teaching material. The content of the control course was dictated by the content of the exam practice book and on-line material available (Cambridge ESOL, 2016) for the FCE exam. This material is considered standard and while the approach of individual teachers may differ, it can be considered the communicative-based norm for this type of examination preparation course. The trial-cohort lesson content is described in the methods section and is illustrated in appendix 3. The emphasis of the course was to introduce phonics patterns meta-

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cognitively, allowing students to recognise the patterns and then create prosodic exercises as ERPs to reinforce retention (Nickels et al. 2013), or music as in Cummings et al. (2015). Any trial results should therefore be the result of the instruction techniques deployed.

The testing

The aim of the pre/post-tests was to measure improvements in orthography and pronunciation (De Graaf et al. 2009), and in the interview, to test general oral skill improvement. Neither trial nor control cohort received any explicit advantage in these test items in terms of practice with the trial techniques. This is true with the possible exception of the following; 1) Dictation exercises (although not the tested items) are a very common technique in curricula courses so neither groups would have been at an advantage. 2) the control group did have more time to practice the interview section of the trial although the results did not show any appreciable advantage for the control group.

We did not follow-up the students to understand their real FCE results as their final result would have involved too many other variables to be relevant for this research. The variables, grammar and discourse, in the interview were not the subject of this research so we do not claim any relevance for these results accept in as much as they affected the final interview score. The lexis category, although not central to this research, was introduced as a phonics exercise in trial classes due to the use of word family exercises and meta-cognitive word creation. The pronunciation category was central to the research.

The examiners

The examiners were both qualified FCE examiners and therefore can be considered competent and appropriate for the task involved. They had no prior knowledge of the research protocol and were blinded to which students belonged to which cohort. The students they tested were randomised for both pre- and post-test, so neither examiner had either all trial or all cohort subjects (i.e., they were cross-tested). The interview was not a duplicate of the FCE but was a shorter interview based on personal information, which is available to the general public on the FCE website (Cambridge, 2016), so it cannot be claimed that the results would predict final FCE test results. The main criteria for the interview were to provide indications of general oral skills in terms of fluency and accuracy, not to duplicate FCE criteria.

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Trial results

The statistically significant results for all three categories, orthography (p = 0.048), pronunciation (p < 0.000) and the interview (p = 0.024) would indicate that the phonics techniques used did achieve our objective of providing successful instruction in L2 orthography, pronunciation and general interview skills. This was not FCE specific, so therefore we believe that these techniques can be applied to other age groups and/or objectives. This would give us the opportunity to test phonics and prosody in other teaching environments or ages, and understand the wider significance of this approach. This is essential in applying the findings of Hensch and Bilihorial (2009), Nickels et al. (2013), Huss et al. (2011) and Cummings et al. (2015) in a TESOL environment and to test their efficacy.

The results of each of the categories, short vowels, long vowels, consonants-plus-vowels and digraphs, are also very interesting, as they give an insight into what worked well, and what still needs to be refined. The long vowel and digraph categories improved equally for both orthography and pronunciation, a result underlined by the statistical significance of the pronunciation category in the interviews. In both these categories, there was ample material available on-line, the prosodic material was simple, clear and effective and there was relatively little phonological difficulty for the subjects. Furthermore, during feedback, the students expressed the sentiment that they had become aware of simple language procedures for the first time. It was the importance of 'raising awareness' of phonics patterns that the students instinctively already knew, and subsequent reinforcing them with ERP material that seemed to have been most effective. Further qualitative data would be useful to understand how students perceived the tests.

The relatively small degree of progress in the short vowel and consonant-plus-vowel categories reinforces the importance of both meta-cognitive recognition of patterns and ERP reinforcing. The short vowel category is particularly important, as according to Crystal (1997: 216) a third of all English vocabulary includes the short vowel, consonant plus vowel plus consonant phonics pattern. While there was on-line material available for short vowels, the noted problem of allophonic interference from the L1 created a great deal of problems for most subjects. This was so especially for short vowels, /ɪ/, /o/, or /ʌ/, which are interchanged or difficult to reproduce for Italian L1 speakers (see Italian phonemic chart appendix 1).

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For the consonant-plus-vowel category, for example, as in war, walk and work - /wɔr/, /wɑk/, /wək/, there were no simple patterns to follow and we used little on-line prosodic material, especially of the correct cognitive level (most material was designed for a younger age group). Clearly, both a didactic strategy and materials need to be developed to make these areas more accessible for most students. Furthermore, our subjects had passed the initial CPH peaks, especially after 14/15 years old, during which pronunciation drills would be more efficient. However, the fact that when the prosodic material was not available, this strategy was less effective would reinforce the neurological rationale proposed by Hensch (2008).

In comparison with the control cohort, we can say that the trial technique was more effective. According to the ANOVA tests, all areas improved more in the trial (overall results for orthography ANOVA F value 4.21, pronunciation, 20.93 and interview, 5.59) than the control, and were statistically significant for the long vowel and digraph categories. Given the short duration of the course, it would be difficult for control parameters to improve significantly whereas in the trial, subjects benefitted from the understanding of patterns rather than individually learnt sight words or practice. Indeed, given the emphasis on exam practice the control cohort actually had more exam practise, which was not reflected in their final scores.

Conclusions

In a total final cohort of 38 high school students preparing for the FCE exam during a 20-hour preparatory course, the trial teaching methodology was shown to be statistically effective as a preparatory technique. In particular it was an effective means of improving orthography ($p = 0.048$), pronunciation ($p < 0.000$) as well as general oral skills ($p = 0.024$) as proscribed by the FCE examination criteria. It was also statistically more efficient than a traditional exam preparation course, for (ANOVA F value) orthography = 4.21, pronunciation = 20.93 and general oral skills = 5.59. While the sample was small, the results were statistically robust and as far as possible, avoided statistical type 2 errors. We believe that the results could be the basis of more widespread phonics/prosody based empirical tests for a wider L2 population. Despite the efficacy of the meta-cognitive approach to teach phonics patterns for our older subjects, we would suggest that research is carried out on a younger age group (primary school) of L2 English learners to overcome phonologically difficult areas such as allophone recognition.

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In general terms, we showed that within the scope of this trial, a relatively short twenty-hour teaching course did have significant results in improving not only PG and GP decoding skills, but also improved the FCE interview skills of discourse, pronunciation and lexis. This would indicate, if replicable on a large scale, that attention to L1 interference of phonemic recognition could make a significant impact in the English L2 learning classroom. Furthermore, this improvement was not linked to the relatively short learning window that phonics techniques are usually taught in the L1. By using the meta-cognitive ability as defined in this study of recognising phonics patterns, our 17/18 year olds significantly improved their L2 performance, even when linked to a general language test such as the FCE. Given the widespread nature of phonics L1 teaching, the decoding material used is both plentiful and free available on-line. The only real challenge is to adapt this material to a cognitively older age group. Thus, even a small amount of instruction in de-coding skills and attention to L1 interference can lead to significant improves, at least for languages such as Italian (and possibly Spanish), where English phonics patterns different considerably.

Research drawbacks

As we have mentioned, the small size of the samples was the principal drawback of this study, especially for the control cohort (originally n = 17). The dropout rate from the control reduced the power of the control's significance, although not that of the trial cohort results. Given that we aimed to test the viability of applying this method for other experimental settings rather than wanting to prove the general viability of the method, we believe that the sample was sufficient. We are presently working on classes with obligatory attendance, which would further alleviate this problem. According to Winter (2013), it is not the size of the sample which is crucial, but rather the avoidance of type 2 statistical errors which is the principal test of robustness. Here, our main concern was to eliminate these errors. The relative small size of the control group did not affect the efficacy of the trial techniques. The only factor that we believe could have negatively affected the results, was the relative efficacy of each of the teachers. In a larger study, we hope to be able to supply guidelines to other L2 teacher in order to eliminate this variable and test the hypothesis on a wider scale, excluding any teacher specific influence.

The repeatability of the techniques could also be a point of contention. The errors of trying to apply a universal standard was amply demonstrated in the controversy of applying L1 phonics

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techniques in England after government intervention (Stuart, 2005) rather than relying on teacher interpretation of techniques as shown in the Clackmannanshire study (Ellis, 2007). However, we believe that the development of materials and the efficacy of prosodic ERP techniques as shown here, need to be understood fully in order to confirm the neurological findings in Hensch (in Bardin, 2012), Nickels et al. (2013), Cummings et al. (2015) and Huss et al. (2011). We therefore, intend to collaborate with Italian neurologists to verify the connection between prosodic material and ERPs to clarify this link. Finally, as noted, we fully intend both to develop new material and to use existing material for phonics ERP activity for future research.

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Authors

*****Robert Coates** graduated from Edinburgh University, with a general arts degree followed by an M.A. in History, I subsequently gained an M.A TESOL from Sunderland University (UK) in 2014. I worked at Brescia University, initially in the Medical Faculty teaching medical English, where I started cooperating with various Medical Doctors in publishing articles in Medical journals as a Medical Writer. This led to my first ESP research area of Medical Publishing in English. My interest in using medical approaches to linguistic studies particularly for empirical research, stemmed from early interest. Subsequently, following my MA TESOL, I became interested in learning strategies both at schools and for older students. Given the widespread use of phonics for L1 teaching, I was particularly interested in the possibility of applying these techniques to L2 teaching, both for children and for older students. Again, contact with both psychologists and neurologist cultivated a strong interest in 'cross-fertilized' research, applying findings from medicine in linguistics.

Judith Gorham After graduating in Fine Art from Newcastle University. I took a PGCE before coming to Italy to teach at the British Council in 2000. I took the DELTA in 2002 and worked in the tertiary sector in Northern Italy. I have been teaching at Bocconi University for 15 years while currently finishing an MA in Education (Applied Linguistics) from the Open University. I am interested in Systemic Functional Linguistics and currently working on English as a Medium of Instruction in Italian Universities.

Richard Nicholas holds an MA TESOL from University College London and teaches at the Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, in Milan, Italy. He has worked for over 15 years in the field of English language training, development and assessment. His interests lie mainly in the socio-economic and geopolitical relationships which influence the teaching of English as well as second language acquisition.

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Appendix 1.

The English phonemic Vowel Chart
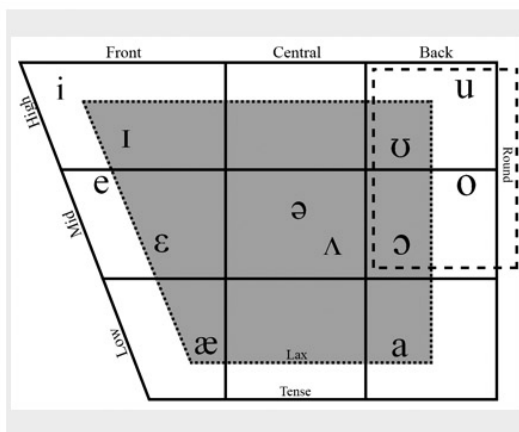
Italian Phonemic Vowel Chart

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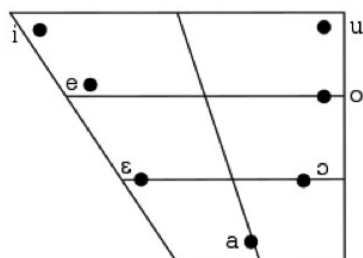
Appendix 2

Pre and Post Tests

Calini Preliminary Language Test Phonics: Teacher's copy.

Short Vowels

/ae/ The **black cat** is sitting there next to her **bag**.

/ ε / **Let** me have a look at your **pet** dog. Can it **beg**?

/ ɪ / Please **sit** down here on the seat. There is a **bit** of cake and you can **sip** the water.

/ ɑ / What have you **got**! please don't eat it from the **pot** as it is very **hot**!

/ ^ / The **rugby** ball is in the **tub**, can you take it to the **club**.

After v' / ə / I do **love** wearing my **gloves** in winter, they're as hot as an **oven**.

before th' /ə / and / ɑ/**Mother** and **father** sat together with their **brothers**.

/ ɪ /   compared with / i / You must always **sit** on your **seat**, see your shoes **fit** your **feet** correctly.

Long vowels   two vowels

/ i / There is a lot of **meat** here. Take a **seat** and we can decide how to **eat** it.

/ e / The house was very **plain** and uninteresting. Its **main** attraction was its garden, which I'd like to see **again**.

/ o / Would you like to come on my **boat**. Don't worry it **floats** but you will need a rain **coat**.

/aj / Last **night** I had a **fright**. I saw a **mighty** dog bite a man.

Double vowels

/ ʊ / **Look** out! You nearly put your **foot** onto my new **book**.

Magic 'e'

/ e / This is my **mate**. We were both very **late** last night and missed our train.

I /cons/ e / aj / The sun **rises** at **five** in the morning. We can then **drive** in our car.

u/(con)/e / u / You must follow the **rules** and not be **rude** especially in **June**.

Consonants and vowels and grammatical morphemes

/a:/⌐+ r   /ɑr/ Shall we take the **car**? It's not so **far** but we can stop afterwards.

W +/o:/. / ər / This **world** would be nice if we didn't have to **work** so much

/h/ The **Huntingdon Hotel** has a **horse** on a sign over the door.

/-ed/ He **studied** so much and **learned** so little because he **liked** to say he had **finished** the course.

/-er/ / ə / (schwa) Did you know that his **father** is a **computer** expert and his **sister** is a **teacher**.

/Wa/were/ –/ wə/**What** did you say they **were**? I said that one **was** a **wasp** not a bee.

/-ing/ / ŋ/   He was **singing** a tune and **playing** along while the teacher was **bringing** the class to an end.

/s/ - /z/ There are several **reasons** for why he **says** you want some flowers

Digraphs and various blends or combinations

/Th/ / ð / **That** is **the** first question. You must **then** move to **the** second one.

/Th/ /θ/ **Thank** you very much for **thinking** about the **cloth** for the dress.

/sh/ / ʃ/ I **wish** you would **brush** the **shampoo** out of your hair.

/ch/   / tʃ/ There is an old **church**, where the **French** play **chess** in the afternoon.

/ph/. /f/ The **photographer** was taking pictures and **framing** them on the wall for the **physician**.

/wh/ /w/ **When** will we be able to **whistle** the new tune? **While** it is still winter I hope?

/ dʒ / You need a **sponge** to wipe down the mess made by the **orange**

/ ə/ The **money** that the **company** raised was enough to go to **London**. (typical error)

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.   .   indicates tested lexis

Calini Preliminary Language Post Test Phonics
Short Vowels

/ae/   The **fat man** had a very impressive **lap**-top computer

/ ɛ /   The **ten** stones were **set** in silver and belong to **Ben** .

/ ɪ /   He decided **it** was a good **fit** for his thin build, so he bought the **pin**-stripped jacket.

/ ɑ /   Can you **mop** the floor and **stop** complaining. Its **not** hard!

/ ^ /   It will be great **fun**! I don't want to **run** in so much **mud**.

After v' / ə / We **discovered** a plane **above** us despite the cloud **cover**

Before th' / ə / and / ɑ/Don't **smother** the taste, it will be a **bother** to make **another**.

/ ɪ / compared with / i / You will **feel** the heat if you **hit** the cup too much. Just **fill** it please.

Long vowels   two vowels

/ i / It was a grey and **bleak** day on the **beach**, but we wanted to watch the **sea**.

/ e / The **train** was travelling fast across the **plain**, which we didn't do **again**.

/ o / There was a funny **goat**, which was eating **oats** and **moaning**.

/aj / It was quite a **sight**! A **fight** between the black **knight** and a dragon.

Double vowels

/ ʊ / What a **fool**! He nearly broke the **stool** by the swimming **pool**.
Magic 'e'

/ e /   It was **fate** that she would be **late** and missed the main **plate** of the evening.

I /*cons*/ e / aj / You must **write** down your name to say your grandmother is **alive** and **smiles** a lot.

u/(*con*)/e / u / You can take the **Tube** in London and **use** your ticket, it makes **pure** sense.

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Consonants and vowels and grammatical morphemes

/a:/ + r /ɑr/ The **army** used a special gun so as not to **harm** the **shark**.

W +/o:/, / ər / This **word** is **worth** a lot in the exam. It **works** a lot.

/h/ The **harm** that a **hamster** can do is more than **half** its value.

/ed/ He **showed** that he had **received** the box as it was **packaged** in plastic.

/-er/ / ə / (schwa) The **manager** helped me to show the **expert her** place.

/Wa/were/ –/ wə/It **was** a **warm** day so the **swarm** of bees moved towards the hive..

/-ing/ / ŋ/The bell was **ringing** as he had **wrung** it with all his **strength**.

/s/ /s/ - /z/ **Stones** will help the **waves** break. The bygone then **crashes** on the beach

Digraphs and various blends or combinations

/Th// ð / **There** was a difficult silence as **the** stranger **then** moved across the room.

/Th//θ/**Thanks**-giving is celebrated in **thirteen** states, **throughout** the world.

/sh/ / ʃ/ He was very **shy** but **silly**, **shameless** but not **stupid**.

/ch/ / tʃ/ **Much** has been said about the **difference** between **chilling** wine and **cooling** it.

/ph/. /. /f/ **Philosophy** was studied **previous** to **physics**, but after maths **preparation**.

/wh/ /w/ Can you tell me **whether** it will be good or bad and **when** the **weather** will improve?

/ dʒ / The cartoon character was bright **orange** and the shape of a square **sponge**.

/ ə/I thought the **honey** was well worth the **money** we spent in **London**.

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Appendix 3

Summary of Lesson Content with web-site addresses

5. Summary of Lesson Content and web links in Appendix 3.

1. Short Vowels/CVC rule. Allophone recognition /difficulty to recognize/repeat as a contrast in following lessons (here contrasted to long CV pronouns). *'Short vowel song'* Video posted to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TjcT7Gto3U and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnVhx3vk1Jg , simple and reverse dictations, students asked to write and then read their own dictations; peer corrected/teacher controlled

2. Long Vowels (contrasted with short vowels). Minimal pairs to underline difference/introduction of 'magic e vowels – elicit rule. Word invention (included nonsense words). *'Magic E song'* Video posted to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZhl6YcrxZQ Long Vowels and double vowels (contrasted with short vowels (CVVC). Minimal pair games/ gap fillers / dictations Omega and Alpha. *'When two vowels go a walking song'* video posted to (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fb3Pdt8kxg)

3. Introduction: film *Daunbailò* (Down by Law) Jim Jarmusch (1986), Video posted to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rK3s_BP9kE, elicit use of homophones (*'I scream for Ice scream'*), pelmonism and elicitation of homophone categories – Peer correction to reinforce meta-cognitive approach, dictations.

4. V' rule/ ou/ other long and short vowel contrasts. V- rule Silent approach (Mime followed by eliciting of rule followed by reinforcing the activity with Beatles' *'All you need is Love'*, song, Video posted to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLEtGRUrtJo.

5. Consonants: grammar morphemes -ing/-ed/-s/'ve/. To underline phoneme/grapheme correspondences. (Noughts and Crosses) – Peer review correction of pronunciation (and grammar use) – Students able to convert high degree of language use to phonics groups. Also limited use of phonetics (especially for -gn/ng) –activating grammar –translation knowledge to transfer to meta-cognitive rules. (introduction of schwa)

6. Digraphs, wh-/th-/gh-/kn-/ph- introduction again of homophones to create phonics patterns. Concepts of types of words e.g., wh-questions, ph –scientific various –gh for function words and adjectives. Peer reviews to create a meta-cognitive framework.

'The Digraph Song'. Video posted to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFQ2g_AZW4c

7. Consonants changing vowels r- / w- Car/word/work/. Introduced from –gh digraph. Dictations from Hornsby-Students elicit rules. Recognition of word groups from FCE reading exercises.

8. Consolidation – creation of word family tables e.g., nouns: -ment, -er/or,-tion, -ology, adjectives: al/-ical, adverbs: – ly prefixes/suffixes for word recognition: pre-, un-, dis- etc.. Round of prosodic activities based on web phonics exercises:

10. Final test and individual feedback given to students.

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Revisiting the Concept of Self-Efficacy as a Language Learning Enhancer[1]

Revisando el Concepto de Autoeficacia como un Potenciador del Aprendizaje de Idiomas

Carol Andrea García Gutiérrez
and Norma Constanza Durán Narváez[2]*
Universidad del Tolima, Colombia

" If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire
the capacity to do it even If may not have it at the beginning"
Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract

Individuals' self-efficacy beliefs determine the ways they perform in any domain, since they reflect the extent to which people feel capable to achieve certain accomplishments Bandura (1997). This paper describes how a group of intermediate school students'constant failure in the exams, demotivating attitudes, apathy and reluctance to learn English as a foreign language, relate with their perceived capability, self-perception and their prior experiences as language learners. This descriptive and exploratory case study was developed in a private language centre and involved 11 participants. The goal of the study was to understand the causes of the students' demotivation and reluctance to the language. For this purpose, autobiographies become a springboard to examine students' language learning experiences. This information was analysed based on the grounded theory approach proposed by Freeman(1998), and findings reveal that the inadequate teachers' discourse, classroom environment, rapport and feedback strategies influenced students' perceived capability to perform in the English class. In addition, the data showed that the supportive role of parents and relatives, encouraged learners to adopt a resilient attitude with respect to the difficulties while learning the language.

Keywords: Self- efficacy beliefs, Students' reluctance, autobiographies, teachers'role, EFL context.

Resumen

Las creencias de los individuos acerca de su autoeficacia determina la manera en la que se desempeñan en cualquier escenario, puesto que éstas reflejan la manera en la que las personas se consideran capaces de alcanzar ciertos logros. Bandura (1997). Este artículo, describe la forma en la que la continua pérdida, la desmotivación, la apatía y el rechazo hacia el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera de un grupo de estudiantes de nivel intermedio, se relacionan con su autoeficacia, su auto percepción y experiencias como aprendices de Inglés como lengua extranjera. Debido a su carácter cualitativo y exploratorio, este estudio de caso fue llevado a cabo en un centro de idiomas de carácter privado y comprendió la participación de once estudiantes. El propósito del estudio se enmarcó en la comprensión de las causas por las cuales dichos estudiantes mostraron desmotivación y rechazo al idioma. Por ello, las autobiografías se convierten en una herramienta para indagar acerca de las experiencias de aprendizaje en lengua extranjera de los estudiantes . La información fue analizada a través del análisis temático propuesto por Freeman (1998), y los resultados revelan que un inadecuado discurso por parte del docente, el ambiente de clase, la falta de empatía con los estudiantes y las estrategias de retroalimentación utilizadas, influyeron en la autoeficacia de los estudiantes para desempeñarse en la clase de Inglés. Por otra parte, la información mostró que el apoyo que los estudiantes recibieron de sus padres y familiares, los motivó a adoptar una actitud resiliente con respecto a sus dificultades durante el aprendizaje del Inglés.

Palabras clave: Creencias sobre la autoeficacia, rechazo de los estudiantes al idioma, autobiografías, Contexto de aprendizaje del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

Resumo

As crenças dos indivíduos acerca da sua autoeficácia determinam a maneira na que se desempenhem em qualquer cenário, posto que as mesmas refletem a maneira na que as pessoas se consideram capazes de alcançar certos aproveitamentos. Bandura (1997). Este artigo, descreve a forma na que a contínua perda, a falta de motivação, a apatia e a rejeição em relação à aprendizagem da língua estrangeira de um grupo de estudantes de nível intermédio, relacionam-se com a sua autoeficácia, a sua auto percepção e experiências como aprendizes de inglês como língua estrangeira. Devido ao seu caráter qualitativo e exploratório, este estudo de caso foi realizado em um centro de idiomas de caráter privado e compreendeu a participação de onze estudantes. O propósito do estudo se delimitou na compreensão das causas pelas quais os referidos estudantes mostraram falta de motivação e rejeição ao idioma. Por isso, as autobiografias se convertem em uma ferramenta para indagar acerca das experiências de aprendizagem em língua estrangeira dos

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estudantes. A informação foi analisada através da análise temática proposta por Freeman (1998), e os resultados revelam que um inadequado discurso por parte do docente, o ambiente de classe, a falta de empatia com os estudantes e as estratégias de retroalimentação utilizadas, influíram na autoeficácia dos estudantes para desempenhar-se na aula de inglês. Por outro lado, a informação mostrou que o apoio que os estudantes receberam dos seus padres e familiares, motivou-os a adotar uma atitude resiliente com relação a suas dificuldades durante a aprendizagem do inglês.

Palavras chave: Crenças sobre a autoeficácia, rejeição dos estudantes ao idioma, autobiografias, Contexto de aprendizagem do inglês como Língua Estrangeira

Introduction

The concept of self-efficacy, entails to what extent individuals believe they are capable of accomplishing something under several circumstances Bandura (1997). This construct becomes an eye opener at the time of understanding the myriad of reasons that interfered with the students' performance in the language learning classroom. This qualitative study aimed at exploring the correlation between the high school learners' prior language learning experiences and their recurrent failure of the English courses, that led them feel demotivated, and have a poor perception of their own potential as language learners and their ability to overcome difficulties. This ten - month research was carried out with a group of 11 students from a private school , who took classes in a private language institute in Ibague.

To accomplish the aim of this research, autobiographies became a powerful source to dig into the students' language learning experiences. With respect to this, Coffey & Street (2008), assert that "the analysis of first -person accounts of the language learning process has gained legitimacy as a qualitative method of inquiry giving voice to the learner's own view of factors both predisposing and sustaining different trajectories of language learning." (p.452).

Furthermore, Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik (2014) assert that "autobiographical accounts tend to bring the emotional dimensions of language teaching and learning, which are often suppressed by other research approaches, to the fore." (p.12). This helped us to understand the relevance of this type of instrument at the time of inquiring into students' experiences, and made us aware of the importance of narrative inquiry as a useful approach to make sense of the learners' experiences and the way they represent them to others Barkhuizen et al., (2014). The reasons above, guided the following research question: *How are the relationships between students' language learning experiences and their perceived capability evident in learners' narratives?* which has to do with the role of autobiographies in informing about students' previous experiences, and their relationship with their sense of capability or self-efficacy to learn and be successful in the language learning.

The decision of inquiring into students' language learning experiences by means of autobiographies uncovered a range of complexities of human behavior that may not be explored through other sources. Moreover, the results of this study revealed the importance of revisiting the concept of self-efficacy in the language learning processes,

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since it can be a foremost alternative to expand the view of teachers with respect to the need of creating safer learning environments and opportunities for students´ improvement, and the decisive role of the educators in students' willingness or unwillingness to learn.

As researchers, we strongly believe that exploring new avenues to understand how emotional competence unfolds becomes at the core of language teaching and learning scenarios. Consequently, this study shows how the concept of self-efficacy regains relevance, and becomes a magnifying glass to see teaching and learning through a new lens.

The oncoming sections of this article will discuss the methodology followed, the different categories that emerged from the analysis of the students' autobiographies in relation to their self-efficacy as language learners and lastly, we present the findings and the conclusions.

Literature Review

This study is supported on a body of constructs and related research that illuminated our path to explore and find answers to our inquiry. We begin by clearing the ground on the notion of self-efficacy, the sources that nourish individuals' self-efficacy beliefs and then present some research that has been undertaken in the field of language teaching. Finally, we conceptualize the autobiographies and inform about some studies in which they have been used to inquire into individuals' experiences.

Revisiting the concept of Self-efficacy

To conduct this study, we took largely into consideration the definition of self-efficacy coined by Bandura (1997), since he started to do some research on the field, which has enriched the scope of the topic in studies done by some psychologists and educators, as well as encouraged new researchers to expand knowledge in the direction of learners' perceived capability.

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Bandura (1997), states that self-efficacy is related to how capable individuals believe they are at the moment of carrying out a specific task in any domain. According to this author, the individuals' self-efficacy influence their thought processes, level of persistency, motivation and affective states. That is, the individuals' self-efficacy determines the performance of individuals increasing or diminishing their beliefs concerning their capability to do something; therefore, we can say that people also build some self-efficacy beliefs. To understand this concept

more deeply, it is necessary to elaborate on the notion of beliefs as follows.

In line with Pajares (1992), beliefs represent a subject of inquiry in different fields, which makes them feasible to be explored through the appropriate methodologies and designs. In addition, Sigel (1985) described that beliefs are "mental constructions of experience- often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts" (p.351).

Sigel's definition is complementary to the one provided by Rokeack (1968), since he considers that beliefs have two additional components apart from the one that represents the mental constructions of experience: the affective and behavioural. The affective component incites emotion and the behavioural one is activated when certain actions require it. This implies beliefs are a representation of what a person thinks about certain situations in relation to their emotions and the different settings that demand a specific behaviour from their part.

These components are distinctive features of the individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, which can be weak or strong. With respect to this, Bandura (1997) states:

> People who doubt their capabilities in particular domains of activity shy away from difficult tasks in those domains. They find it hard to motivate themselves or increase their confidence to carry out a task since they slacken[3] their efforts or give up quickly in the face of obstacles. (p. 39).

