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Editorial

Josephine Taylor*

In this issue of GiST, as in recent issues, the Editorial Committee has chosen to publish a few studies on topics of great interest to local teachers in bilingual and other schools in Bogotá. These issues may not coincide directly with the editorial focus of GiST as they do not treat bilingual or language education per se. They do, however, represent the research interests of teachers enrolled in UNICA's postgraduate program in bilingual education. These young teacher-researchers work at both public and private, elite and charity schools. Their research interests stem from their daily teaching experience, which is much like that of teachers around the world. In the past two years, GiST has published a number of these studies as a diversion from its main publication aim, but in the interest of pointing to the importance of treating local research interests and concerns.

By far, the majority of the research projects in the program deal with non-cognitive issues in the classroom: behavior, motivation, self-regulation, executive function, attention, the role of feelings, resilience, inclusion, bullying, and metacognition; the cognitive studies lean towards critical thinking and attention. Other studies examine the role of art and music programs on children's resilience. Although the program is a specialization degree in bilingual education, few students focus their final graduate project on language teaching or learning, as they are free to pursue their own chosen research topic within the field of education broadly.

Some projects do focus on the process of second language learning, and have pointed to the important role of the first language in this process, especially with preschool children who are new to the language. Indeed, the breadth of research interests and the studies carried out have also pointed to the keen desire of teachers for more grounded training and professional development in non-cognitive areas. The research demonstrates that teachers generally cope with the challenges they face, and appear to be in some cases resourceful, implementing strategies to deal with a wide range of non-cognitive issues in the classroom. They do this in spite of little or no specific training on these issues. The research also points to the need for school-wide projects and initiatives to support teachers' work and interest in the so-called "soft skills." Indeed, the literature on non-cognitive skills point to their crucial role in processes of academic achievement.

While GIST will retain its dedication to studies and reflections on language learning and teaching as well as bilingual education, we feel that inclusion of this nascent research can shed light on current realities in schools in Bogotá, which may be considered to be indicative of schools in many other places. These studies involving teacher-driven exploratory research consistently point to the key role of teachers in learning processes, and the resourcefulness of many of them when addressing the challenges of the classroom. It also clearly points to the need for institutional support and professional development, particularly in the areas most pertinent to teachers and students' growth, mainly the behavioral, attitudinal and emotional connection with learning and school.

Aside from these local studies, GIST is privileged once again in this most recent issue of the journal to have received and accepted articles from Asia, Europe, North and South America. Teachers' research interests continue to be varied yet highly relevant to their daily work in education practice, research and policy. They offer a summation and sharing of important experiences in different contexts including teacher preparation, higher education, global English environments and second language negotiation. In this regard, GIST continues to enjoy the attention and support from its contributors and collaborators. We have gained wide and consistent interest and participation from peer reviewers, authors, and members of our Editorial and Scientific Committees. Just this month, GiST was once again evaluated as a Category B journal by *Colciencias*, Colombia's scientific research evaluation agency. For a young journal like GIST, this category is a positive qualification and speaks to the extent of GiST's international presence and focus.

Specifically, the studies this semester offer us a chance to learn from teacher-researchers in our own contexts, and we hope their work will inspire others to contribute. From Colombia, **Sergio Alonso Lopera Medina** explores the effects of classroom assessment practices in a foreign language reading course. The study points to the impact of assessment for learning practices on students' perceptions as well as learning outcomes.

One of the studies mentioned at the outset of this editorial comes from **David Vargas Alfonso,** who explores the types of critical thinking evident in a range of academic subjects. Data was collected from teachers, classrooms and students in English, Spanish and French classes, and point to the ways in which teachers, and sometimes students promote critical thinking practices in class, even when teachers may not.

Katherine O'Donnell Christoffersen also explores students' roles in their own writing processes, particularly the mitigation of disagreement in peer review sessions. She compares both L2 learners and native English speakers'

use of these mitigation conventions as face-saving mechanisms in order to soften their critiques of one another's work.

The continuous focus on students is woven throughout this issue, as another graduate student from UNICA's specialization program presents a case study of middle school students in Bogotá, and explores the factors affecting academic resilience in these young people. **Luisa Fernanda Rojas**' study affirms the strong connection between family and individual protective factors and resilience on academic achievement. The study also offers a view from the context of vulnerable middle school students in Bogotá.

From Turkey, **Turgay Han** examines the use of foreign language learning strategies by students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs in a Turkish university. The study points to the wide range of strategies studied, and the preferences of students in terms of the strategies they employ.

GiST offers several reflective articles this issue as well. Of particular interest in this context is the collection of multi-perspective reflections from a curriculum unification process in Ecuador for English language teaching programs across the country. The article offers an interesting view into the many agendas represented in large-scale inter-governmental initiatives around English language learning. The players in this process include **M. Elisabeth Serrano, Cristina G. Vizcaíno, Daniel Cazco,** and **Natalie A. Kuhlman**.

From an EFL teacher education program in Switzerland, **Holli Schauber** proposes a model for using the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) for dialogic reflection. The exploration of self-analytical and reflective tools for teachers in training is a key factor in promoting dialogic reflections of practice as an on-going tool for self-development in teaching.

Finally, **Nguyen Cao Thanh** offers a thoughtful treatment of the differences between English and Vietnamese spoken and written grammar in English. This reflection offers our readers an unusual glimpse into a lesser-known language, and specifically offers us the opportunity to contemplate the always present link between language, culture and code.

GiST hopes that readers enjoy this semester's publication, and encourage everyone to contribute with research articles, reflections, literature reviews, and book reviews in future issues.

Editor

* **Josephine Taylor** received her BA in English and French from Emory University and her MS in the Teaching of English as Second Language from Georgia State University, both in Atlanta, Georgia. She has been a teacher of English language and linguistics for more than 25 years, as well as administrator, curriculum designer, and external reviewer of language education programs in the U.S. and Colombia. She has also worked extensively in English language publishing, as author, course developer and editor. Josephine is currently the Editor of *GiST Education and Learning Research Journal* and Adjunct Professor in the undergraduate and graduate bilingual teaching programs at the *Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, ÚNICA*.

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Research Articles

Effects of Classroom Assessment Practices in a Foreign Language Reading Course[1]

Efectos de las Prácticas de Evaluación en el Salón de Clase de un Curso de Lectura en Lengua Extranjera (LE)

Sergio Alonso Lopera Medina[2*]

Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia

Abstract

This article analyzes the various types of information that alternative assessment and traditional assessment practices provided in an English foreign language (FL) reading course for graduate students at a public university in Medellín, Colombia. This study followed the principles of qualitative research, and a case study was used as a research method. There were five instruments to collect data: questionnaires, observations, tests, focus groups, and the diary of the teacher. Findings suggest that the assessment practices applied in this course helped students and teachers recognize that learning occurred. The assessment practices also helped language practitioners learn more about the teaching and learning processes in FL reading. Conclusions suggest that language practitioners should include both alternative and traditional assessment in order to have a wider picture of the process of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Alternative/traditional assessment, foreign language reading

1 Received: April 22, 2015 / Accepted: July 27, 2015

2 serggiolop@hotmail.com

Resumen

Este artículo analiza los diferentes tipos de información de las prácticas de evaluación alternativa y la evaluación tradicional que se brindaron en un curso de lectura de inglés como lengua extranjera ofrecido a estudiantes de postgrado en una Universidad pública en Medellín, Colombia. Este estudio siguió los principios de una investigación cualitativa y se utilizó el estudio de caso como método de investigación. Se aplicaron cinco instrumentos para recolectar la información: cuestionarios, observaciones, pruebas, grupos focales y el diario del profesor. Los resultados indican que las prácticas de evaluación aplicadas en este curso ayudaron tanto al profesor como a los estudiantes a reconocer que se generó aprendizaje. Las prácticas de evaluación también ayudaron a los involucrados a aprender más acerca de los procesos de enseñanza/aprendizaje en lectura en (LE). Las conclusiones sugieren que la comunidad educativa debe incluir tanto la evaluación alternativa como la evaluación tradicional para obtener una mirada más amplia de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Evaluación alternativa/tradicional, lectura LE

Resumo

Este artigo analisa os diferentes tipos de informação das práticas de avaliação alternativa e a avaliação tradicional que se ofereceram em um curso de leitura inglês como língua estrangeira oferecida a estudantes de pós-graduação em uma Universidade pública em Medellín, Colômbia. Este estudo seguiu os princípios de uma pesquisa qualitativa e se utilizou o estudo de caso como método de pesquisa. Aplicaram-se cinco instrumentos para recolher a informação: questionários, observações, provas, grupos focais e o diário do professor. Os resultados indicam que as práticas de avaliação aplicadas neste curso ajudaram tanto ao professor quanto aos estudantes a reconhecer que se gerou aprendizado. As práticas de avaliação também ajudaram os envolvidos a aprender mais sobre os processos de ensino/aprendizado em leitura em (LE). As conclusões sugerem que a comunidade educativa deve incluir tanto a avaliação alternativa quanto a avaliação tradicional para obter uma mirada mais ampla dos processos de ensino e aprendizado.

Palabras chave: avaliação alternativa/tradicional, leitura LE

Introduction

Assessment is an important part of teaching and learning in classroom settings. Some scholars have seen assessment as testing, but assessment involves a deeper concept in which the learning process is involved (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Alderson, 2000; Frodden, Restrepo, & Maturana, 2004). Davies, Brown, Elder, Hill, Lumley and McNamara (1999) define assessment as "a term often used interchangeably with testing; but also used more broadly to encompass the gathering of language data" (p. 11). This means that assessment is any methodical procedure to gather information about students' learning. Testing, on the other hand, is a method that determines students' abilities to complete a task, but is only one way to assess (for example a multiple choice test). It is worth noting that testing has been the traditional form of evaluating students, also used to make management decisions (Aweiss, 1993). New trends in assessment, such as alternative assessment, incorporate different forms of evaluation such as self-assessment, observation, homework, among others (Aebersold & Field, 1997). Some researchers suggest that taking the best parts of both traditional[3] and alternative assessment in classrooms leads to more effective instruction (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Alderson, 2000).

This article reports the effects of traditional and alternative assessment practices applied in a foreign language reading comprehension course for graduate students at a public university in Medellín, Colombia. This study is derived from a larger study on the effects of face-to-face instruction and web-based instruction in (FL) reading comprehension for graduate students in the same university. The study reported in this paper aims at identifying the effects of classroom (face-to-face) assessment practices on students. The research question that guides the inquiry is "What do classroom assessment practices tell language practitioners about the learning process of a FL reading comprehension course for graduate students?" Findings suggest that the assessment practices applied in this course helped students and teachers recognize that learning occurred.

[3] Traditional assessment is a conventional method of testing. A quiz, an exam or a standardized test are examples of traditional assessment.

Literature Review

Assessment

Shohamy, Inbar-Lourie, and Poehner (2008) state that most researchers pay little attention to what teachers do in their classrooms to assess students. They argue, on the other hand, that much research has been carried out to see the effects of standardized tests because large-scale tests have a greater impact on test-takers' lives as well as institutions. Rea-Dickins (2004) and Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000) highlight the importance of doing assessment research in classrooms because it guides scholars to make decisions such as promotion, program admission, or learning support services.

Recently, some researchers have begun to integrate classroom-based assessment and teaching in classroom. Nowadays, there is a growing interest about the practices the teacher does in the classroom, and some studies have focused on second and foreign language teaching contexts (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Davison, 2004; Leung, 2004; Muñoz, 2009; Rea-Dickens, 2004; Sánchez & Morrison-Saunders, 2010). These researchers have explored teachers' practices and beliefs related to assessment through surveys and the impact of these assessment practices in external norm-setting and tests. Researchers have also explored the instruments teachers have used in classrooms such as self-assessment, diaries, and peer-assessment.

To illustrate this, Torrance and Pryor (1998) report that language arts teachers in primary schools in England were familiar with different types of assessment practices such as cloze tests or performance assessments, but did not have a clear picture in order to implement assessment activities that would result in student learning. Muñoz (2009) explored the assessment practices teachers had in FL reading, and found that teachers lacked familiarity with alternative assessment. Nevertheless, the author found that teachers used diverse practices in assessing reading comprehension. Quizzes, multiple-choice tests, presentations, class participation, workshops and class attendance are examples of this diversity. He also found that teachers were concerned about verifying the achievement of learning objectives; that is, some teachers expressed the need to implement traditional assessment practices (such as quizzes or final exams) due to the fact that they provide precise information of learning. Finally and due to the fact that teachers lacked familiarity with alternative assessment, Muñoz (2009) found that students also lacked familiarity with assessment practices.

Rea-Dickins (2004) and Brown (2004) highlight the importance of the role of teachers in assessing the learning process of students. The researchers

argue that FL teachers can be seen as active agents of assessment in the sense that they usually design and implement assessments. In fact, Rea-Dickins (2004) states that the role of the teacher has two main functions: as a facilitator of students' effort to learn a language, and as a judge of learner performance.

Reading

Reading is an active process in which there is a dialog between the reader and text. Alyousef (2005) states, "Reading is an interactive process between a reader and a text. The reader should interact dynamically with the text with the intention to understand its message" (p. 14). In order to understand the text, the reader needs to possess two vital elements: linguistic knowledge and background knowledge. Linguistic knowledge involves awareness about the language such as grammar or vocabulary structure. Background knowledge relates to the familiarity the reader has with the reading.

Cassany (2006), González (2000), Grabe and Stoller (2002), and Weir (1993) also argue that reading involves a process of cognition because readers have to predict, memorize information, interpret, pay attention, and make hypotheses when they decode a written message. Cassany (2006) affirms that that FL readers have to make a greater effort because they may face difficulties with grammar, vocabulary or even culture in the readings. That is why the role of the teacher is important in order to guide students to apply some reading strategies.

Models of reading. There are two important models or processes for reading: bottom-up processes and top-down. In the first model, readers have to build the text from small units beginning from letters to words, and then from words to sentences (Aebersold & Field, 1997). In the second model, readers have to link the text to their existing knowledge that involves historical, cultural or linguistic elements. Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggest an interactive model that includes both bottom-up and top-down processes as readers need to recognize words quickly, and they also need to activate background knowledge in order to understand the text.

Reading strategies. Different authors support the importance of teaching reading strategies to students (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins, 1999; Hosenfeld, 1979; Janzen, 2001; Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2004; Osorno & Lopera, 2012). Reading strategies help learners apply a task, pay attention to what textual cues they have to focus on, and know what to do when they have troubles (Block, 1986). Teachers can use both simple reading strategies (e.g., previewing or scanning) and complex ones (e.g., inference or summarizing) with students.

Janzen (2001, p. 369) proposes five classroom activities to work with reading strategies:

- Explicit discussion of the reading strategies and when to use them
- Demonstration of how to apply a reading strategy (modeling)
- Involvement with the reading in terms of reading aloud and sharing the process while applying the strategies
- Discussion of the activities in the classroom
- Practice with the reading material of the course

Researchers have explored some reading strategies in classrooms, and their conclusion is that they are beneficial for learners (Arismendi, Colorado & Grajales, 2011; Block, 1986; Carrell, 1998; Lopera, 2012; Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2004; Poole, 2009).

Reading assessment practices. Reading assessment practices are important because they tell the language teacher what to do in the course. Gersten (1999) suggests that assessment should be aimed at collecting information from students' reading abilities and then teachers should use that information in order to plan and implement classes. Cross and Paris (1987) give three important purposes when implementing reading comprehension assessment:

- Sorting: It helps not only to predict learners' academic success but also to indicate mastery.
- Diagnosing: It helps to gather information in order to make decisions about the learning process.
- Evaluating: It helps to determine the effects of a program.

Teachers can also implement assessment practices in reading in order to enhance fluency, word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, text structure, discourse organization, main ideas, inference, among others (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Aweiss (1993) asserts that teachers can use different instruments to apply assessment practices, and they vary from unstructured and spontaneous gathering of information during instruction to more formal situations such as structured tests.

Aebersold and Field (1997) propose six methods of alternative assessment that aim at students' learning as well as their participation in classrooms for reading comprehension:

- Journals: They can be done in audio or written forms. This helps both teachers and learners monitor the reading comprehension process.

- Portfolios: This may include students' journals, but items such as drafts, homework, exams, or summaries can also be integrated here.
- Homework: This helps students identify what they do not know.
- Observation: This helps the teacher evaluate students' comprehension and participation. The teacher can also observe if students work in groups, in pairs or individually.
- Self-assessment: This helps students be part of the learning process because they reflect on their own practices and achievements.
- Peer-assessment: This guides students to evaluate each other's participation in a given activity.

Finally, some authors support the idea of including both traditional and alternative assessment in the classrooms because readers respond to texts in many different forms (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Alderson, 2000). In fact, Aebersold and Field (1997) encourage "reading teachers to become thoughtful, attentive, reliable assessors, able to use both alternative and traditional assessment measures that are beneficial to all" (p. 167).

Methodology

Research Design

This study followed the principles of qualitative research, and a case study was used as a research method (Cresswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2003). The study also involved the methodology of an exploratory multiple case study as researchers wanted to identify the effects of classroom assessment on students' reading comprehension. The grounded approach was used when researchers categorized the data (Freeman, 1998).

Context

The research was carried out at a public university in Medellín, Colombia. In order to be admitted to the second semester of their graduate program, students in specialization programs[4] have to certify reading comprehension in a foreign language. They have two options to certify: taking a proficiency test or attending a classroom course. A research group in teaching and learning

[4] *Especialización* (specialization) is a graduate program that usually lasts one year. The main objective of these programs is to update students in their academic areas.

languages designed a web-based course in 2007, and this course became a third option.

The reading comprehension course. The course is designed to guide students to use reading strategies in a FL, and aims at developing readers who interact with different types of texts. The name of the course is English reading comprehension for graduate programs (Competencia lectora en inglés para postgrados). It is a 120-hour course with five main units. Table 1 includes a description of the reading comprehension program.

Table 1. The reading comprehension program

Unit	Name	Topics
1	Word and their meanings	Dictionary use, parts of speech, cognates, affixes, word meaning in context.
2	Reading strategies	Prediction, skimming, scanning, and graph interpretation.
3	Development of reading skills	Sentence structure, topic, main idea, and referents
4	Text organization methods	cause and effect, comparison and contrasts, description, narration, argumentation , and classification and categorization
5	Critical reading	Fact and opinions, tone, and arguments

Participants

The teacher. The teacher holds a Master's degree in teaching foreign languages and has more than ten years of experience teaching reading comprehension for undergraduate and graduate students. He taught the course in Spanish to facilitate students' learning, but the readings and exercises were in English.

The students. There were 27 students in the course (17 women, 10 men), and only one student withdrew from the course. Age ranged between 20 and 51 years old. All participants were in the first semester of different specializations in the Law Department: Social Security Law, Constitutional Law, Family Law, Administrative Law, and Procedural Law.

Data Collection Instruments

Four alternative assessment instruments (questionnaires, observations, focus groups, and the diary of the teacher) and one traditional assessment instrument (test) were used to gather data. The objective of each instrument is explained below:

Questionnaires. Three questionnaires were administered: evaluation of the course and the teacher, reading strategies and motivation, and self-evaluation. For the purpose of this paper, the self-assessment questionnaire was analyzed in order to see the effects of assessment practices.

Tests. There were two types of tests: before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the pedagogical intervention, and different tests for each unit. In the pre-test and post-test, there were two readings in each test with 13 multiple choice questions (questions and readings simulating standardized tests like the TOEFL). Inferencing, scanning, identifying topics and main ideas are some of the topics covered in the tests. The unit tests included short paragraphs on the topic of every unit, and multiple choice as well as open questions.

Diary of the teacher. The teacher kept a diary in order to record his observations and reflections about the teaching and learning process in reading (Jeffrey & Hadley, 2002). The teacher wrote an entry for each class. The purpose of this diary was to gain insights from the teacher about the course.

Observations. This instrument was used to examine behaviors, interaction, and participation in the classroom (Brown, 2001). Two different members of the research group observed two sessions for each unit, and the observations were recorded using a format designed ad-hoc by the research group.

Focus group. At the end of the course, students were invited to have a focus group session in order to discuss the academic experiences in a deeper way. The sessions were guided by the research advisor, and then transcribed. Fourteen students participated.

Data Analysis Interpretation

Ten researchers participated in the analysis of the data (the research advisor, six teachers, and three undergraduate students). All researchers read and labeled the data individually and then compared some important ideas in groups. After that, they coded the data and constructed categories. Finally, researchers triangulated the information in order to validate data (Freeman, 1998). Researchers translated some excerpts from Spanish to English in order to support findings.

Results

Researchers found the following issues after analyzing the assessment practices applied in the foreign language reading course:

Self-assessment Questionnaire

The questionnaire asked students about their motivation, reading strategies, the course, and the teacher during the learning process. Students expressed that the course offered different topics to be applied in readings. One theme that emerged from the self-assessment questionnaire was *positive methodology*. Comments by students out of 26 indicated this issue:

> I like the methodology used by the teacher because he is active and clear with his explanations.
>
> The teacher is quite organized with the course and is quite active.
>
> The methodology was great.

Twenty students also expressed that they had improved their reading comprehension in the FL, and that they had applied different strategies such as skimming, scanning, previewing, and prediction. One of the students reported, "I have learnt pre-reading strategies: prediction, skimming, scanning."

However, five students reported that one of the main obstacles was the lack of vocabulary when interacting with readings, and the lack of time to practice due to their job duties. Some comments include the following:

> One of the main difficulties I have faced with readings is the vocabulary
>
> Well, the lack of time to practice

In his diary and in order to support this issue, the teacher also reported that students faced difficulties with the vocabulary, especially at the beginning of the course. In one of his entries, he expressed that students had difficulties with the vocabulary, even when they had the option to use the dictionary. He wrote:

> Students had difficulties understanding how English words could have different meanings according to the context they had. Students were used to writing the first meaning they had in the dictionary without further considerations on the context; therefore, students had some difficulties understanding the meaning of words. I didn't plan to have students learning to use the context to understand word meanings in one class; however, I was concerned about students' motivation because this topic was one of the issues students complained about when they said English was a difficult language.

Tests

When students took the pre-test, the teacher wrote in his diary that students were nervous, uncomfortable, and worried about the length of the test. He also noted that students had difficulty understanding the readings, completing the test, and that they translated many words into Spanish. This experience contrasts with the post-test, in which students were more comfortable and did not translate as many words as on the first test. The teacher also noted that students understood the readings and applied the reading strategies. Researchers wanted to verify in a quantitative way if students applied reading strategies so they compared statistically the pre- and post-test (the same test was applied). It is worth noting that the quantitative analysis helps support the qualitative one. Table 2 shows the following results:

Table 2. Statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test

Statistics	Tests	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Number of participants	26	26
Minimum	2,000	7,000
Maximum	11,000	10,000
Median	6,000	9,000
Mean	5,654	8,885
Variance (n-1)	5,595	0,506
Standard deviation (n-1)	2,365	0,711

Statistics support that the effect of the reading comprehension course in English as a foreign language was quite positive as the *mean* increased. This means that the course was effective for students.

The teacher also wrote that in his diary that the students were quite nervous taking the tests for each unit. Students' anxiety was so high that they even asked the teacher if they could take the test with a partner. The teacher also noted that their anxiety was mainly based on the score, and tried to lessen their anxiety. The teacher reported in his diary:

> They didn't feel very confident to take a test in English, and they still believed it was very difficult; this is why students asked repeatedly to do the test with a classmate, but I told them that it was not possible. I tried to calm down students about the test, by explaining how they would only be asked on the exercises and topics we studied, but students didn't pay attention and were very nervous to take the test. Although students did a very good effort during the exam, they asked

> a lot of questions trying to get some approval of their work, so they could be confident of getting a good grade.

Finally, the teacher sometimes asked the students to assess each other after a test of a reading activity. He said the correct answer in front of the whole group and then asked students to correct their peers. This activity helped learners not only to confirm their knowledge but also to take responsibility for their own learning. This issue was validated in the observations.

Diary of the Teacher

The teacher began the course explaining the objectives, methodology, content, and assessment. The teacher wondered if students had observations regarding the assessment part as they did not suggest or mention anything about it. The teacher said in the diary:

> I explained the assessment methodology and students agreed, as they didn't suggest further changes or disagree. I wonder if they really understood. This was the feeling I had during the class and all the issues I mentioned.

The teacher also reflected on students' issues such as attitude, contact, motivation, confidence, and improvement in reading. For instance, he stated that the close contact with students makes it possible to provide an immediate solution when students face learning problems; he said:

> By getting close to students there is a chance to get to know what students may be able to do during learning, and there is also a chance to provide immediate solutions to learning difficulties.

The teacher also observed that students' attitude was positive and they read for comprehension and not for a score in order to improve their skills, he mentioned:

> Students' attitude is quite positive. They wanted to understand what they were reading. They didn't want to just complete the exercises for obtaining a grade, they really wanted to take the opportunity to improve their English language skills.

Moreover, the teacher stated that students had gained confidence when facing texts in English:

> These students also remark how it is easier for them to face texts in English – not that they are going to understand everything at once – but at least they said they had more elements for understanding.

The teacher noted that students had improved with the process of applying reading strategies and understood the information from the readings, he said:

> I could notice how students were actually doing a good job on understanding information from different types of text. While I collected information from students' class tasks, I could notice very good answers to the information required.

Finally, the teacher observed that some students showed extrinsic motivation as they had to certify reading in a foreign language in order to be admitted to the second semester of their Law specializations. He argued that some students had taken the proficiency test while attending the reading course in order to accomplish the reading requirement and only one passed it.

> At the end, only one student passed the test and he didn't go back to class, he didn't even say good bye. It was quite surprising to realize that after two months of instruction some students were only worried about obtaining the certification, that's it, there is no other interest.

Observations

At the beginning of the course, researchers observed that students used the dictionaries quite often when they came across an unknown word. At the end of the course, learners did not use the dictionary that much and researchers interpreted this decreased dependence on the dictionary as improvement in reading. The observers and the teacher also noted that students' participation was a constant aspect, and they were willing to do it. Researchers interpreted this issue as a motivation factor in students.

Finally, the teacher corrected class exercises and gave oral feedback to students in some sections of the class. Researchers validated that the teacher applied formative assessment in students.

Focus Group

During the focus groups, students expressed that the methodology was motivating and that they had learned how to read in a FL. One of the students said, "I now feel more confident to read texts in English and understand more." Another student said that she felt so confident reading that she "started to read in English in the Internet."

On the other hand, some students complained about the requirement to certify a foreign language in order to be registered in the second semester of their graduate program, and suggested removing this requirement. One student said, "We felt pressure due to the requirement to certify a foreign language. It would be a good idea not to be a requirement."

Finally, students questioned the idea of interacting with readings from different topics and suggested that the readings be in the Law area as they were

taking a graduate program in Law, one student commented, "It would be nice to interact with readings related to our field."

