

# Autonomy in Language Learning

EDITOR

Vilson J. Leffa



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Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

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IN LANGUAGE  
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EDITOR  
Wilson J. Leffa

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## INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of a project that was designed to discuss the theory and practice of learner autonomy in terms of foreign language education. The articles were selected from the papers presented by the authors at the XII ENPULI (Encontro Nacional de Professores Universitários de Língua Inglesa — National Conference of University Professors of English), held in Porto Alegre in July of 1993.

They are classified into six larger topics, each one making up a part of the book: (1) the theoretical background; (2) the technological revolution; (3) the language experience; (4) the development of writing; (5) the reading process and beyond; and (6) from the learner's perspective.

The first part of the book discusses the main theoretical aspects of learner autonomy. The development of learning strategies, the ability to learn how to learn, the use of concepts maps are some of the ideas presented by the authors in dealing with the issue of what learners have to learn when autonomy is emphasized.

The second part, which focus on the technological revolution, deals specifically with the use of video and computers in language teaching, describing classroom experiences, offering some practical suggestions and casting a tentative look at what may lie ahead.

Part Three stresses the role of language competence in the development of the independent learner. The aim is not only to describe crucial components of language in terms of grammar, vocabulary, conversational and pragmatic features, but also to associate these components with the psychological processes involved in their acquisition, including the learner strategies, and the purposes for which they may be used in different social contacts.

The purposes for which language is used is also emphasized when students are asked to write in the foreign language. The topic is taken up by different authors, offering not only an update review of ideas about text, discourse and self-awareness but also practical suggestions on how to develop writing.

Reading, with an emphasis on the process, is given a wider perspective in this book. New views on cultural competence, English for Specific Purposes, reading strategies, and critical reading are discussed and analyzed. The development of autonomy is propounded through the development of the perception of the many aspects involved in reading, including the roles played by the reader, the relation between language and social practice, and the contacts between different genres.

The last part, finally, tries to unveil the repertoire of learning experiences different learners bring to the learning event and how these experiences are affected by the contributions of the other participants in the event. Different levels of teacher assistance, in terms of motivation, awareness-raising (both of the learning process and paralinguistic features), concepts of autonomy and authenticity are investigated. A critical view of learner autonomy, questioning some of its limitations, is also included.

The authors were free to choose the topics, according to their areas of interest. This confers the book not only thematic variation, admittedly stretched to the limits sometimes, but also authority, since the papers were written by specialists expressing their ideas in their areas of expertise.

The index, with selected keywords and authors, should help the reader not only to investigate a given topic in more depth but also to evaluate which topics receive more attention in the book. Some readers may find these keywords and authors an interesting starting point for research projects on learner autonomy.

The statistical survey that was conducted with the original passages to select the keywords revealed some interesting data, which I would like to comment on briefly. The most frequent occurrence, ignoring function words, was the word *learner(s)*, followed closely by *learning*. In third place, and well below, comes *language*. *Teacher* comes in tenth. The first twenty content words, in order of frequency, were: *learning, learner, language, autonomy, concepts(s), strategies, students, knowledge, development, process, teacher, theories, information, work, teaching, text, research, self, cognitive, new, and learn*. I think this is an interesting order, considering the topic dealt with in this book.

This book was prepared for publication from the originals sent by the authors in floppy disks. Transferring the text from different word processors and formatting it into the DTP system we have in the Department turned out to be a more complex job than I had expected and was only possible with the assistance of some special people. I owe a word of gratitude here to my colleague Anna Maria Becker Maciel, my secretary Canísio Scher and my students Paulo Rubem Bock, Maria de Fátima Ramos Bravo, and Nádia Hilgert.

The pictures which illustrate each part of the book were processed from original photos taken by my colleagues Ubiratan Paiva de Oliveira and his wife Maria Luiza. They were part of a larger collection entitled *Pictures to be read*, and as they were related to the topics presented here, I thought it would be a good idea to use them. I thank Ubiratan and Maria Luiza for allowing me to translate their original beautiful pictures into sketches that could be read by my DTP system.