On the contrary, people whose self-efficacy beliefs are strong can overcome difficult situations easily because they conceive them as challenges instead of threats to avoid. Additionally, they set challenging goals and are consistent to achieve them in spite of failures or setbacks, which they surpass quickly. These outcomes make individuals have successful orientations towards the accomplishment of certain performances, and confirms that self-efficacy beliefs are "active producers instead of merely foretellers of attainments, which makes them the unique dispositional make up of efficaciousness of any person"(Bandura,1997, p.42).

Due to the characteristics already mentioned, self-efficacy beliefs form part of the big term called self-efficacy which was defined above and is related to factors such as self-regulation and motivation, and operates as a key factor in a generative system of human competence or performances.

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[3] To become less productive or fail.

It's important to say that according to Bandura (1997), people build their self-efficacy beliefs selecting, interpreting and integrating the different information they receive. To do so, there are four main sources where they get this information, which correspond to *enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states.*

Enactive Mastery Experiences: this is related to the different successful or unsuccessful experiences an individual has had. In turn, these appear closely connected to the cognitive, behavioural and self-regulatory tools people use to face and overcome different kinds of circumstances without diminishing their self-efficacy beliefs.

Vicarious experiences: Bandura (1997) claimed that "Social comparison operates as a primary factor in the self-appraisal of capabilities" (p.87). This social comparison, refers to the vicarious experiences a person can have, that is, the second-hand experiences that model people's level of perceived self-efficacy, in the sense that the performance of others are useful to make them conscious of their own capabilities to succeed and get the same or even, better results; this way their self-efficacy beliefs can be increased.

Verbal persuasion: this source refers to the encouragement given by others to recognize one's capabilities and efforts to do certain attainments. In line with Bandura (1997), people who are persuaded verbally regarding their capabilities to do something successfully, are more able to mobilize great effort and sustain it even in harder circumstances. Thus, self-efficacy beliefs can be encouraged through verbal persuasion.

Physiological and affective states: it refers to the way people judge their capabilities by getting information from the somatic indicators they show when facing situations of vulnerability or aversive arousal for them. Hence, as teachers, to help students get the right information from this source we are expected to "(…) enhance physical status, reduce the stress levels and negative emotional proclivities, and correct misinterpretations of bodily states" (Bandura & Cioffi, 1997, p.106)

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These sources constitute a way to understand the origin of the students' perceived capability. In the case of this study, the sources mentioned showed how the students' self-efficacy was influenced by the different experiences they lived in the English classroom, which made them have a good or a poor attitude towards the language learning.

Self-efficacy and English language teaching

Previous studies have reported interesting research in the field of self-efficacy, English language teaching and learning and other domains of knowledge. Although the investigations undertaken don't represent a considerable number, some important contributions are acknowledged below.

Shi (2017), an assistant professor of the China University, presents a review with respect to self-efficacy, based on previous research done in the SLA field, specifically in the motivation area. According to the writer, the term self-efficacy is part of a paradigm called the expectancy value theory, which proposes that learners' motivation is influenced greatly by their expected success in a task and the value they give it.

Some of the studies this professor presents, refer to the research done by Teng (2005), Tilfalioglu and Cinkara (2009), Rahimi and Abedini (2009), Naseri and Zaferanieh (2012), and Idrus and Sivapalan (2010). These authors whose studies were conducted in Taiwan, Turkey and Iran, found a correlation between the participants' self-efficacy and their self-directed learning, as well as their reading and listening comprehension skills. Besides, the researchers also pointed that the individuals' proficiency level, their writing and speaking performance and the ability to acquire new vocabulary, could be successful or not depending on their self-efficacy beliefs.

These studies document how the subject of self-efficacy has been explored in the ELT field, which supports the nature of this study and suggest the exploration of the language learners' self-efficacy beliefs in light of theory.

Another important study that confirms the influence of the individuals' self-efficacy beliefs in their development was conducted by Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli (2003). These authors explored and measured 464 adolescents' self-efficacy beliefs to regulate negative affect as well as positive and negative emotions to carry out interpersonal transactions and academic tasks. According to the findings, having a strong sense of self-efficacy to manage one's positive and negative emotional life, that is to say having strong self-efficacy beliefs to control one's affective states contributes to the development of successful academic activities. Likewise, the analysis of the data showed that the perceived self-efficacy of individuals is a general contributor to manage academic issues and to develop a perceived self-efficacy that improves the individuals psychological functioning.

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With reference to the role of self-efficacy in human functioning, the research project conducted by Bandura, Martinez - Pons, & Zimmerman (1996) gives also relevant information. These authors selected 102 ninth and tenth graders to answer two different scales, referred to the type of self-regulating strategies they used and the strategies they implemented to reach a successful academic achievement in the social studies subject. In line with the results, the learners' self-efficacy beliefs for academic achievement influenced their final score considerably. Moreover, it was found that the students' perceived self-efficacy for achievement had a direct influence on their outcomes and goals.

At a local level, some interesting research studies have been conducted, and one of those was aimed at developing students' self-efficacy. Cardona, J., & Novoa, L. (2013), encouraged 20 students from a private and a public school to develop their self-efficacy to write argumentative texts using modeling strategies and giving constant feedback. After interpreting the data collected through written samples, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, findings revealed that students' motivation to write increased markedly, and attitudes like persistence and resilience were constant when they had to carry out different written tasks.

Another relevant research study was done by Contreras, F. E., J. Esguerra, G. Haikal, A. Polanía, A. Rodríguez, A. (2005). These teachers identified the self-efficacy beliefs of 120 highschool students from a private school in Bogota, to analyse the extent to which self-efficacy and anxiety were related to students' performance in five specific subjects: arts, English, social studies and mathematics. To identify learners' beliefs, they used a general scale used for these purposes. Data revealed that the students' self-efficacy beliefs were producers of their academic development, that is, the learners' self-efficacy beliefs influenced their performance in the areas mentioned above, which verifies their vital role in humans' performance.

Although the studies above show the importance of the topic of self-efficacy in the language learning process, there has not been an extensive research on the field in our country. Therefore, we consider this study can contribute to the understanding of the different ways students have built their self-efficacy beliefs throughout their experiences as language learners, and how these ones give information on their possible reluctance, apathy and poor performance in the language.

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Autobiographies and Students' Language Learning Experiences

Since this study seeks to inquire into the students' self-efficacy beliefs, we decided to dig into their language learning experiences, so we could get relevant information of the ways they have built their perception of English as a foreign language and how this perception has influenced their perceived capability as learners. To do so, we chose the autobiographies as the main source of information in this study, because they are useful to explore peoples' beliefs and perceptions towards the learning process, and to understand how individuals construct meaning out of the experiences they have lived. Durán, Lastra, & Morales (2013).

Furthermore, Johnson (1999), asserts that autobiographies shed light on people's prior experiences and beliefs, so they can be analysed critically to comprehend how complex is their understanding of the learning process; in other words, autobiographies can inform about people's experiences, which may give important insights about how they have learnt and use the language.

A study that confirms how autobiographies help teachers dig into students' experiences is the one conducted by Barclay-McLaughlin, Kershaw & Roberts (2007). The participants were aimed to write an autobiography including different stages of their childhood, elementary, middle and high school, the people that related to these phases and the context where these events took place. After sharing the personal accounts to each other, they found out that the cultural autobiographies enhanced the individuals' self- and social awareness, and also the understanding of others.

It's also important to say, that autobiographies have been used in other areas of education to explore student attitudes and behaviors, as Tse (2000) claims in her research report, concerning the analysis of students' autobiographies in the English classroom. In this study, the researcher asked 37 undergraduate and graduate students to write some autobiographies in order to get to know their experiences as language learners, and their attributions to success and failure. After analysing the data, the researcher concluded that learners considered that an appropriate classroom atmosphere and a caring teacher were essential to succeed when learning a language, together with the contribution of family or community sources Tse (2000). That is why they also claimed that attributions for failure also included the teacher, the classroom environment and the teacher-student interactions.

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Clearly, due to its main characteristics, autobiographies can give important information on the ways learners build their self-efficacy beliefs in the process of learning the language selecting, interpreting

and integrating several information from the four sources mentioned by Bandura (1997). Because of this, we considered these were an appropriate method and an object of inquiry to advance the understanding of students' poor perception as learners and their unwillingness to study English, going beyond their academic performance and exploring their affective dimension, which in line with Brown (2007) "is the emotional side of human behaviour and can be juxtaposed to the cognitive side" (p.153).

That is to say that both affective and cognitive sides are important when talking about a person's learning process, in the sense that the beings' personality and sociocultural factors are taken into consideration to understand his or her development. In words of Arnold (1999) and Brown (2007), these factors can be categorized as individual and relational and refer to anxiety, inhibition, self-esteem, motivation, resilience, receptivity, willingness to communicate, risk taking, empathy and classroom transactions, and relate to the recognition of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude in the English class.

It is also worth noting, that the studies above provided an important opportunity to advance in the understanding of autobiographies as a source of inquiry, and reclaims the relevance of narratives at the moment of exploring people's experiences, as Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik (2014) claim: "a focus on narrative content can certainly contribute to a richer and more rounded understanding of language teaching and learning as lived experience" (p.3).

This is verified by an important study carried out by Beheshti & Noor (2013), in which the authors were intended to analyze the impact of different journaling techniques on sixty Iranian language learners. The results of the study showed that encouraging students to keep a journal through which they could reflect about their experiences as learners maximized the sources that nourished their self-efficacy beliefs.

In keeping with the previous literature review, it is evident that the issue of self-efficacy is of central importance for teachers, and in particular language teachers to understand the reasons behind the learners' poor or successful performance at the time of learning English as a foreign language. Indeed, the previous studies showed how the students' self-efficacy can have a positive or a negative impact in their performance, which gives support and relevance to the exploration of the students' language learning experiences in relation to their self-efficacy beliefs.

Methodology

Research Design

This study falls in line with the principles and procedures of a qualitative case study since it pursues "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit" Merriam (1988) p.14. In this case and as the same author states, the interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in the context, rather than specific variables, in discovery rather than confirmation and it is reflected in the following research question that guides the study: *How do students' narratives inform about the relationships between their language learning experiences and their perceived self-efficacy in the language learning process?*

Furthermore, for the purposes of this study it is clear that the understanding of the relationship between students' language learning experiences and their self-efficacy, is central to improve practice, as it will be shown at the end of this chapter. By the same token the grounded theory approach proposed by Freeman (1998), becomes the mode of exploration of the phenomenon of the self-efficacy of the students and its relation with their language learning experiences. This was done by the establishment of commonalities between the data and their possible connections with the phenomenon under study. In this way, as researchers we could go beyond the apparent students' reluctance and indifference towards learning and lack of interest, to turn failure into a new challenge or opportunity to move forward.

The form of narrative considered for the purposes of this study was the autobiographies, which are also defined as histories in this case of language learning. According to Benson (2011), the term history suggests a long - term account as well as periods over a person has learned a language such as a year, or semester or an incident that lasts not more than a few minutes. This was a key aspect for this exploration because the study lasted ten months, and the participant students had taken English courses during two years approximately which turned into an interesting amount of time and range of experiences to look at.

Context and participants

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The population who participated in this study was a group of 11 intermediate students who were ninth and eleventh graders, and their ages ranged from 13 to 15 years old. The criteria for the selection of this population, was the presence of a phenomenon of constant failure and reluctance of the students towards learning the foreign language, and the purpose of understanding the situation further and hopefully to

come up with alternatives to overcome the issue under study, in these students and others in similar circumstances.

The students were enrolled in an agreement between their school and a recognized language centre of the city, which established 16 levels of English (two per month) as a requirement to graduate from high school; that is to say the learners had to go to the institute to have English lessons two days (five hours) a week, so, they could take the courses as a school subject.

Data Collection Instruments

The participants were encouraged to write an autobiography (See appendix 1) using a time line through which they could talk about the most important experiences and childhood memories they have lived as kids or youngsters, and as students of English as a foreign language. Subsequently, the teacher researcher showed them their own autobiography (see appendix 2), in order to motivate them to do the activity and give them some ideas.

It is important to say that learners were guided through some questions (See appendix 3), which were aligned to their former language learning experiences and the sources they used to learn English. This was done to see eventual connections between those facts and the way they have built their self-efficacy beliefs.

With the purpose of conducting the study ethically, it was considered the parents' permission to use the students' narratives taking into account their ages. Consequently, the parents signed a consent form (See appendix 4) where they were told the information was going to be used for research purposes only.

Data analysis and Interpretation

The autobiographies were collected and immediately read as the first step in the analysis, which was supported on the grounded theory approach as it was mentioned before Freeman (1998). In this sense, the data was read repeatedly and colour coded according to the recurrence of themes. Patterns in the themes which connected the autobiographical accounts were identified leading to the interpretation of them. This interpretation was done through the categorization of data extracts and their reorganization under thematic headings Polkinghorne (1995). The preliminary categories were also generated from the analysis of points of similarity and difference throughout the data to have a broader analytical viewpoint and later, they were rearranged based on theoretical

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arguments to provide more validity to the findings, as it is shown in the following figure:
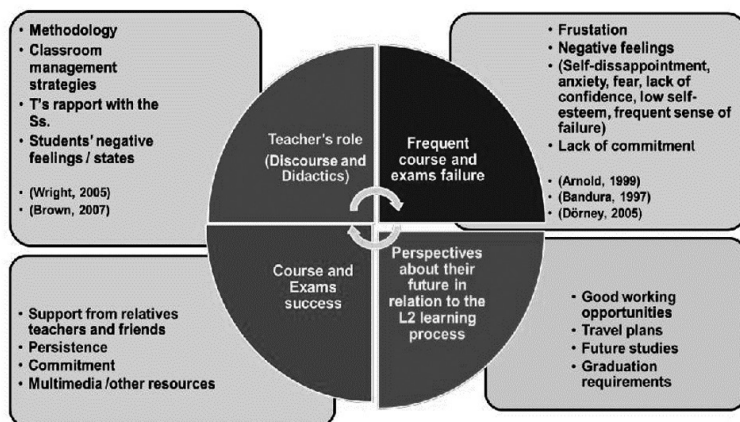

Figure 1. Similarities and differences of data

The themes above were specified and explicit to display initial findings and interrelations, and subsequently configure the categories that emerged from the data analysis. The following categories bring to surface issues connected to students' previous experiences, and different dimensions of interactions in and outside the classroom, that seem to have shaped the way they see themselves as successful or academically disadvantaged learners. Next there are the two main categories that were generated out the data analysis: **learners' discouraging experiences and Students' negative states.**

Discouraging experiences: particularly, after the analysis the data through the grounded theory approach, it was found that the majority of the students' have had discouraging experiences when learning English. One of the consequences of these demotivating experiences is their repetitive failure of the English courses and the exams. According to the data and grouping commonalities, this continuous deficiency could be explained by the aspects below:

Teachers' discourse and didactics: turning to the teachers' discourse and didactics, students mentioned how the inadequate classroom management and error correction techniques used by their teachers, as well as their poor appraisal to learners' work, the teachers' centred lessons, and their inadequate discourse remarks made them feel apprehensive, inhibited and demotivated to learn the language. This implies that the teacher's performance seems to have influenced

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learners' states in the English classroom, which have tended to be negative, as it is shown next:

"Pues una de mis malas experiencias fue con una profesora del centro de Idiomas, por su forma de enseñar no le entendía nada y eso me frustraba un poco y pues su forma de corregirnos no era la más apropiada, por lo que daba miedo y pues el Inglés no es una de mis materias preferidas y así como que menos uno le halla el gusto" (Participant G, personal communication, June 25, 2015):

"Hasta donde tengo memoria, unos pocos profesores mostraron interés por mi proceso de aprendizaje a lo largo de los años. Una profesora llamada Dora, fue la única de los profesores que fue paciente conmigo. Sus clases eran dinámicas y algunas otras eran normales (...) Dora me decía que le gustaban mis presentaciones y la manera como ponía atención en clase, porque ella siempre esperaba sentirse orgullosa de nuestro aprendizaje y avance, más allá de darnos una nota. Para ella, enseñar era más que un trabajo" (Participant B, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

Classroom transactions: According to Arnold (1999) and Brown (2007), classroom transactions imply that learners need to be encouraged and assisted in the classroom. In this respect, students' autobiographies showed that most of them were not motivated enough to learn and use the language in their English classes; on the contrary, they were inhibited, embarrassed in public and demotivated instead, as a consequence of the inadequate classroom transactions and the inappropriate discourse. These are factors educators tend to take for granted, or assume as a common place in the classroom daily basis practice or discourse, disregarding the negative influence these traits bring to the students' prospective performance and behaviour:

"Lo mismo me pasó con el mini proyecto; lo hice pero cuando iba a la mitad de la presentación me dijo: "si no va a aprender que usted se tiene que memorizar lo que trajo no lo presente; y además yo no la pienso pasar con cosas tan mediocres. Desde ahí fue cuando comencé a decirme que soy una bruta que no sirvo para nada etc". (Participant F, personal communication, June 25, 2015)

"yo siempre sentía que ella me tenía rabia ya que no era como unos niños que sabían más que yo. Entonces yo nunca le participaba porque ella nunca me dio esa confianza, siempre me sentía insegura en todo no podía hacer algo sola porque siempre pensaba que me iba a quedar mal ya que ella siempre me ignoraba o todo me decía que me quedaba mal; nunca me explicaba." (Participant F, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

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Once again, it is shown that learners' self-efficacy beliefs could have been diminished dramatically by some of their teachers through an inappropriate discourse and classroom transactions that show they neglected students' affective domain, which according to Brown (2007) is "the emotional side of human behaviour and can be juxtaposed to the cognitive side" (p.153). This explains why educators need to create good conditions that predispose students positively to learn the foreign language and handle adversity in a proactive way. Wright (2005).

Students' negative states: it is important to say that students' negative states can be categorized into individual and relational factors. According to Arnold (1999), these factors express students' behaviour as individuals and as participants in a sociocultural context. Under these circumstances, some of the negative states learners have had during their experience refer to anxiety, inhibition, low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and lack of empathy from the teachers; as well as other negative emotions, such as fear and frustration, which could be possible consequences of the teachers' inappropriate discourse and classroom transactions. The next extracts from the students confirm this:

"Diría que fue la primera vez en el centro de idiomas pues con este profesor entendía muy poco él no pensaba si entendíamos o no las cosas que él le explicaba, y si hacíamos la actividad mal se ponía furioso y nos regañaba... Recuerdo que no entendía nada, este nivel lo perdí, el castigo fue duro y desde ahí le temo a equivocarme o a perder un nivel". (Participant L, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

"Porque me siento insegura con lo que hago y me dan muchos nervios (...) cuando pienso cosas negativas de mí misma (...) cuando pienso en mis padres en que los he hecho perder mucho dinero en los niveles". (Participant F, personal communication, June 25, 2015).

It is important to say that according to Bandura (1997), people judge how capable they are to do something based on the somatic indicators they show when facing certain situations that are aversive or difficult. These indicators are negative states that prevent learners from performing adequately. For this reason, if students feel: anxiety, fear, confusion, Inhibition, nervousness, self-disappointment, or if they experience: frustration, lack of confidence or low self-esteem when doing certain attainments, their self-efficacy beliefs could be low .

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An evidence of this is provided by the excerpts of the students, which show the learners may have a low level of perceived capability since the negative states mentioned above emerged when they needed to do a specific task. This may be related to the fact that the teachers were not making enough effort to create the optimal conditions for students

to learn and use the language in class. Besides, this also suggests that students' negative states seemed to be linked directly to the kind of rapport their teachers built in the classroom, which is also related to the classroom climate of the lessons Wright (2005). That is to say that learners tended to feel uncomfortable with their educators' teaching style and the kind of relationship they built with them, which seemed to be distant and made students feel fear and other negative states already mentioned.

According to the analysis above, it is evident that the main relationships between the students' language learning experiences and their perceived capability can be understood by the way these experiences shaped their self-efficacy beliefs and the different sources from which they build them. These sources, as it was mentioned in the literature review, refer to enactive mastery experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states. A discussion of how these experiences influenced the self-efficacy beliefs of the learners in this study through the sources mentioned will be provided as follows:

Enactive Mastery Experiences: as reported in the autobiographies, the students were exposed to discouraging experiences in the language where the teachers' discourse and didactics, as well as their classroom transactions and the methodology used created an inadequate classroom climate, that made them feel threatened to express themselves using the language. According to the data, this demotivated them to study and made them feel reluctant towards English. Evidently, this first source coined by Bandura (1997), was not nourished appropriately, which explains why their self-efficacy beliefs were not strong.

Verbal persuasion: in agreement with the learners' personal accounts, the continuous discouragement given by their teachers as well as the inadequate error correction techniques and classroom transactions made them feel insecure and increased their reluctance to the language. As Bandura (1997) argued, when a person is encouraged and praised verbally, the verbal persuasion source is heightened, and as a consequence, his or her perceived capability; In this case, the majority of the students were not encouraged verbally, which may have weakened their self-efficacy beliefs. However, it is important to say that a few of the learners received a support from their parents and relatives that contributed to the enhancement of this source.

Physiological and affective states: in consonance with the data, this was one of the sources that was diminished the most, since it was evident the way students' negative states such as anxiety, inhibition, fear, frustration, nervousness among others, came into surface when

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they tried to participate in class, do oral presentations or take written and oral exams. Besides, the analysis showed how the learners' perception about themselves was affected in a negative way, since the continuous discouraging experiences they have faced and the lack of rapport between them and their teachers, made them feel less confident when learning and using the language in the class; this explains their constant failure patterns in the regular courses.

To summarize, it is evident how the students' language learning experiences shaped their self-efficacy beliefs, which made the learners show a poor performance in the language, have a constant failure in the courses and be reluctant and apathetic to the learning process as a consequence. Moreover, it is clear that the autobiographies were a very valuable instrument to inquire into the participants' language learning experiences, and that this information was validated against the theory and the results of previous studies.

Discussion of the findings

Undeniably, the categories obtained after the analysis of the autobiographies which referred to discouraging experiences, students' lack of commitment, teachers' discourse and didactics, classroom transactions and students negative states, provided relevant information about how weak or nourished were the four main sources proposed by Bandura (1997) *related to enactive mastery experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states*, so the learners' self-efficacy beliefs could be explored.

With regard to the question: *How are the relationships between students' language learning experiences and their perceived capability evident in learners' narratives?*, the ideas stated in the personal accounts showed that the negative experiences of the students when learning, the lack of rapport in the classes, the continuous embarrassment and discouragement they were exposed to, the fear they started to feel to participate, and the fact that their work did not seem to be valued enough in class, weakened three of the afore mentioned sources proposed by Bandura (1997).

These aspects, explain why the relationships between the students' language learning experiences and the self-efficacy beliefs they acquired during the process were intertwined, since they were shaped by their teachers' discourse and didactics, the classroom environment of the lessons and the classroom transactions that took place and made the students show a continuous reluctance and apathy to the language.

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Evidently, the autobiographies gave representative information about this such symbiotic relationship, confirming what Durán Narváez, Lastra Ramírez & Morales Vasco (2013) indicate in their research article about this type of narrative, as a useful tool to dig into the individuals' experiences and to get to know their identity as learners.

In short, it can be claimed that the relationships between students' language learning experiences and their self-efficacy beliefs, were clear in learners' autobiographies. As a result, the research question of the study was answered extensively, and the theoretical constructs that support the relationships between students' self-efficacy beliefs, language learning experiences and narratives were verified in this study.

Conclusions

In line with the information presented in this study, which was part of a larger one, findings reveal that the implementation of autobiographies in the English class can give information on the engagement patterns teachers build in the classroom, which reflect their teaching style, classroom management strategies and the climate where students learn the language Wright (2005). Under these circumstances, implementing autobiographies can shed light on the roles teachers and students perform.

The use of autobiographies enables an understanding of the way students feel when they are heard and valued in the English classroom, since the participants of this study expressed their insights about their language learning process freely for the first time without being judged. Surprisingly, during and after the autobiographies implementation, learners started to be willing to learn the language and go to class, which led them to see English differently. Indeed, feeling that their voice counted in the teaching learning process and their histories were important for the teacher, made students get more interested in the language.

This study confirms earlier work done by Bandura (1997) who asserted the influence of the role of self-efficacy beliefs in the individuals' performance. Moreover, the data demonstrated that the students' self-efficacy beliefs in the language were not strong, which was a result of the discouraging learning experiences they have been exposed to. In consequence, these experiences weakened the learners' perceived capability, which led them show reluctance and apathy to English as well as constant failure patterns.

This project was restricted by time constraints and the difficulty of the participants to express themselves clearly through the personal accounts, since it was the first time they had the opportunity to write about their learning experiences in the foreign language. This made the grounded theory analysis more extensive but rich, meaningful and fruitful at the same time.

For further research, it would be interesting to expand learners' life stories to understand the way their experiences shape their performance, attitude and above all, their perception and identity as learners.

It can be concluded that inquiring into the learners' self-efficacy beliefs can help the academic community to understand the students beyond the texts books and the grades they can get in a classroom, giving importance to their affective dimension, which underlies their feelings, perceptions, classroom patterns, the type of environment built in the lessons and the different teaching styles that emerge in each encounter.

The issue of re-thinking the role of the teachers in education is of central importance since little attention has been paid to the appraisal of students' previous experiences, the affective dimension in class and the creation of safer classroom environments that boost students' learning; this might be done by becoming educators that empower students "with a profound trust in people and their creative power" (Freire, 1969, p.24) and by recognizing learners' experiences:

Children's... experiences are tremendously valuable resources for education. Our role as teachers is to build upon these experiences and to create an environment where students can make connections to other experiences, construct personal meaning out of what they are learning and become open to new possibilities for growth... Their experiences need to be taken seriously and woven integrally into the curriculum... There must exist continuity between the child and the curriculum in order for learning and growth to occur. Hytten (2000) p. 460 (as cited in Banks-Joseph, Gilmore and Shawer ,2008) (P.4)

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Authors

***Norma Constanza Durán Narváez** hold an MA in Applied Linguistics to TEFL from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas and a Specialist in English Language Teaching from Universidad del Tolima (Colombia). Her research interests include teacher learning and professional development, cognition processes in teacher education and EFL teaching and learning processes. She is currently a full time teacher in the B.Ed in English program and part time teacher in the English Didactics Master Program at Universidad del Tolima, Colombia.