Conclusions

Both alternative and traditional assessments were analyzed in a foreign language reading comprehension course in order to see the effects of reading instruction. Findings suggest that the course helped both students and the teacher recognize that learning occurred. The assessment instruments applied in this course also helped language practitioners learn more about the teaching/learning practices in FL reading. In fact, researchers not only noted that students' motivation was mainly extrinsic, as they had to certify reading in a foreign language, but also that students' anxiety was high. Researchers also noted that students faced difficulties with vocabulary. On the other hand, these assessment practices helped to examine learning processes in an objective way. The statistical information analyzed supports the assertion that students improved as the mean increased leading to state that the course was effective to students.

One important element of applying both alternative and traditional assessment is that students are involved in the learning process and they reflect on their own practices and achievements. The call to include learners in the assessment practices is crucial in today's teaching, and this may help scholars to make changes in order to improve ongoing or future teaching practices. Finally, the results of this paper may enlighten scholars to integrate both alternative assessment and traditional assessment in classrooms in order to have a wide picture of the process of teaching and learning languages.

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Author

* **Sergio Lopera Medina** holds an MA in linguistics, is a PhD candidate in linguistics and a specialist in teaching foreign languages. He is a full time professor and a research member of EALE (*Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de las Lenguas Extranjeras) at the Universidad de Antioquia*. His research interests are teaching EFL reading comprehension and pragmatics.

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Evidence of Critical Thinking in High School Humanities Classrooms[1]

Evidencias del Pensamiento Crítico en las Clases de Ciencias Humanas en Bachillerato

David Vargas Alfonso[2*]

Colegio Hispanoamericano – Conde Ansúrez, Colombia

Abstract

Critical thinking skills (CTS) are a group of higher order thinking abilities related with complex processes of learning like contextualization or problem solving. This exploratory research study identified whether critical thinking skills were present in high school humanities classrooms. The study was carried out in a private school in Bogotá, Colombia through qualitative methods and content analysis. The study sought to identify CTS in students' actual learning processes. Data collection techniques included classroom observations, document analysis and focus groups to identify skills in teachers and eighth grade students from a humanities-focused high school curriculum. Results demonstrated the presence of argumentation in written and oral classroom material. Analysis was also evidenced through questioning, inferencing and other exercises. Motivation was also an observable element, reflected in explicit expressions and gestures, and in the use of extra material in the classes.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Skills, argumentation, analysis, motivation

1 Received: July 15, 2015 / Accepted: September 21, 2015

2 profesordavidvargas@gmail.com

Resumen

Las habilidades de pensamiento crítico hacen parte de las habilidades de pensamiento relacionadas con procesos complejos de aprendizaje como la contextualización o la resolución de problemas. Esta investigación exploratoria ha sido desarrollada para identificar cuáles habilidades de pensamiento crítico son evidentes en un salón de ciencias humanas, a través de diferentes trabajos en clase y percepciones. El estudio fue realizado en un colegio privado de Bogotá, Colombia a través de métodos cualitativos y análisis de contenido. El estudio trató de identificar las habilidades de pensamiento crítico en los procesos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Las técnicas de recolección de datos incluyen observaciones de clase, análisis documental y grupos focales para identificar dichas habilidades en profesores y estudiantes de octavo grado de la especialidad de ciencias humanas. Los resultados demostraron la presencia de argumentación en el material oral y escrito propio de la clase. El análisis también es demostrado a través de preguntas, inferencias y ejercicios. Se destaca en este punto, los debates autónomos dirigidos por los estudiantes. Finalmente, se refleja la motivación en las expresiones explícitas, los gestos y el material adicional.

Palabras claves: Pensamiento crítico, habilidades, argumentación, análisis, motivación.

Resumo

As habilidades de pensamento crítico fazem parte das habilidades de pensamento relacionadas com processos complexos de aprendizado como a contextualização ou a resolução de problemas. Esta pesquisa exploratória foi desenvolvida para identificar quais habilidades de pensamento crítico são evidentes em uma sala de aula de ciências humanas, através de diferentes trabalhos em classe e percepções. O estudo foi realizado em um colégio privado de Bogotá, Colômbia através de métodos qualitativos e análises de conteúdo. O estudo tratou de identificar as habilidades de pensamento crítico nos processos de aprendizado dos estudantes. As técnicas de recolha de dados incluem observações de classe, análise documental e grupos focais para identificar ditas habilidades em professores e estudantes de oitava série da especialidade de ciências humanas. Os resultados demonstraram a presença de argumentação no material oral e escrito próprio da classe. A análise também é demonstrada através de perguntas, inferências e exercícios. Neste ponto se destaca os debates autônomos dirigidos pelos estudantes. Finalmente, se reflete a motivação nas expressões explícitas, os gestos e o material adicional.

Palavras chave: Pensamento crítico, habilidades, argumentação, análise, motivação.

Introduction

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS) are a group of skills that include criteria, analysis, inference and argumentation. CTS have been receiving importance for the past thirty years, and philosophers, psychologists and educators have researched how to identify, develop and assess them. More recently, these skills are considered even more important in their conceptualization as 21st century skills, which are understood as innovative and learning skills that are requisites to succeed in this century. CTS are also important because they enhance the understanding of arguments and the expression of points of view and critical judgments about any topic. In other words, when critical thinking skills appear in educational settings, they can be seen as guarantors of learning.

Consequently, research has tried to understand which demographical, cognitive or environmental elements are related with critical thinking in order to enhance their application in educational contexts. At the same time, studies have focused on how to improve instruments in order to develop and evaluate these skills, and to avoid other less effective tools.

This study was guided by the following questions: What elements of the development of critical thinking can be observed in the eighth grade humanities classes? How do teachers develop critical thinking? How do students perceive the complexity of academic tasks? The study had as a starting point the following objectives: to identify if there was evidence of critical thinking, as well as development of critical thinking with the use of complex academic tasks. Findings demonstrate some evidence of CTS in high school classrooms within the humanities emphasis, specifically argumentation, analysis and motivation. This exploratory research points the way for a variety of possibilities and perspectives in order to continue researching the same skills, other CTS, or even other higher order thinking skills in the same school.

Literature Review

Critical Thinking

The complex process of thinking is divided into higher order thinking and lower order thinking. Higher order thinking is used when someone relates stored and new information to solve extraordinary and difficult problems, or to obtain new ideas. Lower order thinking is used to develop daily routines and mechanical processes. Higher order thinking skills include contextualization, metacognition, creativity, insight, intelligence, problem solving and critical

thinking. Critical thinking means to have criteria, analyze, infer, explain arguments, and develop them (King, Goodson & Rohani, 2009; Pearson, 2011).

Many authors talk about Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). King et al. (2009) trace their development historically and mention several key movers in this regard: Dewey explained how thinking is evoked by problems, and Bruner argued that inquiry is necessary in the learning process. Piaget clarified that these skills are needed in the last developmental stages of thinking; on the other hand, Bloom explained how HOTS require previous levels of knowledge. Gagné put HOTS in the top of his taxonomy, and Marzano situated these skills as a dimension of learning. Glaser declared HOTS are the type of thinking for problem solving, and Vygotsky affirmed that HOTS are necessary to move into the zone of proximal development. Further, Haladyna sustained that HOTS are a level of mental processes, and Gardner declared HOTS are developed by our multiple intelligences (as cited in King et al., 2009).

Definitely, each theory posits a different way of understanding thinking and how to develop HOTS. There are also theories about the different skills themselves. However, one of the most important skills is critical thinking, divided also into other skills such as analyzing and solving problems, as well as creating new arguments (Beyer, 1990; Pearson, 2011). In fact, critical thinking has been studied by different sciences. Philosophers like Bailin, Ennis, Lipman, McPaul and Peck focus on what people are capable of doing under the best circumstances to get to the truth. Psychologists like Halpern, Sternberg, and Willingham tend to focus on how people actually think. Finally, educators like Bloom and Marzano explain critical thinking based on research about their own experience in the classroom and observation of student learning (King et al., 2009; Lewis & Smith, 1993; Pearson, 2011).

Barry Beyer (1990), based on other philosophers' theories (Richard Paul, Matthew Lipman and Robert Ennis), explains what philosophy offers to the teaching of thinking, and which facts have to be taken into account to develop critical thinking:

> *Reasoning* to make systematic inferring of information, argumentation to structure thinking, *critical judgment* to judge according to prescribed criteria, point of view to contextualize information, *dialogue* to obtain with other the truth by asking and answering questions, and *dispositions* to deepen the things making probing questions walking to the truth. (pp. 55-58)

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS) and education have been researched in different fields since the age of Socrates (Fahim, 2012). However, in the last fifteen years the majority of studies added pedagogical elements to improve these skills. Other research studies try to identify if critical thinking is related with demographic information, cognitive aptitudes or environment. Finally,

a few studies describe how to demonstrate and assess critical thinking in the classroom.

Improving Critical Thinking

It is common to find studies in which participants of similar characteristics are divided into two groups. One of the groups receives direct instruction about critical thinking strategies (Bensley, Crowe & Bernhardt, 2010; Hove, 2011) or pedagogical tools like mind maps (D'Antony, 2009), dialectic journals (Enabulele, 2011), classroom discussions with student feedback (Hayes, & Devitt, 2008), different curricula models (Hepner, 2012), different teaching strategies (Miri, David, & Uri, 2007), syllabi (Mok, 2009), environmental based education programs (Ernst, & Monroe, 2004), or face to face communication (Harrigan, & Vincenti, 2004). After the intervention, participants are evaluated by tests. These studies generally found that after the intervention, participants show significant improvement in CTS compared to the other students, except in the case of mind maps and dialectic journals.

Critical Thinking and Demographic Elements

Another research tendency is to understand which demographic factors are related with CTS. In these kinds of studies, researchers analyze significant numbers of participants from different schools that are chosen following specific characteristics. Edman, Robey, and Bart (2002) selected a sample of 232 college and university students, Mahiroglu (2007) studied a sample of 134 schools from Turkish provinces, and Yang and Lin (2004) selected 1119 male senior high school students from military schools. The study sought to determine if these demographic elements isolated from others generate a disposition for CTS by tests specially designed to identify disposition of critical reasoning, such as the Minnesota Test of Critical Thinking II, a demographic information sheet, or a general survey mode. Demographic studies have been carried out in the United States (Edman, Robey, & Bart, 2002), Taiwan (Yang & Lin, 2004), and Turkey (Mahiroglu, 2007). They found that demographic differences as gender, age, region, school, class, grades or parent's education level are related significantly with CT disposition.

Critical Thinking and Cognitive Aptitudes

Equally, researchers try to understand critical thinking skills and make hypotheses about internal structures that could generate the optimal conditions inside the brain to develop critical thinking skills. Different instruments are used to measure participants' thinking, for example, minute papers, online tests

or periodical questionnaires. Stupnisky, Renaud, Daniels, Haynes and Perry (2008) focused on critical thinking disposition, perceived academic control, high school academic performance, and grade point average. Ramasamy (2011), on the other hand, considered the age, discipline, program, grade point average, and number of reading hours of the participants. LaPoint-O'Brien (2013) analyzed understanding and reasoning.

Findings of these studies sustain only that disciplines, programs (humanities) and age directly influence results of CTS Tests positively. In fact, Ramasamy (2011) concludes that age is an essential part of developing critical thinking. According to her, this is because age is related with maturity and only maturity helps making critical and complex judgments.

Evidence of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking skills are thinking abilities. As with other abstract concepts, they cannot be demonstrated in isolation, rather it is necessary to find them inside other processes. Some researchers try to answer this last hypothesis and by searching for the best way to prove the existence of CTS. These studies also use tests. However, it is more common to find observations, interviews or recording of classes to obtain data. It is not necessary to divide the group because variables belong inherently to the context.

Some studies in this area include Shoemaker (2012), who argues that arts are the correct way to express CT. Mizell and Friedman (2012) suggest that CT is developed by students learning from primary sources. On the other hand, Swartz (2004) looked for collaborative relationships and contextualized interaction. McGuire (2012) studied CT intervention during and after a specific CT semester course. The Virginia Adult Education Research Network (2000) collects definitions made by students. These studies show how students' spontaneous discussions in class reveal CTS, such as comparison, judgment and evaluation of different situations. Additionally, Mizell and Friedman (2012) concluded, based on their method, that videotaped classes could be used as a strategic opportunity to identify and to model CT in the students.

Assessing Critical Thinking

Which is the adequate method to assess CT? Some studies analyze pedagogical processes and observe participants' results. However, instead of focusing on people, researchers tend to center themselves on instruments. Usually, studies apply tests at the beginning and end of observation exercises. In the exams, the most important elements are the form and the assessment

tool itself, not the pedagogical content. Renaud and Murray (2007) make a comparative study based on three pieces of research studies. In these experiments, they sought to find out if assessment could be accurate with higher order questioning inside trials. Additionally, Bissell and Lemons (2006) identified whether questions are made considering topic and critical thinking skills.

Findings evaluating higher order questions show a positive impact because they give reference to teachers and students providing feedback, and remembering objectives of learning. However, to assess with higher order questions requires a long and continuous training for teachers and students.

Methodology

Research Design

In terms of qualitative research, this project intended to carry out an exploration of the use and development of critical thinking inside the classroom. It hoped to accomplish this through the analysis of behaviors, comments, perceptions and products of different classes. At the same time, it tried to infer how critical thinking is promoted and perceived by talking with teachers and students. This approach follows the parameters of qualitative research with ethnography and documentary components. After collecting the data, analysis was conducted via a triangulation process, proposed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), as a way to compare and synthesize information from different sources and make conclusions with more precision and quality of the academic elements studied.

Context

The context for this study was a private school in Bogotá, Colombia. Students at this school receive traditional education where values and academic responsibilities are very important. Students' families are low to middle-income and receive a scholarship from the school. This scholarship is preserved indefinitely if the students obtain the required grades.

When students are in eighth grade, they receive education with special emphases, such as humanities, accounting and electricity. All the students receive core subjects in common, but parallel to this, they receive additional special subjects according to the emphasis they choose. Accounting and electricity specialties at the end of high school receive a diploma from SENA, the national system of vocational training. The humanities emphasis is focused on languages like English and French, and literature and social studies. Because

each course from eighth grade on is divided into the specialties, these special subjects have 25 students maximum, fewer than in core subjects where there is an average of 40 students in a class.

Students are free to choose their area of emphasis. Along with the smaller class size, this provides a positive and friendly environment inside the classroom. Some classes in the humanities emphasis are conducted as seminars. Usually, students choose their future career based on the area of emphasis developed in the school.

All classes in the school use course books or guides developed by the teachers. These help instructors follow a similar pedagogical structure. Each syllabus begins with a motivational class and ends with reinforcement and review classes. Each subject is evaluated by specific activities previously agreed on with the students. Because students' scholarships depend on the grades they obtain, the majority of them maintain a high academic performance and disposition towards the classes. It is not common to have serious disciplinary problems in the school.

Participants

Participants in the study were fourteen to sixteen year old students from eighth grade. In the case of the humanities specialization, there were twenty-six students, all participants of the research. They went to four specific seminars directed by four different teachers, also participants of the study. Three teachers have teaching certificates in their specific subject, but only have one or two years of experience after graduation. The social studies teacher is an exception, with four years of experience, and is studying a Master's in Education as well.

Data Collection Instruments

In the middle of the second semester, three qualitative instruments were applied to humanities students and teachers to obtain data in order to answer the research questions.

Classroom observation. This was used to analyze classroom realities in all the special subjects including social studies, literature, French and English. The method for classroom observation proposed was *ethnographic* and *non-structured observation* in order to report the events of the classrooms and understand behavior and dialogues in context (Cerda, 2008). Four classes were audio recorded, transcribed and independently codified, one per each subject. It was hoped that the dialogues, relations, argumentation and class activities might reveal insights as to the use of critical thinking by both teachers and students.

Document analysis. This analysis intended to identify written expression, arguments and other reflections in samples of student work such as class work, homework and tests from different subjects. It was hoped that these documents might speak to the degree of challenge in tasks, and the extent to which these activities demonstrated evidence of critical thinking.

Focus group. Two focus groups were carried out: one session with students and another with teachers. As in the classroom observation, they were audio recorded, transcribed and independently codified. The objective of the students' focus group was to explore their opinions about the humanities seminars through discussion, especially about aspects they might consider challenging or complex. It was hoped to possibly reveal students' viewpoints of the subjects and to extract data about critical thinking practices identified in the observations. The teachers' focus group had the aim of obtaining the point of view of the humanities teachers about their subjects. It was hoped to explore teachers' attitudes and practices towards the development of critical thinking.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After collecting data with the different instruments, the triangulation and interpretation of data was made applying the principles of content analysis. Codification was the first step to identify categories as evidence of critical thinking. The majority of categories were repetitive in the instruments. The common categories identified were argumentation, absent analysis, contextualization, contradictory indication, encouraging, exemplification, inference, lack of understanding, passion, questioning, students' argumentation, student's creations and teacher' contextualization. Later, a matrix was created as an instrument of analysis to count and identify core categories where the other categories seem to be repeatedly and closely related (Strauss, as cited in Cohen, et al., 2007). Later, the frequency of codes allowed the researcher to deduce which areas are more important or significant. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on relating findings and identifying common patterns between categories and to the theoretical framework (Cohen, et al. 2007).

Results

The results of the data collection, analysis and interpretation demonstrate clear evidence in all humanities classes of critical thinking in both teachers' and students' work. The results were divided into categories: *argumentation, analysis* and *motivation,* which were all determined as showing evidence of critical thinking (Beyer, 1990). All categories are explained from teachers' and students' perspectives.

Argumentation

Argumentation is the ability to create structured thinking through different statements to prove or demonstrate something. It is an important element to explain a topic or illustrate a point of view. It is also a required skill to debate with others, and creates a personal perspective (Beyer, 1990). These skills of argumentation were present in different levels through the study, as discussed below. In only one case, in the language class, argumentation was not present in teachers' speech; it was, however, evident in students' speech.

Teachers' argumentation. Examples of teachers' argumentation can be found in the course guides, which are like course books to study, review, practice content, and follow the learning process during the unit. Teachers decide which content and activities will be developed, and they choose the sources to explain, illustrate and work with course content. The course guides are an institutional practice and are mandatory for all subjects. They are compilations, however, in which some parts were made originally by other teachers. Arguments were more common in the course guides for social studies and literature than in English and French.

Oral argumentation was present in the focus group and in classroom observations. In the focus group, teachers explained their own method, objectives and feelings about the classes with clear reasons, and examples based on their experiences from the classroom. In classroom observations, some teachers made argumentation with their speech, adding examples and clarifications, persuading students about new meanings, contextualizing a reading and amplifying students' sentences to create an argument.

Conversely, the only class observed that did not reflect teachers' argumentation was the English class, which contained simple indications, such as "I want you to pay attention, be active," or "Please be quiet." Clarifications, however, were common in the class, even though they did not build complex reasoning by the teacher, just comments about students' work. e.g. "Improve your pronunciation, you have to improve."

Students' argumentation. Argumentation was observable in the students' focus group, where the students had the opportunity to defend their point of view about their classmates, teachers and subjects. Most students in the focus group did this without effort, with common words and in a natural way.

Students' use of arguments did not seem to be related to their academic performance. The only student who created arguments or coherent ideas to support his ideas in the English work was the average student. However, students with all levels of academic achievement demonstrated argumentation

in their work in the French and literature courses. In the case of social studies, the only student who evidenced argumentation in the written work was the student with higher performance. It is possible that students' argumentation is related with defending a point of view or explaining a topic in specific tasks. However, this was only evidenced in some subjects.

Paradoxically, it was possible to observe that, at least in the classroom observations, when teachers do not create arguments in class, then students may seize the opportunity to do so. In fact, students were seen using argumentation during oral presentations in the English class. They even carried out this argumentation in the absence of such discourse on the part of the teacher. In this case, students explained and argued about the subcultures they were asked to present to the class. On the other hand, almost none of the students argued when teachers led the class. In some classes, teachers did not provide students time to do arguments orally.

Still, students' argumentation was promoted in all the course guides analyzed, in the form of exercises designed by teachers, for example, creating an infograph in social studies, writing a story in literature, a letter in French, or an opinion paper in English.

Analysis

Analysis is a critical thinking skill related with critical judgment and point of view, to examine a topic with different elements and perspectives (Beyer, 1990). Similarly to argumentation, analysis was found present during the study, by both teachers and students. However, even when teachers failed to promote critical judgment, it was possible to observe students using it.

Teachers promoting analysis. Teachers develop this critical thinking skill when they apply different pedagogic actions to relate content and real life; for example, the social studies teacher clarified concepts during class, and designed an analysis workshop on race discrimination in which students had to describe news, identify actors and actions, causes and how to solve conflicts. This teacher is conscious of his role as an analytical promoter when he said in the focus group, "We have to look facts and human actions without judgment and it is avoiding prejudgments and it is trying to generate other points of view."[3]

The literature teacher promoted analysis by contextualization by relating content with student' lives as well as his own life in order to engage them.

[3] Nosotros tenemos que mirar los hechos y las acciones humanas, sin juzgarlas, evitando los prejuicios, y tratando de generar otros puntos de vista. (Teachers' focus group)

"We live in an image world. There are movies that changed my life."[4] The teacher also assigned sensitivity exercises as homework in which he invited the students to act like the characters of stories. He defined his class as an experiment of trial and error, where students can make mistakes to learn and build original deductions.

On the other hand, the French teacher developed her class by questioning. In this way, she promoted analysis of oral presentations and workshops on reading comprehension. She promoted analysis of mistakes through questions and arguments. She said, "I try to make them conscious of their mistakes. They provide feedback to each other. I didn't say: 'This, in this way.' I change the sentence or situation, and they analyze it to identify their mistake."[5]

In contrast, the English teacher tended to ask only simple questions related with grammar, pronunciation and class organization, so analysis was only related with simple problems like: "Do you have more information or that's all? Do we have volunteers?"

Finally, the course books from the English and French classes included analytical exercises to improve vocabulary skills. These types of excercises are not common in other subjects.

Student analysis. Students were analytical when they were encouraged to evaluate news, points of view, life styles, social problems and literature in class. However, in the classes observed, even when teachers did not promote analysis, students did it independently, in a similar fashion as with argumentation. One student debated about *Cosplay* and motivated other students to participate. Another one explained the *Otaku* subculture and then led a discussion about it. Additionally, students inferred from the teacher's arguments and answered his questions. For example, in the observation of the social studies class, the teacher promoted analysis by questions and explanations and related the concept under discussion with others seen before. In other subjects students' analysis was more evident in the worksheets than orally. In literature, students were asked to write an essay about Anime and relate it to social conflicts. By comparison, in the social studies class, students were asked to analyze racial discrimination in the news. This exercise allowed students to infer and contextualize.

4 Estamos en mundo de imágenes. Hay películas que me cambiaron la vida (Literature classroom observation)

5 Yo hago que ellos se den cuenta que están cayendo en el error, cuando hago las correcciones, y ellos son los que se hacen las correcciones ellos mismos, o sea yo nunca tengo que corregir: "No esto es así, se dice así". Sino que lo llevo a otro lado para que ellos caigan en cuenta de cuál es su error. (Teachers' focus group)

Students specializing in humanities evaluated their own process and recognize the analytical skills related with each subject. “I love Humanities for languages and social studies. I begin to have criteria and rationalize more about everything with them. Then, I’m going to be someone who matters.”[6]

Motivation

Motivation is a critical thinking skill related with disposition, interest and a safe environment in the classroom. It is a group of reasons or causes to learn a specific subject, and can be expressed by gestures, postures and words (Beyer, 1990). Motivation is related with critical thinking because it is a requirement to learn and demonstrate academic skills. This element was evident through students’ actions, even when in some cases feedback or motivation was not provided by teachers. However, teachers’ actions, such as lack of encouragement or disapproval, interrupting or ignoring students, had a negative impact on students’ participation in class.

Teachers promoting motivation. If students experience novelty in their learning process by activities and topics, then they have a proper environment to develop critical thinking skills. This safe environment allows them to connect content and life experiences, and engages students with the dynamics of the class. Teachers obtain this goal when they create meaningful experiences through creativity and appropriate relationships during explanations, exercises and evaluation activities.

Actually, students related the social studies and literature classes with learning and novelty. “It is more about research and we learn more about culture.”[7] “I like literature because there we start to reflect about things I never had done before or had not considered important.”[8] They feel motivated with innovation and different activities. In fact, the course book for social studies includes new learning strategies like infographs. The teacher expressed concern about generating motivation in the students, and when he described an ideal group, he described how he tries to motivate his class: “The ideal group is not related with exceptional skills but with motivation to learn about

6 A mí me gusto mucho estar en Humanas, por los idiomas, como dije. Y por sociales, porque empieza uno a tener más criterio y razonar más sobre las cosas. Entonces, uno como que ya va a ser una persona que sí importa. (Students’ focus group)

7 Es como más investigativa y uno aprenda más como de cultura (Students’ focus group)

8 Me gusta literatura porque ahí digamos que uno empieza a reflexionar sobre cosas que uno no sabía, lo hace pensar en cosas que uno nunca pensaría que en realidad son importantes. (Students’ focus group)

humanities."[9] "I always teach them with examples to project themselves more than just class work."[10]

Direct motivation to participate in class activities could be a good strategy to promote motivation for learning. Positive reinforcement and expressions of encouragement were observed during the French class, such as, "We are going to sing together (a song created by students), and does not matter if sound bad or funny. We are going to try."[11]

Feedback and motivation. Related to motivation, another important opportunity to develop and promote critical thinking is through assessment. When students are evaluated with clear criteria and they receive feedback on their work, they know how to progress and move on. One student said these assessment elements are absent in social studies. "Sometimes I make a lot of effort making my duties but teacher puts a low grade, and other times I make my homework in a simple way and the teachers put a high grade. I do not think this is correct."[12] However, it is necessary to explore further to identify if this is an isolated experience or a characteristic of the class.

Students' motivation. Students showed motivation according to particular dynamics in each subject. In general, students were punctual and responsible in all classes. They asked about topics and activities in social studies during the classroom observation; they brought their homework and research material to class, and worked on the assigned activities. In this particular subject, it was interesting to note that it was not necessary to discipline students to work because the majority of the class did it.

Similarly, students created more material than required by the teacher in both the English and French classes. They explained that activities in which research was required and that were related with other topics were more enjoyable. "I love to record street interviews. We learn from other, we

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9 Sí, yo creo que el grupo ideal va como en el sentido de lo que decía E., no necesariamente en el sentido de que tengan grandes habilidades académicas, pero sí que tengan el interés por conocer las humanidades. (Teachers' focus group)

10 Siempre les traigo a la clase como ejemplos para que ellos puedan proyectarse un poquito más afuera y no se queden solo en el ejercicio de hacer un trabajo. (Teachers' focus group)

11 Démosle todo. No nos vamos a reír. Va a sonar chistoso, pero vamos a cantar todos. (French classroom observation)

12 Yo me siento bien en Humanas, pero lo único que no me gusta es que en Sociales, que digamos uno se esfuerza harto haciendo los trabajos. Por ejemplo, a mí me ha pasado, y a L. que digamos en el infograma a él le pusieron 3.7. Uno se esfuerza harto en los trabajos y el profesor coloca una nota, y me ha pasado que yo lo hago así porque sí y me coloca un 4.0 o un 4.3. No me parece que sea así. (Students' focus group)

learn investigating."[13] Activities included composing a song to explain parts and elements of the house, creating a matching game, or making a video or audio interview. Others brought toys or buttons to argue their presentations, and some of them came dressed like the urban tribe they were presenting. Students expressed joy when it was their turn to present: "Let's do it", "Yeah, it is our turn to sell,"[14] and it is common to hear merriment between the activities. However, these motivational signs were not recognized by teachers during any classroom observation or focus group.