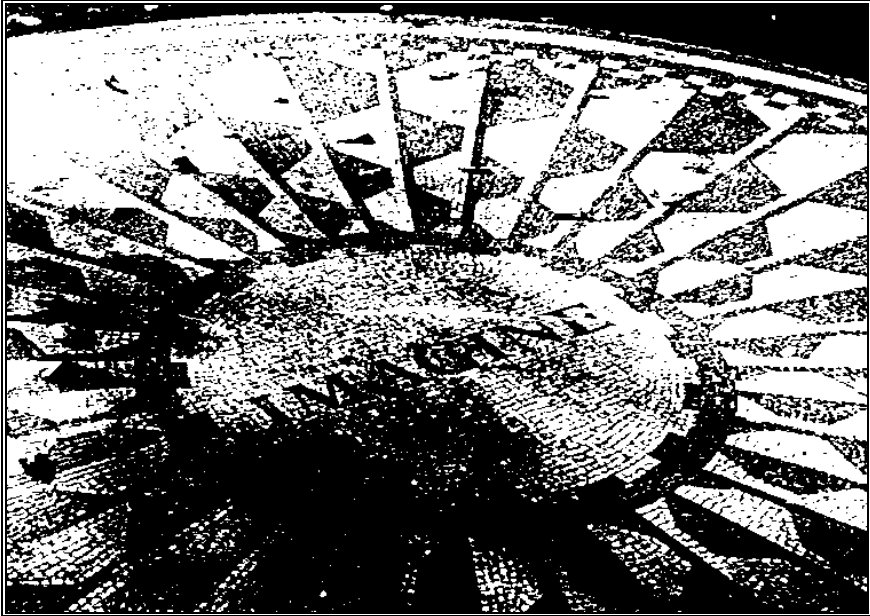
I am also thankful to people who, although not directly involved in the making of the book, were important for their support and assistance: they are Maria da Graça Krieger, Director of our Instituto de Letras, Vilma Sampaio de Oliveira, President of ENPULI, Richard Boyum, USIS English Language Officer, Edú Nery (Riograndelê-Special Book Services), Vera Medeiros (Oxford

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Vilson J. Leffa

PART ONE  
THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND



Central Park, New York  
(Original photo by Maria Luiza Baethgen Oliveira)



# Learner autonomy: what, why and how?

Leslie Dickinson

In this presentation I will define autonomy in terms of *learning to learn* and in a way which relates it to classroom based teaching. I will then review a number of justifications for encouraging greater learner autonomy including claims that it can lead to greater learning effectiveness. Finally, I will consider *how* autonomy can be introduced. I will describe some ways of organizing teaching to give practice in autonomy and then I will talk about learner training. An essential part of the introduction of autonomy is learner preparation — or learner training as it has come to be called, and I will describe a way of integrating learner training with normal classroom lessons.

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I have tried to take account of the likely range of interest in autonomy among readers from interest in a theoretical perspective to concern with practical applications. I begin by attempting a definition of autonomy — which I see essentially as an attitude to learning rather than a methodology. I shall then suggest the kinds of things autonomous learners are capable of — in conventional classrooms as well as in specialized settings such as self-access centers; and then I will suggest some things that language teachers might do to help to promote greater autonomy amongst their students.

More and more teachers nowadays are finding the notion of learner autonomy attractive, but the idea needs to be treated with caution. Those of us interested in autonomy believe that it is desirable that students ultimately become independent of teachers and teaching and become able to pursue learning projects autonomously. As teachers we do not want to be implicated in the development of *teacher dependent* adult students; we see the achievement of independence in learning as desirable — allowing the student to pursue his own learning objectives in ways and at times which most suit him, and so we adopt the additional teaching objective — to teach the student how to learn. The alternative, as Bruner pointed out thirty years ago, is to encourage teacher dependency.

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Instruction is a temporary state that has as its objective to make the learner or problem solve self-sufficient... otherwise the result of instruction is to create a form of mastery that is contingent upon the perpetual presence of the teacher.

Bruner is saying that the outcome of instruction must, logically, be to make the learner self-sufficient or autonomous, since the alternative is the production of a learner who can only learn with the help of a teacher.

The development of autonomy and self sufficiency may be desirable *ends*, and I have argued frequently in the past, and I shall argue here that they are desirable for good reasons. However, the vital question for teachers is how to bring them about, to discover the most effective *means*. It is important to begin by being clear about what we mean by Autonomy. I wish to begin the process of description and definition by identifying certain common misconceptions about autonomy; that is by suggesting three things which autonomy is not!