Carol Andrea García Gutierrez is enrolled in the English Didactics Master program at Universidad del Tolima, Colombia. In the last two years, she worked on a research study named: Exploring students'' self-efficacy in the language learning process, from which the information discussed in the article is part. She has been a teacher for ten years and managed different types of audiences such as: children, intermediate school students and undergraduate learners. She has also worked in private schools, language learning centres and at the University of Tolima as well. She is currently teaching English in the Language Centre at Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Colombia.
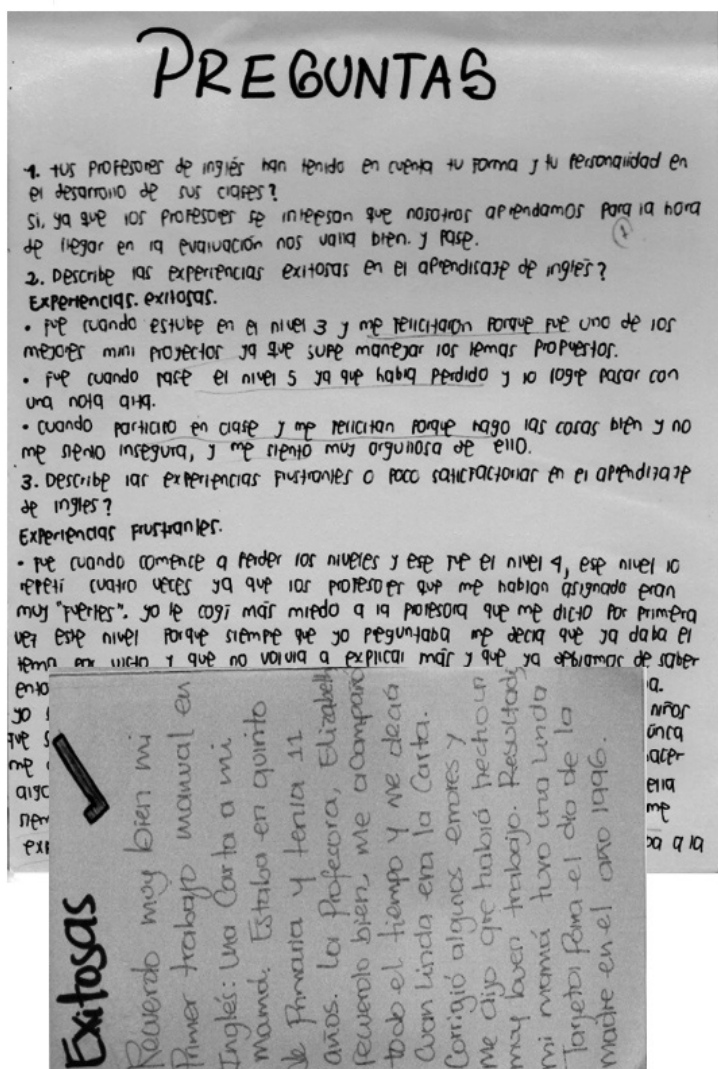
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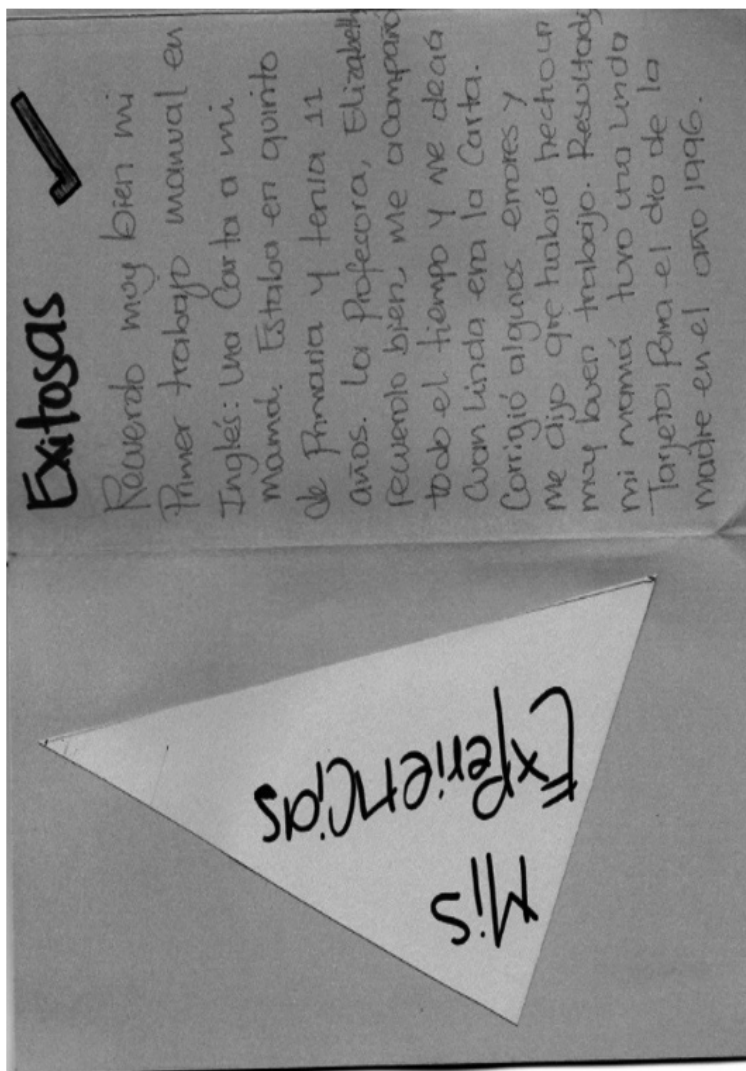Wright, T. (2005). *Classroom Management in Language Education.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Apprendix 1

Autobiographies samples

Appendix 2

Teacher's autobiography

Exitosas

Recuerdo muy bien mi Primer trabajo manual en Inglés: Una Carta a mi mamá. Estaba en quinto de Primaria y tenía 11 años. La Profesora, Elizabeth recuerdo bien, me acompañó todo el tiempo y me decía Cuan linda era la Carta. Corrigió algunos errores y me dijo que había hecho un muy buen trabajo. Resultado, mi mamá tuvo una linda Tarjeta para el día de la madre en el año 1996.

Mis Experiencias

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Appendix 3

Questions (Students' autobiographies)

1. Tus profesores de Inglés han tenido en cuenta tu forma de aprender y tu personalidad en el desarrollo de sus clases?

2. Describe las experiencias exitosas en el aprendizaje del Inglés.

3. Describe las experiencias frustrantes o poco satisfactorias en el aprendizaje del Inglés

4. Que recursos y/o personas han sido fundamentales en tu proceso del aprendizaje del idioma?

5. Que recursos y/o personas han interferido en tu proceso de aprendizaje del Inglés?

6. De qué manera piensas que el Inglés te puede ayudar en tu vida futura? Por qué?

7. Que aspecto/ aspectos han influido en que ganes o apruebes los exámenes y los niveles de Inglés?

8. Que aspecto/ aspectos inciden o han influido en que pierdas las pruebas y los niveles de Inglés?.

Appendix 4
Consent form

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA DIRECTIVOS Y ESTUDIANTES DEL CONVENIO COLEGIO LA PRESENTACION – UNIVERSIDAD DE IBAGUE

Yo, María Fernanda, Peña identificado (a) con c.c N°_____ o T.I N° 1001630366 he sido invitado(a) a participar en el proyecto de investigación **Sobre el incremento de la auto-eficacia de los estudiantes en la clase de Inglés,** orientado por la docente Carol García perteneciente a la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad del Tolima.

Descripción: La presente investigación es de corte cualitativo, con la cual se pretende develar la forma en la que la confianza de los estudiantes en sus capacidades para hacer uso del idioma Inglés puede ser fomentada en la clase.

Objetivos:

- Develar las relaciones entre las experiencias de los estudiantes y su auto-eficacia en la clase de Inglés a través de las narrativas.

- Describir las percepciones de los estudiantes con respecto a su nivel de autoeficacia en el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera.

- Describir el nivel de autoeficacia de los estudiantes en Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

- Analizar de que mánera la escritura reflectiva a través de narrativas fortalece el nivel de autoeficacia de los estudiantes en la clase de Inglés.

Participación de los actores: Los estudiantes participarán de forma activa en el proceso a través de la escritura de autobiografías, entrevistas video y audio grabadas para facilitar el análisis de la información, grupos de discusión y diarios de clase. Los directivos y coordinadores serán informados del proceso así como de los resultados finales de la investigación.

Es importante resaltar, que la información recolectada será de absoluta confidencialidad y anonimato, con el objetivo único de contribuir a la comprensión de las problématicas presentes en el aula, y al planteamiento de futuras soluciones a las mismas.

Padres de Familia:_____ Estudiante:_____ Investigadora:_____

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EFL Learners' Development Of Voice In Academic Writing: Lexical bundles, Boosters/Hedges and Stance-taking Strategies[1]

Desarrollo de la Voz en la Escritura Académica en Aprendices de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera: Estrategias de Paquetes Léxicos, de Refuerzo/Cobertura y de Toma de Posición

Christian Fallas Escobar and Lindsay Chaves Fernández[2]*
Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica

Abstract

In EFL composition courses, teaching and learning normally orbit around norms of unity, coherence, support, and sentence skills that L2 learners are expected to comply with, at the expense of opportunities to develop voice. Against this backdrop, we resolved to examine the extent to which students' exposure to and practice with lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies allows them to build a stronger discoursal and authorial voice as future academic writers. Evaluation of the students' works revealed their level of success in this endeavor and analysis of student surveys unveiled the tensions and struggles they faced along the way. At the end of this paper, we advocate for academic writing courses to be transformed into spaces where students not only come to terms with the basic norms they have to conform to, but also build a discoursal and authorial voice as L2 writers.

Keywords: Academic writing, lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, stance-taking strategies, learners' voice, discoursal and authorial voice.

Resumen

Los cursos de escritura en lengua extranjera normalmente se enfocan en las normas de unidad, coherencia, sustento, y estructuras gramaticales, a costas de múltiples oportunidades que los estudiantes podrían tener para desarrollar su 'yo' discursivo y autoral. Por esta razón, nos dimos a la tarea de investigar hasta que punto exponer a los discentes a fraseología académica, intensificadores lingüísticos/evasivas académicas, y estrategias para el posicionamiento crítico les permite escribir con mayor destreza y confianza. La evaluación de los textos escritos por los estudiantes revelan el impacto positivo que la exposición a y práctica de los elementos retóricos y lingüísticos antes mencionados tuvo en sus trabajos escritos. Por otra parte, los cuestionarios aplicados a los estudiantes al final del curso revelan las tensiones y dificultades que ellos enfrentaron a lo largo del proceso. Concluimos este artículo con un llamado a que los cursos de escritura en lengua extranjera sean transformados en espacios en los que los discentes puedan no solo cumplir con las normas básicas de la escritura académica, sino también construir un 'yo' discursivo y autoral más fuerte y sólido.

> *Palabras clave:* Escritura académica, fraseología académica, intensificadores y evasivas académicas, posicionamiento crítico, el concepto de voz, 'yo' discursivo, y 'yo' autoral.

Resumo

Os cursos de escritura em língua estrangeira de um modo geral se enfocam nas normas de unidade, coerência, sustentação, e estruturas gramaticais, decorrente de múltiplas oportunidades que os estudantes poderiam ter para desenvolver o seu 'eu' discursivo e autoral. Esse é o motivo pelo qual decidimos pesquisar até que ponto expor aos discentes à fraseologia acadêmica, intensificadores linguísticos/evasivas acadêmicas, e estratégias para o posicionamento crítico permite-lhes escrever com maior destreza e confiança. A avaliação dos textos escritos pelos estudantes revela o impacto positivo que a exposição e a prática dos elementos retóricos e linguísticos antes mencionados tiveram em seus trabalhos escritos. Por outro lado, os questionários aplicados aos estudantes no final do curso revelam as tensões e dificuldades que eles enfrentaram ao longo do processo. Concluímos este artigo chamando a atenção a que os cursos de escritura em língua estrangeira sejam transformados em espaços nos quais os discentes possam não somente cumprir com as normas básicas da escritura acadêmica, como também construir um 'eu' discursivo e autoral mais forte e sólido.

> Palavras chave: Escritura acadêmica, fraseologia acadêmica, intensificadores e evasivas acadêmicas, posicionamento crítico, ou conceito de voz, 'eu' discursivo, e 'eu' autoral.

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Introduction

In EFL composition courses, students are often construed as 'not-knowing' novices in need of expert guidance if they are to gain membership into the academic writing discourse community. In these courses, teaching and learning generally orbit around norms regarding unity, coherence, support, and sentence skills that L2 learners are expected to comply with. Puzzled and discouraged, these students find themselves forced to draft and submit writing pieces that feel dry, dispassionate and alien to them. Sadly, regardless of the learners' evident confusion and frustration, composition courses continue to revolve around these norms at the expense of opportunities for them to develop discoursal voice and authorial voice (Ivanič, 1998). In the spirit of problematizing this practice, we created spaces in two composition courses so that the learners could experience using diverse rhetorical devices. The central inquiry in this study was the extent to which students' exposure to and practice with *lexical bundles, boosters/ hedges and stance-taking strategies* would allow them to build a stronger discoursal/authorial voice as future academic writers. Evaluation of student essays and surveys unveiled the tensions and struggles they faced as they tried using the different rhetorical devices to construct their own voice. At the end of this paper, we give specific recommendations regarding the inclusion of the aforementioned linguistic and rhetorical devices so that L2 student writers develop their discoursal/authorial voice.

Literature Review

As academic writers and teachers of composition, we are familiar with the pressures that abound within the academic writing discourse community. Our own trajectory from apprentice to active writers has brought its rewards, but also left us with questions regarding the hardships we faced and the compromises we made along the way. Although we acknowledge that the pressures exercised within academic writing circles are intended to safeguard the highly-valued features of scholarly writing, we also concede that overemphasis on these features jeopardizes the possibility of developing one's discoursal/authorial voice (Ivanič, 1998). Thus, herein we address the features of traditional academic writing and the notion of voice in academic writing.

Traditional Academic Writing: A Focus on Compliance to Norms

The academic writing discourse community claims that 'good' writing ought to be impersonal, objective and informational (Rahimivand & Kuhi, 2014) and grounded in the specific highly-valued features of literacy, relevance and politeness (Farrell, 1997). 'Literate' texts are expected to be objective, analytical and sequential, and thus organized in ways that showcase symmetry, order and logical thinking. Similarly, in scholarly writing, relevance is central to establishing meaning, as the expectation is for all the ideas to refer back to the main thesis at the onset of the text. Additionally, the notion of politeness in argumentative writing is central, given that writing 'too directly' is taken to be arrogant, aggressive and rude. These norms of academic writing exercise pressures on composition instructors, who frequently feel compelled to center on conventions such as unity, coherence, support and sentence skills, at the expense of students' possibilities to build and reflect a sense of voice in their writing.

Academic writing, however, is not only about the communication of ideas in an impersonal, detached, and objective manner, but also about the representation of voice (Ivanič, 1998), since the act of writing itself is inevitably influenced by the author's life histories and the "multiple who's" of their identity (Gee, 2008)[3]. Opposite to common belief, research suggests that, "...academic prose is not completely impersonal, and that writers gain credibility by projecting identity invested with individual authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their ideas" (Hyland, 2002, p. 1091). More and more composition scholars agree that one crucial pragmatic competence of writers is to know how to construct a credible representation of themselves in their work, at the same time that they comply with the norms of the academic writing community (Hyland, 2002, p.1091). Thus, it follows that writing is not a neutral activity (Ivanič, 1998), but an exercise in balancing out one's own voice with the many norms one has to abide by (Trepczyńska, 2016).

Unfortunately, more often than not, the pragmatism that characterizes traditional academic writing, where the focus is on compliance with the pre-set institutional requirements (Benesch, 2001, p. 3), robs instructors of the possibility to problematize their practice, and thus they become accomplices in the trend of training students to comply with institutionally identified needs. Contrary to common wisdom, the emphasis in composition courses should be more on how

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[3] This view coincides with the cultural and rhetorical approaches to discourse analysis proposed by Tracy & Robles (2013).

topics are studied *dialogically* rather than *didactically* (Benesch, 2001, p. 67), with teachers taking a critical writing rather than process writing approach to composition, in which the search for voice is combined with the search for collectiveness (norms of academic writing). Yet, this require that instructors provide learners with intellectually engaging experiences that allow for the development of discoursal/authorial voice; also known as authoritativeness/presence (Hyland, 2008).

L2 Learners' Voice in Academic Writing: Rhetorical and Cultural Perspectives

In exploring the interconnectedness of writing to identity and voice, Le (2009) argues that writing "...involves processes of negotiation, adaptation, appropriation and resistance that can occur during the acts of conceptualisation, drafting and writing" (p. 136) and insists that students' prior experiences as writers and individuals should find validation in composition courses. That is because neglecting to nurture a sense of voice, "... place[s] students at a rhetorical and interpersonal disadvantage, preventing them from communicating appropriate integrity and commitments, and undermining their relationships to readers" (Hyland, 2002, p. 1092). Le (2009), nonetheless, also rightfully asserts that finding one's voice is not a linear path with a clear finish line, but rather filled with negotiation and contestation between the many norms and expectations of the academy and one's own desires about how to represent one's voice in writing.

Despite the aforementioned difficulty in addressing voice, scholars agree that voice plays in fundamental role in both L1and L2 academic writing (Konnor & Kaplan, 1987; Shen, 1989; Li, 1996; Ivanič, 1998). It is for that reason that L2 learners must be explicitly taught about the linguistic and rhetorical features (devices) that enhance a writer's voice (Matsuda, 2001), as projecting individual voice is a part of acceptable English writing (Stapleton, 2002). Although "Voice has been viewed as fuzzy, slippery, hard to define, and nearly impossible to teach" (Sperling and Appleman, 2011), we agree (1) with Ivanič and Camps (2001) that L2 learners should be guided to develop authoritativeness and presence in their writing since the beginning in composition courses and (2) with Matsuda (2001) and Stapleton (2002) that voice is an indispensable tool that should be brought to the forefront, especially when dealing with persuasive writing (Javdan, 2014).

Sperling and Appleman (2011) explain that voice can be understood from two perspectives that need not be mutually exclusive. As an individual accomplishment, voice is viewed from a linguistic

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and rhetorical lens that implies a particular threshold of linguistic and identity achievement, assumes the *self* to be stable, coherent, unitary and autonomous, and constructs voice as a possession. Given the linguistic and rhetorical slant of this perspective, voice is not taken to be a window into the writer's true self but into who the writer claims to be at a particular point in time and for a particular purpose. That is, writers write in different voices at different times.

As a social/cultural accomplishment, voice is assumed to be "…essentially the result of a social and cultural mediation with the individual" (Sperling & Appleman, 73). From this perspective, voice consists of the writers' representation of their social/cultural worlds and its emergence is said to be shaped by the contexts in which they live and inevitably overshadowed by other voices. Discussions of voice as social and cultural accomplishment are largely based on Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) thesis that "…voices and utterances exist in response to previous utterances and in anticipation of future utterances," which in turn suggests that "Voice reflects one's assimilation, reworking, and reaccentuating of other voices" (Sperling & Appleman, 74).

In sum, we concur with Sperling and Appleman (2011) that "…voice is a language performance – always social, mediated by experience, and culturally embedded" (p. 71). That is to say, we view voice as identity performance and as a series of rhetorical movements situated within historical, material and social settings. As such, we believe that part of the students' socialization into academic writing implies learning about how selecting from lexical, linguistic and rhetorical resources available allows them to build a stronger discoursal and authorial voice that is valued within the academic writing community. There lies the amalgamation of voice as individual and social/cultural accomplishments that we espouse. Therefore, we will be looking at how including instruction about particular linguistic and rhetorical devices can potentially guide the students to develop discoursal and authorial voice in their academic writing.

Lexical Bundles, Boosters/Hedges and Stance-taking Strategies

According to Ivanič (1998), there are three interrelated strands of voice: *autobiographical voice, discoursal voice, and authorial voice.* The first one refers to the life histories student writers bring with them; that sense of voice shaped by previous life experiences and literacy practices. The second alludes to the self-representation that emerges from the text, is constructed by means of selected discourse features, and reflects the values, beliefs and worldviews the student writers hold;

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the persona they consciously or unconsciously take on when writing and the voice they want readers to hear. The last one encircles an accomplished sense of worth that allows student writers to compose with authority. These three interrelated strands are seldom explored in traditional academic writing courses despite the fact these are likely to allow student writers to build a stronger sense of worth in the work that they produce.

In this paper, we focus on Ivanič's concepts of discoursal and authorial voice (1998), with an emphasis on student writers' use of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance-taking strategies. Lexical bundles refer to sequences of words that are frequently used in academic writing, serving to perform definable discourse functions: stance expressions, discourse organizers, and referential expressions (Biber & Barbieri, 2007). Discourse organizers, which is the focus in this paper, are multi-word phrases that help signal introduction of new material, elaboration/clarification, contrast/comparison, cause/effect relationships, and argumentation. See Table 1. for some examples of the phrases students were taught about and requested to utilize.[4]

Table 1. Lexical Bundles

- Many scholars/experts claim/sustain that...
- ... is a hotly-debated topic that often divides opinions.
- ... is often discussed yet rarely understood.
- First of all, it is worth considering....
- Another point worth noting is....
- Another factor to consider is...
- With respect to....
- There are those who argue that...
- Research has found that...
- According to experts, ...
- Weighing up both sides of the argument...
- Taking everything into consideration, …
- On the whole,... / By and large,...

[4] For this study, we chose the lexical bundles that were related to the types of essays they had to write, especially their final argumentative essay.

As regards boosters and hedges, we center on the student writers' use of these rhetorical devices to express degree of directness: the subtleness or bluntness with which they express their ideas. Although levels of directness may include diverse devices (See Tables 2 and 3 below for some examples)ʷ, we focus on boosters, which increase authorial commitment at the same time that rhetorical space for alternative views is closed, and on hedges, which signal weaker authorial commitment and openness to alternative views (Lancaster, 2014). By using these rhetorical devices, students can express certainty, skepticism, (dis)belief, and authority (Tracy & Robles, 2013).

Table 2. Boosters/Hedges

Boosters	Hedges
Quite	Probably
Really	Hardly
Very	Slightly
Extremely	Somewhat
Completely	Barely
Exceptionally	Mildly
Totally	Moderately
Absolutely	Partly
Utterly	Practically
Particularly	Reasonably
Certainly	Possibly
Rather	Apparently
Strongly	Presumably
Highly	Supposedly
Strikingly	Allegedly
Excessively	Nearly/Almost
Remarkably	

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5 For this study, we chose boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies related to the types of essays they had to write.

Table 3. Deductive, Inductive and Inferential point-making

Claim - Reasons	Reasons - Claim	Telling a Story
(Deductive point-making)	(Inductive point-making)	(Inferential point-making)
Claim	Reason 1	Story/anecdote of
Reason 1	Reason 2	reasonable length that
Reason 2	Reason 3	indirectly makes a point
Reason 3	**Claim**	without stating it.

Finally, stance, a writer- and reader-oriented concept (Lancaster, 2014), refers to the student writers' use of linguistic and rhetorical devices to overtly or covertly indicate their position and attitudes towards the topic under discussion and their confidence (or lack thereof) in the truth of the propositions expressed (Phang, 2010; Hyland & Guinda, 2012). In other words, the focus is on student writers' evaluation of the topic under discussion (Tracy & Robles, 2013). Although student writers can express contrastive and agreement stances in multiple ways, we wish to concentrate on the ways they use self mentions, disclose their attitudes, mildly/strongly commit to their ideas, and introduce/comment on citations (Lancaster, 2014). See Table 4. below for examples.

Table 4. Stance Taking Strategies

Self-mentions	Disclosure of Attitudes
I strongly believe that....	Surprisingly, ... / It is surprising that...
In my opinion, ...	Alarmingly, ... / It is alarming to note that...
I am utterly convinced that...	Interestingly, ...
From my point of view, ...	Fortunately/Unfortunately, ...
I have no doubt that...	Most importantly, …
As far as I am concerned, ...	Ideally, ...
It seems to me that...	Paradoxically/Ironically, ...
I am certain that...	Oddly enough, ... / Most strikingly,
I am absolutely convinced that...	It is difficult to believe that...
In this essay, I argue/sustain that....	It comes as no surprise that...

Strong/Mild commitment	Introduction/Commentary of Citations
The fact is that....	Brown rightfully asserts that...
It is a fact that/ It is a well-established fact that...	Brown is quite right when he claims that...
It has been scientifically proven that...	I strongly agree with Brown's claim that...
It goes without saying that...	In the words of noted scholar, Dr. Brown, ...
This proves/shows/demonstrates that...	Brown convincingly argues that...
It is obvious/clear that...	Brown provides clear/convincing evidence that....
There is no doubt that....	Dr. Brown, authority in the field of education, asserts…
This seems to suggest that...	Brown's assertion demonstrates that....
Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that...	Considering Brown's claim, it follows that...
Considering the above, it would seem that...	Considering Brown's claim, we can reasonably
Thus, it appears that...	

Our contention is that the student writers' mastery of the basic norms of academic writing —unity, coherence, support and sentence skills—does not suffice to develop a strong discoursal and authorial voice. They also need to gain skill in the use of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies, which has the potential to aid them in developing a stronger discoursal and authorial voice, which in turn can make them feel more confident about their own writing and help them write more academically. This, however, does not come without complications, as appropriate use of these devices "… requires making decisions (usually tacitly) about such matters as when to tune up or down one's level of commitment to assertions, whether and how to comment on the significance of evidence, whether and how to engage with alternative perspectives; how to construct a text that engages with the imagined reader…" (Hyland 2004, 2005; qtd in Lancaster, 2014).

Not addressing these much-needed skills in composition classes may imply leaving the students on their own to guess what is taken to be good writing in academic spheres. And while some may argue that this is an impossible mission, students' awareness of these aspects may constitute fertile ground for them to better understand their professors' feedback and continue to work on their own to navigate unity, coherence, support, sentence skills, coupled with lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies, as they develop skill in making rhetorical moves that fit their purpose(s) and align with the highly regarded features of scholarly writing (rhetorical and cultural view).

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Methodology

As foreign language teachers and learners, we have gone through the tensions and struggles that writing an academic paper entails. When we were EFL students, however, there was nothing we could do to resolve the feelings of anxiety and alienation triggered by our writing tasks. Yet, now that we are seasoned EFL instructors, we resolved to change the customary composition class to help our pupils build a stronger discoursal/authorial voice in their academic writing pieces[6].

The Participants and the Context of the Study

We worked with two groups of students from two majors at Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica (UNA): (1) B.A. in TESOL and (2) B.A. in EFL. Both groups were in their second year and taking their second composition course. Group 1 was comprised of eight students whose ages ranged from 19 to 25 whereas group 2 had a total of 15 students whose ages ranked from 19 to 24. Throughout the semester, they had to write classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and argumentative essays. For this study, however, we analyzed their last essay (argumentative) because they had had 5 months of exposure to sample essays and feedback about their use of the target devices. As part of this study, students were given three workshops along the second semester of 2016. In the first one, they were exposed to examples of lexical bundles and given a published paper to identify instances of how professional writers used them. For the second, they were part of a session on boosters/hedges and were given a handout with 'neutral' statements, which they had to re-write using boosters/hedges (an activity they thought was helpful because it allowed them to see how one can intensify or tone down one's ideas). Before writing their argumentative essay, they participated in a session on stance-taking strategies, followed by sample essays/papers to illustrate their use. For every essay up to the final one, we gave them feedback on the target devices.

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[6] This is not a pre-test/post-test type of study. Thus, it is out of the scope of this paper to compare their present writing skill to their past one. We aimed to collect their perceptions regarding their struggles and tensions as they tried incorporating the target linguistic and rhetorical devices in their writing. As two of the composition professors in the department, we know for certain that this was the first time the participating students were introduced to these target devices, which they also acknowledged in the surveys.

Data Collection and Interpretation

Upon completion of the course, we requested the students' permission to use digital versions of their essays, which we examined by quantifying the number of instances of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance-taking strategies. This analysis allowed us to notice which of devices the students embraced more willingly or had the most difficulties with. In addition, we passed a survey to collect their opinions regarding the extent to which the devices helped them gain confidence in their writing and develop a stronger discoursal and authorial voice. We used the patterns that emerged from this analysis to shed light on their use of each of the devices in their argumentative essays. In sum, we approached data analysis and interpretation both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Results of the Study

The analysis presented here is based on two sources of data: student surveys and the students' final essay (argumentative). First and foremost, the student surveys allowed us to collect their opinions regarding the impact of using lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies on their overall writing skill and their struggles with the implementation of these linguistic and rhetorical devices. Secondly, examination of their argumentative essays served to confirm the impressions gathered from the surveys and to track the devices that were more predominant in their writing. Our analysis is divided into three major themes: (1) usefulness of the target devices, (2) instances implementation, and (3) tensions and struggles.