Towards the literature class, on the contrary, students were divided in terms of their motivation. Some students showed that they were engaged with the topic and encouraged by activities because they had a good posture and were working in the class, but some others showed signs of disapproval like "Again the same" or postures of laziness such as lying down on the desk during class. These postures were evident during classroom observations.

In general, students expressed that they feel the humanities specialized training is the best in the school. When asked which activities prefer, they described activities like debates, essays, games, multimedia activities, and oral presentations.

Conclusions

Clear evidence of learning through critical thinking skills such as argumentation, analysis and motivation were found in this research project in students and teachers' work. Teachers' argumentation via oral explanations and written texts and course books was found in all subjects. Teachers developed analysis with images, videos, questions and other exercises. They also promoted analysis when they invited students out to participate in classroom activities and when they designated homework with research and relationship elements.

Students answered this encouragement, but they also demonstrated their own internal motivation by creating more than required by teachers. They applied additional tools such as songs, games, videos and costumes in oral explanations. When encouraged to be analytical, students demonstrated this skill, as when they practiced critical judgment through assessment of their process and teachers' work in the focus group. However, it is most notable that students were observed carrying out analysis and promoting their classmates

[13] Nosotros nos gusta por ejemplo las entrevistas a otras personas de la calle o cosas así. A parte que aprendemos de los demás, aprendemos diferentes cosas de los demás, nos gusta investigar, nos gusta esas vainas: entrevistas, todo eso, el video o audio. (Students' focus group)

[14] ¡A vender! ¡Sí!, Somos nosotros. (French classroom observation)

to do so even when they were not persuaded by their teachers. Students were interested in complex activities because they worked autonomously, and considered these opportunities for learning through investigation.

As such, the research questions in this study were answered. Teachers applied and promoted critical thinking skills with different strategies as hypothesized. However, students performed beyond expected. They demonstrated critical thinking skills with or without teachers' encouragement. Further, they are not overwhelmed but rather motivated by complex tasks.

As mentioned in the literature review, there are studies about how to improve critical thinking, but just a few focus on evidence of critical thinking inside the classroom. This study sought to fill this research need. As with other investigations, this study was based on observation and did not divide the research group or modify it because variables belong inherently to the context.

However, there are some limitations to this study. Some teachers were not willing to provide sample papers or agree to meetings. More French language skill on the part of the researcher was necessary to analyze the French data with more precision, and more time was needed to apply the same instruments more frequently, or different instruments to deepen the data.

Nevertheless, it was possible to identify similarities between this study and others of the same type. Students expressed critical thinking and felt motivated by activities promoting artistic development like songs, or interaction task like debates. These findings concur with Shoemaker (2012) and Swartz (2004), who argue that arts and collaborative relationships are proper instruments to reflect critical thinking skills, arts demonstrating metaphorical connections and teamwork, promoting complexity, flexibility and self-reflection.

Finally, this research project opens many possibilities to continue exploring CTS. It could be useful for the school to explore these skills in the other departments, follow the process of the same group of students next year, or analyze other groups from Humanities classrooms to assess, promote and apply CTS in the classroom. Other possibilities could be to analyze motivation and feedback, to research independently each CTS, or to explore other HOTS such as creative thinking or metacognition to establish action plans and prepare students to be more competent than competitive in their academic purposes.

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Author

* **David Vargas Alfonso** holds a Specialization in Bilingual Education from the *Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, ÚNICA,* and a BA in Theology from *Unicervantina*. He has published theological research articles in the *Revista Agustiniana* and is currently teaching philosophy and research in a private school in Bogotá, Colombia.

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Mitigation of Disagreement in Peer Review among L2 Learners and Native Speakers in a College Writing Class[1]

Mitigación del Impacto de las Opiniones de Desacuerdo en el Proceso de Revisión por Pares entre Estudiantes de una Segunda Lengua y Hablantes Nativos en una Clase de Escritura a Nivel Universitario

Katherine O'Donnell Christoffersen[2*]

University of New Mexico, United States

Abstract

Peer review is now a commonplace practice in process-oriented writing instruction. A crucial aspect of peer review is assessing another classmate's work, which encompasses the act of disagreement. Given its prevalence in the classroom, it is necessary to analyze how L2 learners mitigate disagreement in the context of peer review with other L2 learners and native speakers. The present paper presents a qualitative analysis of action research from an introductory English writing class at the university level including native speakers of English and international students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The conversation-based peer review sessions were analyzed for various mitigation strategies including token agreement, hedging, prefacing positive remarks and requests for clarification. The analysis shows that L2 learners and native speakers of English use similar mitigation strategies, and it demonstrates the co-construction of meaning in peer review interactions.

Keywords: disagreement, mitigation, L2, peer review

[1] Received: July 15, 2015 / Accepted: October 6, 2015

[2] odonnka1@email.arizona.edu

Resumen

Actualmente la revisión por pares es una práctica común en la instrucción que orienta los procesos de escritura. Un aspecto importante de la revisión por pares, es evaluar el trabajo de otro compañero de clase, lo cual puede provocar opiniones de desacuerdo. Dada la incidencia de esta situación en el aula de clase, es necesario analizar cómo los estudiantes de una segunda lengua pueden mitigar el impacto de las opiniones de desacuerdo generadas durante el ejercicio de revisión por pares con otros estudiantes de una segunda lengua y con hablantes nativos. Este artículo presenta un análisis cualitativo de un proyecto de investigación acción desarrollado en una clase introductoria de escritura de inglés a nivel universitario, con la participación de hablantes nativos de inglés y estudiantes universitarios de diferentes orígenes lingüísticos y culturales. El análisis de las conversaciones generadas durante el proceso de revisión por pares fue realizado teniendo en cuenta diversas estrategias de mitigación, entre ellas, llegar a acuerdos simbólicos, manifestar con cortesía la opinión de desacuerdo, realizar comentarios positivos, y solicitar clarificación. El análisis muestra que los estudiantes de una L2 y los hablantes nativos de inglés usan estrategias de mitigación similares y demuestra la construcción conjunta de significado en las interacciones del proceso de revisión por pares.

Palabras clave: Desacuerdo, Mitigación, L2, revisión por pares

Resumo

Atualmente a revisão por pares é uma prática comum na instrução que orienta os processos de escritura. Um aspecto importante da revisão por pares é avaliar o trabalho de outro companheiro de classe, o qual pode provocar opiniões de desacordo. Dada a incidência desta situação na sala de aula, é necessário analisar como os estudantes de uma segunda língua podem mitigar o impacto das opiniões de desacordo geradas durante o exercício de revisão por pares com outros estudantes de uma segunda língua e com falantes nativos. Este artigo apresenta uma análise qualitativa de um projeto de pesquisa ação, desenvolvido em uma classe introdutória de escritura de inglês a nível universitário, com a participação de falantes nativos de inglês e estudantes universitários de diferentes origens linguísticas e culturais. A análise das conversações geradas durante o processo de revisão por pares foi realizada tendo em conta diversas estratégias de mitigação, entre elas, chegar a acordos simbólicos, manifestar com cortesia a opinião de desacordo, realizar comentários positivos, e solicitar esclarecimento. A análise mostra que os estudantes de uma L2 e os falantes nativos de inglês usam estratégias de mitigação similares e demonstra a construção conjunta de significado nas interações do processo de revisão por pares.

Palavras chave: Desacordo, Mitigação, L2, revisão por pares

Introduction

Since the 1970s, peer review has become a significant mainstay in the writing classroom (Elbow, 1973; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Mendoca & Johnson, 1994). Peer review, also referred to as *peer editing* or *peer response*, is defined as "use of learners as sources of information and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing" (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 1). This collaborative revision technique stems from the change in perspective from writing as a product to a process (Emig, 1971), and is now a common feature of process-oriented writing instruction (Applebee & Langer, 2013; Caulk, 1994; Paulus, 1999). The teaching of writing as a process places emphasis on the stages of planning, revising, editing and working collaboratively with peers to improve a writing assignment.

From the perspective of pragmatics, assessing a peer's writing involves expressing disagreement which could potentially damage the hearer's *face* or esteem in some way as a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this situation, interlocutors often attempt to mitigate, or soften, a disagreement through a variety of strategies including token agreement (*I agree with you, but…*), hedges (*maybe, kind of, I think*), giving explanations, and requesting clarification. While research has investigated mitigation strategies in disagreement in a variety of contexts, relatively little research has explored mitigation among second language (L2) learners (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004), especially in naturally-occurring contexts combining native speakers and L2 learners.

The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature by providing a qualitative analysis of the strategies for mitigated disagreement employed by L2 learners and native speakers in an introductory English composition class at a university. In particular, this research seeks to shed light on how L2 learners and native speakers mitigate disagreement in peer review in L2 learner groups, native speaker groups and L2 learners with native speakers.

This paper first reviews the study of disagreement along with relevant literature followed by a detailed description of methodology. Then, the paper presents a description of relevant disagreement typologies and mitigation strategies as well as a description of the qualitative data analysis. Finally, it offers conclusions based on the findings from this data set.

Literature Review

The analysis of disagreement is essentially a study of assessment. Pomerantz (1984) proposes that assessment is a routine feature of social interactions. In order to make her point, she presents the following example:

> J: Let's feel the water. Oh, it …
> R: It's wonderful. It's just right. It's like bathtub water.
>
> (p. 57)

Furthermore, it depicts assessment as an interactional activity with a clear link between participation in an event and assessment of an event. The assessments are viewed as "products" of that participation. In the context of peer review, the "products" students have to offer are not always pleasant (expressions of agreement), rather oftentimes negative (expression of disagreement). The expression of disagreement in the case of peer review is a potentially *face-threatening* act (Brown & Levinson, 1978), since the hearer may lose esteem or *face*. One common way that interlocutors deal with potentially face-threatening acts is to mitigate the loss of face through a variety of mitigation strategies.

While there is substantial research on the topic of disagreement and mitigated disagreement, "relatively less research on agreements and disagreements has been conducted on the speech of learners and non-native speakers" (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004, p.200). The existing studies include written discourse completion tests (DCTs), conversational interviews, and online peer review collaborations. The following review of recent literature on L2 learner disagreement is organized by methodology.

Discourse completion tasks (DCTs) are one of the most common types of data collection on disagreements, consisting of written descriptions of specific scenarios followed by a conversational turn for the informant who is to write responses exactly as they would respond in the situation (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993). Overall, studies have found important differences among L2 speakers of English and native speakers of English. For example, Behnam and Niroomand (2011) found that Iranian EFL leaners used a limited number of strategies due to proficiency level in English; however, Bavarsad et al. (2015) found that Persian EFL speakers used more mitigating strategies than American English speakers in expressing disagreement. In studies on Chinese English learners, Chen (2006) and Guodong and Jing (2005) found the tendency to over-perform non target-like linguistic features such as certain types of mitigation, due in part to pragmatic transfer from Chinese. In a study of ESL learners from a variety of different countries and English proficiency levels, Kreutel (2007) notes a tendency for L2 learners to use 'undesirable'

strategies which she defines to include abandonment of the message, use of the performative *I disagree*, lack of mitigation, bare exclamation of *no* and blunt statements of the opposite.

Researchers have used audio-recorded interviews, role-plays and conversations to obtain similar types of information on disagreement. For example, Lawson (2009) audio-recorded responses to ten controversial statements by Japanese speakers of English, and the responses demonstrated expressions of mitigated disagreement were as frequent as NS of English, although NS of English used slightly more positive politeness including partial agreement, humor and positive comments, while Japanese speakers of English used more hedges. In a study on L2 learners of Spanish and native Spanish speakers, students discussed one of three issues on campus and ranked possible solutions, and were informed to defend their choice in an audio-recorded conversation with another student. In this study, Flores-Ferrán and Lovejoy (2014) witnessed redundant mitigation strategies from L2 learners compared to a wider variety of mitigation strategies from NS of Spanish. Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004) audio-recorded role-plays among L2 learners of English and native speakers of English during a longitudinal research project and found improvement in acquisition of pragmatic competence over time. While students began with open disagreements, that changed as time passed.

Finally, other research has examined naturalistic interactions in classroom environments, including online contexts. Bell (1998), for instance, recorded classroom interactions in an ESL class and revealed a tendency for Korean L2 learners to express disagreement in direct and unmitigated ways. Greek L2 learners of English also showed a tendency for unmitigated disagreement or disagreement at the beginning of a turn in an analysis of classroom discourse (Kakava, 1993). Shabaka Fernandez (2013) discovered conflicting results for DCT among Egyptian L2 speakers of English and their posts on Facebook; in the former, Egyptians used unmitigated disagreement, but Egyptians used more token agreements and hedges on Facebook. In a study of online disagreements among students in an English as a lingua franca class, Maíz-Arevalo (2014) discusses how students avoided strong agreement and favor mitigated disagreement, as well as the importance of proficiency as a factor in determining native-like patterns of disagreement. So, while there is evidence that certain cultures may prefer unmitigated styles, the context and proficiency levels also appear to be influential factors.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate differences in L2 learners' expressions of disagreement compared to native English speakers. Since role-plays, tasks and DCTs may differ substantially from naturalistic conversations and activities (Shabaka Fernandez, 2013), it is imperative to further explore what is actually happening in the context of the classroom. The research on

classroom and online course contexts cited above demonstrate that Korean (Bell, 1998) and Greek (Kakava, 1993) L2 learners of English tend to express unmitigated disagreement, while a class of students from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds favors mitigated disagreement (Maíz-Arevalo, 2014). The present study furthers this line of research by providing a qualitative analysis of audio-recorded peer review sessions from a university English class consisting of native English speakers and international students from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Methodology

Research Design

There were several important reasons for the research design chosen for the present study. The chief aim of the study was to analyze the act of disagreement embedded in the commonplace classroom task of peer review, especially how students negotiate this through oral conversation-based peer review. In order to heighten the reliability of the data, the peer-review for the second assignment was analyzed after students were more comfortable with the classmates and the peer review process. The peer review process in the students' own classroom with their own classmates embodies natural consequences of maintaining face with peers. The ipod recording kits using nano ipods provided a technology that was familiar to students as well as small and unobtrusive in the classroom. Finally, the classroom itself is well suited for this type of study given the mix of native speakers and non-native speakers. In particular, this study allows us to see how students engage in disagreement among L2 learners, between L2 learners and native speakers and between native speakers.

Context/Participants

The participants in the study include 21 first-year students at a large public university in the United States. Of these, eight students were native English speakers and the remaining thirteen were international students who were intermediate English speakers, having passed a test to enter the class. Of the students, 13 were males and 8 females. They ranged in age from 18 to 25 years old. The class itself was the second semester of first year composition, consisting of an introduction to writing for research. By this point in the year, students had been through the peer review process at least four times, including the previous introductory first year writing class. As such, students were well aware of the expectation to assess other students' writing and that other students

would assess their writing, expressing disagreement with certain aspects. This understanding of the peer review process impacts the context of analysis greatly. In this way, students understood themselves to be working in a collaborative assignment to improve their papers for later submission for a grade. An additional important aspect of the class itself is the presence of native English speakers and L2 learners of English. It is likely that international students and native speakers of English may assign the native speakers a higher status in the context of the English writing classroom and the written English assignment. This certainly would impact patterns of disagreement and mitigation.

Table 1. Groups of students including pseudonyms, gender and countries of origin

Peer Review Group	Pseudonym	Gender	Country of Origin
NS-NS	Charles	M	U.S.
	Diana	F	U.S.
L2-L2	Nari	F	Korea
	Areom	F	Korea
L2-L2	Daiyu	F	China
	Chang	M	China
L2-L2	Ji	M	China
	Hwan	M	Korea
L2-L2	Aarav	M	India
	Ji-min	F	Korea
NS-L2-L2	Liling	F	China
	Thaksin	M	Thailand
	Tim	M	U.S.
NS-L2	Steve	M	U.S.
	Bin	M	India
NS-L2	Stephanie	F	U.S.
	Muqsit	M	Pakistan
NS-L2	Ai	M	China
	Nick	M	U.S.

NS-L2	Yuan	M	China
	Evan	M	U.S.

Data Collection Instruments

The peer review session was based on students' second writing assignment for the class, a short research-based article incorporating at least three scholarly sources. The brief instructions for the written assignment are as follows:

> *For this essay, you will focus on your country of origin and explore a current issue or controversy through gathering research. Investigate several positions of an issue or propose different solutions to an observed problem.*

When students brought their full draft into the classroom, they were instructed, "Comment on what works and what doesn't work." Students first read the paper, commenting in pencil or pen on the copy, and then they began to discuss what they saw in an oral peer review session. I-pod recording kits were used to audio-record these conversation-based peer review sessions. These sessions amounted to 80 minutes of audio-recordings, which resulted in 13,239 words of transcript. Due to the limited data set, the subsequent data analysis is qualitative only.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Disagreement in the present study will be analyzed with regard to the linguistic realizations of disagreement, especially focusing on the mitigation of disagreement. This is first due to the absence of strong disagreement or unmitigated disagreement in the corpus. Secondly, and on a related note, it is also due to the context of the situation. Even as students were well accustomed to the context of peer review as a collaborative effort with the goal of improving their papers for better grade, and the use of negotiation to maintain their own and each other's face in their conversation, they were faced with a relatively pragmatically complex situation.

Various typologies or classifications have been developed throughout the literature on disagreement, including weak and strong disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984), strong, strong yet mitigated, and mitigated (Kakava, 1993), and softened, unmodified, and aggravated (Rees-Miller, 2000). Kreutel (2007) distinguished between desirable and undesirable features for ESL/EFL. Later, Maíz-Arevalo (2014) modified this classification system to be entitled strong and mitigated disagreement. As previously mentioned, the corpus of the present study was exempt of strong disagreement, and for this reason the attention will be solely on mitigation strategies, using Maíz-Arévalo's (2014)

classification. Below both strong and mitigated disagreement strategies are listed, in order to provide the reader with a clear comparison.

Table 2. Strong and mitigated disagreement
(Maíz-Arévalo, 2014, p. 209)

Strong Disagreement	**Mitigated Disagreement**
Use of bare negative forms (e.g. "no" "no way" "of course not")	Token agreement (e.g. "yeah…but")
Use of the performative "I disagree"	Use of hedges (e.g. "I guess" "it seems" "I don't really know")
Use of the performative negation I didn´t agree" or "I can´t agree"	Requests for clarification (e.g. "Maybe I don't understand, could you explain it more clearly?")
Blunt statement of the opposite	Expressions of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry but I don't agree with you…")
Use of insults and negative judgments (e.g., "you are a moron)	Use of prefacing positive remarks toward the addressee (e.g., "that's a very good analysis") Suggestions (e.g., "How about doing this in a slightly different way?") Giving explanations

Results

Since there was an absence of strong agreements in the collected data, the following data analysis will focus on forms of mitigated disagreement. The qualitative analysis of linguistic forms of mitigated disagreement will be organized according to the participants in each peer review group: interactions among NS, interactions among L2 learners, and interactions between L2 learners and NS. This structure is relevant to the rationale for this study and how it may further inform the field in terms of how L2 leraners and NS perform disagreement in a naturalistic classroom learning task of peer review. The mitigated disagreement strategies will be discussed in the context of the particular examples.

NS-NS Peer Review

The students were divided into groups randomly, as had been the practice during the course of the semester, and only one of the ten groups was composed of only NS of English. In the following examples, Charles is commenting on Diana's essay on PETA advertisements.

(1) Charles: Well uh I really liked the introduction, although I did find some grammatical errors.

(2) Charles: Cultural fear, then then maybe I was gonna say, add a little bit more or like, cuz your thesis is, um, is this one? "By looking at various sources, the aspects of how PETA uses feminist, feminine attributes//

(3) Charles: I was going to give a suggestion but there's only two days.

Diana: Oh, it's okay, it's okay.

Charles: I was going to say something like maybe talk about PETA's actions as well. But that's a whole nother, that could be a whole nother paper.

In these three examples, Charles mitigates disagreement in different ways. In (1), he uses a prefacing positive remark to the comment on grammatical errors. In (2), he uses hedges such as *maybe*, *a little bit*, and *I was gonna say*. Also interesting, Charles expresses hesitation to disagree (3), and even when encouraged by Diana backs down from his suggestion with "But that's a whole nother paper." Diana also uses prefacing positive remarks and hedges, along with questions for clarification (4) and explanations (5).

(4) Diana: And um the main question I was thinking was um why do you like pinpoint the US? Like, you mention how it will affect the US and why the US should not like ignore the situation, but what about like other countries? Like, you know, what about the US makes it like a main target to that it needs to, that the US also needs to focus on this issue.

(5) Diana: Pulling everybody out of Germany, whatever, whatever kind of caused this whole thing, so a paragraph kind of explaining how this all occurred. Cuz um you're really explaining the problems really well, like the problems are really in-depth. And with a map, it would be easier to understand but it it really, like I love how you word it. And you really like put the details in there it's very understandable. But you haven't really explained the problem as much.

In (4), Diana frames her disagreement as a question, stating "the main question I was thinking was…", followed but other related similar questions

to demonstrate a hole in the paper's argument. Also, after suggesting that Charles explain the problem more thoroughly, Diana gives a long explanation including positive remarks (5).

L2-L2 Peer Review

In the four groups of L2 learners, disagreement was mitigated through a variety of strategies including questions for clarification, hedges, token agreement and prefacing with positive remarks. Examples of the question include:

(6) Chang: I think uh your first paragraph is good. But I didn't know how or why you used this citation. So I didn't know.

(7) Ji-min: Ok, I think the third pages, I think it's kind of off topic. So um I think so. So I don't know why you're mentioning about the corruptions. So I guess you have to make little changes why you're talking about the corruption.

Chang, a Chinese student, and Ji-min from Korea use questions for clarification. Although the "I don't know how" (6) and "I don't know why" (7) are couched as declarative statements, they are still in essence questioning aspects of their partner's papers, expressing a point that is unclear. As in the other examples, the mitigating strategies are not alone. For example, Chang uses several hedges in the same turn, *I think* and *So, I didn't know* (6), and Ji-min uses repetitions of *I think, I guess*, and *little* changes (7).

Hedges were very frequent throughout the recorded peer review sessions, including modifiers such as *really, probably, I think, and little bit.* The use of modals as a hedge was the least common, with just one instance (9).

(8) Areom: And the thesis is not **that** clear. I can't **really** find it.

(9) Daiyu: I think your introduction is too long, and I think you **might** want to use a hook to grab the attention.

(10) Nathan: And even if you want to bring in your opinion, you should **probably** bring in like last page or something. Because that's what she had said. You should **probably** continue with how people react to this stuff. Bring in the media of Korea.

(11) Ji-min: Ok, so on the second page you're also like keeps to keeping to talks about the background of the India. **I think** uh you reduce about it, just before the first paragraph. **Little bit**, because there are some parts that are not **really** necessary.

L2 learners also made use of token agreement and positive prefacing remarks during their peer review sessions, mentioning understanding certain

points (12), a funny topic (13), or a "good" overall essay (14) before expressing disagreement.

(12) Hwan: So I understand where your thesis and your main point **but I** do not understand the Chinese, the background of the Chinese background gender discrimination. So yeah, I want to know the- (..) the background. So you should add explanation of the background of China.

(13) Areom: Hi Nari, I think your topic is pretty funny em **but I** think maybe you can make the hook more interesting.

(14)Nathan: Yeah, I think it's in a **very good** shape with your essay. How you could make it even better is just try and keep your perspective out of here and try to make it more source-based. And you need to have more sources. Like where the different stars are suggesting in Korea.

The L2 learners also demonstrate usage of a wide variety of mitigated disagreement during their peer review sessions, including hedges, questions for clarification and prefacing positive remarks and token agreement.

NS-L2 Peer Review

Many similar strategies were characteristic of the peer review sessions between NS and L2 learners of English, such as hedges and modals, prefacing positive remarks and token agreement. Hedges were once again very frequent and evident in all transcripts.

(15) Ai: **I think** you might want to put it in the conclusion. And this part is like **generally** your idea, you should make this decision, related to the topic.

(16)Stephanie: Yeah, **I think I think** mostly that since you're like stating your thesis in this paragraph and kind of forming an outline **maybe** you should list the causes of inflation here instead of just saying and they're going to be listed later.

(17) Muqsit: So your introduction, it **just**, it does not have a hook. So if you **could** write a hook, like how it all started and since how the immigrants from Mexico started increasing. That would be a good overview before the introduction, hook.

(18) Tim: Uh, for that part. And there's **I think maybe** you meant to say drop out from school, not drop off.

(19) Liling: I **think** it's a **little** too long the introduction, so you should short your introduction.

Again NS and L2 learners use a variety of hedges; the NS use primarily *I think* and *maybe* (16, 18) while the L2 learners use *just* (17) and *little* (19) to hedge their disagreements. Modals are less frequent, although Muqsit from Pakistan does use the modal *could* (17).

Prefacing positive remarks and token agreement were once again common aspects of the interactions. An interesting difference surfaces, however, in the prefacing positive remarks among the two groups. NS Tim and Nick provide more lengthy positive remarks, a full three (20) and six (21) sentences before issuing their disagreement, while L2 learners tend to use just one sentence (22, 23).

(20) Tim: Um, I **like** your beginning. The hook is very well developed. I like your thesis. You state the two arguments that you want to talk about, the part, the positive and negative of economic growth. I think **maybe** you need to shorten this statement **a little bit.**

(21) Nick: Well, it's balanced. And it's really organized, so that's really **good**. It's organized a lot. There's an introduction and its preview. There's different viewpoint, there's moderate. And the conclusion comes right after that. The only thing that I think though was you say why you want to, why this should be changed, and it's mostly personal, which I mean, it's fine. But you **might** also what to say what it would do for the greater good.

(22) Muqsit: You did **excellent** job on this so far I think. The only thing that makes it weird is when you say "However, other studies show that it is not true."

(23) Liling: I **like** your point, because you always have clear point. Each//

Thaksin: //Your topic sentence really **clear and strong**.

Liling: **But**

Thaksin: And you follow up really good on your illustration.

Liling: **But**

Tim: More explanation.

Liling: And a quote.

Tim: This is a quote, but I actually need to-

Thaksin: You need to cite.

As the only three-person peer review group, (23) provides an interesting example of the co-construction of disagreement. L2 learners Liling and Thaksin take of the same mitigation strategy of a prefacing positive remarks, and then NS Tim adds in his own analysis of what is needed, issuing a self-assessment or disagreement with his own writing.

Another interesting aspect of the L2-NS peer review sessions, only NS used the explanation strategies, as exemplified below.