#### *What autonomy is not*

*Learning or learner autonomy is not a license to behave without constraint.* Autonomy only makes sense if it operates within a defining framework. In Britain, for example, we like to claim various kinds of freedoms, freedom of speech and freedom of movement are instances of these. But these are not licenses to behave in any way one wishes. Freedom of movement is constrained by the recognition of private property. I am not free to go wherever I like - into someone's house, into their bedroom at night without invitation. My freedom is constrained by the framework of laws. Similarly, in education, the concept of autonomy must be understood within the framework of conventions. Adult learners are free not to attend classes, but if they do attend a class, they must accept the conventions of the classroom, the authority of the teacher and the rights of others. The refusal to accept these obligations does not demonstrate autonomy but discourtesy.

*Autonomy is not primarily a matter of the physical setting of learning.* Often, autonomy is regarded as a matter of placing the learner in isolation, perhaps in a self access language learning center, with the assumption that the physical setting defines autonomy. Although autonomous learners may work in isolation, this is not a necessary condition of autonomy. Indeed, the physical setting *of itself* gives no guarantee of autonomy. Work in a self access center can be very teacher directed, and there is no contradiction between autonomous learning and learning in a classroom. In my view autonomy is primarily a matter of attitude to learning rather than the physical setting of the learning. However, matters are complicated by the fact that settings like a self access center are very useful to practice autonomy; but on their own they are not sufficient to guarantee autonomy.

*Helping learners to become autonomous is not a threat to the teacher's job.* Language teaching professionals sometimes worry that autonomy for students threatens the job and role of the teacher. However, this is not the case, as I hope to demonstrate later in the paper. Students must develop autonomy, sometimes over several years, and the teacher has an important role in helping with this process. Of course, the teacher's primary job of teaching the language remains. The teacher remains the authoritative expert in the language and in language teaching, certainly until the student becomes autonomous; and even beyond that point, the teacher remains an authority in the language, and a consultant to the autonomous learner in language learning. Let me now say what I think autonomy *IS*.

*What is autonomy in learning?* As I have just said, autonomy in learning is essentially a matter of attitude to learning. An autonomous learner is one who has undertaken the responsibility for his own learning. What does it mean to take responsibility for one's own learning? Let me begin the answer to that question by placing the notion of *individual responsibility* within the context of the history of ideas in European thinking. Isaiah Berlin in his recent book, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* argues that valuing individuality was a result of the reaction against the prevailing view within the French enlightenment in the Seventeenth century. Within the Enlightenment, the prevailing paradigm was that all societies, and by implication, all individuals, were to be evaluated against a common set of criteria. What was good in French society was held to be good in all societies. In reaction against the values of the French Enlightenment, the German writer Johann Gottfried Herder argued that "every age, every society, differs in its goals and habits and values from every other." (37) This attitude was further applied to individuals. Berlin notes "One man's attitude towards another is, or should be, based on perceiving what he is in himself, uniquely, not what he has in common with all other men."(38) and "There are many things which men do have in common, but that is not what matters most. What individualizes them, makes them what they are, makes communication possible, is what they do not have in common with all others. Differences, peculiarities, nuances, individual character are all in all." Berlin argues that the reaction against the absolutism of the French enlightenment, changed attitudes towards the place of the individual in society. Society was no longer perceived as a set of very similar members, whose individuality was of no importance, but as a group of individuals whose individuality was of prime importance. This ultimately resulted in an ethos favoring the promotion of autonomy, where the individual takes responsibility for his own acts. This underlies the development of autonomy in Education.

What does it mean to take responsibility for one's own learning? Let me ask the question again, and attempt to give an answer with more immediate relevance to the teacher. I interpret *taking responsibility for one's own learning* as meaning that the learner is involved in making the necessary decisions about his learning. It would be tedious here to list all of the areas of decision making necessary in language learning, but such a list would include decisions about objectives, ways of reaching those objectives, materials, sources of input, activities

and so on. A fully autonomous learner would make decisions about all these areas himself. He may also undertake the learning independently.

Of course autonomy *of itself* is no guarantee of success in learning; autonomous learners may make the wrong decisions, and may put a lot of energy into doing rather useless things. I once heard of a learner who spent most of his time memorizing a dictionary. After three years of fairly intensive learning, he had got to the middle of the 'C's, and of course he could not speak the language since he knew little of the grammar, and anyway most utterances require words beginning with letters which come after C in the alphabet. What we are really concerned with is "informed" autonomy. That is, learners who are sufficiently knowledgeable about language learning to make approximately correct decisions about their own learning. This is not an unreasonable aim; experienced language learners develop a personal knowledge of language learning, and I believe that it is possible to train less experienced language learners as part of the process of teaching the language.