Usefulness of the target devices

When asked about the impact the target devices had on their overall writing skill, students from both groups held diverse opinions. With regards to lexical bundles, while students from group 1 considered that these devices added coherence and unity to their writing (see Figure 1), those from group 2 thought that these had multiple applications: professionalism, formality, easiness, elegance, variety of lexicon, relevance, and coherence (see Figure 2). Both groups combined, the highest number of students reported that lexical bundles added coherence (group 1) and professionalism (group 2) to their essays.
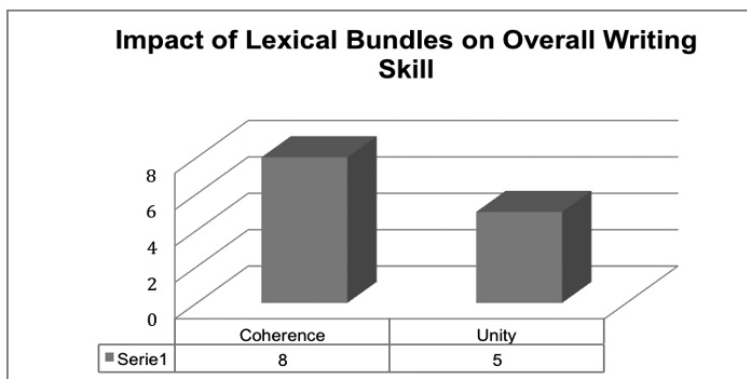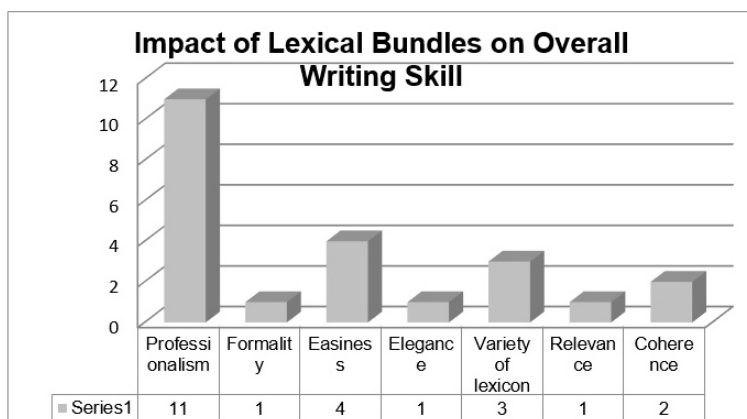
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Impact of Lexical Bundles on Overall Writing Skill

	Coherence	Unity
■ Serie1	8	5

Figure 1. Student Survey - Group 1

Impact of Lexical Bundles on Overall Writing Skill

	Professionalism	Formality	Easiness	Elegance	Variety of lexicon	Relevance	Coherence
■ Series1	11	1	4	1	3	1	2

Figure 2. Student Survey - Group 2

With respect to boosters and hedges, students' opinions were not that divergent. Learners from both groups coincided that boosters and hedges allowed them to state their opinions/positions more clearly and also to emphasize or de-emphasize (i.e. adjust the level of directness) certain ideas in their essays. As to their differences in opinions, subjects from group 1 stated that these devices boosted their overall writing skill whereas members of group 2 claimed that these also helped them to disclose their emotions and somehow connect to an imagined reader. This last aspect is worth noting, given that imagining a target reader and writing with the reader's is normally difficult for students in composition courses.
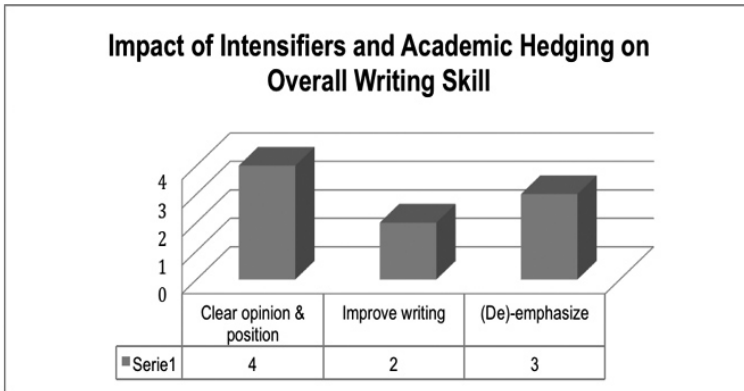
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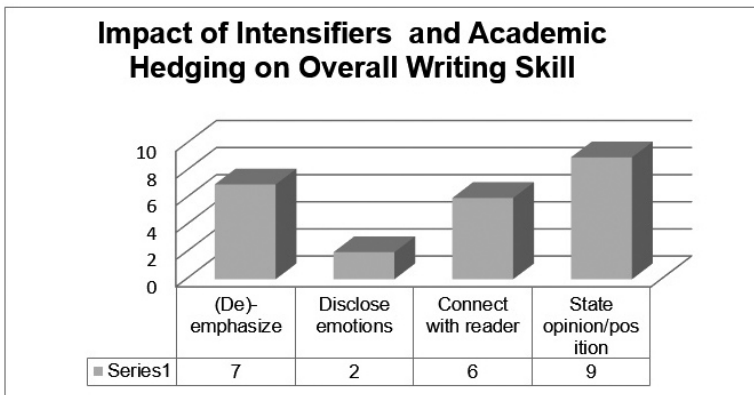*Figure 3.* Student Survey - Group 1

Figure 4. Student Survey - Group 2

Finally, pertaining to stance taking, pupils from both groups concurred that these strategies enabled them to be critical and develop a strong position/voice throughout their papers. Additionally, students from group 1 sustained that these strategies also added a sense of professionalism and naturalness to their writing, which they thought was one of the greatest gains in the course. Students from group 2, on the other hand, claimed that these allowed them to imprint their own voice in their essays, which they think is a skill they will be able to transfer to other courses. Overall, the highest number of students mentioned that stance-taking strategies had an impact on how they depicted their position/voice in their essays (authorial voice).
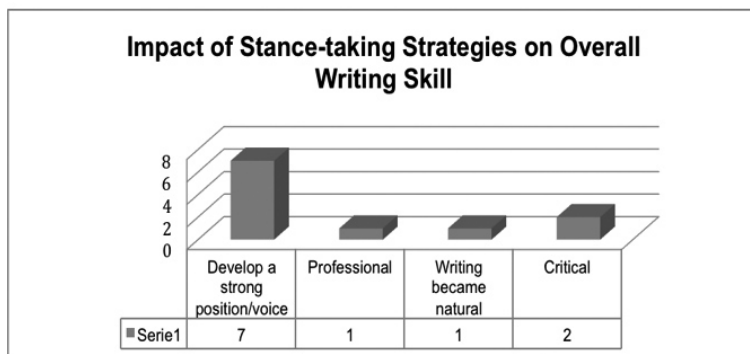
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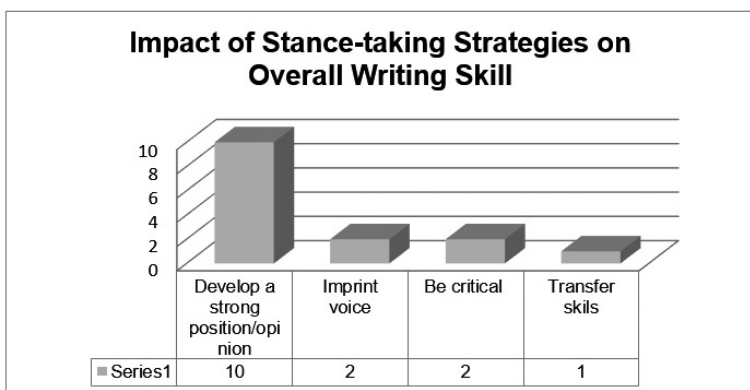**Impact of Stance-taking Strategies on Overall Writing Skill**

	Develop a strong position/voice	Professional	Writing became natural	Critical
■Serie1	7	1	1	2

Figure 5. Student Survey group 1

Impact of Stance-taking Strategies on Overall Writing Skill

	Develop a strong position/opinion	Imprint voice	Be critical	Transfer skils
■Series1	10	2	2	1

Figure 6. Student Survey group 2

Despite the differences of opinions, it is worth highlighting that all the students regarded the use of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies as having a positive effect: they all noticed that these different devices enable them to accomplish diverse purposes in their writing. Beyond that, they referred to being critical, connecting to the reader, professionalism, unity, and coherence; concerns that are normally the domain of composition teachers. We interpret this as students realizing that academic writing is based on specific values and that writing is not about satisfying the professor but about communicating ideas that they can shape and adjust to portray themselves in their essays and connect to the reader.

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Instances of Implementation

As part of this study, we analyzed the students' argumentative essays and counted the number of times they used each of the linguistic and rhetorical devices to trace any possible preferences. As shown in Figure 7, the least employed device was lexical bundles (147 instances), which, as they explained, oftentimes weakened their own voice. Although they reported that stance-taking strategies (200 instances) allowed them to position themselves in the paper, they also sustained that boosters and hedges were most useful (228 instances), as these enabled them to better connect to the reader by appealing to reason, ethics and emotions in the way they treated the topic under discussion and developed the arguments they were putting forth.
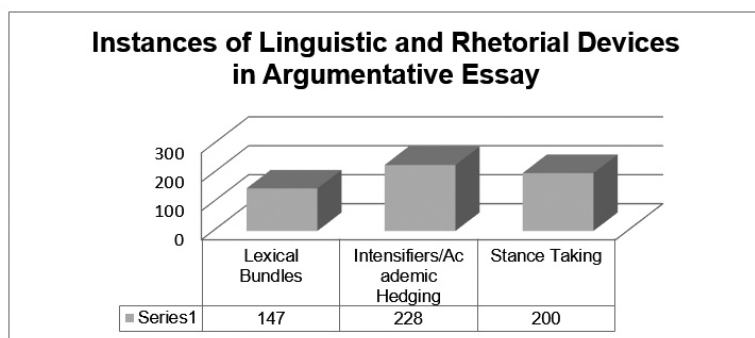

Figure 7. Student Survey groups 1 and 2

Although not all uses of these three devices were accurate (as evident in their essays), we could notice they had started making rhetorical moves that enabled them to be cautious when suggesting or criticizing, to be passionate and firm about long-held values/beliefs, and to treat the topics with relative authority and confidence. Next, we showcase excerpts from the argumentative essays to illustrate the students' use of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies. It is important to point out that by the time they wrote this essay, they had already employed lexical bundles and boosters/hedges in two previous written pieces (comparison and contrast / cause and effect), but it was their first time using stance-taking strategies. For the purpose of clarity, we designated excerpts of essays written by students from group 1, the letter A and from group 2, the letter B.

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As notable in excerpt B, student 1 utilized three lexical bundles (discourse organizers), two boosters and four stance-taking strategies (disclosing emotions and providing criticism) in one of the body

paragraphs of her essay on dating and the role of women. Contrary to our finding of students' preference for boosters/hedges, this student clearly favored lexical bundles, which added coherence and flow to her piece. On the contrary, as evident in excerpt A, student 2's choices reflect students' overall inclination for boosters. In her paragraph, she used two lexical bundles, five boosters and two stance-taking strategies not only to show her commitment to the topic and claim, but also to validate her own experience as a mother.

(B) There has always been the common belief that, when it comes to dating, women must adopt a passive role and wait for men to make the first move. **By the contrary**, when a woman takes the initiative, all of society, including her female counterparts, disapproves of her behavior and alleges that she is doing wrong. Even women themselves think twice before attempting such an approach. A**s was pointed out in the previous paragraph**, this is due to the teachings given to girls in their childhood by their families and society. **Nevertheless, it is important to state that** those **backward** thoughts are **completely** wrong and **not properly** sustained. **Truth be told**, the fact that women make the first approach does not undervalue their integrity, either as women or as human beings. **One major drawback of this female mentality is** that women worry more about what other women think of their actions and do not take into account men's perspective, which is ironic seeing that men do not see this behavior as wrong. **On the contrary,** for some of them, being asked out by a woman is nice and admirable. **(Dating – Student 1)**

(A) It has been scientifically proven that breastfeeding is **utterly** important for both the mother and child. **I strongly believe that** there is nothing pointless in giving breast milk if there is a **high** chance to reduce cancer. **Moreover**, infant formula will **never** supply children with all the substances that breast milk does. The author **convincingly** argues that, "It is important to note that the antioxidant potential in breastmilk is more efficient than infant formula and bovine milk" (Kannan, 424). **Even though** infant formula was created to feed babies, it is not the best option if mothers can provide breastmilk. **(Public breastfeeding – Student 2)**

Figure 8. Excerpt from students' argumentative essay

Another pattern we noticed is that not all students, in either group, abundantly included rhetorical devices they were exposed to during the essay course. As exemplified in the following excerpts, some learners used Boosters (1A: 3; 1B: 2), lexical bundles (1A: 0; 1B: 0), and stance-taking strategies (1A: 1; 1B: 2) much less than their peers, who incorporated boosters (2A: 3; 2B: 6), lexical bundles (2A: 2; 2B: 4), and stance-taking strategies (2A: 3; 2B: 1) in a greater number of instances.

(1A) "More than half of LGBT workers hide their sexual orientation in their workplace" (catalyst.org). You can ask yourself, why do they do that? The answer is very simple; they hide their sexual preferences because they have been discriminated against or they are **extremely** afraid of being judged. Nowadays, homosexual people are still being criticized because of their sexual inclination. Even though a lot of people still think that being gay or lesbian is wrong or evil, **I am absolutely convinced that** it is something **very** natural, and homosexuals deserve our respect. **(The Wrong Idea – Student 3)**

(2A) Second, it is **unpleasant** that parents think they do not have any responsibility in their children's health. **It is a fact that** what kids see, especially from their parents, is something they will be imitating during their development, and that is why it is **extremely** common to see obese adults (parents) with obese kids. **It seems to me that** they think it is normal, and even though genetics have a lot to do in these situations, **I am absolutely convinced that** if parents are aware of their children's health, they will provide them a better adolescence and adulthood. **In fact**, if these kids' parents have unhealthy eating habits like eating junk food or lots of fats, or sedentary behaviors such as staying at home watching television and doing nothing, their children are possibly going to imitate those behaviors because those are seen as normal. **(Childhood Obesity – Student 4)**

(1B) How would you feel if you adopted a child and everyone started pointing at you to judge the decision you made? What would you do if you had to deal with the challenging legal processes and the people's opinion just to have the kid you were not able to have by yourself with your partner? These are not just questions for homosexual people. **Certainly**, the main reason for any couple to adopt is for they cannot have biological children by themselves, and this affects homosexual couples as much as heterosexual couples since the will of having a kid transcends sexual orientation. But what makes the difference between a heterosexual and a homosexual couple adopting? **It comes as no surprise** that it is the people and religious organizations that are against homosexuals adopting. It can eventually become a legal and social challenge for homosexual people since these others believe that homosexuality is a sin and the child should never be exposed to this kind of behavior. It is an evidently rough process that they have to deal with, and **I strongly believe that** it should not be that way since they are not doing wrong to anybody. **(Same Sex Marriages – Student 5)**

(2B) The idea of making decisions through logical and rational thinking has always been supported by numerous philosophers and stoic individuals. **It is believed** that emotions **should not be** involved when an important task or decision is at stake, **otherwise**, the results would be **highly** negative. **Due to this**, the significance of emotions regarding decision-making has been strikingly ignored. **Notwithstanding the above**, there have been several studies and analyses that have revealed

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the importance of emotions when it comes to decision making and action taking. **Even though** rational thinking is one of the most effective tools in order to face life and its challenges, the role of emotions in decision making -and many other aspects with respect to life - is **imperative** and **unavoidable**. **(Emotions and Decision Making – Student 6)**

Figure 9. Excerpt from students' argumentative essay

Another relevant aspect that stood out was the absence, in some cases, or fewer instances, in others, of hedges throughout students' essays. In the following excerpts (A and B), the use of boosters is tangible since paragraph A contains five and paragraph B, seven. By contrast, zero hedges were utilized in passage A and B. In fact, we noticed that the use of Hedges was not a common practice among our learners. By way of further illustration, Figure 12 below shows pupils' preference for boosters over hedges. This figure demonstrates that from a sample of six argumentative essays from each group, students employed Boosters 3.5 times more often than they did hedges.

(A) As a conclusion, it is **really** important to say that the closure that the death penalty provides for victims, the cost of the death penalty versus life in prison, and the fear that the death penalty causes on would-be criminals are not the only reasons many people use as arguments to agree with this capital punishment. Even though those are not the only ones, I can **certainly** say that it does not matter which reason people bring, I will **totally** disagree with the death penalty. If the goal of any punishment, as stated above, is to teach us those things we should not do, then the justice system should more adequately teach the criminality of killing by refusing to partake in it. **(The Death Penalty – Student 7)**

(B) Further, recent evidence suggests that socio-affective bond is another area in which euthanasia **evidently** has a **huge** impact. Marc Groenhuijsen is quite right when he claims that many people have "vastly diverging opinions" and "strong feelings" while discussing about euthanasia (3). There is no doubt that when a person wants to undergo euthanasia his/her family will be utterly concerned about this decision, **particularly** because it is not **great** news to find out that a loved one is about to die. It is obvious that it is one of the reasons why people are against this practice, even if they or one of their relatives have to face **extreme** pain before dying. It is important to mention that even though it is hard for family members to accept euthanasia being applied to one of their relatives, the ultimate decision is that of the patient who is suffering from pain, which is the reason euthanasia is difficult to understand in terms of life choice. **(Euthanasia – Student 8)**

Figure 10. Excerpt from students' argumentative essay

Frequency of Use of Intensifiers and Downgraders

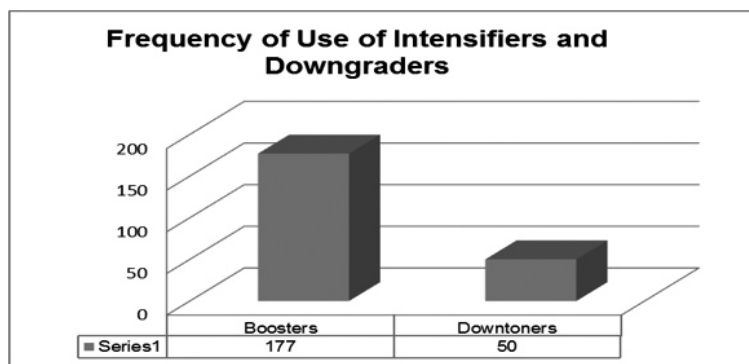|	Boosters	Downtoners
■ Series1	177	50

Figure 11. Students' argumentative essay samples

All in all, students' inclination for boosters/hedges and stance taking strategies may be attributed to the fact that lexical bundles are pre-fabricated phrases that they need to incorporate into their writing – something they have been asked to do in previous courses and towards which they show resistance- whereas the other two are devices they can more easily tailor into their writing. As reported by the students, the ready-made phrases oftentimes seemed alien, dry and void to them; reason why they relied more on boosters/hedges more often. They also claimed that these last two gave them the tools to accomplish something they had not been given a space for in previous composition courses: take a strong stance and reflect more of themselves in their work.

Likewise, while the trend was for students to rely more on boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies, this was not always the case. A few students seemed to have no problems with lexical bundles and used them abundantly in their essays. Interestingly, these students also employed fewer instances of the other two devices. We could assume that these few students are comfortable with following structure and including prefabricated phrases (discourse organizers), but also feel less confident about or ready to develop a stronger authorial self. Additionally, the finding that whereas most students used the target devices rather copiously and that a few decided to use them scantily, we interpreted in two possible ways: (1) they may have been showing resistance to the inclusion of the devices or (2) they feel they still need more systematic practice with them. Similarly, the students' clear overreliance on Boosters over Hedges may point to a similar conclusion. These two points are further examined in the subsequent section.

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Tensions and Struggles

While all the students from group 1 asserted that the usage of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies helped them position themselves in the essays and better portray their own voice as beginner writers, students from group 2 had diverse opinions (See figure 13 below). In this latter group, eight learners said that these devices enabled them to develop a sense of voice, five were hesitant as to the impact of the target devices on their voice, and two claimed that there was no direct impact. These last two students, however, reported that the devices gave them a sense of direction or that they were still in the process of developing this sense of voice (discoursal and authorial voice). These numbers show that throughout the course, they faced tensions and struggles, which they voiced in the student surveys.
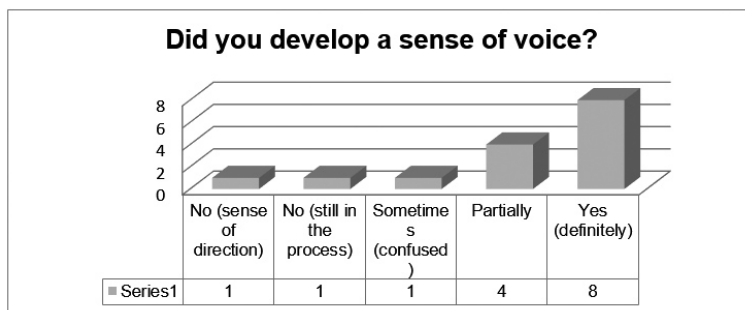
Did you develop a sense of voice?

	No (sense of direction)	No (still in the process)	Sometimes (confused)	Partially	Yes (definitely)
■ Series1	1	1	1	4	8

Figure 12. Student survey

As student 7 reported, "It was very strange because sometimes I felt that I had a voice, but in other essays I felt that I had lost it. At the end, what I found was that indeed all of them were part of my voice, but I don't know how to categorize it or describe it." Student 8 provided a similar opinion regarding the development of her sense of voice: "I am aware I have a style and a voice, but I truly don't know how to name it; however, it is there somewhere." By and large, both comments reflect the ambivalence implicit in developing one's discoursal and authorial voice. These two students have noticed that finding their voice is not an easy endeavor, but one filled with hesitation and uncertainty.

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Other students gave different reasons for this lack of sense of voice despite exposure to lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies. While student 9 was grateful that he was given a space to develop his voice, he also pointed to the importance of time and more extended exposure: "Before this course, I was not aware of this voice that each writer should have. Along the course, I've been trying to

know more about myself in regards to writing; however, I think I have not found or discovered it, yet. Some people figure it out easier than others." Likewise, student 10 voiced a similar concern: "I think those are useful weapons that helped me to find or to be close to my own voice, but I think I need to keep using them from now on because I want to include them in my writing in a natural way, not thinking about where and how I should use them." As noted by these two students, natural use of the target devices takes time and practice. They rightfully assert that only by using them over and over, will they become able to employ them accurately in ways that actually reflect their own voice and help them develop a stronger sense of discoursal and authorial voice.

Another student (11) was more specific and direct as to what helped her develop her voice and what did not: "I think that lexical bundles are very useful for academic writing, but not for the voice. For example, in my case, my voice gets lost when I use them. Boosters and hedges have helped me to identify my voice. However, I cannot be only direct or indirect all the time, so that may affect my voice a little bit. When I take a stand, I totally find my voice since I have the opportunity to say what I think." She unabashedly expressed that not all strategies equally helped her, placing lexical bundles as the least advantageous and Boosters/hedges, coupled with stance-taking strategies, as the most useful. Her comment reveals the constant struggle students face in finding a balance between the expectations of academia and the diverse ways in which they can imprint their own style in their work. In fact, student 6, pointed to this when she wrote: "I think these strategies have helped us to find a balance between what academia expects from us and our voice when writing. All of us have different voices and styles and these can be noticed in the strategies, words, topics, and references we use."

Needless to say, all the students in both groups reported that lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies added coherence, unity, professionalism, elegance, formality, and variety of lexicon to their writing – clearly sought-after features in the academic writing discourse community. Even more importantly, they claimed that they could tone up or down the directness of their ideas, better state their position, and connect to the reader in ways they had not been able to, prior to this course. What they failed to see was a connection between these linguistic and rhetorical devices and their own voice as beginner writers, which comes as no surprise given the difficulty of finding middle ground between the highly valued features of academic writing and their own desire to write in ways that reflect their own voice.

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Conclusions

All in all, the study of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance-taking strategies in composition courses renders positive results that can be observed in the sample student essays included above. As the participating students reported: (1) lexical bundles added professionalism, coherence, formality, and elegance to their writing, and (2) boosters/hedges, together with stance-taking strategies, helped them develop a stronger voice or position in their essays and connect to an imagined reader. As the student surveys and essays seem to suggest, socializing students into academic writing, while at the same time introducing them to lexical, linguistic and rhetorical sources (voice as individual and social/cultural accomplishment), is advantageous. They all reported that, to varying degrees, these devices equipped them to improve their overall writing skill, and more specifically, allowed them to state their positions more strongly and in ways that were more critical than in the past; all of which serve to justify the inclusion of voice in composition courses.

Although the overall results of the surveys and essays pointed to the students' positive stance toward the inclusion of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies, they showed a certain resistance to the inclusion of lexical bundles in their essays. This finding was illuminated by their opinions and perceptions that lexical bundles obscured their voice and felt alien to them. Equally important it is to consider that some still failed to see how these target linguistic and rhetorical devices could translate into the development of their own discoursal and authorial voice. In hindsight, however, this study did not expose them to the many multiple purposes for which these devices are used nor to sufficient practice. This may be why they did not clearly see how these tools can potentially strengthen their discoursal and authorial voice. As instructors of the courses, however, we had the obligation to cover the official course contents/objectives, which limited the time we had to deliver longer workshops and provide abundant practice.

Even further, while the participants in this study were found to use the target devices vastly (in most of the cases) and to make certain rhetorical moves to connect to the reader and more clearly state their position, the scarcity of usage of hedges was evident. Despite some exposure and practice with the target contents, these students did not seem to be aware of the importance of using hedges, which can be dangerous because: (1) the absence of these devices could be interpreted by the readers as arrogance and close-mindedness on the part of the writer, and (2) overuse of self-mentions, excessive disclosure

of feelings and unnecessary employment of boosters may undermine professionalism and seriousness in their written works.

Needless to say, we acknowledge that appropriate use of lexical bundles, adequate usage of boosters/hedges and conscientious stance taking are not easy to teach or learn, as it "… requires making decisions (usually tacitly) about such matters as when to tune up or down one's level of commitment to assertions; whether and how to comment on the significance of evidence; whether and how to engage with alternative perspectives; how to construct a text that engages with the imagined reader…" (Hyland 2004, 2005; qtd in Lancaster, 2014). This was true in our study because at times our students felt that they were skillful at implementing these devices, and at other times, they felt otherwise. This unsteadiness of their skills with the target linguistic and rhetorical devices can also be verifiable in their essays. Given that this study was conducted over the span of one course, it comes as no surprise that some (if not most) of the students did not feel fully confident using the target devices.

Recommendations

In light of the findings discussed above, we now want to give the following recommendations, which we hope will guide future attempts at better understanding the benefits of including the concept of voice in composition courses:

1. For future studies with a similar purpose, the learners should be more explicitly taught how hedges -of the evidentializing and conjecturing types- can be utilized to mitigate criticism, suggest courses of action, and problematize the ideas/works of others. They should be made aware that hedges allow them to make such subtle shifts in emphasis by means of which they can connect to the reader more and accomplish particular rhetorical purposes. Similarly, they should be shown abundant examples of how the strategic usage of lexical bundles helps them add to their work the features that the academic writing discourse community seeks for and highly values. Finally, students should be made aware that stance-taking strategies are used both to agree and disagree.

2. The landscape described above calls for a systematic approach to the teaching of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance-taking strategies. As some students reported, the natural and accurate implementation of the target devices requires time and arduous practice. That is why we suggest that the English Department

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that hosts the programs these students are completing modify the composition courses and officially include lexical bundles, boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies. This would allow for more time to be devoted to direct and extensive teaching and analysis of examples of the target devices as found in published papers written by experienced and seasoned academic writers. If these students are to graduate with solid academic writing skills, their development of their discoursal and authorial voice cannot be overlooked.

3.   Were lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance-taking strategies to be officially included in the courses, composition instructors should be aware that attempts at helping students develop discoursal and authorial voice is an endeavor filled with ambivalence and uncertainty, as it "...involves processes of negotiation, adaptation, appropriation and resistance that can occur during the acts of conceptualisation, drafting and writing" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 136). Tensions and struggles, as was the case in this study, especially arise in composition courses where students are learning to write in their L2 at the same time that they are learning the contextually valued ways of academic writing. By and large, voice should then not be regarded as an easily teachable and measurable aspect of writing, but as a quality of writing that emerges over time. That been said, the assessment of voice should be approached with caution.

4.   Future studies of voice in L2 writing would also profit from the perspective taken in literacy studies, in which voice is understood (1) as ideological, (2) as a dialogically shaped perspective and (3) as appropriation and revoicing. The first one acknowledges that "Individuals struggle with the tensions inherent in the voice that mediate their environment as they develop their own," which is pivotal given that it recognizes that all writing ideological and "… a process of appropriating and expropriating others' words" (Sperling & Appleman, 75). The second admits that the composition classroom, as a site where multiple ideas and perspectives about what constitutes *good writing* are shaped and negotiated, can potentially silence students' voice (Sperling & Appleman, 75), as their own competes with other stronger voices such as the instructor's and those of other seasoned writers. The last one recognizes that, as students compose, they engage in the process of shifting and amalgamating perspectives with their own as they develop their own voice; thereby appropriating and revoicing others' voices (Sperling & Appleman, 77). All of these

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perspectives alert us to the fact that the composition class can become a space where attempts at nurturing students' voice can actually threaten, suffocate or suppress it.

Final Remarks

To conclude, as previously stated, neglecting to nurture a sense of voice, "... place[s] students at a rhetorical and interpersonal disadvantage, preventing them from communicating appropriate integrity and commitments, and undermining their relationships to readers" (Hyland, 2002, 1092). Forming confident, skillful writers calls for an exploration of the norms of academic writing, not only at the unity, coherence, and sentence skill levels, but also at the discoursal and authorial levels. Students who find ways to put more of themselves in their essays are more likely to build a stronger sense of worth in the work that they produce. Not addressing these much-needed skills in composition classes may imply leaving the students on their own to guess what is taken to be good writing in academic spheres. And while some may argue that this is an impossible endeavor, students' awareness of these aspects may constitute fertile ground for them to better understand their professors' feedback and to continue to work on their own to navigate unity, coherence, support, sentence skills, coupled with lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance, as they develop a stronger sense of authoritativeness and presence in their writing.

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Authors

*Cristhian Fallas Escobar holds an *M.A. in Second Languages and Cultures* from Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, and a *Certificate in Teacher Training* from the School of International Training. He has been an EFL instructor for over fourteen years and currently works for the *School of Literature and Language Sciences at the Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica.* Among his research interests are *critical thinking, reflective teaching, composition and rhetoric, multiculturalism & multilingualism, language ideologies, justice and equity in Education, and the intersection between economics, politics and EFL. He has co-authored a textbook for EFL and published several pa*pers dealing with translanguaging in EFL contexts, bilingual approaches to EFL teaching, bilingualism and the spread of English in Latin America, and neoliberal discourses and their connection to the rise of EFL.