(24) Tim: I think in this last statement, it is a little too much negative. Uh, cuz you say, "Nobody is going nowhere it does not"

(25) Stephanie: I think that would make your conclusion sound a lot better, because you seem to be doing that a lot in your main paragraphs as I was reading, saying like the same thing in the first and last sentence.

Explanations were also a feature in the NS-NS peer review group. Larger scale studies would be needed to determine whether explanations are a feature of mitigation of disagreement among NS of English.

Conclusions

The present study provides a qualitative analysis of the strategies for mitigated disagreement employed by L2 learners of English and native English speakers in an introductory composition class at a university. In particular, this research sought to answer how L2 learners and native speakers mitigate disagreement in peer review in the context of L2 learner interactions, NS interactions, and L2-NS interactions.

Results demonstrate that L2 learners and NS use a variety of mitigated disagreement strategies including hedges, modals, questions for clarification, prefacing positive remarks, and token agreement. However, noticeably, NS tended to use lengthier and more specific prefacing positive remarks, similar to Lawson's (2009) findings that NS used more positive comments overall. Additionally, NS used explanations in their mitigation of disagreement, a strategy not found in L2 learners in this corpus. Since this is only a limited data set, further research is needed to determine whether explanation is indeed a mitigation pattern that is specific to NS of American English and uncommon among L2 learners of English.

The lack of strong or unmitigated disagreement in the corpus of peer review data and the L2 learners effective use of mitigating strategies (such as questions for clarification, hedges, token agreement and prefacing positive remarks) suggests that the students understood this as a collaborative learning task. Additionally, students' experience with peer review for the first two writing assignments as well the previous English composition course in the prior semester may have influenced international students (L2 learners) to adapt to cultural pragmatic norms for peer review interactions and disagreements. If this were the case, it would support findings which demonstrate how L2 learners

adapt to cultural pragmatic norms over time (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004). The use of mitigation by L2 learners may also be related to interactions with NS peers who may be perceived as higher status in the English classroom. Other research has found that status is an important factor in disagreement (Lawson, 2009). Future research on a larger corpus of data is needed to corroborate these findings, and it would be beneficial as well to carry out a longitudinal study of students throughout the two-course series of first year English composition in order to observe changing patterns of mitigated disagreement in peer review.

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Author

* **Katherine O'Donnell Christoffersen** earned her PhD in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching at the University of Arizona in 2015. She holds an MA in English Language/Linguistics from the University of Arizona. Her primary research interest is exploring bi/multilingualism and sites of language contact, especially through the use of qualitative, ethnographic, and discourse/conversation analytic methods.

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Factors Affecting Academic Resilience in Middle School Students: A Case Study[1]

Factores que Afectan la Resiliencia Académica en Estudiantes de Bachillerato

Luisa Fernanda Rojas F.[2*]

Volunteers Colombia

Abstract

This research was carried out with the purpose of identifying how and which risk and protective factors affect academic outcomes. The study explored how different family and individual environmental factors foster academic resilience. The exploratory study took place with a group of six students from a public school in Bogotá, Colombia. The school is located in a low-income and marginalized area of the city, where social problems such as poverty and violence are common. Data collection techniques included document analysis, as well as interviews with teachers and parents. The data collection was focused on identifying how academic resiliency skills can be developed in vulnerable young people. It was found that it is possible to identify and describe different protective factors from the family, such as family guidance, family support, and opportunities for meaningful family involvement that explicitly foster academic resilience in at risk-students. It was also possible to address how individual characteristics also foster positive outcomes, including optimism, perseverance, or motivation.

Keywords: academic resilience, risk factors, protective factors, low income, family factors

[1] Received: July 15, 2015 / Accepted: October 6, 2015

[2] serggiolop@hotmail.com

Resumen

Esta investigación se realizó con el propósito de identificar cómo y qué factores de riesgo y de protección afectan los resultados académicos. El estudio exploró cómo los diferentes factores como la familia, ambientales e individuales promueven la resiliencia académica. El estudio exploratorio se llevó a cabo con un grupo de seis estudiantes de un colegio público en Bogotá, Colombia. El colegio está situado en un sector de bajos ingresos y en un área marginada de la ciudad, donde los problemas sociales como la pobreza y la violencia son comunes. Las técnicas de recolección de datos incluyen el análisis de documentos, así como entrevistas con los profesores y los padres. La recolección de datos se centró en identificar cómo las habilidades de resiliencia académica se pueden desarrollar en los jóvenes vulnerables. Se encontró que es posible identificar y describir los diferentes factores de protección de la familia, como la orientación familiar, el apoyo de la familia, y las oportunidades para la participación familiar significativa que explícitamente fomentan la resiliencia académica en estudiantes en riesgo. También fue posible abordar cómo las características individuales también fomentan resultados positivos, entre ellos el optimismo, la perseverancia, o la motivación.

Palabras claves: Resiliencia académica, factores de riesgo, factores de protección, bajos ingresos, factores familiares

Resumo

Esta pesquisa se realizou com o propósito de identificar como e que fatores de risco e de proteção afetam os resultados acadêmicos. O estudo explorou como os diferentes fatores como a família, ambientais e individuais promovem a resiliência acadêmica. O estudo exploratório foi realizado com um grupo de seis estudantes de um colégio público em Bogotá, Colômbia. O colégio está situado em um setor de baixos ingressos e em uma área marginada da cidade, onde os problemas sociais como a pobreza e a violência são comuns. As técnicas de coleta de dados incluem a análise de documentos, bem como entrevistas com os professores e os pais. A coleta de dados se centrou em identificar como as habilidades de resiliência acadêmica se podem desenvolver nos jovens vulneráveis. Encontrou-se que é possível identificar e descrever os diferentes fatores de proteção da família, como a orientação familiar, o apoio da família, e as oportunidades para a participação familiar significativa que explicitamente fomentam a resiliência acadêmica em estudantes em risco. Também foi possível abordar como as características individuais também fomentam resultados positivos, entre eles o otimismo, a perseverança, ou a motivação.

Palavras chave: Resiliência acadêmica, fatores de risco, fatores de proteção, baixos ingressos, fatores familiares

Introduction

Resilience is the process of adapting in the face of adversity. Research has shown that this trait is usual, not unusual, as people commonly demonstrate resilience through life experiences (Chung, 2008). This is because resilience is not a characteristic that people either have or do not have. For this reason, resilience involves behaviors and actions that can be learned and developed in any person. A combination of protective factors and risk factors affect resilience in individuals. Risk factors are those factors that increase the likelihood of a future negative outcome. Protective factors refer to those variables that buffer against the effects of risk factors (Wright & Masten, 2005).

Many studies show that the most important protective factor affecting resilience is having supportive family relationships. On the other hand, different risk factors from family also directly affect the development of resilience. Both of these directly affect children's academic performance as well. Academic resilience is defined as the ability to deal with adversity, stress or pressure in academic settings. Students who are affected academically by family risk factors may be labeled as non-resilient students. The opposite can be described as resilient students, students who succeed academically in school despite the presence of adversity (Grotberg, 2001).

The purpose of this project was to identify academic resilience in a group of eighth grade students from a school that for the purposes of this study will be called *El Triunfo*. The study aimed to determine which risk factors affect these skills to overcome adversity. The questions that guided this research project were the following: How do family risk factors and protective factors affect academic outcomes in three teenage students with academically diverse performances? How can academic resiliency skills be developed in vulnerable teenage students?, and How can positive academic outcomes be developed in vulnerable teenage students?

It was possible to conclude that a powerful predictor of the academic outcome for children is the quality of the immediate care-giving environment. However, factors such as the characteristics of the individual and the environment also contribute to academic performance. Finally, the project proposed of value to establish whether, as research suggests, family support and parenting skills are the result of specific protective factors affecting risk factors that foster academic resilience despite adversity.

Literature Review

Resilience is the ability to overcome challenges. In fact, resilience can be seen when people face difficult experiences and know how to deal with or adapt to them. According to Schoon (2006), resilience is a dynamic process in which individuals show adaptive actions when experimenting significant adversity. Adversity is defined as environmental conditions that interfere with or threaten the accomplishment of age-appropriate developmental tasks (Schoon, 2006).

Resilience is a dynamic process whereby individuals show adaptive actions when they experience adversity. Therefore, those fundamental conclusions refer to the ability that allows an individual to overcome adverse life events successfully and gain competence or skills from the process of overcoming challenges and adversity (Chung, 2008).

Fostering adaptive development depends on the cultural context, as well as academic, emotional, behavioral and physical adjustment. Understanding these different areas is how individuals achieve optimal functioning. Through the five key principles of the life-course approach, individuals might have optimal functioning. The reason is that human development is a life-long process in which individuals construct their own life. However, resilience depends not only on an individual's environment, but also on the individual development. Consequently, this relation between the environment and individual development produces an elevated probability of an undesirable outcome, which is labeled as a risk. From a resilience view, there are risk factors. Wright and Masten (2005) argue that risk factors are "measurable characteristics in a group of individuals or their situations that predict negative outcomes" (p. 18).

On the other hand, protective factors are concerned with the quality of a person, context or their interaction that predicts better outcomes, specifically in situations of risk. Protective factors also moderate the impact of adversity on adaptation (Wright & Masten, 2005). According to Chung (2008), two protective factors help individuals reintegrate the disruption with resiliency: individual personal characteristics and environmental characteristics that the individual experiences.

For these reason, fostering resilience is an important task because it is how individuals overcome challenges and face difficult experiences. In addition, by fostering resilience, people can develop lifelong skills such as communication and problem-solving skills, and the ability to make realistic plans and be capable of taking the steps necessary to follow through with them.

Many studies have explored which elements increase resilience in vulnerable children. By understanding resilience, it is possible to develop preventative packages, support strategies for parents and schools, and plans to foster resiliency. Nettles, Mucherach, and Jones (as cited in Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003) found that family and community experiences create protective factors through the access of social resources, including caring parents, participation in extracurricular activities, and supportive teachers.

Many studies are focused on educational resilience and how to lead advances in the education of students at risk of academic failure. Studies focus on defining the differences between resilient students, students who succeed academically in school despite the presence of adversity, and non-resilient students. Some of the differences identified include family environment, perceptions of the classroom, school environment and problems caused by poverty, health and explicit social conditions. Johnson (1997) proposes that human relationships are the most critical factor in student resiliency, followed by student characteristics, family factors, community variables, and school programs.

Methodology

Research Design

The proposed methodology for this research was a case study. The project sought to understand how risk factors affected academic resilience in six middle school students, and how protective factors were developed in order to build academic resilience. The exploratory methodology made it possible to discover which risk factors were of particular importance in academic performance or resilience, and how academic resilience, as a result, became a protective factor that impacted learners' lives.

In the case of risk factors, family and context, the literature points to the importance of developing and fostering academic resilience in children. The literature, however, did not describe which or how risk factors in contexts similar to this could remove protective factors from families. For this reason, the data collection proposed sought to identify which risk factors affected skills to overcome adversity and also describe the role of the family as a potential support strategy as a protective factor to foster academic resilience. Finally, the data sought to establish which risk factors and protective factors existed in participants' contexts.

Context and Participants

The context for this study was a public school located in a marginalized, low-income area of Bogotá. For the purposes of the study, the school has been given a pseudonym, *El Triunfo*. At the time of the study, the school was what is known as a *colegio de concesión*.[3] *Colegios de concesión* are public schools that the local school authority temporarily contracts through public tender to recognized educational institutions and non-profit organizations, which then operate the schools for an agreed period, with the goal of raising standards of quality.

El Triunfo school is located in an area of the city which, according to the District Planning Office of Bogotá (*Secretaria Distrital de Planeacion,* 2009), has had one of the most marked levels of basic needs in the city, characterized by high economic dependence on families headed by single mothers, high rates of school dropouts, overcrowding and poor housing conditions.

The participants were six students from *El Triunfo* school. The participants were eighth grade students, between twelve and fifteen years old. The six students were chosen based on their academic records in 2014: two low achievers, two average students, and two high achieving students. Three teachers were also chosen for the study, mathematics and music, as these were the subjects that most students failed. The art teacher was also selected because he was the homeroom teacher. The names of all the participants have been changed for the purposes of this study.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to gather a wide range of data inputs for the case studies, three different techniques were used and described: academic records, interviews, and biographical research.

Academic records. Academic records were used to identify potential participants in the case study. Three groups of students were chosen: above average, average and below average. During the case study, teachers' academic assessments of students was also sought in order to establish students' academic performance and possible related resilient behaviors.

Interviews. Interviews took place with three teachers, six students, and parents of three of the students. It was intended that, by carefully choosing the

[3] *Colegios de concesión* can be roughly translated as "outsourced schools."

participants to be interviewed, a wide range of responses could be obtained. Open-ended and semi-structured questions were designed intending to gain insight into the importance of academic resilience and protective factors.

The objective of the interview with the teachers was to know their perceptions or insights about the students' families in order to identify risk factors and protective factors. The objective of interviewing parents was to identify how and which practices promoted academic resilience in their children, and to analyze how risk factors affected protective factors.

Biographical research. The objective of this was to identify which situations affect academic resilience and analyze which skills students use to become resilient. The students were asked to keep a personal journal in which they were to represent (write or draw) a difficult situation they experienced each week. The objective of this was to recognize what experiences or events affected or possibly promoted academic resilience in their daily life. The students also had a space each Tuesday in which they shared personal ideas they felt or perceived. Planned activities by the researcher were carried out in each week's session to attempt to address the research questions.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following techniques were used to analyze the data: exploratory data analysis for interviews, participant diaries and activity sessions, and a reflective research diary after interviews and sessions. It is important to point out that the case study eventually focused only on three students: Mateo, Pablo and Miguel (high, average and low academic achievers). This is because not all the information could be gathered from all participants. The majority of information was collecterd from these participants.

Interviews-sessions-diaries analysis. Each interview, weekly sessions with the students and the reflective diary were transcribed and analyzed for recurring themes, such as risk factors and protective factors. These themes are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 represents the environmental risk factors and protective factors resulting from exploratory analysis of interviews, sessions and diaries from the participants.

Table 1. Environmental risk factors and protective factors

Academic Resilience	
Environmental Risk Factors	**Environmental protective factors**
Poverty	Low family stress
Family dysfunction	Child relationship
Family conflict	Parenting skills
Lower economic status	Child attachment
Lack of social support	Role models
Marital conflict and domestic violence	High expectations
Harsh discipline	Family support
Parent is less supportive, affectionate and playful	Family guidance
Lack of positive parenting skills	Opportunities for meaningful family involvement
	Respectful communication

Table 2 illustrates individual factors fostering academic resilience resulting from exploratory analysis of interviews, sessions and diaries from the participants.

Table 2. Individual factors

Academic Resilience
Individual Factors
Optimism
Empathy
Self-steem
Direction or mission
Determination
Perseverance
Motivation
Problem Solving Skills

Crtitical Thinking
Autonomy
Internal locus of control
Sense of purpose

In this case study, content analysis was undertaken after all interviews, sessions and diaries were conducted and transcribed. First, risk factors and protective factors were identified. Afterwards, a list of environmental risk and protective factors that emerged from the data collection was created. Each of them was interpreted. Finally, a summary of the main features was written in three individual "stories" from the results of the instruments used in the research, combining findings from all the data collected (interviews, sessions and dairies). Significant concepts were identified and highlighted as well as problems, and areas for additional research.

Results

The case study reveals how different risk factors related to the family environment and the individual characteristics of three students from *El Triunfo* school affect academic resilience in terms of students achieving high educational outcomes despite adversity, and how specific protective factors as family guidance, parenting skills and positive role models develop resilience skills in vulnerable teenage students.

Case 1: Mateo

Mateo was born in 2001 as the first of three children to married parents. Mateo's parents both left school at the age of 11. Mateo's parents work at a mini-market close to their home. They live in one of the poorest, most violent, and overcrowded neighborhoods in Bogota.

Mateo's parents show keen interest in his education. Mateo has performed well in all academic tests. He has shown no behavior problems. His teachers rated his performance as either "average," or "above" in all subjects. Based on the results of the five sessions and the interviews with his mother and his teachers, Mateo demonstrates in the characteristics of an individual with academic resilience despite the experience of socio-economic adversity, taking into account his academic average and his two consecutively grades of *Excelencia*.

Mateo's family environment appears to be stable and supportive, based on the interview with Mateo's mother. She described some activities they do on

weekends and how they help their children complete homework. His mother takes an active interest and involvement in Mateo's education including career planning. The mathematics teacher expressed that Mateo is an independent and autonomous student and that his family has strong and clear agreements about schoolwork. The teacher reported that she truly believes that Mateo shows interest for learning.

As a result of the findings, we can describe this case as an academically resilient student because it is possible to consistently find a larger network of social support and higher satisfaction with that support. The student demonstrates a more autonomy-oriented and open climate in his tasks. The findings also illustrate the principle of resilience as a successful adaptation despite risk and adversity, Mateo is in a high ability group, he enjoys school, and is described by his teachers as a well-behaved boy. He shows a realistic appreciation of his abilities and pReferences and he knows what he wants to achieve in life.

Case 2: Pablo

Pablo is the youngest of five children was born in 2001. His parents both have the same level of education, and both completed university studies. At this moment, his mother is completing a specialist degree in psychology. His father works as paralegal for the Mayor's Office of Bogota, and his mother works in a call center. At age two, Pablo's family lived in rented, overcrowded accommodation, but by age nine, they had moved into a new rented home. They live in a house with a cousin, so there are eight people in the house, as well as two pets.

His parents are interested in Pablo's education. His mother reported, "If he has to make a poster, or model, he calls me at the office, tells what is needed to be done and I buy the materials if necessary, and I also ask him to make a draft of the assignment and as soon as I get home. I help him with the project, which is usually drawing the posters with markers, for him"[4] Pablo has not performed well in all academic tests, and he has shown some behavioral problems. The high school coordinator has a system to follow up students that arrive late to class, and Pablo has the worst attendance record of his grade. His teachers rated his performance as "on the average" in all subjects.

[4] Original Spanish: Si tiene que hacer una cartelera o una maqueta, me llama a la oficina me cuenta que hay que hacer yo compro los materiales si es necesario y le pido que haga un borrador de lo que necesita y cuando yo llegue a la casa le ayudo hacer lo que necesita, usualmente es pasar a marcador las carteleras.

Based on the results of the five sessions, the diary, and the interviews with his mother and his teachers, Pablo demonstrates the characteristics of an individual with factors that increase resilience, namely optimism and empathy, but shows a lack of determination and perseverance. In terms of the family environment, his family demonstrates a supportive family environment evident in the activities they do on weekends. Depending on the situation, the family organizes a plan to keep family bonds strong. For most of the teachers, it is difficult to hold a meeting with his mother to talk about Pablo's difficulties. She cannot attend these meetings because of her job and studies.

As a result of the findings, we can categorize Pablo as a resilient student who is not successful academically. His family shows some protective factors that increase resilience, but academically Pablo does not show most of the self factors. Pablo's family does not evidence these environmental protective factors, including parenting skills (supervision and discipline), low family stress and family guidance. Pablo's case illustrates the exent to which parenting skills have a direct impact on academic resilience, but also how the individual characteristics foster resilience as well.

Case 3: Miguel

Miguel was born in 2001 as the third of three children to married parents. Miguel's mother left school in ninth grade. Miguel's father studied a technological program at *SENA*, the national vocational training institute. Miguel's mother works as a secretary and his father is a car mechanic.

His parents in 2014 did not show a strong interest in Miguel's education. The mathematics teacher reported in the interview that Miguel's parents were just in the process of asking what is going on when there is nothing to do because he has not learned what he needed to learn during the school year. "This is the typical case in which the parents start showing interest about their children's performance around the months of October or November[5] when they are about to fail the school year, I ask myself, every time the parents come worried running to my door, asking what are assignments they need to turn in order to pass, where were those parents months ago to show their support their child needed?"[6]

[5] The regular school calendar in Colombia goes from February to November.

[6] Este es el tipico caso en el que los papás se empiezan a interesar por sus hijos cuando ven que ya en octubre o noviembre van a perder el año, yo me pregunto siempre que llegan angustiados a mi puerta a saber que trabajos debe entregar donde estan sus papas hace meses para brindarle el apoyo que necesitaba.

Miguel has not performed well on any academic test, and he failed the academic year. He showed some behavior problems, was absent to different classes, and did not complete homework. His teachers rated his performance as "below average" in all subjects.

Based on the results of the five sessions, the dairy and the interviews with his father, his sister and his teachers, Miguel demonstrates the characteristics of an individual with a lack of optimism, direction or mission, self-esteem, determination or perseverance.

In terms of the family environment, his family demonstrated a lack of a stable and supportive family environment. His family does not appear to take an active interest and involvement in Miguel's education including career planning. His mathematics, arts and music teachers have the same point of view about Miguel's family.

As a result of the findings, this case demonstrates a non-academically resilient student because of the lack of environmental protective factors such as low family stress, child relationship, parenting skills, child attachment, high expectations, family support, family guidance and opportunities for meaningful family involvement.

Conclusions

This case study sought to understand how and which risk factors related to the family environment affect the academic outcome of six students from *El Triunfo* school, and also to explore how and which protective factors compensate specific risk factors. The findings of this study in general support the literature reviewed. From the data analyzed from this study, it was possible to conclude that a powerful predictor of the academic outcome for children is the quality of the immediate care-giving environment. According to Schoon (2006), there are two broad sets of variables working as protective factors that may impede adverse experiences. These factors include characteristics of the individual and the family environment, also presented in the data analysis and interpretation. For this reason, in this case study, risk and protective factors are characteristics of the individual and characteristics of the environment. In the analysis of information of the six participants, the study can conclude that there are specific family and individual risk factors that affect academic outcomes, and that protective factors from the family environment that minimize the effect of different risk factors:

- *Caring and support:* According to Chung (2008),"Despite the burden of parental, family discord, or chronic poverty, most children identified as resilient have had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least

one person [not necessarily the mother or father] who provided them with stable care" (p. 46).

- *High expectations:* Associated with high expectations are different family characteristics such as structure, discipline, and clear rules and regulations. Schoon (2006) argues that families that establish high expectations for their children's behavior from a nearly age play a role in developing resiliency.
- *Encouragement of children's participation:* Rutter (1993) argues that families that create environments characterized by the qualities of caring, high expectations, and opportunities for participation provide support and opportunities for their children.
- *Parenting strategies:* One of the factors most consistently associated with positive academic outcomes is responsive parenting. According to Masten and Reed (2002), a wide variety of specific parenting practices are associated with children's positive adjustment, including consistent discipline, responsiveness, structure, and monitoring.
- Parent–child relationship quality: The quality of the parent–child relationship has been examined in relation to positive child academic outcomes. Luthar (2003) argues that having a good relationship with a parent prepares the child to engage in healthy productive relationships with other people in the social environment.

Grouping the students based on their academic performance the study determinate the following:

"Average and above" students. Gonzalez and Padilla (as cited in Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003) found that students' sense of belonging to school was a predictor of academic resilience. High-achieving students reported reading more pages per week, doing more homework, and having higher grades than low-achieving students.

Based on the present study, Mateo is an academically resilient student. He has similar protective factors including parenting skills (supervision and discipline), child attachment, role models, high expectations, family support, family guidance, opportunities for meaningful family involvement and respectful communication.

"Average" students. According to Johnson (2008) local activities and relationships are also important because potential and reinforce school structures and processes in which transform resilient students relationships into better support. Pablo showed some protective factors like family support, opportunities for meaningful family involvement and respectful

communication, but what made the difference between him and the "average and above" students was the individual characteristics, Pablo presents a lack of optimism, perseverance and determination.

"Below average" students. Johnson (1997) proposes that human relationships are the most critical factor in student resiliency. Miguel is not resilient a student because he does not succeed academically in school despite the presence of adversity. In addition, with Miguel, it was difficult to collect all the information, his parents did not attend the meeting, and he did not present his diary or attend the weekly sessions. In this specific case, there are more risk factors than protective factors that affect Miguel's academic outcome. Finally, resilience comes from supportive relationships with parents, peers and others, as well as cultural beliefs and traditions that help people handle with the inevitable problems in life. Wright and Masten (2005) argues that "every child capable of developing a resilient "mind-set" will be able to deal more effectively with stress and pressure, to deal with everyday challenges, to develop clear and realistic goals to solve problems" (p. 4).

Limitations of the study included a lack of data sources and the limited time available for in-depth interviews, sessions and dairy register. Further research includes four next steps: 1) design a tool to collect information from all families students; 2) define clear support strategies for families who do not show protective factors; 3) create sessions for parents focused on how to foster academic resilience; and 4) teacher coaching and training.

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Author

* **Luisa Fernanda Rojas Flórez** is an industrial designer from Jorge Tadeo Lozano University and Bilingual Education Specialist from *ÚNICA (Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana)*. She has worked as a professor in industrial design program at the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University. She was also part of the first cohort of *Enseñar por Colombia*, teaching English in elementary and high school in a disadvantaged neighborhood school in Bogotá. She currently work is at a non-profit organization, Volunteers Colombia, where she is the pedagogical coordinator.

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Foreign Language Learning Strategies in the Context of STEM Education[1]

Estrategias de Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras en el Contexto de la Educación STEM

Turgay Han[2]*

Kafkas University, Turkey

Abstract

This study aims at providing an insightful evaluation of the EFL strategies used by first-year STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) students, and their perceptions of their own use of strategies. The 147 participants were undergraduate level, first-year engineering students at a state university in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24. They took the Young Learners' Language Strategy Use Survey (LSS). In addition, a sub-sample of students was interviewed about the strategies they used in learning language skills. The results showed that the students tended to employ various strategies in learning different language skills, but did not frequently use or practice these strategies. Further, vocabulary strategies and pronunciation skills were believed to be effective in conveying and deciphering meaning. These results suggest that language learning strategy training should be provided in STEM education.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, engineering students, English as a foreign language

[1] Received: July 15, 2015 / Accepted: September 10, 2015

[2] turgayhan@kafkas.edu.tr

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo proporcionar una profunda evaluación de las estrategias en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera utilizadas por los estudiantes de primer año de STEM (Ciencias, tecnologías, ingenierías y matemáticas) y sus propias percepciones sobre el uso de estas estrategias. Los participantes fueron 147 estudiantes de primer año de la carrera de ingeniería de una Universidad en Turquía, cuyas edades oscilaban entre los 18 y 24 años. Se aplicó el instrumento (Young Learners´ Language Strategy Use Survey) para identificar las estrategias de aprendizaje utilizadas por los participantes. Asimismo se seleccionó una submuestra de estudiantes para entrevistarlos sobre las estrategias que utilizan en el proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes solían emplear diversas estrategias en el aprendizaje de idiomas, sin embargo no las utilizan con frecuencia. Además, se asume que las estrategias de vocabulario y habilidades de pronunciación son eficaces en la transmisión y comprensión del significado de las palabras. Estos hallazgos sugieren que es necesario proporcionar entrenamiento en estrategias para el aprendizaje de idiomas en la educación en ciencia, tecnología, ingeniería y matemáticas (STEM).