Lindsay Chaves Fernández holds an M.A. in *Second Languages and Cultures* from *Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica.* She has been an EFL instructor for over fourteen years and currently works for the School of Literature and Language Sciences at Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica. Among her research interests *are composition and rhetoric, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in teaching, learners' diversity and motivation, approaches to EFL teaching as well as accreditation practices in higher education*, and she has published papers dealing with the previously mentioned topics.

Exploring the Effects of Teachers' and Learners' Conflicting Beliefs on the Provision of Corrective Feedback During Undisturbed Classroom Interactions[1]

Explorando los Efectos de las Creencias Conflictivas de Maestros y Alumnos Sobre la Provisión de Retroalimentación Correctiva Durante las Interacciones de Clase sin Perturbaciones

Edgar Emmanuell Garcia-Ponce, Irasema Mora-Pablo[2]*
Universidad de Guanajuato, México

Abstract

Extensive research literature suggests that corrective feedback (CF), when effective, has a beneficial impact on the development of learners' interlanguage. This is because CF provides learners with language data concerning the correctness of their utterances and thus pushes their oral production towards greater clarity, accuracy and comprehensibility. However, CF has been found to be considerably scarce during classroom interactions. In an attempt to understand its scarcity, the present study investigates the interplay between the amount of CF provided by teachers and learner peers and the effects of their beliefs during uncontrolled classroom interactions at a Mexican university. By combining data collected from recorded classroom interactions, teacher interviews and learner focus groups, the findings show that there was a considerable number of errors which were avoided and not corrected by the teachers and learners during the classroom interactions. The findings also suggest that the scarcity of CF was in response to the teachers' and learners' conflicting beliefs about CF. This study provides a great opportunity to direct research towards the effects of

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teachers' and learners' beliefs on providing and receiving CF during classroom interactions, and find ways through which a socio-affective climate can be promoted in the language classroom in order to facilitate the provision of CF.

Keywords: accuracy, classroom interactions, corrective feedback, English as a foreign language, teacher and learner beliefs

Resumen

Un gran número de investigaciones han argumentado que la retroalimentación correctiva es de beneficio para el desarrollo del interlenguaje de los estudiantes. Esto se debe a que dicha retroalimentación facilita información sobre la precisión de sus estructuras lingüísticas y promueve que su producción oral sea más clara, precisa y comprensible. Sin embargo, estudios empíricos han encontrado que la retroalimentación correctiva es considerablemente escasa durante interacciones en el salón de clase. Con la intención de entender su escasez, el presente estudio indaga sobre la relación entre la cantidad de retroalimentación correctiva (facilitada por maestros y estudiantes) y sus creencias en salones de clase de una universidad mexicana. Al combinar datos recolectados de interacciones en salones de clase, entrevistas con maestros y grupos focales con alumnos, los resultados corroboran que hubo un número considerable de errores que no fueron atendidos y corregidos por los maestros y estudiantes durante las interacciones. Los hallazgos también sugieren que la escasez de la retroalimentación correctiva se debe a la influencia de sus creencias. Este estudio presenta una gran oportunidad de dirigir esfuerzos para investigar los efectos de las creencias de los maestros y estudiantes en la provisión de la retroalimentación correctiva y para encontrar alternativas que promuevan un ambiente socioafectivo en el salón de clase que permita la provisión efectiva de la retroalimentación correctiva.

Palabras clave: creencias de maestros y estudiantes, retroalimentación correctiva, inglés como lengua extranjera, precisión, interacciones de clase.

Resumo

Um grande número de pesquisas tem argumentado que a retroalimentação corretiva é de benefício para o desenvolvimento da inter-linguagem dos estudantes. Isto se deve a que mencionada retroalimentação facilita informação sobre a precisão de suas estruturas linguísticas e promove que a sua produção oral seja mais clara, precisa e compreensível. Porém, estudos empíricos encontraram que a retroalimentação corretiva á consideravelmente escassa durante interações na sala de aula. Com a intenção de entender a sua escassez, o presente estudo indaga sobre a relação entre a quantidade de retroalimentação corretiva (facilitada por professores e estudantes) e suas crenças em salas de aula de uma universidade mexicana. Ao combinar dados recolhidos de

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interações em salas de aula, entrevistas com professores e grupos focais com alunos, os resultados corroboram que houve um número considerável de erros que não foram atendidos e corrigidos pelos professores e estudantes durante as interações. As descobertas também sugerem que a escassez da retroalimentação corretiva se deve à influência das suas crenças. Este estudo apresenta uma grande oportunidade de dirigir esforços para pesquisar os efeitos das crenças dos professores e estudantes nas provisões da retroalimentação corretiva e para encontrar alternativas que promovam um ambiente sócio afetivo na sala de aula que permita a provisão efetiva da retroalimentação corretiva.

Palavras chave: crenças de professores e estudantes, retroalimentação corretiva, inglês como língua estrangeira, precisão, interações de aula.

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Introduction

The role of corrective feedback (henceforth CF) has been acknowledged in most second language theories and language pedagogy since it is viewed as language data that fosters linguistic accuracy and language learning (Ellis, 2009). Over the past three decades, extensive research has corroborated the beneficial effects of CF on learners' language development (see Nicholas, Lightbown & Spada, 2001; Russel, 2009; Sheen, 2001). Based on this evidence, we can thus assume that there is no reason why teachers and learners should avoid providing CF in the language classroom. However, recent empirical studies suggest that the provision of CF is scarce during classroom interactions, despite teachers' and learners' stated value of it. It may seem possible that there is an interrelated set of instructional, interactional, practical and perceptual factors that compel teachers and learners to avoid providing and receiving this language data concerning the accuracy of their utterances.

By combining interactional (from recorded classroom interactions) and perceptual (from teacher interviews and learner focus groups) data, the present study aims to develop an understanding of the interplay between the amount of CF that is provided during classroom interactions led by teachers (teacher-led interactions) and learners (peer interactions) and the effects of teachers' and learners' beliefs. Due to practical constraints, the study is unable to encompass all the classroom factors that have effects on providing or avoiding CF. Rather, it intends to determine the impact of teachers' and learners' beliefs on the provision of CF, and thus provide new insights into how these perceptual factors can be oriented towards enhancing its provision during classroom interactions. The study is guided by three research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What is the amount of corrective feedback during uncontrolled classroom interactions led by the teachers and learner peers?

RQ2: To what extent do teachers' and learners' beliefs influence the provision of corrective feedback during these interactions?

RQ3: What can be learned from RQs 1 and 2 in order to enhance the provision of corrective feedback?

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Literature review

In the classroom, there can be two types of feedback: positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback signals the veracity of the content of a learner's response or the correctness of an utterance (Ellis, 2009). Negative feedback, on the other hand, is language information provided by teachers or learner peers for learners to signal that their utterance lacks veracity or linguistic correctness (Ellis, 2009; Walsh, 2011). In other words, this latter feedback is other-initiated repair and corrective in nature. CF consists of:

- an indication that an error has been committed,

- provision of the correct target language form, and

- metalinguistic information about the nature of the error, or any combination of these (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; cited in Ellis, 2009).

Due to the asymmetrical roles in classroom interactions, the provision of CF is a ritual that is mostly initiated by teachers (Walsh, 2006, 2011, 2013). Both language teachers and researchers have paid careful attention to CF because CF promotes language learning (see Ellis, 2009; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; García Mayo & Pica, 2000; McDonough, 2004; Walsh, 2006, 2011, 2013; to name just a few). In particular, CF is claimed to provide learners with opportunities to metalinguistically reflect on the clarity, accuracy, and comprehensibility of their output (Martínez-Flor, 1999; McDonough, 2004), as well as opportunities to correct wrong language hypotheses and prevent errors from being fossilised (Swain, 2005). It has been also argued that CF can be beneficial – when its initiation and moves to provide it are embedded in a collaborative interaction during which teachers and learners provide jointly owned affordances to solve linguistic problems (Rassaei, 2014; Swain & Susuki, 2008).

Despite arguments that there is no reason why erroneous utterances should not be corrected in L2 classrooms, language teachers and researchers frequently disagree on the following conflicting actions regarding the provision of CF:

1. What errors to correct.

2. How and when to correct errors.

3. Whether to correct errors, interrupt the interaction and avoid interlanguage fossilization.

4. Whether to omit the error, continue with the interaction and maintain learners' face.

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It has been found that the fourth action is motivated when learners perceive CF as face-threatening (Yoshida, 2013a), evaluative (Allwright & Bailey, 1991), or a communication failure (Tsui, 1995). Learners' perceptions of CF as face-threatening information, in influencing emotions, have significant effects on their self-concepts and perceived self-efficacy (e.g., learners' self-perceptions of limited linguistic competence, poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, etc.), which in some cases may deter them from fully participating and thus developing the target language (Tsui, 1995; Wesely, 2012). In light of the possibility that CF during classroom interactions may be perceived by learners as face-threatening and thus limit their oral production, research literature has suggested alternative techniques for providing learners with CF or information concerning their accuracy. For example, Hendrickson (1978) suggests that teachers should only correct those errors that 1) hinder communication significantly; 2) have highly stigmatising effects; and 3) occur frequently in learners' speech. Tsui (1995) warns that teachers should not correct every error since it may discourage learners from answering questions and participating in future interactions. However, the immediate issue that emerges from an avoidance approach to providing CF is that learners' opportunities to develop metalinguistic knowledge and push their utterances towards greater accuracy would be limited. In particular, this approach would also limit negotiations for meaning during which (implicit or explicit) CF is facilitated.

It seems possible that the provision of CF in the language classroom is enhanced if research efforts are oriented towards understanding the perceptual factors that motivate learners' perceptions of CF as face-threatening and thus limitations in its provision. Therefore, the present study attempts to gain insights into the interplay between the amount of CF in uncontrolled classroom interactions and teachers' and learners' beliefs about CF with a view to enhancing the opportunities to provide learners with more effective CF in the language classroom.

Methodology

The present study resided in an exploratory and naturalistic inquiry which adopts a multiple data-gathering approach with a view to developing an understanding of the participants' classroom practices and meanings (Lillis, 2008). The data collection instruments were:

For interactional data: 1) recorded classroom interactions

For perceptual data: 2) teacher interviews and 3) learner focus groups

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The rationale behind the use of the above instruments is that interactional and perceptual data provide insights into the interplay between classroom interactional behaviour and beliefs (Wesely, 2012). Moreover, these research instruments not only allow a thick description of what may prove to be potentially significant, but also help researchers maintain an openness to what may be important to the participants (Lillis, 2008).

Research context and participants

The present study took place at a university located in the centre of Mexico. In this teaching and learning context, learners take subjects which train them to become language teachers or translators after a five-year BA programme. However, it is common in this context that most learners opt to major in EFL teaching. Learners are also expected to learn English throughout the programme.

Specifically, the study was conducted in three classrooms at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Learners in courses at basic and intermediate levels practise English during six hours per week. At advanced levels, learners study English during five hours per week. The reason why this university decided to reduce the number of hours at advanced levels was to encourage learner autonomy outside the classroom. The total number of learners who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study was 63 (17 at the basic level; 26 at the intermediate level; and 20 at the advanced level). All the learners were Mexican, their age ranged from 18 to 24 years, and their L1 was Spanish. Most of the learners had studied English before starting their university studies. Some of them came from state schools, where language exposure ranges from four to five hours per week. A low number of learners had studied English in private schools, where the language is practiced from 15 to 20 hours per week. The teachers were also invited to participate in the study and accepted under no obligation. The three teachers were women, born and raised in Mexico, and their mother tongue was Spanish. They all stated that they had been learning English for 18 or more years, and teaching it for 11 or more years.

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Data collection instruments

Classroom interactions at the three proficiency levels are claimed to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of teachers' and learners' interactional behaviour in a naturally-occurring way (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Following this claim, the interactions were

recorded in two sessions of 100 minutes approximately at each proficiency level. In total, 600 minutes of classroom interactions were recorded, 200 minutes approximately from each proficiency level. After having recorded the interactions, the data were then transcribed completely, and segmented into teacher-led interactions (TLIs) and peer interactions (PIs).

Teacher interviews were included in this study in order to understand how the teacher participants make sense of the provision of CF in relation to the context which they inhabit (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The teacher interviews were conducted by one of the researchers, after the recorded classroom interactions. In order to guide the interviews, a list of ten questions was used to understand the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding CF. In the case of the learner focus groups, Gibbs (1997) maintains that they allow insights into people's beliefs, attitudes and values from individual as well as group perspectives. This was of particular relevance for the study which seeks to investigate the extent to which learners' beliefs influence the provision of CF. Thus, three focus groups were carried out with five learners from each proficiency level. They were selected randomly from the teachers' attendance list, and invited to participate free of obligation. They all agreed to participate in the focus groups which were arranged at their convenience. A list of 10 questions was used to facilitate and guide the oral interactions between the researcher and learners. The teacher interviews and learner focus groups lasted around 20 minutes. They both were conducted in Spanish so as to avoid the learners' anxiety about the correctness of their utterances in the L2. For analysis purposes, the oral interactions during the interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed in their entirety.

All participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and provided consent to participate. Complying with their right to be protected from identification, the learners' names and identities were carefully anonymised in the data. Instead, abbreviations and pseudonyms are used. The word 'Learner' (or letter 'L') and an identification number, e.g., Learner 5 are used to refer to learners in the extracts. In the case of teachers, pseudonyms are also used to refer to the teachers: *María* for the teacher at the basic level, *Tanya* for the teacher at the intermediate level, and *Aranza* for the teacher at the advanced level.

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Data analysis and interpretation

According to Ellis (2006, 2009) and Lyster (2004), moves to provide CF can be classified in the following way:

Table 1. Taxonomy of CF moves

Input-providing	Recast
Output-prompting	Repetition
	Clarification request

Therefore, the study investigates the incidence of recasts, repetitions and clarification requests that were initiated during the TLIs and PIs at the three proficiency levels. In order to identify these moves in the uncontrolled TLIs and PIs, it was necessary to find the CF episodes which involve a trigger, feedback and (optionally) uptake (see Ellis, 2009), as shown in the following example:

Trigger	L11: //The woman … call a taxi//
Feedback	T: the woman?
Potential Uptake	L11: //Calls a taxi//

Once identified, we classified each feedback move following the specifications summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. CF moves

Move	Specification
1. Clarification requests	These are mostly wh- or bipolar questions which are initiated to elicit clarification or new information of the interlocutor's preceding utterance(s) (Long, 1980; Ellis, 2009; Tedick & Gortari, 1998).
2. Repetitions	Language information which is provided to reshape another speaker's utterance (Ellis, 2009; Tedick & Gortari, 1998). These are the most common types of feedback moves which usually contain an additional feature, for example, stress or lengthening of a segment, questioning intonation, etc. (Chaudron, 1988).
3. Recasts	These are reformulations which are initiated to reshape or refine all or part of others' utterances (Walsh, 2006). Recasts need to 1) contain content words of a preceding incorrect utterance; 2) reshape utterances in a phonological, syntactic, morphological or lexical way (Braidi, 2002); and 3) focus on meaning rather than form (Long & Robinson, 1998).

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Because the purpose of the study was not to test hypotheses but to explore the incidence of CF, the interactional data were calculated using simple totals and ratios. Firstly, the total numbers were obtained by counting the instances when CF was provided and the moves that triggered them. Secondly, ratios were calculated by dividing the total number of each move per the total minutes of each TLI or PI. In order to understand the amount of errors that were attended during the interactions, we also counted the total number of errors, and calculated ratios by dividing the total number of errors per the total minutes of each TLI and PI. Prior to this analysis, we needed to establish what constituted an error. The following criteria were then coded for identifying and counting errors:

- Errors in word selection

- Errors in morphology

- Errors in syntax

- Errors in pronunciation

- False starts, hesitations and self-corrections were excluded.

The perceptual data from the interviews and focus groups were analysed following a meaning categorisation which is believed to facilitate the identification of patterns, themes and meaning (Berg, 2009). This involved identifying extracts manually, and attributing them to theme categories and sub-categories which emerged from the data:

Perceptions about CF

- Positive attitudes towards CF

- Perceived benefits of CF

- Negative attitudes towards CF

- Teachers avoiding corrections

Perceived nature of CF

- Types of CF moves

- CF at word level

- No perceived need for CF

- CF moves not initiated by learners

- Face-threatening CF

- More CF episodes in PIs

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Results

In order to address RQ1 (i.e., what is the amount of corrective feedback during uncontrolled classroom interactions led by the teachers and learner peers?) and RQ2 (i.e., to what extent do teachers' and learners' beliefs influence the provision of corrective feedback during these interactions?), this section firstly discusses the findings into the amount of CF at the three proficiency levels. It then explores the influence that the teachers' and learners' beliefs exerted on this amount. Overall, the interactional evidence shows a considerable proportion of errors which went unnoticed or omitted by the teachers and learner peers, and a low number of CF moves to address them during the interactions at the three proficiency levels. The perceptual data suggests that the teachers' and learners' beliefs about CF are conflicting and important perceptual factors that heavily influenced the provision of CF.

Results of interactional data

The findings of the interactional data are summarised in tables, and are presented by kind of interaction (TLI or PI) at each proficiency level. The first two tables show the number of errors per minute and ratios of CF moves at the basic level:

Table 3. Number of errors and CF moves during TLIs at basic level

		TLI 1	TLI 2	TLI 3	TLI 4	TLI 5
	Time of activity	1 min 24 s	5 min 20 s	7 min 20 s	5 min 13 s	2 min 45 s
Frequencies	**Clarification request**	1.3	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.3
	Repetition	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.3
	Recast	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3
	CF moves per minute	1.3	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.9
	Errors per minute	2.0	0.5	0.2	0.5	1.8

Table 3 shows that the number of CF moves per minute tends to be low compared to the number of errors per minute that the basic learners committed during the five TLIs. It can also be seen in this table that there is a trend towards clarification requests, ranging from 0.1 to 1.3 clarification requests per minute. However, in some TLIs, there is an absence of some moves. For example, in TLIs 1 and 3, there is a lack of repetitions. In the case of TLIs 1, 2 and 4, there is omission of recasts. It was only during TLIs 2-4 that the basic teacher and learners attended to all the errors. However, as we will see in the remainder of

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this section, the interactional data indicate that there was a high number of errors which were unnoticed or omitted, but a considerable scarcity of CF moves during the TLIs and PIs at the intermediate and advanced levels. This was also the case of the basic PIs:

Table 4. Number of errors and CF moves during PIs at basic level

		PI 1	PI 2	PI 3	PI 4	PI 5	PI 6
	Time of activity	3 min 20 s	5 min 47 s	2 min 53 s	9 min 03 s	9 min 03 s	9 min 03 s
Frequencies	Clarification request	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.5	0.7	0.6
	Repetition	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Recast	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.0
	CF moves per minute	0.6	1.2	1.4	1.9	0.8	0.6
	Errors per minute	3.6	3.4	3.2	2.5	1.6	1.0

As in the TLIs, Table 4 shows that there is a high proportion of errors per minute to which a low amount of CF was provided, as indicated by the CF moves per minute during these interactions led by learner peers. For example, during PI 1, 3.6 errors per minute were committed, but only 0.6 clarification requests per minute were initiated to address them. Moreover, there is a tendency towards a greater number of clarification requests (a range of 0.6 to 1.5 clarification requests per minute) than repetitions and recasts. It can also be seen from this table that there is a scarcity of repetitions, and a tendency of recasts in some PIs (PIs 2-5).

Similar to the TLIs and PIs at the basic level, Tables 5 and 6 show that despite a high number of errors, there was a considerable scarcity of some CF moves across the intermediate interactions.

Table 5. Number of errors and CF moves during TLIs at intermediate level

		TLI 1	TLI 2	TLI 3	TLI 4
	Time of activity	6 min 16 s	7 min 20 s	12 min 55 s	5 min 21 s
Frequencies	Clarification request	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.7
	Repetition	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Recast	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
	CF moves per minute	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.7
	Errors per minute	2.4	1.7	2.0	2.4

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In Table 5, it is evident that the number of CF moves per minute is lower than the number of errors per minute, indicating again that there was a high number of errors which were omitted by the intermediate teacher and learners. This table also shows that there is a low proportion of CF moves across the intermediate TLIs, with a clear tendency towards clarification requests. In the case of the PIs, the data indicates a greater scarcity of CF moves than in the TLIs:

Table 6. Number of errors and CF moves during PIs at intermediate level

		PI 1	PI 2	PI 3	PI 4	PI 5	PI 6
	Time of activity	8 min 31 s	8 min 31 s	8 min 31 s	13 min 02 s	13 min 02 s	13 min 02 s
Frequencies	Clarification Request	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.07	0.1	0.3
	Repetition	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Recast	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.07	0.0
	CF moves per minute	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.07	0.2	0.3
	Errors per minute	5.1	3.0	4.5	2.6	1.0	2.2

As in previous interactions, Table 6 indicates that there is a low number of CF moves compared to the number of errors that were committed during these learner-led discussions. Due to the high number of errors during these and previous teacher- and learner-led interactions, it seems possible that there are more pressing factors that compel these teachers and learners to avoid providing CF during the interactions despite the high number of errors. It can also be seen in Table 6 that there was a low number of CF moves per minute across the six PIs. Again, clarification requests tended to be initiated more than repetitions and recasts.

The following table shows the absence of errors and therefore the initiation of CF moves at the advanced TLIs:

Table 7. Number of errors and CF moves during TLIs at advanced level

		TLI 1	TLI 2
	Time of activity	1 min 50 s	5 min 40 s
Frequencies	Clarification Request	0.0	0.0
	Repetition	0.0	0.0
	Recast	0.0	0.0
	CF moves per minute	0.0	0.0
	Errors per minute	0.0	0.0

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In exploring these two TLIs, it was possible to observe the lack of learners' opportunities to contribute to the classroom discourse with freer and more elaborate utterances. It was the teacher who controlled these interactions; learners only had opportunities to respond to the teacher's elicitations centred on grammar practice. This lack of opportunities to contribute to the classroom discourse with more creative utterances may explain the absence of errors and thus CF moves. This suggestion is supported by the advanced PIs, during which learners were responsible of the discourse, and had more opportunities to experiment with the language, having perhaps an impact on the number of errors that they committed.

Table 8. Number of errors and CF moves during PIs at advanced level

		PI 1	PI 2	PI 3	PI 4	PI 5	PI 6
	Time of activity	11 min 42 s	11 min 42 s	11 min 42 s	6 min 20 s	6 min 20 s	6 min 20 s
Frequencies	**Clarification Request**	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.4
	Repetition	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Recast	0.0	0.2	0.08	0.0	0.0	0.0
	CF moves per minute	0.1	0.4	0.08	0.3	0.1	0.4
	Errors per minute	7.7	7.6	4.8	1.4	1.7	2.8

As shown in Table 8, there is a considerable amount of errors for which a limited number of CF moves was initiated. For example, 7.7 and 7.6 errors per minute were committed during PIs 1 and 2, respectively, but only 0.1 and 0.5 CF moves per minute were initiated to attend to these errors. As at previous proficiency levels, the advanced learners during these interactions opted to initiate clarification requests.

Overall, the above interactional data firstly showed a high proportion of errors which was not attended. In other words, there was a high number of errors which went unnoticed or avoided by the teachers and learner peers. The issue that emerges from this evidence is that the learners had fewer opportunities to notice erroneous utterances and thus push their oral production to be more accurate and comprehensible.

138 The data also indicated that there was a varied, but low number of CF moves initiated by the teachers and learner peers across the interactions at the three proficiency levels. Among the CF moves, it was clarification requests which tended to be initiated. It is possible that the teachers and learner peers relied more on clarification requests than repetitions and recasts because clarification requests were used as moves which provided CF but in an indirect way. That is, when an

error was committed, the teachers and learner peers tended to initiate elicitations to signal that there was the presence of an erroneous utterance, but without modifying or correcting the utterance as in the case of repetitions and recasts.

It seems possible that there are more pressing concerns or factors that compelled these teachers and learners not to initiate CF moves to attend to the high number of errors. Particularly, the teachers' and learners' beliefs as important perceptual factors may reveal the motivation behind this avoidance strategy, and possible ways through which the teachers and learners can be assisted in providing CF and thus benefitting from greater opportunities to develop the target language. The following section attempts to address this.

Teachers' and learners' beliefs about CF

During the teacher interviews and learner focus groups, various points concerning CF were suggested by the participant teachers and learners. In general, the three teachers claimed that they embrace the value of CF as a strategy for teaching and learning the target language, for example:

Extract 1 Quote by María (basic level)

"It [CF] may be significant for them, like having an alarm to correct. Then, they can produce the same sentence and if they make the same mistake, they will be able to correct it."

Extract 2 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

"It is a matter of giving you my [corrective] feedback so that you in the future see which one is the standard. Then, making for the whole class, you realise that the learners are aware and say: 'I can use this in this situation, and the other in another situation' and all the class benefits from this [feedback]."

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Maria's and Tanya's statements clearly reveal their positive attitudes towards providing CF during classroom interactions. These statements also indicate perceived benefits for learners' self-corrections. Interestingly, they perceived that CF was beneficial not only for the learners to whom corrections are directed, but also to the whole class

(for a discussion about this, see Havranek, 2002; Muranoi, 2000). The 15 learners during the focus groups also suggested responses which reveal positive attitudes towards providing and receiving CF. For example, Learner 5 (basic level) said: "I think it is good that she corrects us."

However, the responses of the three teachers, one learner at the basic level and the five learners at the advanced level suggested that CF was scarce or absent during classroom interactions, as borne out by the interactional data. For example, in "we need that the teacher starts to correct us," Learner 1's (basic level) suggestion points to a perceived scarcity of CF during the classroom discussions. This perceived scarcity is corroborated by Aranza's statement: "I seldom correct while they are speaking, […] I rarely correct them during classroom discussions." The teachers' responses point to one main reason that motivated this avoidance:

Extract 3 Quote by Aranza (advanced level)

"Maybe they are fluent but with many mistakes. Thus, I have decided not to correct them so as not to affect"

Extract 4 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

"It is give them something positive, something not very positive and not tell them that their speaking was wrong, you may inhibit them and you could spoil the interactions."

Aranza's and Tanya's statements suggest the feeling that correcting learners' oral mistakes inhibited them from speaking, as indicated in "not tell them that their speaking was wrong, you may inhibit them, and you could spoil the interactions." The feeling that CF inhibited learners from interacting was shared by the learners during the focus groups, for example:

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Extract 5 Quote by Learner 4 (advanced level)

"Some people may feel pressed while talking to the teacher for fear of being corrected or something like that."

Again, Learner 4's statement suggests a feeling that CF had a negative impact on learners. It thus appears that the teachers' and learners' beliefs about CF were conflicting. That is, the teachers' and learners' beliefs about the importance of CF appear to have conflicted with their beliefs about negative effects of it on learners' oral production, as suggested in Aranza's statement: "it is funny because everybody agrees to be corrected, but when you do correct them, they [learners] don't like it that much." As indicated in "I have decided not to correct them so as not to affect [speaking]" (Aranza, Extract 3), it seems that these conflicting beliefs influenced Aranza's teaching decisions not to correct learners' oral mistakes. The other two teachers' responses also suggest teaching decisions influenced by these conflicting beliefs:

Extract 6 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

"They perceive it negatively and take it personal, like exposing them. There are people who take it (corrections) personal […] you need to find like tactics, it is a delicate topic."

Tanya's explanation again points to a perception that CF had negative effects on learners, even at a personal level. As suggested in "you need to find like tactics, it is a delicate topic," we see a perception that the conflicting beliefs around CF influenced her teaching decisions. The following two extracts suggest how the teachers' and learners' conflicting beliefs around CF influenced the basic and intermediate teachers' teaching and interactional behaviour:

Extract 7 Quote by María (basic level)

"Depending on the intimacy for them to express, interact and tell them at the end [of the classroom discussion] where they were wrong."

Extract 8 Quote by Tanya (intermediate level)

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"The provision of feedback is personalised and without other learners […] Then, you have the freedom to tell them their mistakes and advise them." "[…] I now do it in a personalised way so as to avoid peer criticisms."

As suggested in María's and Tanya's statements, we again see beliefs that CF was perceived as face-threatening (as implied in "depending on the intimacy for them to express"), and had a negative impact on learners (as indicated in "I now do it in a personalised way so as to avoid peer criticisms"). These beliefs appear to have influenced the teachers' teaching decisions to avoid providing CF during the classroom discussions, as indicated in "I now do it in a personalised way" and "tell them at the end [of the classroom discussions] where they were wrong."