Palabras clave: Estrategias de aprendizaje de una lengua, estudiantes de ingeniería, inglés como lengua extranjera

Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo proporcionar uma profunda avaliação das estratégias no aprendizado de inglês como língua estrangeira utilizada pelos estudantes de primeiro ano de STEM (Ciências, tecnologias, engenharias e matemática) e suas próprias percepções sobre o uso destas estratégias. Os participantes foram 147 estudantes de primeiro ano da carreira de engenharia de uma Universidade na Turquia, cujas idades oscilavam entre os 18 e 24 anos. Aplicou-se o instrumento (Young Learners´ Language Strategy Use Survey) para identificar as estratégias de aprendizado utilizadas pelos participantes. Da mesma forma se selecionou uma subamostra de estudantes para entrevistá-los sobre as estratégias que utilizam no processo de aprendizado de idiomas. Os resultados mostraram que os estudantes tinham o hábito empregar diversas estratégias no aprendizado de idiomas, porém não as utilizam com frequência. Além disso, se assume que as estratégias de vocabulário e habilidades de pronúncia são eficazes na transmissão e compreensão do significado das palavras. Estas descobertas sugerem que é necessário proporcionar treinamento em estratégias para o aprendizado de idiomas na educação em ciência, tecnologia, engenharia e matemática (STEM).

Palavras chave: Estratégias de aprendizado de uma língua, estudantes de engenharia, inglês como língua estrangeira

Introduction

Strategies are deliberate observations and mental actions actively employed by learners to improve their language learning, for example, observing how others take notes in a lecture and thinking over one's own background before engaging with a text (Anderson, 2005). The term has also been used interchangeably with behaviors, tactics, and techniques (Ellis, 2008). However, there is no fully agreed upon classification of strategies nor a thorough scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies (Oxford, 1990). Ellis (2008) describes the most widely accepted strategy classifications: those made by O'Malley and Chamot (2010) (e.g. cognitive, metacognitive and social-affective learning strategies), and Oxford (1990) (e.g. direct and indirect strategies).

Further, several researchers have examined the robust link between strategy use and L2 proficiency (e.g. Huang & Nisbet, 2014; Kayaoğlu, 2013; Kouritzin, 2012). However, the literature indicates that very little research has specifically targeted foreign language learning strategies (LLS) used by STEM students in content-based instruction. In this sense, this study aims to bridge this research gap by examining foreign LLS employed by engineering students who had previously received English language instruction and were receiving content-based engineering instruction at a Turkish state university.

The study posed these questions: What strategies do the engineering students frequently employ while learning English-as-a-foreign language and how do they perceive them? Further, the following sub-research questions were asked: What are the strategies students frequently use in learning and employing each language skill (e.g. speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar)? How do the students perceive their strategy use?

Literature Review

Inventories Used in LLS Research

Several inventories and surveys have been devised to examine language learning strategies (LLS). The most frequently referred to in the literature include Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Several research studies on LLS have benefited from SILL (e.g. Demirel, 2012; Patil & Karekatti, 2012) for the purpose of providing "a general picture of the individual learner's typical strategy use, rather than a specific portrayal of the strategies used by the learner on a particular language task" (Oxford, 1999, p.114). It has been used in different language contexts and levels of study

(Oxford, 1999). The great advantage SILL is to provide reliable and valid data (Anderson, 2005). Likert-type items in the SILL are classified into two main, and six sub-categories of strategies: direct strategies (e.g. memory-related, cognitive, and compensatory), and indirect strategies (e.g. metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) (Oxford, 1999). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency index of the 80-item version of the scale in EFL/ESL or translated contexts is between .94 and .98.The reliability of the 50-item version of the SILL is .89 and .90 when administered in English in EFL contexts (Oxford, 1999).

Another more sophisticated taxonomy is Purpura's (1999), which examines the psychometric properties of cognitive and metacognitive LLS (e.g. comprehending, retrieval and memory strategies) through the applications of the Structural Equation Model approach. The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002) is another commonly used Likert-type scale, which examines metacognitive strategies used while reading in the target language. It includes three sections: global reading, problem solving reading strategies, and reading support strategies. SORS has a well-established psychometric property and a reliability co-efficiency of .93. Finally, Cohen and Oxford's (2002) Young Learners' Language Strategy Use Survey (LSS) defines strategies regarding language skills. This taxonomy uses 76 items, which are constructed to examine strategy uses in learning language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and other language features including vocabulary and translation.

Content Based Instruction (CBI) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education

STEM is an acronym coined in the competitive and modern world and mostly refers to interdisciplinary science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. These four areas are entangled rather than separated into four disciplines because these skills, required in real world applications, are considered for success. STEM education mostly aims to support undergraduate level students in developing the skills needed for a STEM career, which responds to the need for competent professionals in the real world (Reeve, 2014). For a long time, language course content has been selected from a particular profession or academic discipline, such as that of airline pilots or computers scientists. This is because this type of CBI enables the integration of language and content learning, and contributes to the naturalness of content for language instruction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Further, CBI "speed[s] up the learning and teaching of the second language in question" (Van Els, 2005, p. 973). This tendency may be a result of the position of English as the language of technology around the globe. The professional world and the labor market in several fields force

students to have not only technical competencies, but also a strong command of English, the lingua franca of science and technology today (Gimenoa, Seiza, Siqueiraa, & Martínez, 2010).

Research into LLS

Several studies on LLS have been conducted in the last three decades (e.g. Anderson 2003; Cohen 1998; Ellis, 2008; Huang & Nisbet, 2014; Kayaoğlu, 2013; Kouritzin, 2012; Naiman, Fröhlich, & Todesco, 1978; Oxford, 1990). Some mainly investigated learners' engagement towards learning new things, and the strategies they frequently employed to understand, memorize and retrieve information (e.g. Oxford, 1990). Others compared more successful language learners to those less successful, and identified the qualities of good learners in terms of LLS (e.g. Kayaoğlu, 2013).

Typically, there is generally a robust link between strategy use and L2 proficiency. Some learners are better at foreign and second language learning than others even though they receive the same education in the same setting (Lee, 2010). It has also been argued that less successful learners do not generally show considerable progress due to their repeated use of the same strategies. On the other hand, successful language learners possess a variety of strategies ready to be employed in different occasions (Anderson, 2005). Other studies that have frequently examined the relationship between strategy use and language learning performance, and specifically on ESL (Bialystok, 1979; Eslinger, 2000; Rubin, 1975; Vann & Abraham, 1987), and the link between different EFL proficiency levels and strategy use (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). More recent studies have examined LLS use from different perspectives: studying the link between reading strategy use and reading proficiency among adult ESL learners (Huang & Nisbet, 2014); the link between high and low learners' language learning beliefs and language strategy use (Kayaoğlu, 2013); male and female foreign language learners' LLS (Tercanlıoğlu, 2004); the link between LLS, gender and academic achievement (Demirel, 2012); and the link between explicit metacognitive strategy instruction and EFL reading comprehension (Durgun, 2010).

Regarding STEM education, very few studies have examined LLS used by science and engineering tract students (Cheng, Xu & Ma, 2007; Kouritzin, 2012; Minh & Intraraprasert, 2012; Patil & Karekatti, 2012). Among the first of such studies, Cheng, Xu and Ma (2007) investigated engineering students' LLS while learning English. Questionnaires were used to investigate their strategy use, frequency of strategy use and utilization of learning strategies in practice. The findings indicated that students frequently used more cognitive strategies than social/affective strategies, and metacognitive strategies were

employed less often. Further, the result suggested that participants believed in the positive effect of strategy use on language learning.

In another study, Minh and Intraraprasert (2012) investigated language-learning strategies used by science-oriented students in Vietnam. Thirty students majoring in science, technology and health science in six different Vietnamese universities were interviewed to extract a LLS inventory to represent the strategies they used. The results suggested two main categories of strategies: language skills enhancement and general language knowledge enhancement.

Following Minh and Intrarapraseet, Patil and Karekatti (2012) examined LLS employed by engineering students and their perceptions on the use of strategies in learning English in the Indian context. The SILL (Oxford, 1990) was used to collect data from 60 engineering students from four engineering colleges. The findings indicate that students prefer metacognitive, cognitive, compensatory and social strategies, but they rarely use memory and affective strategies. Further, students are not aware of the benefits of using LLS to learn English.

Finally, Kouritzin (2012) investigated the similarity between studying foreign languages and the study of STEM subjects in the Canadian context. The findings showed that STEM lead to greater opportunities when compared to foreign language study, regardless of whether the students receive foreign language study or not. It was found that the knowledge of a foreign language was not necessary for business or social success in Canada, and that English was an international language of science.

In the Turkish CBI context, the medium of instruction and the course content related to professional fields are in English at several universities (e.g. BAU, BOUN, ITU). However, in the Turkish research context, to the best of our knowledge, there has been little substantial research that specifically selects its target sample from STEM majors at the undergraduate level. Only Kayaoğlu (2011) has investigated EFL physics-track students' language beliefs and approaches to language learning. The participants were taking foundation EFL courses in a Turkish state university. In this study, the participants responded to Horwitz's (1987) 34-item Beliefs about Language Learning inventory. The results indicated that the students frequently believed that foreign language learning requires a special ability, a good ear, and good memory skills. The students' beliefs and their fixed ideas about aspects of learning foreign language impacted their LLS.

Briefly, foreign language learners try to employ several different strategies to complete language learning tasks such as reading or writing. In

this sense, they could be successful in completing the tasks if they employed the appropriate LLS (Richard, 1994 cited in Lee, 2010). The above review has shown that very little research has specifically targeted foreign LLS use by STEM students in content-based instruction.

Methodology

Research Design

This mixed methods study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Specifically, using the convergent parallel design, the researcher concurrently collected the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out separately, and then the results were merged to assess the general interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Context and Participants

The participants were 147 first-year students studying in different undergraduate level engineering departments at a Turkish state university. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24. Students took an intensive English course in the preparatory program before starting their faculty education in which they attended several content-based courses in English. The medium of instruction and exams were conducted in English. Students were tested using a criterion-referenced framework designed by the School of Foreign Languages at the university. The test included two sections, the first which tested their speaking and writing skills and the second which tested their listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary skills. All the participants passed this exam based on criterion-referenced assessment. Table 1. shows the participants' profile.

Table 1. Participants' profile

Department	f	%	f	%	age
Software/Computer Engineering	24	16.3	11	7.5	18-24
Metallurgical and Material Engineering	13	8.8	29	19.7	
Automotive engineering	72	49	58	39.5	
Mechanical and Machine engineering	12	8.2	39	26.5	
Electric and electronic engineering	11	7.5	9	6.1	
Energy system engineering.	15	10.2	1	.7	
Total	147	100	147	100	

Data Collection Instruments

Cohen and Oxford's (2002) Young Learners' Language Strategy Use Survey (LSS) was used in this study. This 76-item taxonomy investigates strategy use in different skills (e.g. listening, speaking, reading writing, and other language features including vocabulary and translation). The reliability checks are positive. The reliability coefficients are: Learning Structure and Vocabulary (r = .85), Speaking (r = .77), Listening (r = .83), Reading (r = .67), and Asking for Clarification (r = .79) (Paige, Cohen & Shively, 2004)

A reliability check for this present study was also conducted. The results showed that the total reliability is very high (r = .925). Further, while the reliability coefficients were over .7 for listening (r=.79), speaking (r=.78), reading (r=.78) and writing (r=.75), the reliability coefficients were lower than .7 for vocabulary (r=58) and translation (r=55).

Data for this study was collected in two phases. First, 147 students responded to the 76 items on the scale. Then, a focus group interview was conducted with a random sub-sample of four students. These participants were randomly selected from volunteers who were studying at different departments to maximize differences among the participants. Six interview questions were pre-determined and directed to the students after they took the survey. The questions related to the strategies used in learning every language skill and their individual experiences. The students discussed their perceptions about strategy use. The interview was conducted in Turkish to maximize participant responses. The interviews were voice recorded and then transcribed.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

A series of descriptive statistical analyses (e.g. the mean and standard deviation) were performed over the quantitative data. The purpose of conducting these statistical analyses was to determine which LLS were most frequently used.

A coding and classifying approach (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009) was used for the qualitative data analysis. First, the student responses determined to be pertinent to the research questions were arranged together. They were categorized, and then analyzed according to recurring themes (Huang, Cunningham, & Finn, 2010).

In terms of the focus groups, the interviews were conducted with the sub-sample of four interviewees in Turkish. First, the voice-recorded interviews were transcribed. Then, the researcher translated the students' responses from Turkish to English. The aim of conducting the interview in the learners' native

language (e.g. Turkish) was to encourage more detailed responses. Finally, the analysis was made based on recurring themes following Gay, Mills and Airasian's (2009) coding and classifying approach. These analyses were used to answer the following research question: How do the students perceive of their strategy use in learning English-as-a-foreign language?

Results

The quantitative results are presented first, followed by the qualitative results. The quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics (e.g. mean and standard deviations of strategy use for each skill). The tables provide the descriptive statistics for the data obtained from responses used in the analysis. Finally, the analysis of the focus group interview is presented.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data was used to answer the following research question: What are the strategies students frequently use in learning and practicing each language skill (e.g. speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar)?

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for listening strategies

	if the statement really describes you		if the statement isn't like you		if the statement is somewhat you like				general mean	general s.d.
	f	%	F	%	F	%	mean	Sd.		
What I do to listen more…										
1. I listen to the radio in the language.	45	30.6	44	29.9	58	39.5	,904*	0,84		
2. I watch TV shows in the language.	46	31.3	35	23.8	66	44.9	,789	0,87		
3. I go to movies that use the language.	43	29.3	41	27.9	63	42.9	,850	0,84		
4. I listen to the language if I am in a or go see movies in the language.	54	36.7	29	19.7	64	43.5	,762	0,90		
5. If I hear people speaking the language, I listen	47	32.0	41	27.9	59	40.1	,878	0,85		
What I do to understand sounds										
6. I find sounds in the language that are like sounds in English.	41	27.9	38	25.9	68	46.3	,796	0,84		
7. I try to remember unfamiliar sounds I hear.	49	33.3	27	18.4	71	48.3	,701	0,89		
8. I ask the person to repeat the new sound.	41	27.9	24	16.3	82	55.8	,606	0,87		
9. I listen to the rise and fall of sounds (the music of the language).	56	38.1	25	17	66	44.9	,721	0,91	-781	.0825
What I do to understand what I hear										
10. I listen for the important words.	48	32.7	44	29.9	55	37.4	,925*	0,84		
11. I listen for what seems interesting.	49	33.3	25	17	73	49.7	,674	0,90		
12. I listen for words that are repeated.	43	29.3	32	21.8	72	49	,728	0,87		
What I do if I still don't understand what someone says:										
13. I ask the person to repeat.	43	29.3	42	28.6	62	42.2	,864	0,84		
14. I ask the person to slow down.	44	29.9	35	23.8	68	46.3	,776	0,86		
15. I ask a question.	48	32.7	30	20.4	69	46.9	,735	0,88		
16. I guess the meaning from the person's tone (such as angry or happy).	48	32.7	35	23.8	64	43.5	,803	0,87		
17. I guess the meaning from how the person moves or stands.	52	35.4	32	21.8	63	42.9	,789	0,88		
18. I guess the meaning from what I heard before.	55	37.3	28	19	64	43.5	,755	0,90		

Table 2 provides the detailed descriptive statistics for the responses given for the listening strategy category. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across each strategy item, indicating that students employ similar listening strategies. The mean scores are close to 1.0, indicating that the students use these listening strategies to some extent. The standard deviations are slightly below 1.0, indicating that the students employ similar listening strategies. Further, item #1 and item #10 received higher mean scores, indicating that the students mostly listen to the radio and pay attention to important words when listening.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for vocabulary strategies

	if the statement really describes you		**if the statement isn't like you**		**if the statement is somewhat you like**				**General mean**	**General s.d**
What I do to memorize new words	f	%	F	%	F	%	mean	Sd		
19. I group the words by type (e.g.. nouns. verbs. adjectives).	54	36.7	28	19	64	43.5	,748	.89968	.704	.0582
20. I match the sound of the new word with the sound of a word I know.	42	28.6	25	17	80	54.4	,626	.87655		
21. I use rhymes to remember new words.	58	39.5	25	17	64	43.5	,735	.91320		
22. I make a picture of new words in my mind.	56	38.1	21	14.3	70	47.6	,667	.92406		
23. I write the new word in a sentence.	44	29.9	32	21.8	71	48.3	,735	.86816		
24. I write the new word on a card.	36	24.5	36	24.5	75	51	,735	.83030		
25. I go over new words several times at first.	47	32	22	15	78	53.1	,619	.90077		
26. Later I go to remind myself about words I learned earlier	43	29.3	35	23.8	69	46.9	,769	.85769		

Table 3 provides the detailed descriptive statistics for the responses given for vocabulary strategy use. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across strategy items, indicating that each student employs similar vocabulary strategies. The mean scores are approximately 1.0, indicating that the students use these vocabulary strategies mentioned above in the Table. Again, the standard deviations are slightly below 1.0, indicating that the students employ very similar vocabulary strategies.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for speaking strategies

	if the statement really describes you		if the statement isn't like you		if the statement is somewhat you like				General mean	General s.d
	f	%	F	%	F	%	mean	sd		
What I do to practice speaking										
27. I make the sounds of the language until I can say them well.	57	38.8	27	18.4	63	42.9	,755	.90567		
28. I imitate the way native speakers talk.	56	38.1	35	23.8	56	38.1	,857	.87586		
29. I say new expressions over to myself.	48	32.7	32	21.8	67	45.6	,762	.87798		
30. I practice using new grammar forms when I talk.	52	35.4	29	19.7	66	44.9	,748	.89392		
What I do to talk with other people:										
31. I start conversations.	53	36.1	25	17	69	46.9	,701	.90757		
32. I change the subject if I don't have the words I need.	53	36.1	26	17.7	68	46.3	,714	.90459		
33. I plan what I am going to say.	55	37.4	28	19	64	43.5	,755	.90072	.761	.0630
34. I ask the other person to correct me when I talk.	57	38.8	33	22.4	57	38.8	,837	.88364		
When I can't think of a word or phrase I want to say:										
35. I ask the person to help me.	49	33.3	30	20.4	68	46.3	,741	.88575		
36. I try to say it a different way.	49	33.3	29	19.7	69	46.9	,728	.88858		
37. I use words from my own language.	50	34	29	19.7	68	46.3	,735	.89057		
38. I use words from my own language, but utter them with sounds from the new language.	51	34.7	24	16.3	72	49	,674	.90660		
39. I move my hands or body so the person will understand me.	51	34.7	40	27.2	56	38.1	,891	.85540		

Table 4 provides the detailed descriptive statistics for the responses given for speaking strategy use. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across strategy items, indicating that students employ similar speaking strategies. The mean scores are somewhat near 1.0, indicating that the students use above mentioned speaking strategies. Again, the standard deviations are slightly below 1.0, indicating that the students employ very similar speaking strategies.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for reading strategies

	if the statement really describes you		if the statement isn't like you		if the statement is somewhat you like				General mean	General s.d
	f	%	F	%	F	%	Mean	sd		
What I do to read more										
40. I read a lot in the language.	52	35.4	28	19	67	45.6	,735	.89699		
41. I read for fun in the language.	49	33.3	26	17.7	72	49	,688	.89673		
42. I find things to read that interest me.	51	34.7	35	23.8	61	41.5	,823	.87319		
43. I look for things to read that are not too hard	57	38.8	24	16.3	66	44.9	,714	.91580		
What I do to understand what I read										
44. I skim over a reading to get the main idea.	56	38.1	38	25.9	53	36.1	,898	.86380		
45. I look for important facts.	64	43.5	25	17	57	39.5	,850	1.230*		
46. I read things more than once.	54	36.7	31	21.1	62	42.2	,789	.88968		
47. I look at the pictures and what is under the pictures.	54	36.7	30	20.4	63	42.9	,776	.89308		
48. I look at the headings.	40	27.2	35	23.8	72	49	,748	.84818	.763	.0830
49. I think about what will come next in the reading.	49	33.3	16	10.9	82	55.8	,551	.92006		
50. I stop to think about what I just read.	51	34.7	29	19.7	67	45.6	,742	.89235		
51. I underline parts that seem important.	48	32.7	27	18.4	72	49	,694	.89167		
52. I mark the reading in different colors to help me understand.	51	34.7	29	19.7	67	45.6	,741	.89235		
53. I check to see how much I understood.	80	54.4	24	16.3	43	29.3	,871	.88243		
What I do when I don't understand what I read										
54. I guess the meaning by using clues from other parts of the passage.	55	37.4	31	21.1	61	41.5	,796	.89042		
55. I use a dictionary to find the meaning.	48	32.7	34	23.1	65	44.2	,789	.87207		

Table 5 provides the detailed descriptive statistics for the responses given for reading strategy use. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across strategy items, indicating that students employ similar reading strategies. The mean scores are somewhat near 1.0, indicating that the students use the above mentioned reading strategies. Again, with the exception of item

#45, standard deviations are slightly below 1.0, indicating that the students employ very similar reading strategies and differ only in looking for facts to understand what they have read.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for writing strategies

	if the statement really describes you		if the statement isn't like you		if the statement is somewhat you like				General mean	General s.d
	F	%	F	%	F	%	mean	sd		
What I do to write more										
56. If the alphabet is different. I practice writing it.	62	42.2	44	29.9	41	27.9	1,020*	.82761		
57. I take class notes in the language.	58	39.5	27	18.4	62	42.2	,762	.90619		
58. I get write other notes in the language.	57	38.8	26	17.7	64	43.5	,742	.90911		
59. I write letters to other people in the language.	44	29.9	36	24.5	67	45.6	,789	.85769		
60. I write papers in the language	56	38.1	26	17.7	65	44.2	,735	.90829		
What I do to write better										
61. I plan what I am going to write.	48	32.7	43	29.3	56	38.1	,912	.84223		
62. I use a dictionary or glossary.	46	31.3	36	24.5	65	44.2	,803	.86224		
63. I read what I wrote to see if it is good.	52	35.4	34	23.1	61	41.5	,816	.87761	.791	.0816
64. I ask someone to correct my writing.	57	38.8	30	20.4	60	40.8	,796	.89496		
65. I rewrite what I wrote to make it better.	45	30.6	27	28.4	75	51	,674	.88317		
66. I use the spell checker on the computer.	52	35.4	27	18.4	68	46.3	,721	.89999		
67. I use the grammar checker on the computer.	48	32.7	34	23.1	65	44.2	,789	.87207		
What I do if I cannot think of a word or phrase I want to write										
68. I ask someone for the word or phrase I need.	57	38.8	33	22.4	57	38.8	,837	.88364		
69. I try to say it in a different way.	58	39.5	25	17	64	43.5	,735	.91320		
70. I use words from my own language.	53	36.1	29	19.7	65	44.2	,755	.89527		
71. I use words from my own language but add new endings to those words.	57	38.8	28	19	62	42.2	,769	.90217		

Table 6 provides the detailed descriptive statistics for the responses given for writing strategies. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across strategy items, indicating that students employ similar reading strategies. The mean scores are somewhat near 1.0, indicating that students use the above mentioned reading strategies. Again, standard deviations are slightly below 1.0, indicating that students employ very similar reading strategies. The mean score is over 1.0 for the item #56, indicating that they mostly prefer practicing writing the alphabet when they know it is different.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for translation strategies

	if the statement really describes you		**if the statement isn't like you**		**if the statement is somewhat you like**				**General mean**	**General s.d.**
	F	%	F	%	F	%	mean	sd		
What I do when I translate										
72. I plan what I want to say or write in my language and then translate it into the new language.	47	32	40	27.2	60	40.8	,864	.85147		
73. I translate when reading to make sure I understand it.	51	34.7	34	23.1	55	37.4	,809	.87655		
74. While I am listening to someone, I translate parts of what they say into my own language to remember it.	58	39.5	34	23.1	55	37.4	,857	.87952	.871	.0545
What I do to think in the new language										
75. I put my language out of my mind.	50	40.1	34	23.1	54	36.7	,864	.87909		
76. I try to understand without translating.	57	38.8	42	28.6	48	32.7	,959	.84582		

Table 7 provides the detailed descriptive statistics for the responses given for translation strategies. Both the mean and standard deviations are very similar across strategy items, indicating that each student employs similar translation strategies. The mean scores are somewhat near 1.0, indicating that the students use these above mentioned translation strategies. Again, standard deviations are slightly below 1.0, indicating that students employ very similar translation strategies.

Briefly, the results are quite similar for all strategies. Although the descriptive statistical results suggest that the students use the above 76 language LLS similarly to some extent, they do not apply all these strategies with the same frequency.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Regarding the profile of the participants in the focus groups, Student B and Student D were mechanical engineering majors, Student A was a mechatronic/mechanical engineering major, and Student C was a computer/ software engineering major. When asked about their self-assessment of their L2 levels, the four students expressed that they had an intermediate level of English proficiency.

The analysis of the students' preferences on speaking skills indicated that they emphasized appropriate vocabulary choice and pronunciation.

> I try to pronounce words accurately and clearly. [Student A]
>
> First I check the meanings of words and then try to speaking using these words. [Student B]
>
> Generally I watch films and find words that I do not know. Then, I try to speak. [Student C]
>
> I generally try to pronounce words accurately. [Student D]

The students mostly reported that they try to understand spoken language using their lexicon and well-known words. A student emphasized that pronunciation is a clue to understand what is heard.

> I try to understand the whole speech departing from the meanings of each word that I know on the subject. [Student A]
>
> I try to solve pronunciations. [Student B]
>
> I learn new words and then try again to understand. [Student C]
>
> I try to understand depending on the meaning of words that I know. [Student D]

For reading comprehension, the students mostly prefer to employ a bottom-up strategy. In other words, they first focus on each word that they are acquainted with and then relate word meanings with each other based on the text context. A student reported that he/she first attempts to use a dictionary to find the meaning of unknown or new words and then reads the text a few times.

> I try to understand a text depending on the meaning of words that I know. [Student A]
>
> I select words then relate them with the whole text to understand it. [Student B]
>
> I find the meanings of words that I do not know well. Then, I try to understand the text by reading it repeatedly. [Student C]

I depart from the meanings of each word to understand a text. [Student D]

Regarding writing skills, the students mostly prefer to employ pre-writing strategies and attempt to find the meanings of new words. They then construct messages into sentences before writing.

First I imagine, then I carefully try to construct sentences using basic vocabulary based on my proficiency level. [Student A]

I use vocabulary strategically. [Student B]

First I design what I am going to write then try to write. [Student C]

First I find vocabulary that I do not know and then I focus on messages conveyed with sentences. [Student D]

When it comes to the challenges they experience for each skill, Student B and Student D reported that the most challenging skill is pronouncing words correctly. They try to cope with this through repeated practice. Student A reported that vocabulary retention poses a challenge for him/her and to overcome this sort of problem he/she prefers to learn vocabulary using sentences in context and using visual aids.