Discussions

In exploring the interactional data, it was found that there was a high number of errors that were unnoticed or omitted by both the teachers and learner peers during the classroom interactions. The number of CF moves was considerable low during the discussions led by the teachers and learner peers across the three proficiency levels. Among the three CF moves explored in this study, it was clarification requests which the teachers and learners tended to initiate during the discussions. The study was unable to determine the extent to which these CF moves were effective in providing feedback which leads to uptake. However, we put forward the argument that the teachers and learners decided to initiate mostly clarification requests since they involve less face-threatening interactional work which, implicitly, encourage learners to reshape their own erroneous or unclear utterances. It is possible that the other two CF moves were perceived by the teachers and learner peers as face-threatening moves.

Based upon the evidence that CF moves were scarce during classroom discussions, the study found that the teachers' and learners' beliefs about CF were conflicting. That is, the teachers and learners valued the role of CF, but it was perceived by both teachers and learners to inhibit learners and thus limit their oral production. This thus implies that providing information concerning the correctness of learners' utterances and thus push them towards greater accuracy may have been perceived as face-threatening or as a sign of incompetence to speak the target language. This is in accord with Cathcart & Olsen (1976) and Allwright & Bailey (1991), who also found classroom perceptions of oral corrections as face-threatening, despite the fact that learners claimed to value them (Cathcart & Olsen, 1976). However, the findings of this study suggest that it was actually the teachers' and learners' conflicting beliefs about CF which influenced teachers' and learners' behaviour, resulting in an avoidance strategy to save the learners' face.

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Based on the above interactional and perceptual data, and in addressing RQ3 (i.e., what can be learned from RQs 1 and 2 in order to enhance the provision of corrective feedback?), it thus seems that the frequency and effectiveness of CF and its moves reside not only in teachers' and learners' value of them as opportunities which promote language learning, but also in their willingness to provide and receive strategic and supportive language data concerning the correctness of their utterances and thus promote others' language development. Drawing on the evidence that the teachers and learners of the study were able to reflect on their teaching, learning and interactional behaviour during classroom discussions, it may seem possible that this reflection ability may be directed towards the socio-affective climate between teachers and learners and learner peers, and the ways through which they can be encouraged to develop a positive attitude and behaviour towards initiating and receiving CF. This suggestion is supported by Naughton (2006), who contends that the most relevant classroom discussions to interlanguage development is that in which teachers and learners share a need and desire to understand each other, and learn from them. As suggested by Naughton (2006), classroom discussions can be exploited through a classroom climate in which challenging or modifying others' utterances is not social taboo. Under these conflicting circumstances, Yang and Kim (2011) raise the need to align teachers' and learners' beliefs with interactional behaviour that is more effective for classroom practices. In line with this, Yoshida (2013) contends that teachers and learners can be assisted in breaking away from classroom behaviour influenced by their conflicting beliefs in order to promote the development and appropriation of new beliefs consistent with more effective teaching and learning practices. We might thus explore the possibility that opportunities to provide CF can be enhanced if teachers and learners are assisted in mediating their beliefs and other cognitive factors through awareness-raising processes (e.g., advice from tutors on more effective interactional behaviour, or reflective procedures) (see, for example, Navarro & Thornton, 2011; Yang & Kim, 2011; Yoshida, 2013). These processes can assist them in raising an awareness of the interplay between actions and beliefs, resulting in co-constructed beliefs which have a beneficial impact on the socio-affective climate of classrooms and teachers' and learners' interactional behaviour (Li & Lian, 2012; Yang & Kim, 2011; Yoshida, 2013), in this case, opportunities to provide and receive CF in both TLIs and PIs.

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In the language classroom, teachers need not abandon the provision of CF; its use during classroom interactions maximises learners' opportunities to be exposed to information concerning the

accuracy of their utterances (Rassaei, 2014). Teachers should make a conscious use of feedback in relation to the pedagogic goal of the moment (Tsui, 1995; Walsh, 2013). That is, teachers need to be aware of the effects of these moves, and use them depending on the aim of the teaching practice. In order to avoid learners' loss of face, Rassaei (2014) suggests that the provision of CF needs to be performed collaboratively, in a way that encourages learners to produce language and assists them in negotiating and solving their erroneous utterances.

Conclusions and further research

The primary aim of the present study was to explore the interplay between the amount of CF and teacher and learner beliefs around this corrective language data. The study resided in a naturalistic as well as exploratory enquiry in order to understand better teaching and learning practices without controlling classroom variables.

The study firstly found that the amount of CF, indicated by clarification requests, repetitions and recasts, was scarce or absent during the classroom discussions led by the teachers and learner peers, despite the high number of errors that were identified in the interactional data. In an attempt to understand this avoidance, the study found that the teachers' and learners' beliefs concerning CF were conflicting, and influential on teaching behaviour by avoiding these moves perceived by the teachers and learners as face-threatening. Based on this evidence, the study puts forward the argument that in cases of low amount of CF, teachers' and researchers' attention should be directed towards the socio-affective climate in the language classroom where CF is seen not only as beneficial, but also as necessary to promote learners' interlanguage development.

As in any exploratory study, further research should be conducted in order to generalise from the findings of this study. Research should explore the interplay between the nature of CF and the influence of teachers' and learners' beliefs in teaching practices with several aims. It would be interesting to know whether awareness-raising processes have a beneficial impact on the amount and quality of CF during classroom interactions. However, it is hoped that this study is useful for teachers and learners who endorse CF and its moved, but struggle to initiate them during classroom discourse.

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Authors

*Edgar Emmanuell García holds an MA in Applied Linguistics (UAEMex, Mexico), and a PhD in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (University of Birmingham, UK). His research interests are centred on the interplay between classroom interactions and teacher and learner beliefs. He currently teaches in BA in TESOL and MA in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching at the Departamento de Lenguas, Universidad de Guanajuato.

Irasema Mora Pablo holds an MA in Applied Linguistics (Universidad de las Américas-Puebla) and a PhD in Applied Linguistics (University of Kent, UK). She coordinates the the Master's in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching at the Universidad de Guanajuato. She is a member of the National System of Researchers (Sistema Nacional de Investigadores) and her research interests are bilingual studies, identity and nativespeakerism.

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Constructing Sociocultural Awareness from the EFL Classroom[1]

Construyendo Conciencia Sociocultural Desde la Clase de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

Nancy Yolanda Bautista Pérez[2]*
Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, Colombia

Abstract

This article reports an action research project carried out with a group of 24 undergraduate students in a private university in Ibagué, Colombia. The study aimed to characterize the development of university students' sociocultural skills, to analyze their perceptions and to examine the teacher's procedures and possible implications required to implement the *Raising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy* taken from the Postmethod Pedagogy. To reach these objectives a series of interconnected tasks were designed and implemented in three different stages. To collect the data, five data collection methods were used: the students' artifacts, teacher's field notes, questionnaires, video recordings and a focus group. The findings revealed that these university students became gradually aware of the importance of having the opportunity to develop tasks that allowed them to connect the English classroom with the local and global context. Furthermore, students suggested that this type of pedagogy should be an explicit component of the curricula of their professional programs. A review of the literature also showed that in our local context this kind of sociocultural study with a postmethod orientation is scarce, thus this study intends to bridge this gap in the Colombian ELT field.

Key words: Postmethod Pedagogy, macrostrategy, sociocultural skills, local and global context.

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Resumen

Este artículo reporta un proyecto de investigación acción realizado con un grupo de 24 estudiantes de pregrado en una universidad privada colombiana en la ciudad de Ibagué. Los objetivos del estudio fueron caracterizar el desarrollo gradual de las competencias socioculturales, analizar las percepciones de los estudiantes universitarios, examinar los procedimientos del profesor y las posibles implicaciones requeridas para implementar la Macro-estrategia *Incrementando la Conciencia Cultural* seleccionada de la Pedagogía del Posmétodo. Para alcanzar estos objetivos, fue necesario diseñar una serie de tareas que se implementaron en tres ciclos. Los instrumentos que se utilizaron para recolectar la información fueron los materiales hechos por los estudiantes, las notas del profesor, cuestionarios, videos y un grupo focal. Los resultados revelaron que los estudiantes universitarios comenzaron gradualmente a ser conscientes de la importancia de tener la oportunidad de desarrollar actividades que les permitieron conectar su clase de inglés con el contexto local y global, también sugirieron que esta pedagogía debería ser parte de sus currículos en sus diferentes programas de formación profesional. Además, se evidenció que en el contexto local este tipo de estudios con la orientación de la Pedagogía del Posmétodo son escasos, por lo que este estudio intenta contribuir a llenar este vacío en el campo de la enseñanza del inglés en Colombia.

Palabras claves: Pedagogía Posmétodo, macro-estrategia, conciencia sociocultural, contexto local y global.

Resumo

Este artigo reporta um projeto de pesquisa-ação realizado com um grupo de 24 estudantes de curso de graduação numa universidade colombiana na cidade de Ibagué. Os objetivos do estudo foram caracterizar o desenvolvimento gradual das competências socioculturais, analisar as percepções dos alunos universitários, examinar os procedimentos do professor e as possíveis implicações requeridas para implementar a macro-estratégia *Incrementando a Consciência Cultural*; a qual foi selecionada da Pedagogia do Posmétodo. Para alcançar estes objetivos, foi necessário desenhar uma serie de tarefas "tasks" que foram implementadas em três ciclos. Os instrumentos utilizados para recolher os dados foram: os materiais feitos pelos estudantes, notas de campo do professor, questionários, vídeos e um grupo focal. Os resultados revelaram que os estudantes universitários começaram gradualmente a ser conscientes da importância de ter a oportunidade de fazer atividades e conectar sua classe de inglês com o contexto local e global, eles também sugeriram que esta pedagogia deveria ser parte de seus currículos nos diferentes programas de graduação. Além disso, se evidenciou que no contexto local este tipo de estudos com orientação da Pedagogia do Posmétodo é escasso; por isso, este estudo intenta contribuir a encher esse vazio no campo do ensino de inglês na Colômbia.

Palavras chaves: Pedagogia Posmétodo, macro- estratégia, consciência sociocultural, contexto local e global.

Introduction

Good communication skills in English is one of the demands in this globalized world of permanent evolution and changes that have affected our thoughts, beliefs, behavior and interests. Consequently, the way we teach and learn, as it has been said by many researchers and scholars. These trends and changes imply the development of new pedagogies and approaches in the EFL classroom to give students the opportunity to develop their linguistic skills and sociocultural competence to better prepare them for life.

As a result, from this huge demand in teaching and learning English, methods and approaches with a sociocultural orientation have evolved and emerged in an attempt to meet the fact that learners' needs and interests have changed too. In this regard, Johnson (2009) emphasizes that today it is important to reflect about who teaches English, who learns English and why. Also to know about the sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts in which English is taught.

In response to these challenges and responsibilities for school, university and teachers regarding the English learning process, an action research project was undertaken during the second academic semester in 2016, at a private university in Ibagué, with a group of 24 students from different undergraduate programs. The study aimed to characterize the development of students' sociocultural skills, to analyze their perceptions and to examine the teacher's procedures and possible implications. To achieve these goals, the *Raising Cultural Consciousness* Macrostrategy and its guiding principles were implemented in the English classroom. This macrostrategy was taken from the Postmethod Pedagogy framework, which is considered by many scholars such as Stern (1992), Allwright (1984), Giroux (1988), Johnson (2009), and Byram (2002), a sustainable approach to language teaching around the world due to its sensitivity to local particularities and the involvement of critical awareness of local conditions and needs. Furthermore, some local researchers as, Fandiño (2014), Aldemar & Bonilla (2009) and Ramos (2013) have manifested that this is a suitable pedagogy for Latin America.

The outcomes of the study evidenced that by gradually empowering students to go beyond the walls of the classroom, they were able to expand their global and local knowledge. Foucault (1984) suggests that being able to read the community critically is part of the learning process; it means questioning reality, raising awareness, transforming self and rewriting the world.

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In this paper, I present a discussion and description of the theoretical constructs that supported the study, the implemented methodology, the results and, finally the conclusions and pedagogical implications.

Literature Review

Understanding the Postmethod Pedagogy

The main construct of this project is the Postmethod Pedagogy. This pedagogy emerged as an answer to the teachers and teacher educators' voices of dissatisfaction with prescriptive methods of teaching and as part of the ELT evolution and the new challenges the new millennium has brought. These changes have gradually evolved over the years thanks to the critical thinkers that have questioned not only the pedagogical limitations but the insidious, sociocultural and political agenda that have permeated our educational system. Macedo (1994) called for an "anti-methods pedagogy" he said that any pedagogy should include a critical understanding of the sociocultural context that guides teachers' practices (p.8).

Kumaravadivelu (2003) defines the Postmethod Pedagogy as "a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method" (p. 32). He considers that alternative methods are primarily products of top-down processes and alternatives to method are mainly products of bottom-up processes. In other words, teaching practices and policies should emerge from the daily-classroom activities. He assures that the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct personal theories of practice that gives teachers autonomy.

Following these ideas, Kumaravadivelu and other scholars recognize that "the nature of any language pedagogy should be socially-realistic and contextually-sensitive" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, P.32).

Grasping the Pedagogic Wheel and the Macrostrategies

The Postmethod Pedagogy proposed by Kumaravadivelu can be visualized as three-dimensional system or framework consisting of three pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. He designed the Pedagogic Wheel to show how the three parameters interweave and interact with each other and the systematic relationship among the ten macrostrategies. As illustrated in the Pedagogic Wheel. (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.41):

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"These three parameters are based on social, cultural, economic and political dimensions that have permeated the process of language teaching; at the same time those parameters are complemented by ten macrostrategies or classroom principles" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.41).

This framework encompasses the most relevant elements that surround people's life; for this reason, teachers are required to be aware of the students' sociocultural background as well as their linguistics needs. Kumaravadivelu states that it is the teacher's discretion to implement one, two, or whatever macrostrategy as needed, or experience teachers can even create their own ones. I explored all of them to seek which one was the most appropriate to develop my project, and I selected the *Raising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy*, which appeared to be the most suitable according to the needs analysis and the students' characteristics.

The Raising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy

As it is well known, teaching culture has been an integral part of language class and it is viewed as a cognitive component. The Postmethod Pedagogy, proposes that the cultural dimension as "an obligation we, language teachers, have to our students" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 284). In this sense, Stern (1992) points out that teaching culture should include three components: the cognitive, affective and behavioral to help students to gain an understanding of the native speakers, their cultural values, attitude and diversity.

This macrostrategy also indicates that the global cultural consciousness is a requisite in the English language teaching and learning process. Kumaravadivelu (2003) asserts that nowadays teacher should not be considered as the sole cultural informant; teachers need to treat learners as cultural informants as well. Teachers can encourage learners to be engaged in a process of participation by identifying the cultural knowledge learners bring to the classroom and share their own individual perspectives with the teacher as well as with other learners; such a multicultural approach can dispel stereotypes that create and sustain cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications, as it was evidenced in this study.

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Addressing Culture in the EFL Classroom

Brown (2007) argues that culture is an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. It means that culture involves a series of cultural patterns and customs that shape the way we think and understand the world around us. Williams (1976) defines culture as one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language because it "brings to mind different images to different people…such as the mental habits, personal prejudices, moral values, social customs, artistic achievements, and aesthetic preferences of particular societies" (p.87).

Additionally, Kramsch (2013) describes culture as the meaning that members of a social group give to the discursive practices they share in a given space and time and over the historical life of the group. "She states that language learners learn who they are through encounters with the Other. They cannot understand the Other if they don't understand the historical and subjective experiences that have made them who they are" (p. 61). In this regard, the term Third Place is seen as a place of contact or encounter between speakers from two different countries. Learners occupy a position where they see themselves both from the inside and from the outside; and that is what she has called a "third place" of symbolic competence that regards to language-in-context for the making of meaning. Kramsch (2005) uses the term "Thirdness" as a way of seeing the relation of language, thought and culture.

The above concepts and thoughts helped me to create encounters in and outside the classroom, where students had the opportunity to reflect about them and the Other, and were able to expand and to understand the concept of culture as it is evidenced in the outcomes of the project. On account of these kind of sociocultural encounters with the Other the intercultural competence merged as it will be explained in the next section.

Tackle the Intercultural Competence in the English classroom

The term 'intercultural' emerged in the eighties in the fields of intercultural education and intercultural communication. Both are part of an effort to increase dialogue and cooperation among members of different national cultures within a common European Union or within a global economy (Jackson, 2012; Kramsch, 2001).

Byram (2000) visualizes intercultural competence as the ability 'to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of

the other, either for themselves or for other people'. It also encompasses the ability 'to critically or analytically understand that one's own and other cultures' perspective is culturally determined rather than natural.' (p.10). He states that globalization has put individuals in contact with one another at an unprecedented scale. It has brought forth a general challenge to traditionally recognized boundaries of nation, language, race, gender, and class. For this reason, Byram (2000) and others like Kramsch (2011) consider that teachers should promote the intercultural skill in the classroom.

Sociocultural Perspective

Another important construct of the study was the sociocultural perspective that views human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts and it is distributed across persons, tools, and activities (Vygotsky, 1978).

According to Johnson (2009), a sociocultural perspective assumes that human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities. This perspective refers to the social relationships and the culturally constructed materials, signs, and symbols that mediate those relationships that create uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking and as a consequence of it. This means, that learning takes place in interactive processes mediated by culture, context, language, and social interaction.

Community-based Pedagogy

Community-based pedagogy is a perspective inspired on the work of educators such as Freire (1988) and, more recently, Murrell (2001). Freire insisted that curriculum be locally generated and generative and that learners and their worlds be invited into the project and process of education. A community-based pedagogy curriculum reflects a close link between the community and school. Furthermore, Murrell (2001) observes that this pedagogy is informed by sociocultural approaches and that teachers are called to research the knowledge of the cultures represented by children, families and communities.

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Thus, I based my study on this approach because one of the aims was to encourage students to inquire about their surroundings; such as their neighborhoods, inside and outside the university, etc. In order to connect the EFL classroom to the local context and to expand their awareness, experiences and very likely to take action on what they found needed or feasible.

Teacher's Decision-making: Moving from Theory to Practice

As part of the advent of new approaches and pedagogies, the teacher's role in the EFL classroom has also changed and evolved. Zeichner & Liston (1996) suggest that the notion of the teacher as a self-reflective, inquiring, and critically motivated practitioner is required today. Allwright & Bailey (1991) have stated that this tendency is accelerating interest in research in ELT environments.

However, it is important to consider that every teacher has her/his personal theory of teaching and learning, which Kelly (1955) calls personal constructs. "Teachers make decisions to act on the basis of his/her sense and understanding; in order for teachers to transform the personal constructs, they need to adapt them to reach a common understanding together with others" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 28). Furthermore, Freeman (1998) called such a reflective thinking inquiry-oriented teacher research. He defines as "A state of being engaged in what is going on in the classroom that drives one to better understand what is happening—and can happen—there" (p.14).

In the following figure, I summarize the process and the challenges I had to tackle as a teacher researcher in order to connect the theory and practice and to accomplish the aims of the project. The Figure 1. includes the theoretical framework and the six main dimensions that I explored in order to design the curricular units for each cycle in order to get students sociocultural aware.
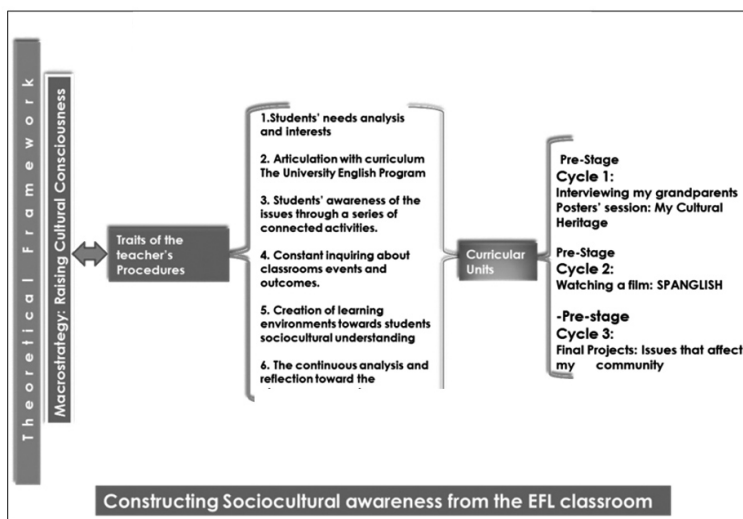
Figure 1. Teacher's Decision Making

Background

The Postmethod Pedagogy is considered a sustainable approach to language teaching around the world including Latin America, mainly, because it is sensitive to local particularities and involves a critical awareness of local conditions and needs. However, after searching for similar studies; I realized that most of them are focused on discussions, analysis of theory and the way of teaching English and culture in the EFL classroom influenced by the Postmethod Pedagogy.

Nonetheless, I selected two practice-oriented studies that have been carried out in Latin America: The first one was reported in Argentina by Porto & Byram (2015) that aimed to combine the language teaching and education for citizenship; she called her study intercultural citizenship. This project is part of a network of projects coordinated by Michael Byram. Findings revealed that Porto's project is scarce in Latin America and her study intends to fill an empirical gap; thus, it has given me some elements to refine my study, which is also a contribution to bridge the existence gap in the sociocultural studies in Colombia with a Postmethod Pedagogy orientation.

The second study was held in Colombia by Fandiño (2014), whose work has been influenced by the Postmethod Pedagogy and the sociocultural approaches. He proposes five strategies to facilitate a better understanding and implementation of culture in the Colombian EFL classroom to help teachers to understand and become aware of the social conditions. This study enhanced my view of teacher's agency, freedom and autonomy, which led me to design activities to foster students' awareness with respect to culture in our local context.

Methodology

Research Design

This project was based on Action Research methodology, which is defined as a process that is characterized as a spiral or cycle of movements between action and research. It suits the specificity and particularities of every teaching context and situation through permanent and systematic actions of reflection, observation, planning, action and evaluation (Johnson & Christensen 2004; Burns, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

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Based on this methodological design, the project aimed to answer the research questions:

Main question:

What does the implementation of the Raising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy, taken from the Postmethod Pedagogy, show with respect to the development of a group of university students' sociocultural skills in their English learning process?

Subquestions:

1. What do university students' perceptions reveal regarding the implementation of the Raising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy?

2. What characterizes the teacher's decision making when implementing the Raising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy in the English classroom?

Context and Participants

The study was conducted at a private university in Ibagué, during the second academic semester in 2016. The participants were 24 students from different undergraduate programs who attended English classes every Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for 16 weeks. The students' ages ranged between 18 to 24 years old. They were in the third level of English, which is a requirement to graduate. Each English level is characterized by a predetermined set of language competencies students are expected to achieve according to the curriculum.

Instructional Design

The instructional design involves all the process and the interconnected activities that were implemented in each of the three stages of the study. Figure 2 summarizes all the process, the implementations done and the instruments used in each stage. Each cycle was divided in alignment with the three academic periods. In the first cycle students started to raise their sociocultural awareness, in the second cycle students continued expanding their sociocultural awareness, and in the third cycle, they were able to take action about sociocultural issues that affect their community.

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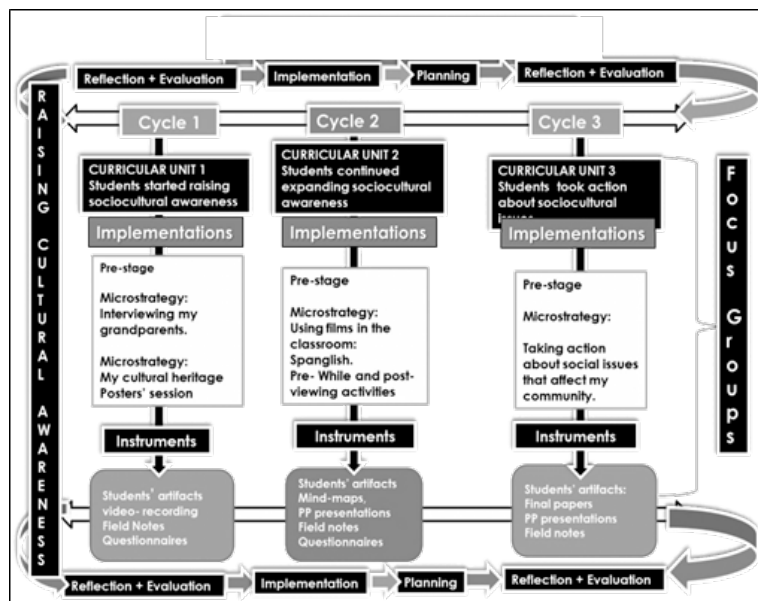
Figure 2. Action Research Process

Data Collection Instruments

To collect the data, five data collection methods were used: the students' artifacts, teacher's field notes, questionnaires, video recordings and a focus group. All the data gathered through these instruments helped me to analyze and triangulate the information to find out to what extend the research questions were answered.

The students' artifacts were collected and analyzed in each cycle of the process. They reflected the students' sociocultural awareness development during the whole process. Then, questionnaires in Spanish were applied at the end of each cycle. This instrument was very valuable to know the students' opinions and impressions about the different tasks done in class. The teacher's field notes were taken during each class to analyze reactions, interactions or behaviors during or after the implementation of the different activities.

In addition, most of the activities were recorded, which was very useful because it let me go back as many times as I needed to analyze the students' opinions or to discover new insights of the project. Finally, a focus group was held to give students the opportunity to discuss and give their opinions freely about the different activities and strategies

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implemented by the teacher during the whole process, and to reconfirm previous data collected with other instruments.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Burns (1999), the reflexive nature of Action Research means that analysis occurs over the entire investigation; she adapted a framework from McKernan (1996) to shape the overall processes of analysis. Burns says that throughout a process of constant checks that lead the analysis and triangulation, the data provide the evidence for the research insights or outcomes. Thus, the data analysis and interpretation of this study was based on the grounded theory that allows concepts and categories emerge from the data and produces knowledge as stated by Glaser & Strauss (1999).

Table 1 illustrates the four categories and the subcategories that merged from the data in order to answer the research questions.
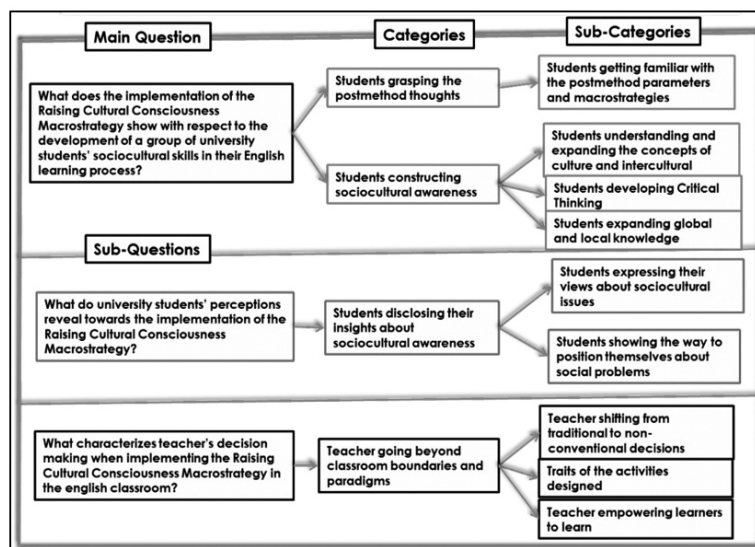
Figure 3. Categories and Sub-Categories regarding the Research question

Students grasping the Postmethod Pedagogy

To answer the main question, since the very beginning, students were initialized in a process of raising their sociocultural awareness, then they continued expanding their sociocultural awareness and in

the last stage, they were able to take actions about sociocultural issues. According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), students should be aware of the complex connection between language use and cultural identity to sensitize themselves to better understand and value the cultural richness that surrounds their lives. For this reason, one of the first activities aimed to recognize the students' understanding of global culture. They started to analyze the status of English in this global world and the relation with their lives as citizens and future professionals in order to develop an awareness of empathy regarding the English language.

These excerpts confirm that this group of students already possessed a sociocultural background and knowledge about the world and it was easier for them to become familiar with the postmethod thoughts.

> *"Most of the students considered that by learning English they can have better job opportunities and can have access to international business. Others thought about the possibility to travel abroad to study". (Field notes, august 15, 2016)*

> *"These group of students recognized that globalization affect our lives in many ways, such as the language the world speaks, the way we communicate, dress, and so on". (Field notes, august 15, 2016)*

Students Getting Familiar with the Postmethod Parameters and Macrostrategies

Let me recall that the selected macrostrategy for the purpose of this study was the R*aising Cultural Consciousness Macrostrategy.* To implement this macrostrategy, I designed some microstrategies that I called activities or tasks to develop their sociocultural skills and give them the opportunity to create knowledge.

Therefore, in the second stage of this study, I designed a microstrategy based on a comedy movie called *Spanglish*. It contains a lot of nonverbal communication and relevant cultural and cross-cultural information. After analyzing the students' opinions about this activity, it was found that students enhanced their understanding of culture and identified other aspects of culture such as language, cultural barriers and stereotypes. They stated that the movie helped them to understand the difficulties and problems an immigrant has to face when travels to another country to pursue a dream and commented that some of them knew a person that has experienced the situation of being illegal in another country. Students recommend the movie as a way to expand

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their intercultural competence and recognized how important is to speak English in a foreign country.

The following excerpts were taken from a video recording after the film activity:

S1. "Esta actividad nos ayudó a practicar, pronunciar y mejorar el inglés y aprender sobre diferentes culturas".

S3."Recomiendo la película pues permite tener una visión más amplia de la cultura de otros países y reconocer la importancia de hablar bien inglés".

S4:"Me ayudó a tener una visión más amplia de mi cultura y de la cultura de otros países".

Students Constructing Sociocultural Awareness

Social awareness involves both the will and the skill to interact with others, involving motivation, attitude, self-confidence, empathy and the ability to handle social situations (Byram 2002). This category shows how students became conscious and expanded their knowledge about the difficulties their communities have and even took part in possible solutions.

When students presented their final papers and oral presentations regarding local and global issues, data showed that they have expanded their social and cultural awareness, were ready to explore global and local issues, and were able to take action about problems related to their communities, such as the university, neighborhood and the city. The following five questions, students attempted to answer in their final tasks, is an example of it:

1. *We are concerned about how to develop awareness in the university directors about the drug addiction?*

2. *What can be our contribution to reduce the amount of garbage in the streets of Ibague?*

3. *How to improve security in Ibague city, especially near the Cooperativa University?*

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4. *This group of students was concerned about the corruption that has been affected our country and especially this city, which is considered one of the biggest sicknesses of this century.*

5. *What can we do to reduce domestic violence in the city of Ibague?*

Students understanding and expanding the concept of Culture

Students understood and expanded the concept of culture during the development of different cultural oriented tasks. The tasks involved observation and reflection about other's cultures thus students had the opportunity to cross the borders from their local to the global culture with computer and technology to gained intercultural competence.

My Cultural Heritage, a posters session, was one of the activities that helped students to expand their understanding about culture. The first step of this activity comprised that students worked in small groups and drew mind maps to express their understanding of culture. This task involved observation and reflection about other's cultures and the face-to-face interaction with the native assistant who is part of the English language program.

Students Developing the Intercultural Competence

According to Stewart (2007), the intercultural competence is the continuous evolution and transformation of the society as a result of science, technology and globalization, that force intercultural objectives to evolve and reflect to be able to respond to the needs of modern citizens and communities. This appreciation, confirms that today's students are modern citizens whose learning habits are permeated by the facts already mentioned. For this reason, I also included technology in the classroom. A good example on how these students expanded their intercultural skills was when they watched the movie Spanglish and in the post-viewing stage, they drew some mind maps and made a contrast between three cultures; Colombian, Mexican and American. The mind maps showed that language is the main barrier to get a good job in a country like the United States. They found that Colombian and Mexican cultures are more traditional than Americans' culture. Also, that Mexico and Colombian have faced similar social problems such as the violence, trafficking and corruption.

Even though the movie Spanglish is a funny comedy, students addressed critical opinions to social and cultural differences:

S1:*"Recordaré la película como una actividad diferente y al contrastar las culturas me llama la atención como cada país ve al otro, dependiendo del STATUS de éste". (Questionnaire, October 10, 2016)*

S2. *"Recomiendo la actividad de la película porque nos ayudó a ser capaces de ser más conscientes de las diferencias con otras culturas" (Focus group, November 14, 2016)*

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S3.''Mexico and Colombia, pensé que no debían ser muchas las diferencias, pero cuando comencé a investigar habían diferencias culturales, en la forma de hablar el español. (Field notes, October 10, 2016)

S4.''Así estén cerca hay muchas diferencias entre México y los Estados Unidos, por ejemplo en la película las dificultades que tiene que afrontar la mujer son por no conocer la cultura y no hablar el idioma. (Field notes, October 10, 2016)

Students developing Critical Thinking

The students were immersed in a series of activities that were sociocultural and political oriented as suggested by Halpern (1996) who asserts that "A forward –looking education must be built on the twin foundations of knowing how to learn and knowing how to think clearly about the proliferating information with which we all have to contend" (p.4). The decisions teachers make in the classroom will affect not only the class, but also generations that come; our students.

Therefore, in the third cycle of this study, I took advantage of a crucial moment our country was facing up, the Peace Process in Colombia, which has been a controversial topic of discussion during the last years. The first thing I did was to elicit information from the students to see how much they knew about it. Since most of them were not well informed about this process, I asked them to be followers of this process during two weeks, just before the plebiscite, and to be ready to participate in a round table session. During the round table students discussed about this topic that requires they move to a higher-level of thinking. The following excerpts correspond to some teacher's field notes and some opinions students wrote in Spanish to answer a questionnaire:

S1. "Yo si estoy más enterado del proceso de paz" (Field notes, October 16, 2016)

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S2. "Es muy difícil decirlo en inglés, porque en español para mí no es tan fácil, pero se aprende mucho" (Questionnaire, October 24, 2016).

S3. "Aparte de aprender sobre este proceso de paz, aprendí mucho vocabulario nuevo en inglés y soy más conciente de la importancia de votar". (Questionnaire, October 24, 2016)

S4. *"Me considero una víctima indirecta y directa porque es nuestro país y nos afecta todo lo que pase en el"* ((Questionnaire, October 24, 2016).

The above extracts evidenced the students' awareness about events that surrounded their lives, even though most of them had never debated or participated in political issues.

Students expanding local knowledge

Canagarajah (2005) indicates that local knowledge is a "process rather than a product and it is constituted by the beliefs and practices of the past […] the most important is the locality that shapes our social intellectual practice" (p. 3).

Reflecting on Canagarajah's appreciation, I noticed that the development of the sociocultural competence in these students who were strongly influenced by their previous knowledge. It means that students brought to the English classroom knowledge from their fields of study. Let me recall that this group of students belongs to the programs of Civil Engineering, Veterinary and Accounting. Then, they shared in class their personal beliefs, values and experiences during the different activities, and finally their global and local knowledge that includes all the information they possess and express regarding their communities and the world.

In this sub-category, I will highlight some instances, where students expressed their global and local knowledge about social issues:

S1: *"Cuando analizamos los diferentes problemas sociales, recordamos que tenemos muchos, lo bueno es que intentamos sugerir soluciones"(Focus group; November 14, 2016)*

S2: *"Observamos que algunos compañeros están consumiendo drogas, o la han consumido en el pasado, por eso nos llamó la atención este problema".(Field notes; October 17, 2016)*

S1:*"We know that drug-addiction is a global problem. It does not only happen in Colombia or Ibague" (Field notes; October 31, 2016)*

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Teacher shifting from traditional to non-conventional decisions

This project could not be done without considering the teacher's role during the process. Kumaravadivelu (2001) observes that the most relevant key component and the heart of the Postmethod Framework is to empower and promote the teacher's autonomy. It gives him/her the elements to become more confident and able to empower learners to construct their own knowledge.

Following these thoughts, as a language teacher at a higher educational institution, I am aware that one of the challenges we have is to promote competences university students need to improve their quality of life. For these reasons, I generated opportunities for the students to develop a series of interconnected tasks that were designed and implemented according to their needs, English level and the articulation with the English university program. It was necessary the creation of learning environments that foster the students' sociocultural understanding and to continuously analyzed and reflected about the results of each of the tasks. This ongoing process guided me to accomplish the project.

The following excerpts correspond to students' opinions about the change from traditional to non-traditional class:

S1. "Pues a mí me llaman mucho la atención las actividades que realizamos, porque es una forma más de desarrollar la habilidad lingüística y cultural. Si, en lo particular me gustó el cambio es más significativo." (Focus group, November 14, 2016)

S2. "En general aprendimos mucho, sobre todo vocabulario, que en una clase tradicional nunca lo hubiéramos hecho. Si fue una experiencia única." (Focus group, November 14, 2016)

S3. "Pues pienso que es muy bueno, pues algunos de esos temas son interesantes para nosotros y abordarlos en inglés es todo un reto. Digamos, lo cultural, lo político y esto nos obliga a trabajar mejor el idioma. Fue una experiencia significativa y fuimos progresando paso a paso". (Focus group, November 14, 2016)

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Results

Regarding the main question, the findings revealed that this group of university students became more aware of the importance of having the opportunity to develop tasks that led them to connect the

English classroom with the global and local context. They expressed that it should be part of their learning process as future professionals. Additionally, data showed that through the development of the different sociocultural oriented tasks, students activated their previous knowledge, expanded their intercultural competence, and positioned themselves regarding social issues.

With respect to the second question, these students demonstrated that by connecting the English class with their surroundings there were unlimited opportunities for them to move to a higher level of thinking, to create meaningful learning, and to become independent learners (Johnson, 2009). They also recognized that this type of sociocultural activities offered them a unique opportunity because they had to face challenges that led them to generate and expand their linguistic skills and raised their sociocultural awareness.

In relation to the third and last question, the data indicated that teacher plays an important role in the creation of learning environments that should give students the opportunity of exploring, discovering, analyzing and evaluating meaningful information. These were the main features of the tasks and microstrategies implemented during this process to reach the aims of the project.

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

After the implementation of the *Raising Cultural consciousness Macrostrategy* taken from the Postmethod Pedagogy through a series of interconnected activities along the academic semester; this group of university students demonstrated a deeper social consciousness about different local-context realities that they brought to the class because they are part of their sociocultural background. They evidenced improvement in the process of being better citizens by opening their minds to social issues. They recognized that they went beyond the classroom walls and found the English learning process more meaningful and challenging. Students believed that this project provided a unique opportunity to share and compare their ideas, values and beliefs about their culture and others' culture.

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Furthermore, students changed their perceptions of the English class. During the execution of the final task, students did not only analyze social issues, they applied surveys, sent letters to official institutions, talked to community's leader and to university's directors; in sum they thought of possible solutions to a problem. Even though some students admitted, it was really challenging to them to do oral

presentations of sociocultural topics, some of them also said, *"We will never forget this experience"*.

From the teacher's perspective, this pedagogical experience has changed my point of view about my role as a teacher, the way I teach, and the way I view students. After this unique experience, I will never be the same teacher. Although, there were some limitations such as the lack of experience in this kind of projects, the time constrains due to the amount of work I had to do. One of the biggest challenges I had to face was how to start the process of raising the students' sociocultural consciousness, and at the same time be in alignment with my institution English program.

To sum up, being an innovator and a critical thinker in education is not an easy job. There are some boundaries in our context; such as, some local policies, lack of resources, similar studies, learners' attitude or interests, time constrains; despite that I started to walk into the sociocultural perspective and I was able to connect the classroom with the global and local context. Thus, when one of the students said *"Teacher esa proeza que tu hiciste de salirte del libro, del tablero, de combinar de llevarnos a un plano más actual, de hacernos pensar como ciudadanos y futuros profesionales, creo que fue lo que hizo más atractivo y se diferenció tu clase de los demás compañeros. El hacer que pensemos más acerca de lo que estamos viviendo y percibiendo creo que ha sido lo más novedoso de lo que nos has enseñado". (Focus group; November 14, 2016).*

I was very excited because in a way he summarized the complexity that implies to become a kind of pioneer innovator in this particular field of the ELT process. Even though, Kumaravadivelu (2003) does not consider the higher education population in his work, and in our local context, these kind of sociocultural projects with a postmethod and sociocultural orientation are scarce. This study shows the process, the results and implications in the Colombian context with undergraduate students.

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Author

***Nancy Bautista Pérez** holds a Specialization in English Language Teaching and a B.A. in English. She is candidate to an English Didactics Master's degree from Universidad del Tolima. She has been teaching English and Portuguese for more than twelve years, and is currently working as a full-time professor at Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia in Ibagué. She was the winner of the Third Meaningful Experience Competition at national level in 2017 with her pedagogical innovation "Constructing Sociocultural Awareness from the EFL classroom". Her main research interests are the sociocultural and intercultural dimensions of English language learning and teaching.

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Lesson co-planning: Joint Efforts, Shared Success[1]

Planeación Conjunta de Clase: Esfuerzo Colectivo, Éxito Compartido

Laura Carreño and Luz Stella Hernandez Ortiz[2]*
Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia

Abstract

The present article reports the results of a qualitative research study conducted at a higher education institution in Bogotá Colombia. The study aimed at examining the lesson planning practices conducted by English language teachers at the proficiency program of the institution. The participants were a mix of the mentors in charge of each level and teachers who agreed on being part of the study. Data was collected through two online surveys and one semi-structured interview; three categories were obtained from the data analysis; they focus on the planning stages, the impact of co-planning on teachers´ performance and the role of resources for lesson planning. The findings suggest that lesson planning collaboration among teachers provides them with the opportunity of improving their practices, and helped participants identify professional strengths and weaknesses.

Key Words: Lesson planning, teacher collaboration, professional development, planning resources, teaching practices.

Resumen

El presente artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio de investigación cualitativa realizado en una institución de educación superior en Bogotá, Colombia. El estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar las prácticas de planeación de clase de los profesores de inglés de la institución. Entre los participantes se incluyeron los mentores a cargo de cada nivel y los profesores que aceptaron ser parte del estudio. Los datos se recopilaron a través de dos encuestas en línea y una entrevista semiestructurada; se obtuvieron tres categorías del

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análisis de datos las cuales se centran en las etapas de planeación, el impacto de la planeación conjunta en el desempeño de los docentes y el papel de los recursos usados para la planeación de las lecciones. Los hallazgos sugieren que la colaboración entre los docentes para la planeación de lecciones les brinda la oportunidad de mejorar sus prácticas además de identificar sus fortalezas y debilidades profesionales.

Palabras clave: planeación de clase, colaboración docente, desarrollo profesional, recursos de planeación, prácticas de enseñanza.

Resumo

O presente artigo reporta os resultados de um estudo de pesquisa qualitativa desenvolvido em uma instituição de educação superior em Bogotá, Colômbia. O propósito do estudo é examinar as práticas de planejamento de aula realizadas por professores de inglês no programa de competência da instituição. Foram obtidas três categorias da análise de dados, as quais se enfocaram nas etapas de planejamento, o impacto do planejamento coletivo no desempenho dos professores e o papel dos recursos para o planejamento de aula. As descobertas sugerem que o planejamento de aula colaborativa entre os professores os provê com a oportunidade de melhorar suas práticas, e ajuda os participantes a identificar suas fortalezas e debilidades profissionais.

Palavras chave: Planejamento de aula, colaboração docente, desenvolvimento profissional, recursos de planejamento, práticas de ensino.

Introduction

Lesson planning is a demanding task that language teachers embark on every day. For this reason, the question as to whether this task should be done individually or in teams, has puzzled the teaching staff of the Languages Department (LD) at a higher education institution for quite a long time. But, why is it that English teachers, find it difficult to plan their lessons and are constantly re-thinking their practices? Authors such as Richards and Bohlke (2011) argue that:

> Language teaching is not only a field of practical activity but also a discipline that draws on a considerable body of knowledge and practice. There are long traditions of theory, research, and practical experience to support contemporary approaches to language teaching (p. 3).

Lesson planning is an essential component of teaching. Independently from what is taught, lesson planning gives teachers a 'route map' which guides their actions in the classroom. Harmer (2001) highlights that "Planning helps, then, because it allows teachers to think about where they're going and gives them time to have ideas for tomorrow's and next week's lessons" (p. 21). However, lesson planning is not an easy task. There are many factors such as students' specific needs, time allotment, equipment or resources needed and possible problems; among others, that have specific roles in the planner teachers write for every single lesson; lesson planning is not only about listing a series of activities that provide teachers with ideas on how to develop a session.

The proficiency program offered by the LD has devoted more than 20 years to finding suitable language teaching methodologies and to improving teaching practices that help university students reach the language level they need. These efforts are made not only for students to comply with requirements set by their faculties, but also to have access to better work and study opportunities once they graduate. The program has specific parameters which teachers should bear in mind while teaching their classes; and, for teachers to get familiar with those parameters, the LD offers continuous training and a mentoring system that supports teachers all along the semester.

In this system, mentors are teachers who coordinate all the administrative details related to the correct functioning of the level they are in charge of. They also provide teachers with lesson-planning and evaluation items and support both, teachers and students whenever issues arise. Given that mentors provide weekly lesson-planning, each teacher is assigned with two weeks a semester to help mentors enhance

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or create class planners. For this task, teachers and mentors use the textbook and the planner used in the previous semester as a way to guide the planning to be done for the current semester. Planning is supposed to be done as a team, this means, teachers and mentors are not supposed to just split sections and decide who is in charge of each component and then put everything together; however, because of time constraints, this is what used to happen before a co-planning strategy started to be implemented.

The co-planning strategy proposes that teachers and mentors come together to analyze the resources available, evaluate how useful they were in the previous semester (in case they have already taught the level) and sit down together to brainstorm new ideas. They also need to consider the current needs of the level to come up with an improved final class-planner which would be the result of joint efforts made by the mentor and the teacher in charge of the weekly co-planning.

As stated by Smith and Scott (1990), "collaboration depends inherently on the voluntary effort of professional educators to improve their schools and their own teaching through teamwork" (p.2). This is the main intention of having LD teachers planning together, since they are the ones who are using the planners, they are the ones who know what works best and how their practices can get better every semester.

Literature Review

Lesson Planning & Planning Resources

Planning lessons might be a matter of personal choice for teachers; but, is lesson planning a relevant component for students' academic success? Even the most experienced teachers might consider important to have a general idea on what the objectives and outcomes of a lesson might be. A lesson plan should not become a straitjacket that forces teachers to strictly follow the plan; on the opposite, teachers must be ready to adapt their teaching to the conditions and demands of the lesson.

There are many factors that could prevent teachers from strictly following the plan they had, factors such as "equipment not working, bored students, students who have done things before, students who need to ask unexpected questions or who want or need to pursue unexpected pathways, etc." (Harmer, 2001, p. 121). Therefore, teachers cannot be expected to follow the plan and stick to it even if they notice that something might not be going as it was planned.

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Lesson planning does not only benefit teachers. Students are able to notice when a lesson has been planned; they can realize when teachers know where they are going and the time they have devoted to planning the lesson. In the end, as stated by Woodward (2001), "the students we work with are the real reason for the whole learning/teaching encounter" (p. 16). Therefore, we cannot ignore the fact that our students will definitely be the first to judge the quality, effectiveness and efficacy of the lesson we plan, and then, execute.

It is also important to consider the role of lesson-planning resources. Teachers and mentors in the LD use three main resources when planning their lessons: the course syllabus, the course textbook and the planning format. Of course, there are other resources included (ICT, worksheets, etc.), but these are the core elements that guide teachers every week.

In the case of the syllabus, it presents the general content that students in the level should learn and an exit profile that describes the abilities that students should count on by the end of the course. In addition, the course syllabus includes the description of the project tasks that students must carry out along the semester to complete the final product (group work). The course syllabus is available for all students and in general, for all the academic community of the university to have an idea of what the course offers. Ur (2009) asserts that "Underlying this characteristic is the principle of accountability: the composers of the syllabus are answerable to their target audience for the quality of their document" (p. 177).

The author (Ur, 2009) also suggests that a syllabus should at least contain "content items (words, structures, topics), process items (tasks, methods), also; it should be ordered (easy, more essential items first), have explicit objectives (usually expressed in the introduction)". This certainly aligns to what is stated as the philosophy of the LD for language teaching and learning. (Ur, 2009) adds that a syllabus is a "public document that may indicate a time schedule, a preferred methodology or approach, and may recommend materials".

For the LD, the syllabus plays a crucial role for class planning. It lets teachers know about the grammar structures, vocabulary and book units that must be covered in each term. Without a syllabus, it would be impossible to keep track of students expected outcomes. Besides, the syllabus shows the progress of students in alignment with the Common European Framework (CEF). In the same manner, the syllabus aligns to the type of teaching methodology that the LD takes as the basis for its proficiency program. In regards to this matter, Saraswati (2004) states

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that "it is impossible to think of any course of study which has no pre-specified syllabus or curriculum. In fact, syllabuses play a significant role in pedagogy." (p. 45).

Another important resource is the textbook used in each level. Usually a single textbook is used for 2 levels; it means that if the textbook has ten units, then each level covers half of the book. This is done with the purpose of allotting a pertinent amount of time to studying each of the units in the book. Textbooks for the LD are not the core component of the course, therefore, as Ur (2009) suggests, they are used "selectively, not necessarily in sequence, and they are extensively supplemented by other materials" (p.183).

Many professionals in the language teaching field find themselves having mixed feelings regarding the use of textbooks for their courses. Among the positive aspects that a textbook can offer to language teaching are: clear framework, ready-made tasks, economy, guidance, and autonomy. However, there are also negative aspects such as inadequacy, limitation, variety of levels of ability and knowledge, and over-easiness (Ur, 2009). All of these factors have been considered by the LD and given that it has not been possible to find a 'perfect' textbook that adapts to all the requirements of the program, the LD has opted for using the textbook as a complementary resource, which guides students' autonomous work and which also, serves as practice material during the class. Accordingly, teachers adapt the activities offered by the textbook to adjust the level of difficulty, the type of task they want students to work on, etc.

Teachers' Mentoring & Team Work

Mentoring and team work have become core aspects of the proficiency program at the LD. Ever since the beginning of the program, the LD has considered it important to count on academic coordinators (now level mentors) who can be visible heads in each level. Of course, the program has a general director who supervises all the details regarding the correct academic and logistic functioning of the program itself. Mentoring contributes to the improvement of several aspects of the program, and especially to teachers' professional development in terms of the implementation of new teaching strategies, evaluation of such strategies, reflection upon teaching practices and experiences and identification of professional assets and shortcomings (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

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Accordingly, level mentors do have a supervising' role in terms of operational matters, but most of all in terms of academic matters. Level mentors are supposed to be familiarized with the core aspects of the program to guide the team of teachers in his/her level. But learning how to teach is not a one-way road in this institution; by mentoring, level mentors also learn from their colleagues who might even be more experienced professionals who just happen to be devoted exclusively to teaching at the moment. However, mentoring is not an easy task and it may lead to controversy or disagreement at times, Diaz-Maggioli argues that "because mentor as well as mentee must scrutinize and reflect on one another´s attitudes, beliefs and behaviors while simultaneously building trust and respect, the process can be difficult to many" (p. 48, 2004).

Randall and Thornton (2005) cite varied definitions regarding the word 'mentor'. Among these definitions, it is mentioned that mentors are people who should be either older or more experienced, but it is not the case of the LD. Mentors are people who have demonstrated enough skills as to be able to perform the tasks expected from them, either academic or operational. For the LD, mentors should be people who "advise younger or newer colleagues" (Smith & West-Burnham, 1993, p.8) and people who "support, facilitate and coach new teachers" (Earley & Kinder, 1994, p.79).

For this mentor-teacher relationship to work, it is crucial, that the atmosphere created be a warm, welcoming one. Mentors in the LD are the ones who guide teachers all along the semester, and teachers plan lessons along with mentors on a bi-weekly basis; therefore, communication and closeness play a key role in the success of the whole process. Randall and Thornton (2005) exemplify how for many institutions this system has been a successful one. In this regard, they highlight:

> Heads of Departments and Directors of Studies generally work with their teachers as "teams" i.e. they operate as a group to provide lessons and often teach alongside the colleagues that they supervise. Thus, there tends to be an atmosphere of shared responsibility for getting a task done (i.e. teaching) in which there is generally not a great distance between the manager and the worker" (p. 18)

Shared responsibility for the LD is core to the process. Teachers and mentors are in charge not only of lesson planning, but also of all the duties that are part of a successful teaching-learning experience. Teachers and mentors also design and validate evaluation items, solve

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students' inquiries and face any kind of difficulty that might arise along the road. This is the main reason why the LD is concerned about motivating its team members to create and maintain a comfortable and rewarding working atmosphere. In this sense, the LD has also thought of providing teachers with constant support and professional development opportunities, and as part of this process, class observation is conducted and conceived as a moment of self-evaluation and reflection regarding teaching practices. The class-observation process should then benefit all the professionals involved, as argued by Randall and Thornton (2005):

> The very act of observing and offering advice should benefit not only the one being observed but also the one observing. Being able to discuss lessons with young peers in a non-judgmental and open forum is seen as an essential step along the road to being an autonomous and reflective practitioner". (p. 20)

Although the class-observation process entails a high level of formality and teachers might feel that their weaknesses and flaws are put on the spot, the LD uses this process as a way to enhance the quality of the proficiency program offered to students and as an opportunity to encourage teachers to become better professionals. The LD counts on specific items assessed in each class-observation, which are included in a checklist that is presented to teachers at the beginning of the semester. In this way, teachers are expected to become familiar with the aspects to be taken into account when their classes are visited.

A checklist contains a list of different features of a lesson, which you complete while observing a lesson. Checklists provide a clear focus for observation; however, they can only   be used for certain aspects of a lesson, such as features that are easy to count. There are several published checklists; alternatively, you and your cooperating teacher can develop   your own checklists (Richards and Farrell, 2011, p. 94).

Once teachers have been observed, both the observer and the teacher complete reflection formats and later they meet and discuss the class observed; their conversation should be surrounded by an atmosphere of confidence and respect. This is an opportunity for the teacher to reflect about his/her teaching practices and experience; and for the observer to provide feedback on the positive and negative aspects of the lesson as well as to see if there is progress in case the teacher has been previously observed.

It is crucial to highlight that although class observation is a formal process and all teachers are observed at different stages, the LD does not rely on this process only when assessing a teacher's performance.

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For the LD, teachers are integral professionals who perform a variety of tasks that are taken into account when making decisions. The LD teaching staff has a low turnover, and is increased by few teachers (3-4) every semester in response to the continuous growth of student population at the university.

Methodology

Research Design

As stated above, the main intention of the present study is to describe the implementation process of a planning strategy that was intended to help both teachers and students to reach their goals. In order to illustrate how the strategy was planned, implemented and then analyzed, a basic qualitative study (Merriam, 1998) was designed.

According to Merriam (1998), a basic qualitative research study is conducted in order to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 23). For this study, the researchers intended to find out what the experiences of co-planning language lessons had been like for teachers at the LD.

Interpreting teachers' perceptions regarding co-planning was of great importance given that such strategy was implemented thanks to a previous diagnosis in which teachers were asked regarding their preferences when planning their lessons. Therefore, it was necessary to evaluate how useful the strategy was for teachers and for the program itself to take actions, either to continue improving the strategy or to re-think the way it had been implemented.

Context and Participants

The present study took place at a higher education institution in Colombia, South America. The study was conducted at the Languages Department with the English proficiency program.

The English proficiency program is one of high importance given that the university has specific requirements regarding the language level students must have to be able to graduate. To fulfill the language requirements, students must pass all the levels of the program and must take an international exam (TOEFL, IELTS, and FCE) that certifies their language proficiency. For years, the LD has made big efforts to offer students a high-quality program that can prepare them to use the target

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language in different contexts; preparation of students for international tests is only one of the objectives of the program. As stated by Benson and Nunan (2005), "Effective learners not only develop a high degree of autonomy but the development of autonomy is associated with a view of language as a tool for communication rather than as a subject to be studied in the same way as other school subjects" (p. 28).

Initially, 13 teachers and mentors were selected and invited to participate in the study in order to answer a survey and respond to an interview that intended to find out their co-planning experiences and insights. The teachers and mentors were selected following the criteria underlying purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002); "purposeful sampling is about selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated" (p. 265). The sample of teachers and mentors was chosen taking into account the time they had worked with the LD, that is to say, participants who had been able to experience both the previous planning methodology (mentor in charge of class-planners), and the new co-planning strategy implemented (mentor-teacher every week).

In total, 5 teachers and 5 mentors answered the survey. 7 out of 10 participants have a master's degree in areas such as Education, Linguistics, and Learning Environments, among others. The other 3 participants have a bachelor's degree in Languages. On average, the participants have worked with the LD between 1.5 and 4.5 years. This fulfills the most important requirement established to participate in the study. The levels teachers and mentors have taught are not relevant given that all levels must follow the same guidelines for lesson planning and evaluation. This in accordance with what Patton (2002) described as credibility concerns which deal with the necessity of finding "the kind of arguments that will lend credibility to the study as well as the kind of arguments that might be used to attack the findings" (p. 308).

Data Collection Procedures and Instruments

For this particular study, data were collected from two surveys and one semi-structured interview conducted with the participants who were a mix of the mentors in charge of each level and the teachers who agreed on being part of the study at the end of the semester 2016-1. The first survey was conducted right after the strategy had been implemented for the first time. In this survey, teachers and mentors shared their views on how this new strategy had worked for them and the differences (if any) they had perceived.