I forget the meanings of words that I learnt earlier, therefore I prefer to learn words using them in sentences and with visual aids rather than writing. [Student A]

I experience challenges with pronunciation yet I cannot do anything. [Student B]

While learning English I experience challenges in speaking and writing; so, I watch films and read books in English. [Student C]

I face difficulty in pronunciation, so I usually do exercises and revisions but I do not think that they are effective. [Student D]

Their opinions regarding how English should be learnt and taught are diverse. Student A states that using English in daily life may impact learning. Teachers should consider students' proficiency levels and help students to lean new vocabulary rather than teaching them only grammar. Student B emphasizes that teachers should avoid revisions. Student C gives utmost importance to speaking. Student D believes that teaching the same things repeatedly does not improve student language skills.

I think that we should place English in many aspects of our lives; as a result, we will encounter them continuously and then we would learn permanently. While teaching English, teachers should consider students' proficiency levels and help them to learn new vocabulary rather than grammar. [Student A]

While teaching English, revisions should be avoided. [Student B]

While teaching English, I think students should be helped to speak frequently. [Student C]

While teaching English, there is a monotonous situation and therefore I do not think that such a teaching will not contribute to learning. [Student D]

Briefly, although the students mostly use language learning strategies, they employ various strategies for different language skills. For speaking, they place emphasis on appropriate vocabulary choice and pronunciation. For writing skills, they mostly employ pre-writing strategies and attempt to find meanings of new words rather than construct messages in sentences before writing. Further, they have reported that vocabulary retention and pronunciation are the most challenging skills, and they follow rote-learning tactics for accuracy (e.g. repeating until remember). They try to cope with these problems by employing different strategies. Also, they suggest that language learning and teaching should be aligned with the students' learning styles and their learning pReferences.

Conclusion

The quantitative data analysis suggests that the engineering students employ various strategies in learning different language skills. The qualitative data analyses explained their strategy use. First, interview data analyses showed that pronunciation was both the most challenging and important skill. When speaking and listening in English, the students give importance to pronunciation strategies. Further, to be competent in pronunciation, practicing is perceived as a good strategy for accuracy.

Second, the students also considered vocabulary to be a challenging skill and a key factor in reading, listening, and writing skills. Appropriate vocabulary choice is reported to be a good strategy for speaking skills. Further, they also reported that they could understand spoken language better depending on the number of the words they knew in what they heard. To understand a written text, the students mostly began by focusing on each word they knew and then guessed the meanings of unfamiliar words based on context. Interestingly, the students related their ideas on language learning and teaching with their strategy use. That is, they mostly aligned their strategy use with their expectations regarding language learning and teaching. As such, they believed that using language skills in real-life contexts may be effective. Further, vocabulary was believed to be more important than grammar. Finally, they believed that revisions regarding grammar were not good for language learning progress.

There are two major limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed regarding this study. First, scant interview data might have limited the qualitative results of the study. Instead, more sophisticated qualitative methods could be used in data collection. For example, concurrent data could be collected through think-aloud protocols to provide deeper evidence of what students think while employing strategies. Several strategy studies have used this data collection procedure (e.g. Alhaisoni, 2012; Ohly, 2007). Additionally, observations may be a viable alternative to interviews. Second, this study collected data only from engineering students. Participants from different fields and from different educational levels in the STEM context may lead to different results.

In light of the above limitations, the following suggestions are proposed. First, identifying strategies and providing strategy training can foster interlanguage development indirectly (Ellis, 1997). The engineering students in this study reported that vocabulary was both of paramount importance in reading, listening, and writing, was a challenging skill as well. Vocabulary strategy training can be implemented within teaching programs. This suggestion is supported by previous research (e.g. Demirel, 2012). As reported by Ellis (1997). The results of the research on training on strategies and vocabulary learning suggested that different ways of meaning associations with new words or linking L1 words to a "mental image" that encompasses the meaning of L2 words can contribute to retention and recall. Other research has also suggested that training teachers to teach students language learning strategies would contribute to students' development (Demirel, 2012). Training students to use strategies plays an important role in fostering learner autonomy; learners become more autonomous as they take responsibility of their own learning (Ellis, 2007).

Second, the qualitative data of this study did not show any sign of students' awareness of the positive impact of strategy use on their language development. An earlier study found that engineering students are not well aware of the benefits of using LLS in learning English (Patil & Karekatti, 2012) even though another study indicated that students believe that strategy use has positive effects on language learning (Cheng, Xu& Ma, 2007). There are still contradictions among the results of studies. Some research has suggested that effective LLS training should be applied explicitly, integrated into regular class work activities (e.g. Chamot, 2004). Therefore, explicit strategy use training could be applied in STEM education contexts.

Overall, from the perspective of educational practice, this paper provides new experimental data on the topic. The research results might be included in the materials for teachers' continuing professional development programs and might be taken into account within foreign language course planning

procedure as far as STEM education is concerned. Finally, comparing students' EFL proficiency levels and strategy use based on gender is not within the scope of this study. Further research should include participants with varying EFL proficiency levels from different fields of STEM education.

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Author

* **Turgay Han** is Assistant Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, Kafkas University, Turkey. His areas of research center on ESOL learning and teaching, and EFL measurement and assessment issues.

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Transformation: A Model for Restructuring the Preparation of English Teachers in Ecuador[1]

Un Modelo para Reestructurar la Formación de Profesores de Inglés en Ecuador

M. Elisabeth Serrano, Cristina G. Vizcaíno, Daniel Cazco and Natalie A. Kuhlman[2]*

Universidad Laica Vicente Rocafuerte de Guayaquil, Universidad del Pacífico, Guayaquil and Quito, Ecuador, San Diego State University, USA

Abstract

As English has become the language of business, the economy and social media around the world, it is more and more necessary to start teaching English in schools. Countries such as Ecuador have seen the immediate need to review how they prepare teachers of English to meet this new demand. This article shares a reflection on the process of moving from an autonomous university preparation program to a unified approach based on international standards for teachers of English in Ecuador. This transformation is discussed from four perspectives: the US Embassy in Quito that organized the effort; the facilitator who guided the process; the universities that train English teachers and whose programs were to be revised; and the language institutes that provide intensive English instruction to all university students. These last two points of view are provided by two academics that have been part of the group that collaborated in the creation of the proposal. The end result is a new curriculum based on international EFL/ESL teacher standards and, most importantly, created through collaboration among different entities that had not previously worked together.

Keywords: Standards, collaborative educational programs, curricular change, standards-based curriculum, collaborative work.

[1] Received: July 15, 2015 / Accepted: October 16, 2015

[2] melisega@yahoo.com / cris_viz@hotmail.com / danielcazcom@hotmail.com / nkuhlman@mail.sdsu.edu

Resumen

Ya que el inglés se ha convertido en el lenguaje de los negocios, la economía y los medios de comunicación social en el mundo, es cada vez más necesario enseñar inglés en las escuelas y colegios. Países como Ecuador han visto la necesidad de revisar la forma en que preparan sus maestros de inglés para satisfacer esta nueva demanda. En este artículo se reflexiona sobre el proceso de pasar de programas individuales de cada Universidad a un programa unificado basado en estándares internacionales para la enseñanza de inglés. Este cambio se lo analiza desde cuatro perspectivas diferentes: la de la Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Quito que organizó este esfuerzo, la de la especialista que guio el proceso; la de las Universidades que preparan profesores de inglés y cuyos programas debían ser revisados y la de los institutos universitarios que dan clases intensivas de inglés a toda la comunidad universitaria. Estos dos últimos puntos de vista son proporcionados por dos académicos que colaboraron en el proceso de construcción de la propuesta. El producto final es un nuevo plan de estudios basado en estándares internacionales de EFL/ESL resultado del trabajo colaborativo entre diferentes entidades que no habían trabajado juntos previamente.

Palabras clave: Estándares, programas educativos colaborativos, cambio curricular, programa de estudios basado en estándares, trabajo colaborativo.

Resumo

Já que o inglês se converteu na linguagem dos negócios, a economia e os meios de comunicação social no mundo é cada vez mais necessário ensinar inglês nas escolas e colégios. Países como o Equador tem visto a necessidade imediata de revisar a forma em que preparam seus professores de inglês para satisfazer esta nova demanda. Este artigo dá a conhecer uma reflexão sobre o processo de passar de programas individuais de cada Universidade a um programa unificado baseado em padrões internacionais para o ensino de inglês. Esta mudança se analisou desde quatro perspectivas diferentes: a da Embaixada dos Estados Unidos em Quito, a qual organizou este esforço; a da especialista que guiou o processo; a das Universidades que preparam professores de inglês e cujos programas deviam ser revisados e a dos institutos universitários que oferecem aulas intensivas de inglês a toda a comunidade universitária. Estes dois últimos pontos de vista foram emitidos por dois acadêmicos que fizeram parte do grupo que colaborou no processo de construção da proposta. O produto final é um novo plano de estudos baseado em padrões internacionais de EFL/ESL resultado do trabalho colaborativo entre diferentes entidades que não tinham trabalhado juntos previamente.

Palavras chave: Padrões, programas educativos colaborativos, mudança curricular, currículos baseado em padrões, trabalho colaborativo.

Introduction

The teaching of English around the world has inspired the creation of new models for preparing those who will teach English in the public schools (Burns & Richards, 2012; Burns, 2005). In Ecuador, until recently, universities were both independent and autonomous in how they prepared their teachers, but that has changed. From 2011-2015 teacher educators from across the country have come together as unlikely collaborators to create a new international standards-based (TESOL, 2010) curriculum. Through the sponsorship and guidance of the U.S. Embassy in Quito and several of the educational agencies in Ecuador, this model represents a mind-set change that may result in more effective English teachers capable of increasing the language proficiency of their students.

The rationale for a standards-based model comes from many sources (e.g. Burke, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Genesee & Harper, 2010; Kuhlman, 2010; Kuhlman & Kneževic, 2013; Staehr Fenner & Kuhlman, 2013). In education, standards are generally defined as benchmarks for accountability (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996) or goals that students (or teachers) will attain. Standards call for consistency in what is expected from both students and teachers, and various assessment measurements are developed to determine if standards are being met. Darling-Hammond (1997) suggests that unless we move toward keeping more consistent goals rather than always making exceptions to the goals, our educational reforms "will surely evaporate in a very short time, long before good schooling spreads to the communities where it is currently most notable by its absence" (p. 211). Standards are a way to provide the stability and consistency, Darling-Hammond advocates.

Four perspectives on this process of standards and curriculum development are presented in this article. First, the representative from the U.S. Embassy reflects on how the project started and the role of the Embassy. The ESL Specialist brought by the U.S. Embassy to assist in the project reflects on her role as facilitator. From one of the participating universities, the previous coordinator of the English teacher preparation program reflects on why the project was needed, and how the experience changed the perception of autonomy by the universities. Finally, a coordinator from one of the university language institutes (which provide foreign language courses for all its university students) reflects on the changing role of university language institutes, and how collaboration rather than autonomy has changed their purpose.

From the U.S. Embassy Perspective

In 2011, while performing duties as the Cultural Specialist for the U.S. Embassy in Quito, I was asked to increase the portfolio of English language education programs. The emphasis was to look into ways in which the U.S. government could assist the efforts of the Ecuadorian government concerning English language learning in public schools. Until then, the English language programs portfolio had been reduced and limited to providing specialists to participate in English language conferences, a few professional development scholarships for Ecuadorian teachers, and a few English language-learning scholarships for low-income public school students.

The first steps were to find out the needs of the Ecuadorian government and the resources available from the Embassy, the Regional English Language Office and the Bureau of Education of the U.S. State Department. My research showed that the needs surpassed by far any of the programs, tools, and resources available from the U.S. Government. The Ecuadorian government was looking for ways to bring 7,000 quality English language teachers from abroad to teach in Ecuadorian public schools while training new Ecuadorian teachers to take their place in a few years. These teachers would be teaching high school students to comply with the Ecuadorian government mandate that all Ecuadorian high school students graduate with a proficiency level of English equivalent to B1 in the Common European Framework (2010) (low intermediate).

This goal seemed too ambitious even to try to attempt, not to mention the economic resources it would have demanded. Nevertheless, shortly after the meeting where the needs were expressed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ecuadorian government announced and actually devoted enough money in an attempt to accomplish the initial task of bringing well trained English teachers to Ecuador. Unfortunately, the project was not directed to the area of concern but to university level teachers. The program is still known as Prometheus. It is not focused on English language teaching or learning, however, rather on recruiting PhD's in every area of knowledge into Ecuadorian academia in order to increase the quality of university instruction.

Shortly after the Ministry of Education's (MOE) request for help, relations between the U.S. and Ecuador were disrupted due to the "wikileaks" of a cable the U.S. Ambassador sent to a colleague that was critical of Ecuador's political climate. The result was for the Ecuadorian government to request the immediate removal of the U.S. Ambassador. This meant an obvious rupture in official relations between the two countries. As a result, English language education became more important than ever before for the U.S. Embassy. This was seen as the only area where cooperation with the U.S. would be accepted

by the Ecuadorian government and was a means to maintain dialogue with government authorities. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the challenge required a creative and possibly long-term solution to the needs identified prior to the political rupture.

Considering the resources available, there was a proposal to offer the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Ecuador a specialist that could help assess the actual needs they had in English language education. The intent was that the specialist would guide the MOE to a strategy that could lead them to a more effective and efficient professional development program, with the ultimate goal of raising the level of English proficiency of Ecuadorian students. The MOE desired that the strategy include international English teaching/learning standards (e.g. TESOL, 2010) that could help bring students to the desired level of fluency by the end of high school.

For this reason, the English Language Programs Office of the U.S. State Department provided an ESL Specialist to work with MOE, with prior experience in various countries, and specifically, having developed a similar project in Uruguay (Kuhlman, 2010). This collaboration re-established a fruitful dialogue between the U.S. and Ecuadorian governments that later on helped to normalize their bilateral relations.

The specialist's work with the MOE over a six-month period demonstrated that it would not be enough simply to create standards for existing teachers. A long-term solution was necessary to address the lack of well-prepared teachers. Consequently, the U.S. Embassy-Quito submitted a request for her to return, this time to address the source of the problem that the Ecuadorian MOE faced, specifically that English teachers graduating from Ecuadorian universities were generally unprepared. This was the first step to a four-year project that resulted in the production of a universal curriculum for English language teaching majors in Ecuador. This became a collaborative project in which 32 universities initially signed on to participate, and 17 actually presented the proposal to the education authorities in charge of its validation, evaluation, and adoption.

When I submitted the proposal to the U.S. Embassy-Quito for consideration, I did not anticipate it would become almost a full-time job to lead the participating universities, coach the participants, lobby with the university authorities, and mediate with the government institutions. Time was devoted to having the large and always changing number of participants agree to collaborate for the greater good, to obtaining the economic resources from the Embassy and the participating universities, and maintaining hours of discussions with participants and the specialist. Nevertheless, all the work paid off when the proposal was officially introduced to the Ministry of Education

to all the participating universities, government education entities, and general public on January 30, 2015. This huge collaborative project is an example that with devotion and patience, agreements can be reached.

The process, however, was never free of difficulties. The biggest were created by the continuous changes in higher education regulations announced by the higher education council (CES), a newly created board that did not demonstrate a strong understanding of the needs and specifications of learning of a second language by both educators and learners. Beyond this obstacle, which in my opinion was the most critical one, were those created by the uncertainty and fear of change that most of the participating academics exhibited while the process was carried out. This was an exercise in patience for both the specialist and myself. I also had to continuously seek support from government institutions.

Despite all these and other minor challenges, I strongly believe that this process was educational beyond its final objective. It helped people understand that academic work is a mandatory contribution, a right, and a need. It helped institutions to agree and collaborate to obtain mutual benefits and to contribute to society at large. It created a collaboration model that was unknown in Ecuador before the group started to work together, which is now considered as a model for other academic areas that are currently collaborating under similar conditions and for similar purposes.

Based on the above, I can say that the experience was highly beneficial for all of those who participated directly or indirectly. Unfortunately, the anticipated results were not as foreseen. Due to the continuous process of change in the regulations pertaining to education from the higher education council, the proposal was not accepted in full. Nevertheless, the contents of the work are widely used by both the universities that worked on it as well as others who did not have an interest in creating an English language teaching major. Therefore, we can say that the impact of the project was greater than expected.

Results of the implementation of the project are yet to be measured and evaluated. My recommendation before I left the position of Cultural Specialist at the U.S. Embassy- Quito was to bring in the specialist at least two more times to evaluate the actual impact of implementing the proposed curriculum and to see its effectiveness or what areas might need to be modified in order to validate the project further. Complementary projects should also be carried out. The most important include professional development for those who will prepare the new English teachers under this plan, and for in-service teachers in order for them to reach a high level of English language proficiency and be able to use current methodologies.

From the Facilitator's Perspective

In April, 2011, I was invited as an ESL Specialist by the U.S. State Department to work with the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Quito in developing standards for in-service English teachers. At the same time, the universities were asked to revise their curriculum so that students could transfer to other universities without losing credits. My original expectation was to help create standards for in-service teachers. We accomplished that within six months, using an adaptation of the TESOL p-12 ESL Teacher Standards (TESOL, 2010). These were adopted and published on the MOE website (MOE, 2011). I never expected the project to become a national one, expanded to all universities that prepare English teachers or that it would be a four-year project, but that is what happened.

As English has become the lingua franca around the world (Burns, 2005), the social and economic reasons for Ecuadorians to learn English have increased substantially. At the same time, the majority of English teachers in Ecuador have neither the language proficiency nor the methodologies to teach English effectively in the schools. Further, before recent reforms in government regulations, universities were autonomous in their teacher preparation programs. Change was needed, and a standards and researched-based approach was required by the authorities. All the universities that originally participated agreed that a common curriculum was overdue. There needed to be consistency so that students graduating from any university in Ecuador would have the same competencies. By doing this, there was a better possibility that the English taught in the schools would improve.

The first meetings that were held with the universities were in December, 2011. They were in the form of five-day retreats, fully sponsored by the U.S. Embassy-Quito under the guidance of the Cultural Specialist. Half of the universities met in the north in Ibarra, and half in the south, in Cuenca. At these initial meetings, I introduced the entire concept of standards (benchmarks to be achieved), which was new to most of the participants, and I also shared the adopted Ecuadorian Ministry of Education in-service teacher standards. Perhaps one-third of those present were from the language institutes at their universities, not from teacher education programs, and even the concept of teacher preparation was new to them. As we progressed during the week, the group began to understand the complexity of the problems that they faced in changing how English teachers were prepared in Ecuador. What followed was four years of meetings in which university representatives created a complete curriculum, with standards aligned to courses aligned to an exit-portfolio.

While the university participants did the majority of the work, as the facilitator, I oversaw the project, made suggestions, provided feedback on the overall plan, kept the groups on track, and edited the documents. The new

standards-based curriculum that was created would never have happened, though, if there had not been substantial collaboration. As the facilitator for the project, I have seen collaboration in various forms, but each one is unique. Similar to Uruguay (Kuhlman, 2010), the project in Ecuador involved a large number of participants. However, while some key people remained throughout the four-year process, many participants changed, and so the act of creating collaboration had to be continually revisited. Further, while some participants came with an attitude of compromise, others had their own agendas and were firm about what they thought the new curriculum should include. Agreement regarding the standards, however, was easily attained since the group found that those already adopted by the MOE could apply to both in-service and pre-service teachers.

Several things have changed as a result of the project, and yet some remain the same. A new curriculum, with syllabi, assessments, a final portfolio, and timeline by semester are complete and ready to be used. Intensive English has been included in the curriculum to ensure the language proficiency of the new teachers. Previously, some universities had no requirements for language proficiency, and others had very high requirements. Now they would be all the same.

The possibilities for a major change are there, and the authorities, while not mandating the new curriculum, have agreed that universities can implement it if they choose. One of the major changes that has occurred, though, was having teacher educators from universities from all over Ecuador talk to each other, share their perspectives and create the new curriculum. The resulting product has the possibility to change significantly how teachers are prepared in Ecuador. The question is whether it will actually be implemented, and whether there will be sufficient professional development for the instructors in the program for real change to occur.

As a result of this project, I see many new teachers being better prepared to teach English. However, without the support of the educational authorities, both nationally and at the universities, this will not happen. The U.S. Embassy-Quito has been instrumental in providing needed support, not just to bring me as the facilitator over the four years, but also in organizing, pushing and encouraging all the participants. It is hoped that the U.S. Embassy will continue to provide this support.

For me personally, this has been an amazing experience. In 2011, there were some 30 universities that were autonomous, preparing teachers however they felt was right, and language institutes teaching university students English without special attention to those who would become teachers. Four years later, we have a core group of 17 universities who have agreed on this new way of preparing teachers, integrating the teaching of English with preparing teachers to teach English.

From the University Perspective

Out of my 34 years as a university professor, I have been a member of the teaching staff of the School of Languages at the Universidad Laica Vicente Rocafuerte (ULVR) in Guayaquil, Ecuador for 27 years. I have also had the opportunity of serving as the Assistant Director from 1992 to 2007 and as Director from April 2011 to July 2014. It was while I was in charge of directing the school that I participated in the project started by the U.S. Embassy to bring together the directors from the institutions that train English teachers to analyze the possibility of creating a universal curriculum for the preparation of English teachers at the universities in Ecuador.

The first meeting was held in December, 2011 in Cuenca (a second group met in Ibarra a week after). It turned out to be a highly beneficial gathering for those of us who attended. It was the first time we talked about international standards for the teaching of English and the preparation of teachers, something most of the participants were not aware of. Unfortunately, I must say, up to that moment there were no specific regulations as to how to run a teacher preparation program in university departments of languages.

The School of Languages at ULVR offered English as a major for the first time in 1979. The outstanding characteristic was that all the subjects during the four years of study were to be taught in English. As one of the former students, I had the opportunity to experience the benefits of attending a full English program. Most of the students reached an advanced intermediate level after finishing the first two years of studies. In the third year, the students began to study subjects such as linguistics and pedagogy, all of them related to their future profession: to be English teachers. A thesis and oral defense were also required for graduation, and both had to be completed in English. There has always been a high demand from primary and secondary schools in Guayaquil to hire the graduates from ULVR. Most of these institutions send their requests while the students are still in the classroom, thus assuring them a teaching position as soon as they graduate.

The story of the School of Languages at ULVR is a story that was only shared by a few other schools in the country. Most of the university programs were half in Spanish, half in English, perhaps because it was difficult for them to find and hire teachers to teach subjects in English. The result was low English proficiency in their graduates. The attraction of this new project for me was that it might nationalize what ULVR had been doing for the past 30 years. However, even though some of the universities thought they were preparing English teachers "the right way," none of the programs, including ULVR's, were aligned with international standards or the fluency levels stated in the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2011).

This background is useful to try to explain the importance of the meetings at Cuenca and Ibarra. Leaders of the different English teacher preparation programs were sitting together at the table talking about international standards for the first time. We were aligning the standards with the Ecuadorian reality and accepting the challenge and the commitment to work as a whole in favor of English language teaching and the preparation of effective professionals in the field.

How do you train teachers if the challenges they will be facing are not known? As a preamble of future decision-making, it was necessary first to learn about the new changes in English language programs instituted by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. That first meeting was not only about learning about standards. For the first time, it was an opportunity for the participants to learn about each other's programs, as participants made presentations about the programs they ran. We became involved in analyzing and discussing how the various programs did or did not fit Ecuadorian needs.

Six months later, a second meeting was held in Quito. At that meeting, another reality was faced. Most of the universities, if not all, run two different English programs. English as a major, whose purpose is to prepare future teachers of English, and English as a requirement for graduation in any field. This finding caused somewhat of a setback as it was difficult for participants to understand that these were indeed two different programs. Finally, two groups were formed: those who prepared teachers and those who taught English in the language institutes. Both would be teaching English to university students but for different purposes.

With the teaching roles well defined, a third meeting was called. This time university representatives met in Guayaquil, a city on the coast of Ecuador. It seemed more inclusive to meet in different places. The main agenda for the meeting in Guayaquil was to do a first draft of a common study plan for the preparation of English teachers. This was the hardest task yet. It was common for participants from the different universities to defend the programs they had implemented for years rather than seek compromise in order to draft a common preparation program for all institutions. Essentially, there were two agendas: those who favored pedagogy as a basis for preparation programs, and those who favored linguistics. This debate was quite serious, but the prompt intervention of the facilitator, Dr. Kuhlman, brought us back together. It was difficult for many universities to accept a new study plan that meant a break with old paradigms. Eventually, most saw this as an opportunity for growth and professional development by sharing the expertise and giving birth to a new proposal that would benefit future English teachers.

After several more meetings, the first draft was finally completed, but future meetings were needed to polish it. After the draft was finally accepted by the whole group as the new study plan, it was then necessary to write the contents of each one of the proposed courses and design a portfolio that would be used to show that teacher candidates met all the requirements (i.e. standards). The final product, signed by 17 universities, was presented at a celebration in January, 2015 at the Ministry of Education, where this project began. Now it all depends on the higher education authorities to accept and implement the program.

From the Language Institutes' Perspective

For the first time, in 2011, 30 language institutes and English teacher education programs from different universities in Ecuador received an invitation from the U.S. Embassy-Quito to participate in an English Network that would be created. In Ecuador, university language institutes provide language teaching for the entire university, not just the English teacher preparation programs. The coordinators and/or directors who attended this first of many meetings started working together to understand the reality of the English institutes in our universities, and most of all, the quality of English education in our institutions. One of the important issues we noted were the differences from one university to another.

I wanted to be part of this network so that we could standardize English teaching and teacher education in our country, and produce graduates who would be more proficient English teachers in the schools. For example, at that time, the English program in one university offered three hours of English a week, while others offered ten. Still others taught only English for Specific Purposes (not including education), and some did not even have an English program. The situation was one of chaos, and the diversity of programs was great. Even today, directors of many university language institutes do not support the concept of English teacher education at all.

Another reality was that in our English institutes there was a serious need for qualified English teachers. Most of the universities have the problem of hiring teachers with a low level of English proficiency and without the methodology to teach students at the university level even though they graduated from English teacher preparation programs. One objective of the network then was to find a solution for the lack of qualified teachers. Without them, a new standards-based program would not make a difference.

All the universities that came to those first meetings asked to be part of this dream and started working hard. At every meeting, we worked diligently

to accept different points of view. Everything we did was to achieve a new perspective and a revolutionary change in English teacher education in our country. As the laws and regulations in Ecuador were changing, it was necessary at the same time for universities to work together in order to save time, money and provide a new vision for English education.

My university supported my participation in this project because of the potential results that we could achieve. From my perspective as the Director of the Academic English Institute, we created an English program for students majoring in English language teaching, and we supported the idea that new English teachers needed a strong knowledge of the language they were going to teach. Our role was to create an intensive nine-level, two-year English program, in which the new pre-service teachers would acquire what they needed to succeed and be quality professionals.

Collaboration was a necessary tool to create and standardize opinions from the participants. From my point of view, it was the first time that representatives from the universities across Ecuador came together to work. I could see the willingness towards compromise and an attitude of working towards a common goal that would benefit English education. Of course, there were problems along the way, particularly different opinions, but in the end, the university representatives collaborated in the process. Directors from English teacher preparation programs and from English institutes were working towards a common curriculum for English teacher preparation programs.

The process worked. Now, universities have the option of selecting this curriculum for their programs. It is necessary to insist on the importance of having a standardized and standards-based English curriculum so that Ecuador can develop quality English teachers and professionals in the field. That said, it may be difficult for public universities to implement this program due to governmental regulations, but for private universities it is the best program ever created in Ecuador.

After completing this four-year process, I consider that the result is a very comprehensive English teacher preparation program. In my own case, I will use the curriculum to create a new English teacher preparation program in the institution where I currently work. I believe this curriculum can be used as a national and international model to be followed. The exit portfolio for teachers exemplifies the quality of the program.

Conclusion

From 2011-2015 representatives from more than twenty university English teacher education programs and language institutes came together for the first time to collaborate in the transformation of the way that English teachers are prepared in Ecuador. With support from the U.S. Embassy and several Ecuadorian educational agencies, with guidance from an ESL Specialist sponsored by the U.S. Embassy, this group that had previously been autonomous, collaborated, discussed, challenged and created a new curriculum, based on international ESL Teacher Standards, for the preparation of English teachers in Ecuador. It was not an easy task. There were times when the whole project could have exploded, but it did not. The four perspectives presented here represent the challenges and the solutions that this eclectic group was able to accomplish. As a by-product of this work, a new organization, ECUATESOL has been formed for the first time to support the English teaching profession in Ecuador. The possibilities are great. The reality is unknown and it can only be hoped that this transforming model will be implemented and in tomorrow's world the children of Ecuador will have the opportunity to become proficient in English that will open doors to the world.

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Authors

* **Elisabeth Serrano** holds a BA in Education and was the Cultural Specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Quito for the past twelve years. While serving as Specialist, part of her portfolio included the management of English language programs in Ecuador. In that capacity she was the coordinator for the national curriculum project described in this article, and acted as liaison between the Embassy, the universities, and the government institutions that participated, acting in that capacity up to the completion of the project in January, 2015. Currently Ms. Serrano is exploring other areas of interest but remains an active member of the ELT community, including as a member of the Board of Directors of ECUATESOL, a new English teacher oriented organization in

Ecuador that is applying to become a TESOL affiliate. She also is doing consultant work about the quality of education in Ecuador.

* **Cristina G. Vizcaíno** is a doctoral candidate at the *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos* in Lima. She holds a degree in Linguistics with a major in English Language and Literature as well as a degree in Social Communication Sciences. Her experience includes teacher training, educational administration, research, seminars and workshops.

* **Carlos Daniel Cazco** holds a BA in Business Administration, and a Certificate in TEFL. He is currently pursuing an MA in TEFL and an MA in Education. He has five years experience in university English education, teaching general English and ESP. He also has three years experience managing educational projects with different institutions. He also worked as the Language Department Director at the *Universidad Técnica del Norte* in Ibarra and is now the English Language Department Director of the *Universidad del Pacífico* in Quito and Guayaquil. Profesor Cazco is the Vice-president of ECUATESOL, a new English teacher organization in Ecuador that is applying to become a TESOL affiliate.

* **Dr. Natalie A. Kuhlman** is Professor Emeritus in the Dual Language Department, College of Education, San Diego State University. She is the co-author with Diane Staehr Fenner of *Preparing Effective Teachers of English Language Learners: Practical Applications for the TESOL P-12 Professional Teaching Standards* (TESOL, 2012); with Bozana Knezevic, TESOL EFL Guidelines for Teacher Standards Development (TESOL, 2014); and the author of *An Introduction to Language Assessment* in the K-12 Classroom (ELT Advantage, Cengage, 2006). She is past president of CATESOL, was on the Board of Directors of both the National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers (2004-2010), and TESOL (1996-99). She was an original member of the TESOL p-12 ESL Teacher Standards Team (1999-2012) and the Accreditation Standards Expert Group (ASEG) that created Short-Term Certificate Standards (TESOL, 2015). Dr. Kuhlman has worked in Ecuador, Uruguay and Albania to apply the TESOL standards to English teacher preparation.

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Using the EPOSTL for Dialogic Reflection in EFL Teacher Education[1]

El Uso de EPOSTL para la Reflexión Dialógica en la Educación de los Docentes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

Holli Schauber[2*]

University of Geneva, Switzerland

Abstract

For many pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their mentors, the theory and practice driven European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)[3] occupies a prominent and practical role in their preparation programs as a delivery system of core pedagogical skills and knowledge. Interest in the role that dialogical reflection plays in this process is studied in an EFL teacher education program at a Swiss university that relies heavily on the EPOSTL for the professional development awareness-raising. While the EPOSTL contributes valuable core knowledge to the processes of dialogic and mentored-reflection, certain program components provide more opportunities for scaffolded reflection than others.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, EPOSTL, Dialogic reflection

1 Received: July 15, 2015 / Accepted: October 16, 2015

2 Holli.Schauber@unige.ch

3 EPOSTL http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/fte/pdf/C3_Epostl_E.pdf

Resumen

Para muchos docentes en formación de inglés como segunda lengua extranjera y sus mentores, la teoría y la práctica guiada por el Portfolio Europeo para Futuros Profesores de Idiomas – EPOSTL, ocupa un papel importante y práctico en sus programas de preparación, al ser el núcleo fundamental para el desarrollo de conocimiento y competencias pedagógicas. La importancia del papel que juega la reflexión dialógica en este proceso, es analizado en un programa de formación de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera en una Universidad suiza, el cual se basa en gran medida en EPOSTL para la sensibilización de los programas de desarrollo profesional docente. A pesar que EPOSTL contribuye de manera valiosa al conocimiento fundamental de los procesos de reflexión dialógica orientada, ciertos componentes del programa proporcionan más oportunidades para generar una reflexión andamiada en comparación con otras.

Palabras clave: Inglés como lengua extranjera, EPOSTL, reflexión dialógica

Resumo

Para muitos docentes em formação de inglês como segunda língua estrangeira e seus mentores, a teoria e a prática guiada pelo Portfolio Europeu para Futuros Professores de Idiomas – EPOSTL ocupa um papel importante e prático nos seus programas de preparação, ao ser o núcleo fundamental para o desenvolvimento de conhecimento e competências pedagógicas. A importância do papel que joga a reflexão dialógica neste processo é analisada em um programa de formação de docentes de inglês como língua estrangeira em uma Universidade suíça, o qual se baseia em grande medida na EPOSTL para a sensibilização dos programas de desenvolvimento profissional docente. Apesar de que o EPOSTL contribui de maneira valiosa ao conhecimento fundamental dos processos de reflexão dialógica orientada, certos componentes do programa proporcionam mais oportunidades para gerar uma reflexão em comparação com outras.

Palavras clave: Inglês como língua estrangeira, EPOSTL, reflexão dialógica

Introduction

The ongoing interest in reflective practices in EFL teacher preparation remains widespread in recent research and teacher education materials (Belvis, Pineda, Armengol, & Moreno 2013; Burkert & Schwienhorst, 2008; Cakir & Balcikanli, 2012; Farrell, 2012; Harmer, 2015; Velikova, 2013; Yesilbura, 2011). Reflective practices have become so commonplace in the discourse associated with teacher education that the notion is often included without a clear definition of the role it should play in shaping the professional development process (Farrell, 2012). What we do know, however, is that we want trainees to engage in copious amounts of reflection so that they no longer need us after they exit our programs.

Reinforcement of this trend towards reflection in professional development can be found in the introduction of the EPOSTL into the European discourse and educational policy initiatives on foreign language teacher preparation and learning (Newby et al., 2007). Developed by the European Council on Modern Languages (ECML) in response to the search for practice and reflection-driven innovative approaches to foreign language teaching and learning, the EPOSTL is one of several practical guides serving the English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning community. Recognition of its value to teacher development and effective practice has meant a surge in its application internationally. Newby (2012b) equates the EPOSTL with seven categories of good practice in teacher preparation that include: promoting teacher autonomy, fostering a reflective mode, reinforcing the rationales and approaches to learning and teaching, making the scope and aims of teacher education transparent, rendering the competences explicit, facilitating self-assessment and promoting coherence in classroom practice.

While these are good reasons to introduce the EPOSTL into a teacher preparation program, our initial decision to adopt the EPOSTL in 2008 stems from several additional pedagogical objectives. We sought to anchor our mentoring, supervision, practicum, and teaching processes to a theory and practice-driven tool that could deliver essential EFL knowledge in ways that complemented our program model and in particular the dialogic reflection dimension it nurtures. Our decision was further motivated by our view that effective EFL teacher preparation grows organically out of dialogic reflection that is centered on constructive mentoring relationships that deliver and build teacher knowledge that is explicit and contextually driven, which we associate with significant teacher learning. It is likewise our view that the pedagogical conversations the EPOSTL nurtures contribute to reducing the theory-practice divide that is so often a barrier to student-teacher buy-in during the induction process.

At the macro level, this article is concerned with innovation and best practices in EFL teacher education, while at the micro level with how the EPOSTL introduces a steady flow of dialogic reflection, and through that process, the didactic knowledge that enhances situated EFL teacher learning and development. These concerns form the conceptual foundation for the view adopted in this article that the EPOSTL and the dialogical reflection process it feeds represent a shift in how theory driven practical information should and can be delivered in practicum experiences and supervision initiatives.

The purpose of the present reflection on EFL teacher preparation is to examine where and how the EPOSTL mediates and supports dialogic reflection in the six core components of our program: 1) methods classes and related research assignments; 2) lesson planning and teaching/learning objectives; 3) student and teacher observations and reports; 4) debriefing through dialogic reflection after observations; 5) independent reflection and goal setting; and 6) assessment criteria for certification meetings. After a descriptive overview of the EPOSTL and the research it has generated, a review of the literature on dialogic reflection is provided followed by a discussion of the specific ways in which the EPOSTL shapes the dialogic reflective dimension of our EFL program model.

The EPOSTL as a Tool for Dialogic Reflection

What is the EPOSTL?

The EPOSTL is a teacher-learning didactic tool that is organized around seven foreign language teaching and learning themes (see Appendix 1 for the list of themes or use the following link to access the EPOSTL[4]). Each category has its own set of principled descriptors that are expressed as can do statements and which function as self-assessment and reflection opportunities for monitoring the understanding and use of the descriptors at various intervals in the teacher education process. Each of the 195 descriptors conveys procedural *know how* and establishes a link between theory and practice. Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) have suggested that getting teachers to analyze and theorize about their teaching as part of reflection can reduce the theory-practice divide.

A primary goal of the EPOSTL is to support teacher learning in different program components at the pre- and in-service levels. The EPOSTL is sufficiently well-rounded that it acknowledges the types of teacher knowledge put forth by Shulman (1987): 1) content; 2) general pedagogy; 3) curriculum;

[4] http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/fte/pdf/C3_Epostl_E.pdf

4) pedagogical content; 5) learners and their characteristics; 6) educational contexts; and a more recent type of teacher knowledge focusing on 7) technological pedagogical content knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). These are reinforced and recycled through a core body of EFL knowledge found in the extensions of the EPOSTL's seven categories. See Figure 1.

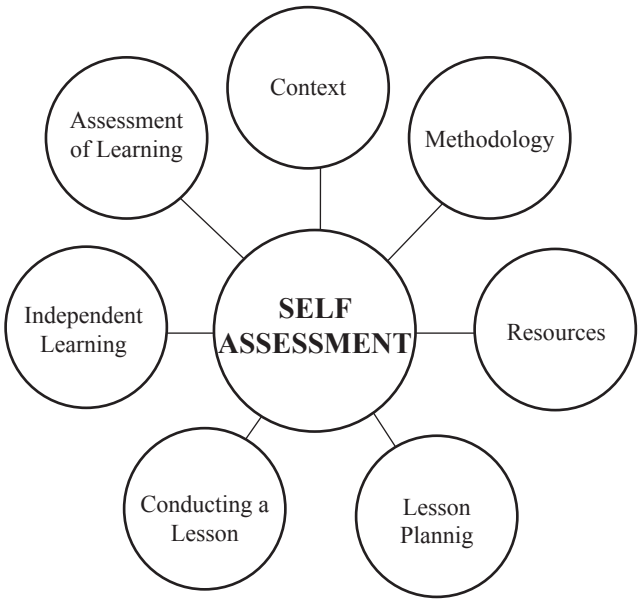

Figure 1. EPOSTL's Seven Categories (http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/fte/pdf/C3_Epostl_E.pdf)

The following are several example descriptors taken from three of the above sections of the EPOSTL. Each descriptor signals a language learning principle and tells teachers what to consider and how to teach.

- **Methodology:** Speaking and Spoken Interaction: "I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities" (EPOSTL, descriptor 1, p. 21).
- **Resources:** "I can locate and select listening and reading materials appropriate for the needs of my learners from a variety of sources, such as literature, mass media and the internet" (EPOSTL, descriptor 3, p. 31).
- **Conducting a lesson:** Lesson content: "I can vary and balance activities to include a variety of skills and competences" (EPOSTL, descriptor 2, p. 35).

- **Assessment of learning:** Portfolios: "I can assess portfolios in relation to valid and transparent criteria" (EPOSTL descriptor 4, p. 48)

The EPOSTL provides several access routes to the development of EFL teacher pedagogical knowledge. It raises awareness about the ideas and views that are valued in EFL teaching and learning while providing a practical expression of the language learning principle upon which each descriptor is based. The portfolio is set up to be used in light of the individual pre-service teacher's areas of needs and objectives and as an outgrowth of core program content.

Johnson (2009) argued that language teacher preparation should give teachers the tools to interpret their instructional experiences in light of the prevailing theory about language learning and teaching. Re-tooling professional development requires that trainees become managers and apprentices of the learning process. Student teachers require a voice in the direction, planning, execution, and assessment of their teaching in concert with more seasoned professionals. Through dialogic reflection, zones of proximal (teacher) development are created (Johnson, 2009; Warford, 2011). When these elements are present, teachers are more likely to consider their professional development relevant and authentic; this in turn makes teacher learning and improved teaching practice more likely.

In our program model, the descriptors are explained and explored in methods classes, during mentoring, debriefing, or peer tutoring sessions, and through assigned readings. The student teacher may select a relevant descriptor as part of lesson planning, for independent reflection and self-monitoring after teaching, or it may be raised by the teacher educator in class, or by the field supervisor in a report to highlight its presence or absence in the lesson observed. It may also be raised in a debriefing session after an observation through dialogic reflection to set objectives for follow-up instructional planning or as criteria to evaluate teacher competence and development.

EPOSTL and Reflection

Much of the recent literature on the EPOSTL rallies around issues of autonomy and reflection. Many existing models of EFL teacher preparation organize teacher learning around the core paradigms of socially-mediated, reflective, and practice-driven processes (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2009; Johnson, 2009). These processes rest on the idea that they help pre- and in-service teachers approach their instruction more proactively and in more informed and autonomous ways. Within this framework, teacher educators and mentors present novice teachers with

resources and learning opportunities that promote dialogue through which reflection is modelled and cultivated with an eye toward developing situated and complex pedagogical knowledge.

Ultimately, the goal is to use reflection to move teachers toward positions of autonomy in their own classroom practices. This naturally has the best chance of occurring through contact with varied and valued sources of expertise, such as mentors. This does not negate the value of experiential knowledge nor the sanctioned literature to which they are exposed to in the coursework and the practicum experience. Recent EFL implementation studies have explored how to introduce new elements into a program to enhance the teacher learning process without corrupting or completely overhauling it (Troyan, Davin & Donato, 2013). As a relatively new program element, the EPOSTL, and the dialogic reflection it generates, operates in tandem with and as an outgrowth of the myriad ways that trainees are exposed to in the profession, whether they be the contextualized challenges of classroom practice, or the review of the principles behind certain theoretical assumptions being explored. The dialogic interaction around the EPOSTL is both a proactive and reactive process about the essential practical elements necessary for effective EFL teaching.

In their review of the literature on practice-driven teacher education, Hlas and Hlas (2012) argue for the need to make visible those core practices that are quintessentially identifiable as foreign language teaching and those that novice practitioners are less likely to learn independently. While the EPOSTL is not the unequivocally sanctioned list of core practices, its coverage and range is complex and relevant. While there is no present consensus about what (theory-driven) tools may improve the process of EFL teacher preparation, or what ratio or type of mentoring, dialogic reflection or practicum experience may be necessary for teacher learning to occur, there is growing consensus about the value of specifying and discussing the micro-practices (strategies, routines, and moves) that can enhance pedagogical understanding and teaching. Recently however, some have called for a more dialogically driven approach to raise awareness of these practices during the pre- and in-service stages to facilitate deeper understanding of the complexities of language teaching and learning (Edge, 2011).

Dialogic Reflection as Mentoring

The practice of mentored reflection is a highly valued and encouraged practice in EFL teacher preparation, and has been understood through several explanatory prisms: that of rational thought, and as a creative and intuitive process (Bean & Patel Stevens, 2002; Dinkelman, 2003; Loughran, 2002; Yusko, 2004; Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). More recent views invoke the cognitive and affective dimensions involved in making sense of practical teaching experiences to promote professional development (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Mentored reflection on the professional development

process and on the specific and general content and criteria takes teacher-learners through several stages and levels of practice. Rodgers (2002) refers to the reflection as a cycle that includes experience, description, analysis and action. She further argues that reflection that leads to change begins with resistance, and is followed by dialogue about making changes, then mimicry, and finally, implementation of the change. The competencies of pre-service practitioners are often intertwined with the competencies of the expert mentor and the References (EPOSTL) examined through "dialogic engagement" (Bakhtin, 1981).

Initiatives to improve teacher preparation and instructional practice tend to focus on either independent reflection or mentored-interaction rather than a combination of both, which underestimates the value of the combined force of the two. Promoting reflection is key toward what is a necessary part of future EFL teaching. Despite the prevailing view of reflection as a solitary act, the EPOSTL facilitates expert modelling of reflection for teacher-learners through dialogue around the issues that need attention in order for improvement and understanding to occur. Schön (1988) describes teacher supervision as those activities that promote reflective practice. Chief among these are modelling, prompting, inquiring, and mentoring that occur during reflection in and on action (Schön, 1983). While pre-service teacher reflection has become commonplace in many teacher preparation programs, various distinctions exist. A distinction has been made between descriptive reflection, which is a detailed account of events; analytic reflection, which tries to explain the events and to suggest alternative options as part of the evaluation of instruction, followed by critical reflection on the socio-cultural and socio-political influences operating in the classroom, the institution and the community (Marcos, Sánchez & Tilleman, 2008).

In their case study research on the transformational outcomes of varied contexts of reflective inquiry, Lyons, Halton and Freidus (2013) found that mentored reflection was crucial to learning and changes in stance and frames of reference. Dialogic teaching, which stems from Vygotsky's emphasis on socially-mediated cognitive development, has become synonymous with pedagogical innovation and with being among the most beneficial approaches for learning (Alexander, 2006; Lyle, 2008).

Effective Professional Development and EFL

A brief overview of the studies of effective professional development, not specific to EFL contexts, but still of particular relevance to them, has yielded a wide range of criteria. Professional development is effective and meaningful when it considers the daily needs, concerns, and interests of individual teachers, promotes reflection and goal setting over an extended period of time,

provides trainee teachers with access to external resources and opportunities for collaboration with experts, and attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Richardson, 2003).

Professional development that is effective also needs to be classroom-embedded, and instructionally driven in order for teachers to view it as relevant and authentic. According to Hunzicker (2011, p. 179), this requires changing tactics from a 'one shot', 'sit and get' model to one where teacher learning is an ongoing process. Teachers approach contextualized professional development more seriously because it brings practice into focus and draws it closer to theory. The particular knowledge associated with EFL professional development includes second language acquisition theory, knowledge of the language as a communication and linguistic system, methods for teaching EFL, content area instruction, cooperative learning, and the socio-cultural dimensions of teaching a second language. Part of the explanation for the gap between theory and practice lies in part on the absence of context in the discourse on practice and in part on the inability to render the theory in applicable terms, like the EPOSTL descriptors do.

In addition to Guskey's (2000) notion of effective professional development as "ongoing, intentional, and systematic" (p. 16), most of the literature on effective professional development cites reflection as essential, both independently and with a mentor, and dialogue as deliberation, discussion and negotiation. Teacher preparation becomes interactive when trainees can reflect on their practice during dialogue with a mentor to identify problems, exchange ideas and collaborate toward solutions. Hunzicker's (2011) checklist serves as a guide for determining the most effective professional development practices. When professional development is supportive, job-embedded, instructionally-focused, collaborative and ongoing, teachers are more likely to consider it relevant and authentic, which is more likely to result in teacher learning and improved teaching practice.

Using the EPOSTL

The efforts using the EPOSTL described in this article were recorded naturally as part of our day–to-day use of it in our teaching, supervision activities, observation reports and students' reliance on it. We realized the dialogic thrust and potential of the EPOSTL and sought to examine where in our program dialogic reflection was most prevalent and what the implications might be for our student teachers.

This reflection is based on a two-year EFL teacher preparation program at a public university in Switzerland. The EPOSTL was introduced into

the program in 2008 and operates as a stable element across all program components: didactic or methods classes, student observation reports and projects, lesson planning, field supervisor reports, debriefing sessions, working sessions, and mid-term and final written exams, and mid-term and final certification meetings. In the 2014-2015 academic year of the program, there were 13 first-year and 27 second-year students. In addition to coursework, only second-year students have a practicum experience in the public schools, while first-year students conduct a prescribed number of observations along with their coursework. Students are exposed to the EPOSTL in the first year and dialogic reflection goes into high gear in the second year as each student is paired with a field supervisor. Two faculty members run and teach the program supported by seven field supervisors.

By shifting assumptions about teacher education research and practice and the increasing attention being paid to the role of experience in the learning process, this paper attempts to contribute to the knowledge base in the field of EFL teacher preparation. It recognizes that (dialogic) reflection, which involves returning to and recasting instructional experiences results in unforeseen insights, rendering the complexities of the teacher education and teacher learning process visible. This study refers to Schön's (1987) call for student–teachers' reflection-in-action, constructing new ways to conceptualize their practicum experience, and hypothesizing about ways to mediate the instructional process through ongoing reflection on their experiences and feelings. The analysis and interpretation of our use of the EPOSTL is organized around the themes of dialogic reflection present and recycled in the six professional development events listed below. The order is based on when student teachers first encounter the EPOSTL.

1 Methods class: in class video and case study tasks, projects, observation assignments, and written exams.

2 Methods class and mentored dialogue: discussion about principles and relevance of the descriptors and the theories they represent.

3 Mentored-dialogical reflection and student teacher lesson preparation: practicum lesson planning and objectives.

4 Debriefing and mentored dialogic reflection: based on observation and goal setting for improvement and follow-up teaching.

5 Observation reports: Student teachers attach EPOSTL descriptors to the elements of the lesson sequences they observe.

6 Certification assessment meetings and mentored dialogic reflection: Candidates are assessed in light of a percentage of EPOSTL descriptors they have demonstrated in their teaching apprenticeship; in light of those that remain as objectives for continued professional development; and in

light of additional practical teaching ideas raised as extensions of those descriptors.

Our EPOSTL narrative begins by meeting with student teachers to discuss the objectives and purposes associated with using the EPOSTL, its contexts of use, and the dialogic, reflective and self-evaluative nature of the tool. Each of the program components is approached through a process of mentored reflection much like a zone of proximal teacher development (Warford, 2011). Use of the EPOSTL involves an ongoing process of deconstructing and reconstructing elements of practice both independently and through dialogue with more expert school and university-based mentors. The mentors or field supervisors are all familiar with the content of the methods courses and the readings.

Methods Classes

Guiding theoretical principles are cornerstones of EFL methods classes and the variables around which class content is organized. The EPOSTL descriptors serve as a complimentary means of exposing learners to the specific didactic knowledge being explored. Relevant EPOSTL descriptors are introduced related to the given theme of the class. If the class is on listening, the EPOSTL descriptors for listening are presented and a video of a listening sequence may be presented with a task asking students to match the descriptors to what was observed. A dialogue about which descriptors are relevant and what language teaching and language learning principles they express ensues. Students are free to argue for their own choice of descriptor(s) to reflect a certain element in the sequence.

Within the methods classes there are also written tests and assignments that require students to consult the EPOSTL as a reference for what they have observed in their practicum and also for what they have identified as the teaching and learning objectives in their project sequence.

Lesson Planning

During the practicum experience, students are expected to rely on the EPOSTL to support their lesson planning. As part of lesson planning, trainee teachers identify descriptors that are relevant to the objectives set for the lesson. In many cases, the descriptors escort the lesson planning rather than follow it. When trainees plan lessons with their mentors, the EPOSTL descriptors become an integral part of the mentored dialogue about the lesson objectives, content and organization.

Student Observations

When students conduct their observations, the EPOSTL stands as a reference for evaluating, assessing and analyzing what they have observed regarding the teacher's objectives and execution of those goals.

Mentor Reports after Observations

After each of the 10-12 lesson observations which mentors are required to conduct, reports are written and relevant EPOSTL descriptors are highlighted in light of the contributions their presence or absence made to the lesson. In the reports, mentors set goals in terms of EPOSTL descriptors, which the trainees see after the debriefing session. The identification of EPOSTL descriptors launches the debriefing dialogue that follows every observation.

Debriefing after Observations or during Information Sessions

When mentors and beginning practitioners debrief, the EPOSTL descriptors and the praxis elements they specify may be at the core of their discussion. During these debriefings, areas of need are identified and solutions are sought against the backdrop of the EPOSTL. Mentors encourage teacher-learners to reorient their practice guided by EPOSTL descriptors. Consciousness-raising occurs to promote awareness of the areas that need improving and to promote understanding of the principles that the relevant EPOSTL descriptors represent. The mentored dialogue promotes a reflective stance and gets the teacher-learner to take responsibility for the lesson elements they implemented or not in light of the lesson plan and the EPOSTL descriptors, included as objectives. To help students identify areas of strength and need, the mentor prompts the teacher-learner to engage in a process of reflection either by modelling the practice or by helping the learner select EPOSTL descriptors that represent areas for improvement. Objectives are set as part of the dialogue between the learner and the mentor for the follow-up observation.

Certification Assessment

The ability to act on those goals lies at the heart of the teaching evaluation process. The EPOSTL is used both as a summative tool with exit and certification criteria and as a formative tool for setting goals and evaluating ongoing classroom-based teaching performance. Trainees are expected to have demonstrated competence in 70% of two separate sets of descriptors halfway through and at the end of the practicum experience. Failure to demonstrate competence, understanding or implementation of the descriptor's core principle can lead to denial of certification and/or failure.