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In a preliminary phase of the study, a survey was conducted to ask teachers and mentors what their roles during the first stage of the implementation had been. In previous semesters, only mentors were in charge of structuring weekly planners for each of the levels, that is to say, mentors planned by using the textbook suggested and the planners from previous semesters; then, planners were shared with the teaching staff in charge of carrying out the activities suggested in the planner. Based on the results of the first survey conducted, it was decided that some changes needed to be included in the structure of the strategy and the class planning methodology.

In the analysis of the first survey some teachers claimed that they did not feel comfortable by receiving and following a lesson plan designed by one person (the mentor in charge of the level). This feeling was caused by the fact that they constantly saw themselves in the need to adapt and, in some cases change the different activities proposed by the mentor. Teachers argued that at times, they did not feel comfortable developing the activities suggested, simply because they considered the activities proposed in the planner did not help their students accomplish the objectives established.

In a second stage, and to find out teachers and mentors' perceptions regarding the co-planning strategy which had already been implemented for over 3 semesters by that time, a survey was designed. As stated by Seliger and Shohamy (1989), surveys offer several advantages such as anonymity of the participants, which allows for more honest responses regarding the phenomenon under study; also as surveys are responded by participants on their own, the time allotted for data collection reduces, which results in a more efficient data collection process. Separate surveys were shared with the participants given their roles in the program; however, the questions had very similar intentions regarding the type of information being collected. The survey had 3 main sections: 1. Background information, 2. Co-planning experience and perceptions, and 3. Teachers and mentors' roles.

The first section asked the participants to provide very specific information regarding their academic background and degrees obtained. The second section asked the participants to describe the co-planning process they had followed in their particular levels; the aim was to identify differences even though all the levels were supposed to follow the same procedures for class-planning.

The third section of the survey asked teachers and mentors to portray the strengths and weaknesses they had found along the process; this was done to identify successful aspects and possible

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areas of improvement in the future implementation of the strategy. In the next section, teachers and mentors described the roles they had performed along the process, to know how they saw themselves, as they were active participants of the different stages of the process. Finally, the participants were asked to express their feelings regarding the strategy, more specifically, to say how they felt while being part of the implementation and their preferences regarding the continuation of the strategy.

To gather complementary data to that collected from the survey, a round of semi-structured interviews was planned with the 11 individuals who accepted the invitation to participate in this second phase of data collection. The use of semi-structured interviews is usually highly informative due to the nature of the instrument. "The researcher develops an interview protocol that includes a list of questions or topics to be addressed in the interviews with all participants (…) it helps guide the collection of data in a systematic and focused manner" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 301).

Although an interview protocol was written, each interview varied according to the insights provided by each participant. What is most interesting about this instrument is that it is an opportunity to discover unexpected perceptions that emerge from participants' spontaneous views. Regarding semi structured interviews, Zohrabi (2013) highlights that:

> This type of interview is flexible and allows the interviewee to provide more information than the other ones. This form of interview is neither too rigid nor too open. It is a moderate form in which a great amount of data can be elicited from the interviewee (p. 255).

The interview conducted was a great opportunity for teachers to open themselves, they were able to contribute to the improvement of a process that had been implemented for over a year and a half, and which had brought a great deal of advantages that had remained unexplored and which emerged from what teachers could share by using this data collection instrument.

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By using semi-structured interviews, it was possible not only to broaden the views collected in the survey but also to empower the participants by showing them how valuable their views were since they were the ones who were actually present in all the stages of the implementation of the strategy.

All data were analyzed under the parameters of the grounded theory approach, which allows researchers to go from specific characteristics to more general features that are then grouped to find commonalities that portray the nature of the data collected. Charmaz (2006) asserts that "Grounded Theory Coding consists of at least two phases: initial and focused coding; during initial coding, we study fragments of data – words, lines, segments, and incidents – closely for their analytic import" (p. 42). This method was chosen given that it allowed the researchers to explore data and start identifying repetitive features that were used to understand the phenomenon of study.

Results and Discussion

During the data analysis process, several aspects regarding the co-planning strategy experienced by mentors and teachers emerged. In figure 1 below, a display of the categories that resulted from the data analysis carried out is shown.

Categories	Sub-categories
Following Steps: The Path to a Successful Co-Planning Experience	1. Pre-Planning Stage 2. While-Planning Stage 3. After Planning Stage
Co-Planning as a Way to Empower Teachers	1. The Mentor as Guide 2. Tailoring the class-planner 3. Teachers as active participants 4. Teacher-mentor Communication
Co-Planning Resources	1. Standardizing Teaching Practices through the Class-Planner 2. The Role of the Syllabus 3. The Role of the Textbook

Figure 1. Categories and Sub-Categories

In this study, the data analysis process was carried out taking into account the parameters suggested by Creswell (2009), who mentions how in grounded theory "there are systematic steps which involve generating categories of information (open coding), selecting one of the categories and positioning it within a theoretical model (axial coding), and then explicating a story from the interconnection of these categories (selective coding)". (p. 184).

Bearing this in mind, the researchers opted for a systematic analysis that aimed to identify repetitive patterns of information that showed participants' views and insights regarding the focus of the study. The categories shown before are the result of the patterns that predominated in the data analysis and that focused on several aspects that were key for a thorough comprehension of the co-planning phenomenon in the particular context where the study took place.

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During the analysis process, each of the researchers analyzed specific portions of information and then gathered the patterns obtained to compare and merge the resulting codes. However, it was revealing to see that the patterns identified by each of the researchers coincided and it was more a matter of agreeing on the names of the codes to be used to label data. Each of the stages suggested by the grounded theory approach was followed and as a result, 3 categories and 11 sub categories were obtained.

Category 1: Following Steps: The Path to a Successful Co-Planning Experience:
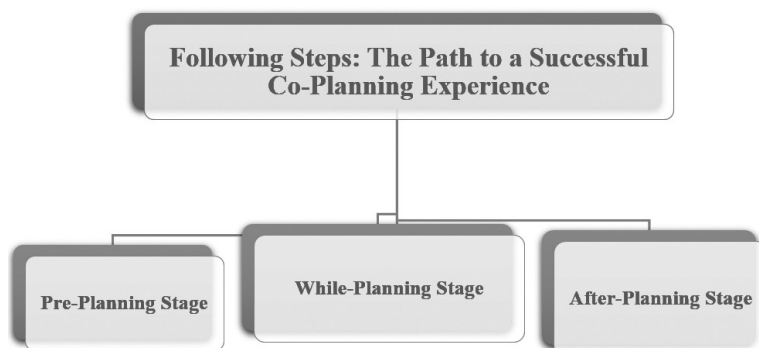
Figure 2: Category 1

The first category is called "Following Steps: The Path to a Successful Co-Planning Experience", this category is devoted to the analysis of teachers and mentors' perceptions regarding the co-planning strategy, its advantages and disadvantages.

In this category, it was identified that the co-planning strategy was divided into 3 main stages that made-up the whole process: a pre-planning, a while planning, and a post-planning stage. During the 'pre-planning' stage teachers had to think of the necessary components to create a planner that could fulfill the needs of the level, and which helped teachers and students reach the objectives proposed in the course syllabus. For this 'pre-planning' stage, teachers were aware of how important it was to follow certain steps that led to a successful co-planning experience.

First, level mentors were supposed to share the planner used during the previous semester; in some cases, the planner used coincided

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with the week and topic to be covered in the current semester. This step was meant to help teachers and mentors know what had been done and to avoid starting from scratch; however, it was expected that teachers would propose new activities and look for new resources that could contribute to an enhanced and more efficient version of the class-planner.

Most of the teachers who work with the LD have been teaching at the institution for quite some time and are familiar with the levels and the methodology used. Therefore, if teachers had already taught the level assigned, that stage became a great opportunity for them to re-structure their teaching and evaluate how efficient their practices had been in the previous semester and from that, improve the lesson structure, the resources used or any other aspect that they considered needed an intervention to suit their current course and students' needs.

The second stage, the 'while-planning stage' is about the logistics teachers and mentors went through for actually sitting down and planning their lessons. In this stage, the principal factor to be taken into account was time management. For teachers and mentors, it was difficult to find the time to meet and devote to lesson-planning; therefore, finding strategies such as sharing class-planners in advance (pre-planning) and thinking of what went well and what went wrong in previous semesters was a mandatory step to save time and make the process more efficient. One of the most important aspects to consider was how students had perceived the activities and resources proposed. Although it was quite challenging to attempt to satisfy all of the students' preferences with the activities and resources proposed, teachers and mentors always tried to choose activities and resources that could appeal to the target ages and social conditions of the students in each level and to the trends found in society nowadays.

Time management was also a crucial factor when teachers and mentors met to discuss and agree on the activities and resources that were going to be included in the final planner. In most cases, teachers and mentors could actually meet for 1 or 2 hours at the most; so, time had to be fully taken advantage of to achieve the main goal. During those meetings, time was mainly devoted to making suggestions and reaching consensus based on the analysis of previous planners and on the selection of the new activities and the resources that teachers and mentors would propose for inclusion in the new version. For some mentors, it was hard to deal with the fact that teachers had innovative ideas and that it was absolutely necessary to open space for their ideas to refresh class-planning given that teachers usually have more groups than mentors and have a wider perspective regarding students' needs.

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During the second stage, it was possible to identify that the co-planning strategy was not only a way to enhance class-planners, but also a way to actually get to know teachers in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. For teachers who had been working at the LD for some time, it was easier to understand the nature of the strategy and adapt to it; for new teachers, it was harder to adapt. However, as teachers were expected to plan two weeks in the semester, it was easier for them to plan the second week assigned, once they had become more familiar with process.

I have found the two profiles, teachers who already know how we work and come to the meetings with some proposals and we both agree in regards to class-planning and resources. With some new teachers, the co-planning process was more about explaining to them how it worked and showing them what a class was like, how we do classes, what we focus on, what kind of activities we use, etc. Interview 1. June 21st, 2016. Participant 3.

In this interview extract, one of the participants highlights how teachers' profiles influence the process and how mentors adapt to the kinds of teachers that compose the team. It is necessary for mentors to be aware of the roles they need to assume depending on the teacher they are working with every week.
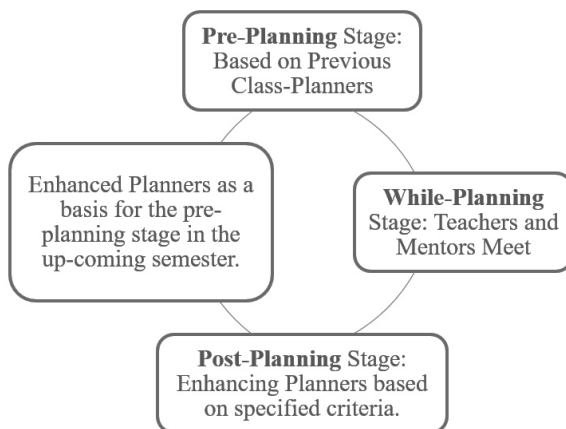
Figure 3: Co-Planning Process Stages Implemented at the DCL

The third stage was the result of teachers' suggestions regarding their experience with the co-planning strategy. This is a stage that had not been officially included in the process, but it was suggested by

teachers and mentors during the interviews conducted as a necessary step to successfully conclude the process.

During the 'post-planning' stage, teachers and mentors would have to meet again, after the class-planner has been implemented to evaluate the success of the activities and resources proposed. The purpose of that stage was to optimize the 'pre-planning' stage of upcoming semesters, so that either experienced or novice teachers would receive a version of the class-planner that had already been implemented and assessed based on course syllabus objectives and how successful the activities were with students in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and how entertaining and appealing they were.

Category 2: Co-Planning as a Way to Empower Teachers:
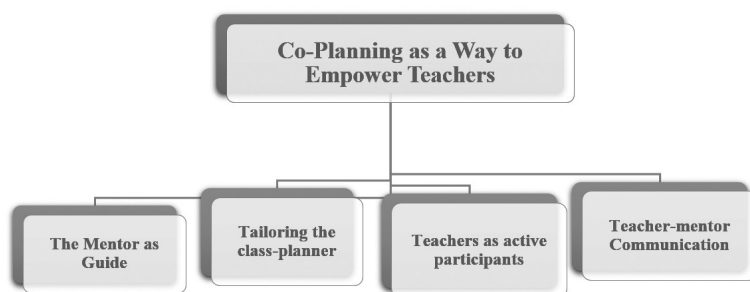
Figure 4. Category 2

This second category is about how co-planning was not only a strategy to class-planning, but also a path to improve all the aspects concerning the process.

Including teachers in lesson planning allows institutions to identify strengths and abilities that contribute to the improvement of the program. Displaying such characteristics can later become a crucial factor when determining future mentoring roles. Regarding this aspect, some teachers see this strategy as an opportunity to learn how to plan and consequently improve their teaching practice.

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Mentors should then be open to suggestions and possible changes that teachers make to class-planning; however, this is not always the case. In an interview extract, one of the participants mentions how discouraging it was for her to see that some of the resources she had suggested for both of the levels she was planning had not been included

in the final class-planner. However, she is also aware that her mentor might have made this decision due to specific reasons.

> *Maybe, something that happened to me with both mentors, was that searching for suitable activities, videos, etc. was not easy, and at the time of receiving the planner, they did not use the video that I had sent, then one feels a little ... ah ok, it wasn't taken into account, my time was wasted. But, if we get back to the point, I think they also have a more general vision of the level and teachers and students' needs, so they know what would be more useful. But, in the end I didn't use the video suggested by the mentor, so, sometimes it's more about individual perspectives.* Interview 1. June 21st, 2016. Participant 4

In this extract, the participant tried to put herself in the mentor's shoes and understand the reasons why mentors sometimes made decisions that might seem unfair to teachers. However, at the end of the extract, she also mentioned that she made a decision regarding the class-planner and omitted one of the resources suggested, which brings up the need for a more personalized class-planner.

As mentioned in a previous section, before the implementation of the co-planning strategy, mentors were the only ones in charge of class-planning and teachers were only expected to follow the planners proposed by mentors. In the first survey conducted, it was possible to see that teachers identified the need for including more communicative activities that allowed students to increase their spoken abilities and activities that aimed at increasing the level of interaction among learners. In addition, teachers expressed that the previous lesson planning strategy had not included learning strategies and had not taken different learning styles into consideration.

Therefore, a co-planning strategy has been implemented as a way to provide solutions to the problems found and to provide teachers with an opportunity to contribute to the program and become more active participants of the process. In some cases, teachers had contradictory points of view that might have arisen when they had to use planners that had not been proposed by them. In the following extract, it is evidenced how the participant highlights advantages and disadvantages of the strategy.

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> *I get the planner and I go back and change some things then, I check it and again I go back and I say, yes this is cool but I think this wouldn't work for this group, I know my students, and, in*

the end I end up making more changes even at the moment of implementing the planner, of course without changing the essence of the lesson or the topics or anything, but I end up putting other activities or modifying the way they are done, then sometimes I think, I do not know if all that work that other people did is being lost, because sometimes it doesn't work for me; and, I'm not saying that my activities are the only ones which work for my class, but definitely some activities don't work for me. There are also super cool activities that I would not have thought of and I say, uh, cool, this is very interesting, I would not have thought of this and it's nice, it's cool… Interview 1. June 21st, 2016. Participant 6.

Although this teacher mentioned that some activities were replaced according to the needs of the groups, she was also aware that some of the activities were actually very innovative and offered a new perspective on the concepts that were to be taught. The participant also made an analysis regarding the amount of work that the planners required and how this work might have been lost if teachers did not make use of the resources and activities proposed.

For this strategy to work, team communication becomes a key factor, mainly because level teams are made out of almost 10 teachers in average, so it would not be efficient to have all of them sit together to receive and discuss the planner. Keeping constant communication with all the members of the team through the forum, where lesson plans are uploaded to improve planning practices arises then, as a necessary component of the process. In this way, teachers would suggest activities, resources and successful practices to enrich lesson planning.

When listing the advantages of the strategy, it is possible to see that one of the major strengths provided by co-planning was that ideas, resources and activities would vary and contribute to more dynamic lessons that fulfill learners' needs and which tackle several learning styles. What is more, by co-planning, teachers' sense of belonging and commitment to the program increases, given that they are now in charge of the most important step for the success of the whole program. This also contributes to the knowledge that teachers have regarding the philosophy underlying the institution's program.

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Category 3: The Co-Planning Resources:
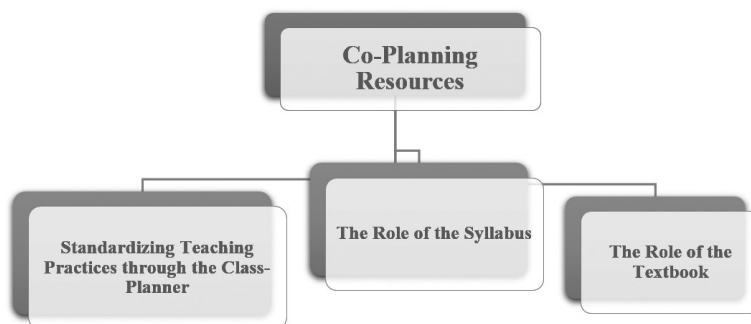
Figure 5. Category 3

For this category, the examined aspects were the role of the planner format used, the textbook and the course syllabus. The main reason to analyze these aspects was that teachers and mentors are demanded to follow the course syllabus to ensure the standardization of the procedures to be carried out by teachers in terms of course content, project implementation and evaluation criteria. The textbooks used in the program are selected based on the approach to language teaching adopted by the institution (Task-Based Learning). In the planner format, the co-planning team is requested to complete specific sections that go hand in hand with the approach previously mentioned.

In this sense, the LD provides teachers with a fixed format that contains specific sections (warm up, introduction, practice, application and independent work) that guide lesson-planning and in which the co-planning team records the objectives of the lesson, the learning strategies to be used, the skills to be reinforced, the activities suggested, the resources needed and the time allotted among others.

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Figure 6. Planner Format

The data collected evidenced that the planner format was quite clear for teachers so they had no problem to understand the purpose of the planner. Teachers highlighted how the planner helped them to create a cohesive lesson since the sections suggested easily connect to each other. Teachers claimed not to have trouble when reading the planners, even if they were not part of the weekly co-planning team.

Among the disadvantages mentioned by the participants of the study was the fact that not all lessons need all the sections specified in the planner, so teachers suggest that, according to the lesson, the sections can be modified or omitted; sometimes, the sections were completed with unnecessary content just because they were in the format.

Another aspect that emerged was that the descriptions of the activities included were sometimes too long and unnecessary information was included, and this, instead of helping teachers understand the lesson, made it harder to actually see the purpose of the activities.

What happens is that, there are certain activities that do need a description, for example, a game, then, I can look at the photocopy where the game is, but if for me it is still not clear, then, I can look at the planner. But, if the activity is in the teacher's book, it has the game or the exercises and those already have an explanation, so I just take a look at the book and that's it. I would say that it depends on the activities; there are others that just need to be mentioned and you already know what to

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do. Certain activities require a full description and, at the same time we can use them with students, so, sometimes it is quite useful. Interview 1. June 21st, 2016. Participant 1.

For this teacher, it was evidently unnecessary to include such detailed descriptions in the planner, because in most cases, they are experienced teachers who have taught the same level and who know the activities (if they have been used in previous semesters). Therefore, it would be better to mention the activities and let teachers look for further instructions (teacher's book, photocopiable material, etc.) if necessary.

For teachers, the role of the syllabus and course books goes hand in hand with the planner format. In the weekly planner, the planning team should always include the components of these two resources that are necessary for the achievement of the goals established for the week.

As mentioned in the review of literature, the LD has made great efforts to find textbooks that respond to the demands of the program regarding aspects such as an appropriate methodology, fun and challenging tasks, topics which incentivize students' communicative production, and critical thinking skills. The textbooks should also include extra material that can scaffold students' learning and that can lead them towards the achievement of the objectives set.

Conclusions

All along the document many arguments in favor of the mentoring and co-planning strategies have been presented. There are several benefits and advantages that this strategy can offer to any institution interested in the improvement of the processes involved in the language teaching experience.

The advantages mentioned along the documents are not only concerning institutional matters. The participants of this strategy at the LD highlighted various positive aspects regarding this implementation and expressed the reasons why they considered this was an effective and efficient methodology to lesson-planning. Co-planning opens the door to many possibilities, for instance, teachers highlight how co-planning allows them to have access to a variety of activities and resources that they would not be able to think of on their own; as a result, classes can become much more interesting and motivating for students. Additionally, having different perspectives integrated in the class-planner is a lot more inclusive than having one person in charge of the planner. Teachers then, feel more empowered, comfortable and at ease with the activities and resources proposed; thanks to the inclusion

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of other team members in class-planning, a wider view of students' needs is included.

Regarding mentoring, the study revealed that it is not only a matter of class-planning; the LD conceives mentoring as a key factor in the success of the whole program. When talking about co-planning and teachers' mentoring, it should be highlighted that the person who is in charge of mentoring his/her colleagues should be aware that teachers will turn to them in case of a doubt or a difficulty. However, mentors are also required to be careful when dealing with requests and suggestions made by teachers; not all of the suggestions or requests can be solved or included, so mentors should be knowledgeable professionals who count on arguments and criteria to make decisions in the level assigned.

In this regard, communication between team members (mentors and teachers) should be optimized to increase the quality of the process. Teachers argued along the data collection process that they sometimes felt that mentors had some difficulty accepting suggestions and comments. However, it is also important to take into account that level mentors have a much more global vision of the process given that they possess much more information about the good and bad aspects going on in the level. It is crucial that teachers and mentors are willing to negotiate and contribute to students' success. It should be considered that all the efforts made by the LD have a principle that revolves around students' well-being in all senses, which makes us more concerned about the high impact of teaching practices on students. In this context, the mentor is the one who monitors, guides and accompanies the process, therefore, teachers are also students' mentors.

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Authors*

Laura Carreño Bolívar holds a BA in Modern Languages and a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics to TEFL from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (Bogotá, Colombia). She has been an English teacher for over twelve years in different higher education institutions holding numerous positions. Laura has been a speaker in numerous national and international academic events and has also led teacher-training projects. Her research interests include Teachers´ Professional Development, Intercultural Competences and CLIL.

Luz Stella Hernandez Ortiz studied Modern Languages at Universidad Industrial de Santander and holds a Master's degree in Education with emphasis on English Didactics from Universidad Externado de Colombia. She has worked in the teaching field for about 20 years and she is currently working at Universidad de La Sabana as a teacher and Academic Programs Director of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures.

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Confidentiality. The Editor is committed to the principle of confidentiality and anonymity in communications between Editor and Authors, and Editor and Peer Evaluators. The Editor shall not disclose information related to the article or its process with third parties or colleagues not related to the journal, except in cases when an expert opinion is required, and in which the express permission for this purpose is granted by the author(s). The Editor shall not use the results of research of articles not accepted for publication for his or her own benefit or that of others, except with express permission from the author(s).

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Compliance. The Editor strives to comply with the editorial policies of the Journal, and the publication of each online and print issue according to its established publication schedule.

In the same fashion, to:

- Consult the opinion of the members of the Editorial Board and Committee.
- Generate initiatives of support and constantly improve editorial practices.
- Support initiatives to educate researchers on issues of publication ethics and other ethical aspects of the journal.
- Take responsibility for the process of all articles submitted to the Journal, and develop mechanisms of confidentiality and peer evaluation up to the point of publication or rejection by the journal.

Other principles to follow include:

Peer Review Process and Editorial Decisions. The decision to publish or not shall be established via the process of peer evaluation, according to the "double blind" method in order to guarantee that the evaluation process that is free of conflict of interest between the parties. This rigorous procedure allows peer reviewers to value the technical quality, originality, and scientific contribution of the articles, among other aspects, and at the same time provides authors with the means to improve the article. For this

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revision process, a sufficient number of peer reviewers will be provided, selected from qualified area experts, with the intention of allowing for a more critical, expert, and objective editorial decision- making process.

Editing and Publication Schedule. The Editor provides for the fulfillment of the editing and publication schedule of articles accepted for publication. Upon the publication of each issue, the Editor and the editorial team accept responsibility for the promotion and distribution of the journal to its readers, subscribers, authors, peer reviewers, and other organizations with whom the institution holds agreements, as well as the data bases and national and international indexing services.

General Editor Obligations and Responsibilities

Authors must present their articles in the link indicated on the OJS-web page, according to the guidelines for the presentation of articles established by the journal. Authors are responsible for the ideas expressed in the articles, and for the ethical appropriateness.

Originality, plagiarism and exclusivity. Authors must explicitly state that the article is original in its creation, and that every effort has been taken to respect the intellectual property of those third parties cited within. Articles must not be reprints, nor published in other journals. Further, authors must declare that the findings are original in nature, that no plagiarism exists, nor distortion or manipulation of the facts.

Exclusivity. Articles submitted to the journal must not be simultaneously submitted to other publications.

Citations and references. Authors must ensure that they have received express permission for the use of material they do not own, including the reproduction of charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, photographs, etc. All sources must be cited appropriately, with complete references provided.

Authorship. Articles with more than one author should order authors' names in hierarchical fashion, indicating by this the degree of function, responsibility, and contribution to the article. By the same token, mention must be made to any individuals who have made significant scientific or intellectual contributions to the research, composition, and editing of the article.

Responsibility. All authors submitting articles must assume full responsibility for their work, and ensure that it presents an exhaustive review and discussion of the most recent and relevant literature.

Research ethics. Research studies must use methodology that ensures that subjects are treated with respect and dignity. In addition to those principles of the code of conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA), GIST highlights the following: discussion of the limitations of confidentiality and the safekeeping of the same, minimization of the intrusion and invasiveness in individuals' privacy, conservation of data

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and informed consent to research, record, or film. Further, the names of institutions or individuals should be avoided, even if the author has gained permission for their use. If their mention is considered necessary, the author must submit signed authorization for their inclusion. The names of the researchers and participants shall likewise be omitted from the article. It is suggested that authors use pseudonyms , for example in case studies.

Conflict of interest. The Editor shall not consider articles that possibly represent a real or potential conflict of interest, resulting from financial or other relationships of competition or collaboration between authors, companies, or institutions mentioned in the article.

Errors in articles published. Any error or imprecision shall be communicated by the editorial team, and the necessary corrections in the online version of the article made.

Obligations and General Responsibilities of Peer Reviewers:

In the revision process, peer reviewers shall adhere to the following principles:

Confidentiality. Peer reviewers shall not share any information with third parties related to the article or its publication process. In such case that an external opinion may be necessary, reviewers shall seek express written authorization from the Editor in Chief, explaining the reasons. By the same token, reviewers shall not use the content of non-published articles for their own benefit or that of others, except with the express authorization of the authors. The violation of the principle of confidentiality constitutes bad practice by the reviewers.

Contribution to quality. Individuals who commit to evaluating articles submitted to the Journal shall carry out a critical revision, without bias, using clear, non-offensive language, with the intention of guaranteeing scientific and literary quality, according to the area of expertise.

Time management. Although the Journal has a maximum time allotted for the revision process, articles should be evaluated as soon as possible in the hopes of optimizing the revision and editing process. At the same time, peer reviewers who feel that they are unable to fulfill their function as evaluators, either because of lack of expertise, time or possible conflict of interest, shall communicate this immediately to the Editor or editorial team through regular channels.

Detection of errors and bad editorial practices. Reviewers shall pay particular attention to gaps in references to literature or authors that they feel need to be included. At the same time, if in the process of revision it is possible to detect bad practices on the part of authors, peer reviewers are under the obligation to inform the Editor so that he or she may proceed in accordance with the ethical principles of the journal.

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Additional Information

Compensation. The author will receive three copies of the edition in which his/her article shall appear.

Concerns. Communicate with the Editor through e-mail or by telephone, please. Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, International: (57-1) 281-1777 ext. 1296; In Colombia: (05-1) 281-1777 ext.1296

Waiver. Every article shall be subject to the review of the Editorial Committee. The Editor reserves the right to make formal modifications to articles through the editing process.

Editorial Norms. The contents of the articles are the exclusive responsibility of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GiST or ÚNICA. Any article published in GiST may be quoted as long as the source is clearly referenced.

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Reviewers

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Mauricio Aldana, *Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana-ÚNICA, Colombia*

Anne Westmacott, *Universidad Chileno-Británica de Cultura, Chile*

Claudia Patricia Álvarez, *Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia*

Helaine Marshall, *Long Island University, United States*

Carlos Mario Gómez, *Universidad Católica de Oriente, Colombia*

Martha Ramírez, *Universidad de los Andes, Colombia*

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Liliana Cuesta, *Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia*

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Roberto Alvira, *Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia*

Adriana Castañeda, *Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia*

Alejandro Suárez, *Universidad de La Sabana/Centro Colombo Americano, Colombia*

Christine Khan, *Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana- ÚNICA, Colombia*

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