The EPOSTL, mediated by a mentor, contributes to a process of socially-constructed teacher knowledge that ensues in part from scaffolded and dialogic reflection. The experienced mentor moves the novice practitioner along the continuum of professional development by identifying EPOSTL descriptors that represent areas for improvement. Change in the dialogue occurs when trainees act on their reflections and newfound awareness, and demonstrate the capacity to select and use the descriptor in class. That transformation is marked by the selection of different EPOSTL descriptors for the next event of mentored and dialogic reflection. A review of the six components of the program reveals that three professional activities present the best opportunities for copious amounts of mentored and dialogic reflection.

The first of these three events is the debriefing session after an observation. The trainee and field supervisor meet for a 60-120 minute session to review and evaluate the lesson. The EPOSTL descriptors selected for the lesson plan are discussed and evaluated for their relevance and appropriateness, and the mentor poses questions, which may refer to other possible descriptors to prompt reflection on finding alternatives to improve or modify the lesson observed. Micro-strategies, ideas and techniques are presented as part of the consciousness-raising process and References to EPOSTL descriptors mark the dialogue. Student teachers are exposed to contextually relevant support, which increases their ability to link the EPOSTL descriptors to their practice and develop the complex professional knowledge that EFL practitioners are expected to demonstrate.

The second event is a one-to-one working session between the mentor and the student-teacher. Working sessions can be requested by the student-teacher or recommended by the field supervisor in place of an observation. In a working session the focus of the session is typically decided beforehand because a conceptual or practical problem has been identified either by the mentor or the student-teacher. For example, one candidate was struggling with summative assessment for interactive speaking activities and was seeking help with the development of the criteria for an assessment grid. Other candidates needed help with lesson planning and objectives and the mentor provided a framework for considering these through dialogic reflection. Referring to the EPOSTL was one of the organizing modes for addressing both these challenges. In their article on professional development design and its impact on outcomes, Lauer, Christopher, Firpo-Triplett & Buchting (2014) report that teacher preparation programs that emphasize how to teach the target subject confer more benefits than those providing generic strategies.

The final event where considerable amount of interactive reflection occurs is during the certification assessment sessions. Dialogic reflection and mentored-awareness raising are equally present in the certification

assessment sessions that candidates and their mentors hold twice a year. In these sessions, review of the EPOSTL descriptors takes place to determine which of the descriptors have been demonstrated in the practicum experience. If a sufficient number has been covered, then the candidate is awarded either an interim attestation or a final attestation to mark successful completion of the practicum. In these sessions, the students provide examples from their teaching linked to descriptors. A process of dialogic reflection ensues and practical ideas that spring from the practicum experiences are introduced. This is followed by an oral report from the mentor and field supervisor.

The three teacher-learning events described above are not suggestive of a finite set of professional development possibilities. The EPOSTL is a flexible tool because its shape grows organically out of the individual teacher using it. Moreover, it can be configured for a number of developing teacher profiles as a theoretical and practical departure point of reference and integrated into the dialogue with mentors. In each of the contexts discussed above, the EPOSTL initially exposes the trainee teacher to the descriptor's underlying concept and then reinforces it through repeated exposure in follow-up encounters. In each case the EPOSTL in concert with dialogic reflection functions as a delivery system of core pedagogical skills and knowledge for situated EFL practice.

Conclusions

There is an acknowledged shift in how the EPOSTL's varied components prompt the planning, observation, reflection, discussion and assessment of teacher learning and practice. That shift appears to have long tentacles. To borrow a term from management, it permits trainee teachers to deep dive into the criteria underlying effective EFL teaching and to develop a repertoire of objectives and competence-driven expertise. Dialogic reflection around the EPOSTL communicates what gets valued and what is expected in effective EFL teaching (Newby, 2012a). The EPOSTL operates much like a GPS wherein destination coordinates are plugged in and a roadmap appears in the form of descriptors with intermittent stops along the way to review the route and the final destination. Recalculating and reviewing the route to the destination occurs through socially-mediated processes.

The EPOSTL allows the trainee teacher to move through a zone of proximal teacher development during the induction and apprenticeship phase. A zone of proximal *teacher development* (ZPTD) is the distance between what trainee teachers can do independently and a proximal level they can achieve through dialogically-mediated support from more expert sources, including but not limited to the EPOSTL. Teacher knowledge does not develop solely through the transfer of facts, but rather by appropriating and configuring

meanings nurtured in part through the process of dialogic reflection (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, cited in Warford, 2011). Pre-service teachers determine what resonates with their understanding of the contextual challenges they face. Here, situated learning is meshed with the EPOSTL through the mediating role of the mentor.

Trainee teachers and their mentors build pedagogical knowledge through the use of a mediated tool. The EPOSTL allows teachers to systematically anchor their instruction to a set of principled statements by merging those scientific concepts with local understandings and practices. The EPOSTL merges theory with practice by front-loading and back-loading descriptors onto the experiential dimension of teacher preparation.

The EPOSTL tool should support trainee teachers in their analyses, planning, reflection, and self-assessment. The preparation of a learning autobiography sets the stage for a lifetime of professional growth, offering a diagnostic of directions toward which the candidate's affective-volitional disposition might be most profitably directed and where they might benefit from sensitive, intensive mediation from the teacher-educator.

While the EPOSTL has oriented trainees and their mentors in a worthwhile direction, several shortcomings have been identified. Concerns have been raised about the number of descriptors (195) and their connection to identifiable outcomes and the lack of any globally referenced benchmarks (Burkert & Schwienhorst, 2008). Parallel criticisms can be made about the finite set of descriptors that ultimately restrict the kinds of claims that can be made about what the candidate has or still needs to acquire. Second, the descriptors are often expressed in very general terms, which may fail to make important contextual distinctions regarding different EFL learner profiles. Third, there is an uneven distribution of descriptors across the different sections of the EPOSTL with some categories containing far fewer descriptors than others. For example, vocabulary contains only three descriptors whereas speaking contains more than 10. This imbalance does not reflect current thinking about what gets valued in EFL teaching, the materials that support practice, and the curricular goals upon which both are predicated. A further shortcoming is the non-standardized manner in which EPOSTL users chart their progress and declare (in) progress, achievement (success), or failure. As such, the reliability of the tool as a formative assessment system or basis for certification may be limited. Since EPOSTL descriptors are stated as can do statements evidence of the ability to do something is not always presented through repeated trials and confirming observations. Much of the self-assessment is on the honour system. A final drawback of the EPOSTL in our program is the sheer number of descriptors and the limited timeframe in which to cover them. That combination has necessitated paring down the tool, in a hierarchical way, to descriptors

deemed essential for certification. The selection of the essential descriptors are discussed and voted upon, that means that those descriptors left out of the final list become marginalized and deemphasized. There is a coercive element to the EPOSTL despite its flexibly adaptable nature. Attempts to place them into a hierarchy may be counterintuitive because it may contribute to emphasizing one aspect more than another without knowing what the final impact will be from the unequal emphasis.

Research on how the EPOSTL is used in other teacher preparation settings would further the discussion about its reliability as a training and reflection tool and contribute to harmonizing its use. Further study might also lead to the development of a guide on how it can best be used across the different contexts identified in this article. A validation study could provide much needed reinforcement for statistically significant claims about the different micro-practices contained within the EPOSTL. Survey research would likewise prove worthwhile in contributing information about tendencies, frequencies, and profiles of EPOSTL-using communities and the descriptors that are prioritized.

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Author

* **Holli Schauber** holds a Doctorate in Education and teaches in the Institute for Teacher Education at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. Her research and teaching are conducted as related activities and focus on teacher preparation, second language learning and use, and writing in a second language.

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The Differences between Spoken and Written Grammar in English, in Comparison with Vietnamese[1]

Las Diferencias entre la Gramática Oral y Escrita del Idioma Inglés en Comparación con el Idioma Vietnamita

Nguyen Cao Thanh[2*]

Tan Trao University, Vietnam

Abstract

The fundamental point of this paper is to describe and evaluate some differences between spoken and written grammar in English, and compare some of the points with Vietnamese. This paper illustrates that spoken grammar is less rigid than written grammar. Moreover, it highlights the distinction between speaking and writing in terms of subordination and coordination. Further, the different frequency of adverbials and adjectivals between spoken and written language is also compared and analyzed.

Keywords: spoken and written grammar, English, Vietnamese

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2 thanhthu7580@yahoo.com

Resumen

El principal objetivo de este artículo es describir y evaluar algunas diferencias entre la gramática oral y escrita del idioma inglés y comparar algunos aspectos gramaticales con el idioma vietnamita. Esta revisión muestra como la gramática oral es menos rígida que la gramática escrita. Por otra parte, se destaca la distinción entre el hablar y el escribir en términos de subordinación y coordinación. Además, la diferencia en el uso de adverbios y adjetivos entre la gramática oral y escrita también es comparada y analizada.

Palabras clave: gramática oral y escrita, inglés, vietnamita

Resumo

O principal objetivo deste artigo é descrever e avaliar algumas diferenças entre a gramática oral e escrita do idioma inglês e comparar alguns aspectos gramaticais com o idioma vietnamita. Esta revisão mostra como a gramática oral é menos rígida que a gramática escrita. Por outro lado, se destaca a distinção entre o falar e o escrever em termos de subordinação e coordenação. Além do mais, a diferença no uso de advérbios e adjetivos entre a gramática oral e escrita também é comparada e analisada.

Palavras chave: gramática oral e escrita, inglês, vietnamita

Introduction

In early times, there was no writing, and people exchanged information only by speaking. Through the historical stages of development, the writing system was shaped. Nowadays, writing is an indispensable means of communication for people in life as well as work. Parallel to writing, speaking has also become more adequate and perfect day by day. As a result, research into spoken and written language in English, the global language, has been properly addressed. One of the principal aims of this reflection is to analyze how to distinguish between spoken and written grammar. Based on this, the teaching of English at school may take the direction of differentiating between spoken and written grammar.

There are many different definitions of spoken and written language. However, in a minor scope of the paper, I will give a definition given by Horowitz and Samuels (1987):

> Oral language is typically associated by linguists with conversation that is produced, processed, and then evaluated in the context of face-to-face exchange and grounded in interpersonal relationships that are often clearly established. Oral language is adapted to a specific audience and to socio-cultural settings and communities that are presumably present, functioning in a context of here and now. (p. 56)

In contrast:

> Written language is typically associated with language of books and explanatory prose such as is found in schools. Written language is formal, academic, and planned; it hinges on the past and is reconstructed in such a way that in the future it can be processed by varied readerships. (p. 21)

Table 1. The oral-written dichotomy (Horowitz and Samuels, 1987)

Oral language	**Written language**
Talk	**Text**
Face to face conversation with reciprocity between speaker and listener	Face to text with limited reciprocity between author and reader
Narrative-like	Expository-like
Action-oriented	Idea-oriented
Event-oriented	Argument-oriented
Story-oriented	Explanatory
Here and now	Future and past
In given space and time	Not space – or time – bound

Informal	Formal
Primary discourse	Secondary discourse
Natural communication	Artificial communication
Interpersonal	Objective and distanced
Spontaneous	Planned
Sharing of context (situational)	No common context
Ellipsis	Explicitness in text consciousness
Structureless	Highly structured
Cohesion through paralinguistic cues	Cohesion through lexical cues
Single predication	Multiple prediction
Repetition	Succinctness
Simple linear structures	Complex hierarchical structures
Paratactic patterns	Hypotactic patterns
Right branching with limited subordination	Left branching with multiple levels of subordination
Fleeting	Permanent
Unconscious	Conscious and restructured

From the above definition, this paper will attempt to distinguish some differences between spoken and written grammar. English and Vietnamese are adopted to be compared. The foundation of this paper is partly based on the author's personal understanding and mostly on a collection of arguments from other authors.

Literature Review

From historical research up to now, there have been a variety of understandings about spoken and written language in English. However, it is undeniable that oral and written narratives are two components constructing English. As a result, the aspects of spoken and written language such as grammar are always a current topic for researchers. There are many different ideas about the occurrence of written and spoken language, such as the frequency in narrative, which is more important, and whether they work together or separately.

Townend and Walker (2006) suppose that both spoken and written language are closely interdependent. They emphasize that from primary time, spoken language was a means to express ideas and information while written language was a symbol system to represent the spoken form. Cook (2004)

states that although there are some similarities of the systems of speech and writing, there are many differences. Written language can easily show various words by varying the spelling. "Many of the devices of written language have no spoken equivalent" (p. 12). Biber (1986) also shows that "linguistic differences between speaking and writing have been attributed to differing processing constraints and to differing situational characteristics" (p. 23).

From the above evaluations, it can be seen that although there are some similarities, there are also remarkable differences between spoken and written grammars in English. Actually, in grammar books, the concentration is on written grammar, and students are usually taught this rather than spoken grammar. It should be recognized that normally, when people speak, they often do not pay much attention to the words, sentences, structures or conjunctions. As a result, grammar in spoken language is usually not strict; it is less rigid and more flexible than in writing.

As in Townend and Walker's analysis, there is an interdependence between spoken and written language, but they still have to find the answer for the question, "Why does language have two parts?" Because of that, there should be a distinction between spoken and written language. At school, besides written grammar, spoken grammar should also be properly addressed because it has been an indispensable part of languages in general and English in particular.

Spoken Grammar Less Rigid than Written Grammar

In spoken language, the participants usually do not pay much attention to lexical content and meaning, which are strictly used in written language. Biber (1986) gives two examples (p. 15-16), one from face-to-face conversation and one from an official document.

Text Sample 1 (Face-to-face conversation)

B: it doesn't need to
but it does in fact
by tradition
all the
A: finalists
B: finalists go
and so the others mmm
the others sort of feel

that things won't go on much longer

A: well they really haven't any reason to

because I mean finalists are

B: mmm

A: and they actually do finish

B: exactly

of course they do

A: and the others don't

well

I don't know

B: but I don't think it's feasible

I mean I know this is the first time I've done it

and I'm not in a main line paper

but I'm sure it'll take me all my time to do it

in three weeks

I mean I've seen what it's been like for you

I know… had more

on the other hand

I must allow myself good time

the first time I do it

A: I don't think I'm going to go on with it

B: are you doing two or one paper this year

A: only one

Text Sample 2 (Official document)

The University expects its students to conduct themselves at all times in an orderly manner creditable to the good name of the University. Regulations for the maintenance of good order and discipline are promulgated from time to time…

The official dates of University terms are published in the Calendar apply to all students. Students (other than new students at the opening of a session and research students) are required to arrive in Hull on the first day of term and, except with the special permission of the Dean of their Faculty, may not go down until the last day. The first and last days of term as published are regarded as travelling days on which no lectures or classes will be held…

Text Sample 1 uses interpersonal interaction and personal attitude (*I, you, are you doing?, ...feel that I don't think that, I know this is..., what it's been...*). Text Sample 2 uses longer and more academic words to present meaning (*an orderly manner creditable to..., regulations for the maintenance...*).

Additionally, in spoken narratives, people often use elliptical and abbreviated forms. When somebody asks us "What are you doing?" we can answer "cooking" or "studying." The answer stands for the complete sentence, "I am cooking" or "I am studying," which is unnecessary in the form of the question. Townend and Walker (2006) typify an instance: A child went to find his grandmother in another room, saying as he left "better see … Bromma's up to." Grandfather who overheard this repeated it later to grandmother as "I'd better see what grandma's up to" (p. 18). It is quite complicated to understand the content if we do not base on specific context, but it is often accepted in spoken language.

Horowitz and Samuels (1987) show that in writing people use complete sentences, but in speaking we usually use incomplete sentences. They take the following example: People can say, "Just going to check the reserve stock out of the back. Won't be a minute" (p. 27). The written version of this would be "I am just going to check the reserve stock out the back. It won't be a minute." It should be noted that in conversations or speech, people speak to exchange information with each other in a restricted context. In contrast, in writing, the author presents his or her ideas for the public, so the style must be academic and formal.

According to Leech (1998), conversation, which is the most common type of spoken language, takes place in real time, so it often expresses personal politeness, emotion, and attitude. Specifically, conversation usually uses syntactic reduction such as *You better..., What you doing? We gonna...* Moreover, people also use familiarizing vocatives like *honey, mum, guys, dude, mate...* When people desire others to do them a favour or ask someone to do something, they often use polite formulae and indirect requests such as *Thank you, Sorry, Please, Would you..., Could you..., Can I...* Another feature of the spoken language is that, when people speak, they often use expletives such as *God, Jesus Christ, My gosh, Bloody hell, Geez.* In addition, other exclamations are also seen in spoken language like, *What a rip off, You silly cow, The bastard, Good boy, The bloody key!*

It can be explained that spoken language often does not require strict rules, so it is less rigid and more flexible than the written language. Moreover, people communicate with each other anytime and anywhere, so most of the frequency of spoken language is informal and less academic. This is the reason why speakers can have chances to use vocatives, expletives, exclamation and

abbreviations. In contrast, the language in writing is often formal and academic, so it usually needs strict and appropriate words.

Unlike English, which usually uses the elliptical and abbreviated form, Vietnamese does not have this characteristic either in spoken or written language. In English, especially in using modal verbs, the speaker and writer often use the reduced form such as *won't (will not), can't (cannot), shouldn't (should not) or couldn't (could not)*. On the contrary, in spoken and written stories in Vietnamese, the full form must be used. People have to speak and write fully *không thể (cannot, could not), sẽ không (will not), không nên (should not)*. Some following examples are the typical demonstrations.

Ngày mai tôi sẽ không đichơi. (I will not go out tomorrow)

Anh không nên làm việc đó. (You should not do that stuff)

Cô ta không thể trả tiền cho tôi. (She cannot afford to pay me money)

Not unlike English, spoken grammar in Vietnamese is less rigid and informal than written grammar. Binh (1971) shows that there are many spoken sentences in Vietnamese which have no subjects, while they are strictly constructed in the written language. He demonstrates a few forms:

- The negative forms đừng, chớ and hãy are often used in sentences which contain no subjects.

  Hãy đợi một chút nữa (Let's wait one little more)

  Chớ đi nhanh quá (No go fast very)

- 'Half-questions' is also one kind of the questions containing no subjects, for instance:

  Cơm chưa? (Eaten yet? Lit.: Eat question word?)

  Đi đâu đấy? (Where (are you) going? Lit.: Go where final particle?)

  Ăn không? (Want to eat? Lit.: Eat question word?)

  Đẹp thế nào? (How beautiful (is that lady)? Lit.: Beautiful how?)

Subordination

One of the fundamental distinctions between spoken grammar and written grammar is subordination. Tannen (1984) defines that "subordination is the asymmetrical relationship between an independent and dependent clause(s) in which the dependent clause is introduced by an overt subordinating conjunction" (p. 24). The use of subordination between spoken and written language is not balanced and depends on different types and various functions

of the whole sentence. Two of the subordinating factors, which clearly exhibit the differences between written and spoken language, are adjectivals and adverbials.

Adjectivals. With regard to adjectival relative pronouns, this type of subordination occurs more frequently in spoken than in written language. Keenan (1975) summarizes the use of adjectival in the following table*:*

Table 2: Frequency indices and percentages of occurrence of each adjectival relative pronoun in spoken and written peer narratives (Keenan, 1975, p. 60)

	Spoken	**Written**
Total Frequency Index	11.7 (147)	6.9 (49)
Restrictive Relatives	8.0 (101)	4.8 (34)
Non-restrictive Relatives	3.7 (46)	2.1 (15)
Who	33% (48)	31% (15)
Which	11% (17)	29% (14)
That	46% (68)	20% (10)
Where	5% (7)	2 (1)
Whom	- (0)	2% (1)

Table 2 shows the frequency index for relative clauses and the percentages of overall occurrence for each relative pronoun in spoken and written peer narratives. Overall, the occurrence of relative pronouns in spoken language is approximately three times that of written language, (147 in the spoken while 49 in the written). Restrictive relative clauses are considerably more frequent in both the spoken and written stories than non-restrictive relatives. The occurrence of pronouns is also not balanced. Referring to table 2, the relative pronoun that is used in spoken much more than in written language (46% in the spoken and 20% in the written). There are some typical examples for that:

> The man that lives next door is very friendly.
>
> Where is the fruit that was in fridge?
>
> Everything that happened was my fault.

In contrast, there is a preference for which in written narratives with 29% while 11% in spoken narratives. It would account for the social uses of language based on pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

> Is it possible, argue critical pedagogues, for teachers to embrace a pedagogy which empowers students to intervene in the making of history? (Zyngier, 2003, p. 43)

> Knight suggests the test or benchmark of a democratic education is not just the difference it makes to the lives of the students but also to the community to which the students belongs. (Zyngier, 2003, p. 44)

In Vietnamese, relative pronouns are rarely used in either spoken and written language (Can, 2001). Usually, the use of relative pronouns in Vietnamese causes statements and utterances to become more complicated and redundant. Some following examples can demonstrate this:

Example 1

Anh co biet nguoi phu nu song o phong ben canh khong?

Anh co biet mot phu nu, nguoi song o phong ben canhkhong?
(Do you know the woman who lives next door?)

Example 2

Anh co biet dia diem toi sap chuyen den khong?

Anh co biet dia diem, noi ma toi sap chuyen den khong?
(Do you know the place where I am going to move to?)

The meaning of the two sentences in Example 1 is the same, and in Example 2 as well. However, Vietnamese speakers rarely use the pronoun *nguoi (who)* as in 1.2 or *noi (where)* in 2.2, especially in written narratives.

Adverbials. The difference is not the same in every adverbial, but in general, adverbials in written language are much more frequent than in spoken language (Tannen, 1984). Tannen constructs a table to show this distinction (p. 19).

Table 3: Frequency indices for adverbial subordinate clauses in spoken and written peer narratives

	Spoken	**Written**
When	1.6 (20)	3.7 (26)
As	1.3 (16)	3.7 (26)
While	.8 (10)	2.3 (16)
Because	1.3 (16)	- (0)
If	1.3 (17)	- (0)
Whether	- (0)	.8 (6)

After	.2 (3)	.6 (4)
Where	.5 (6)	.4 (3)
Like	.9 (11)	.3 (2)
Since	.2 (2)	.3 (2)
(Al)though	.1 (1)	.1 (1)
As if	- (0)	.3 (2)
Before	.2 (2)	.1 (1)
So that	.2 (2)	- (0)
Wherever	- (0)	.1 (1)
Whereby	- (0)	.1(1)
Once	- (0)	.1 (1)
Total	8.4 (106)	13.0 (92)

There are some instances for the use of adverbial clauses:

I fell asleep while I was watching television.

I didn't get the job although I had all the necessary qualifications.

As you know, it's Tom's birthday next week.

(Murphy, 1995, p.46)

The above statistics are quite similar to what O'Donnell (1974) found for adverbial clauses in his research: 22 for spoken and 33 for written per 100 units. In total, the adverbial clauses occurred more frequently in written (13.0) than in spoken language. However, the occurrence among clauses is different. For example, there is no *whether* in spoken language while there are 0.8 (6) in written. Moreover, with the *subordinators wherever, whereby* and *once,* the frequency in spoken narratives is zero, but they frequently occurred .1 (1) in written samples. There are also some adverbial clauses such as *like*. This clause is used more in spoken than in written language: .9 (11) and .3 (2). It is possible that the frequency of adverbial subordinate clauses is not always fixed between spoken and written narratives. Rather, it depends on the contexts and specific situations of spoken narrative; for instance, a speech in a conference is usually more formal than a conversation between friends.

In Vietnamese, the adverbial subordinate clause is quite balanced between spoken and written language (Tu, 2002). In Tu's statistics, the occurrence

of adverbials in both spoken and written language is approximately 9.5 % of 93 stories. The following examples are typical illustrations for the use of adverbials in Vietnamese language:

Dậu phải báncả con vì chồng cô rơi vào cảnh nợ nần.

(Dau has to sell her daughter, because her husband was in debt.)

Anh ta gọi điện cho tôi trước khi đến

(He called me before coming)

(Ngo, 1979)

Similarly to English, Vietnamese language rarely uses *có hay không, được hay không (whether) or như thể, cứ như là (as if)* in spoken language.

Coordination

SIL International (2004) defines "A coordinating conjunction is a conjunction that links constituents without syntactically subordinating once to each other" (p. 23). This could be understood as the coordinating conjunction being used to join two independent clauses which are equally important. A coordinating conjunction usually uses a comma, and it is often in the middle of sentence. There are some important coordinating conjunctions such as *and, but, so* and *or.*

Examples:

He lives in Melbourne, and he studies at Latrobe.

I was sick, so I went to the doctor.

She is Italian, but her father is French.

In the comparison between spoken and written language, the use of coordinating conjunctions is more frequent in spoken discourse than in written (Tannen, 1984, p. 17). Her statistics illustrate this distinction:

Table 4: Frequency indices for coordinating conjunctions in spoken and written peer narrative

	Spoken	**Written**
And	72.9 (918)	35.9 (254)
But	4.8 (61)	2.1 (15)

So	4.2 (55)	.8 (6)
Or	1.1 (14)	.1 (1)
And so	1.3 (16)	- (0)
Total	84.5 (1064)	39.0(276)

From the above table, it is clearly recognized that the use of and is much more preferred in the spoken (72.9 in the spoken and 35.9 in the written). According to Martinet (1964), "The use of and contributes to the fragmented quality of speech. This greater use of filler words and the characteristic of chaining numerous clauses together with and can be attributed to speakers' lack of tolerance for silence" (p. 9). The following examples typify the feature of spoken discourse:

And then he gets down out of the tree,

And he dumps all his pears into the basket,

And the basket's full,

And one of the pears drops to the floor,

And he picks it up,

And he takes his kerchief off,

And he wipes it off,

And places it in the basket

Which is very full.

It can be seen that coordinating conjunctions are one of the important factors in both spoken and written language. Depending on the specific characteristics, the occurrence of coordinating conjunctions is dissimilar between speaking and writing. This is evident in the above evaluation in a speaking situation when people do not feel confident or do not have enough words to express themselves, they usually use conjunctions such as and or so to fill the silence and make the narrative coherent.

Conclusions

The fundamental point of this paper is to describe and evaluate some differences between spoken and written grammar in English. Some of the above points were also compared with Vietnamese. This paper has illustrated that

spoken grammar is less rigid than written discourse. Moreover, the distinction between speaking and writing in terms of subordination has been highlighted. Relating to this point, the different frequency of adverbials and adjectivals between spoken and written languages is also compared and analysed. In addition, the study also examines the distinguishing features between spoken and written components in terms of coordinating conjunctions. Pragmatically, results of this study could significantly contribute to the teaching of English to Vietnamese speakers.

The above evaluation shows the crucial roles of both spoken and written English. Clearly, both spoken and written discourse are two indispensable facets of language in general, and of English in particular. Although there are considerable differences between speaking and writing in terms of grammar, they are always interdependent of each other. Furthermore, the English grammar taught at school should be balance of both spoken and written language in order to provide learners comprehensive and clear understandings about the similarities as well as differences of spoken and written English.

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Author

* **Thanh Nguyen** finished his PhD in education at La Trobe University, Australia in 2013. He is currently undertaking the role as Deputy Head in the Department of Science Management and International Relations at Tan Trao University, Vietnam. Dr. Nguyen has a number of publications, and is editor of several science journals. His areas of interest include language studies, student learning and cultural identity.

Reviewers

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