Learning autonomy for me, then, is a goal of education rather than a procedure or a method. Work towards this goal is likely to be teacher directed initially, and it proceeds as a co-operative enterprise between teacher and learners involving the learners progressively in taking on more responsibility for their own learning.

A number of comments are needed here. First, the process of training towards autonomy — often called "learner training" — may continue over two or three years with school children, or over a number of months with adults; it depends on how much time is available. Secondly, I believe that the training process must be fully integrated into language teaching; I suggest how that might be arranged later. Thirdly, learner training involves practice of autonomy; and fourthly we need to further analyze the concept of autonomy in language learning in order to identify appropriate goals for learner training. Learner training seems to me to be the key to autonomy, and I will spend some time considering the goals for learner training. First, let me briefly describe the research background, and in particular, work on learner strategies, which is central to learner training.

The early research on language learning strategies carried out by such researchers as Rubin (1975), Stern (1974), and Frolich Naiman Stern and Todesco, (1978) indicated that good learners have an active involvement with language learning, that they have clear ideas about the best ways for them to go about language learning, and that they set up their own learning objectives in addition to the teacher's objectives. Similar findings are discernible from the more recent work in learner strategies undertaken by such researchers as O'Malley et al, and Wenden. Groups like the Center de Recherches et d'Applications Pedagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL) at the Universite de Nancy II in France/ and individuals like Ellis and Sinclair (1989), and Dickinson (1987) see language learning best facilitated by the development of greater independence on the part of the learner, involving the learner in accepting a greater share of responsibility for his own learning.

There are similar findings in research in learning other subjects. Wang and Peverly (1986)<sup>2</sup> review findings of strategy research (in subjects other than language learning) and conclude:

...one feature is salient across the research from the various perspectives. Effective learners are characterized in the research literature as being cognitively and effectively active in the learning process. They are seen as being capable of learning independently and deliberately through identification, formulation and restructuring of goals; use of strategy planning; development and execution of plans: and engagement of self-monitoring. (p.383)

Here, then, Wang and Peverly are saying that in many areas of learning *effective learners* are those who are active and independent. They identify goals, they formulate their own goals, and they change the goals to suit their own learning needs and interests. They use effective learning strategies, and attempt to monitor their own learning.

From all of this research it appears that the essential quality that autonomous learners have is an *active* and *independent* involvement with the target language. This implies five skills or abilities on the part of learners; they are able to:

- *identify what is being taught. That is, they are aware of the teacher's objectives;*

Not all learners actually know what the aims of the lesson are, or know what the objective of a particular exercise is. In order to be aware of these things, a learner has to be *active*; this involves things like reviewing the lesson beforehand; taking note of the statement at the top of the exercise saying what the exercise is trying to teach, and listening carefully to the teacher when she introduces the lesson and the activities.

- *state and follow-up their own purposes in addition to the teacher's. That is, they are able to formulate their own learning objectives;*

Independent learners select and construct their own objectives and purposes in addition to the teacher's. That is, they are not in competition with the teacher and the teacher's objectives, but are often objectives which develop out of the lesson being studied. Thus, a student may want to expand his vocabulary in a particular area — maybe words concerned with an aspect of his main subject of study, or another student may be aware of difficulty in pronouncing a particular sound, and want to practice this.

- *select and implement appropriate learning strategies;*

Learning strategies are simply the techniques that learners use to understand a piece of language, to memorize and recall language, to perfect pronunciation and so on. Some of the writers about learning strategies distinguish between those strategies which are directly involved with learning — the examples above are directly involved with learning; and those which are indirectly involved — such things as checking what the lesson is about before the class; being aware of the objectives for a particular activity; assessing oneself, and so on.

- *monitor and evaluate their own use of learning strategies;*

There are several techniques which a learner might use for any one of the tasks I have listed above. Someone involved in perfecting pronunciation might try merely repeating the target sound, but then discover that as soon as the sound is used in a word, they cannot get it right; they may try repeating sentences; or they may spend a long time listening to the correct pronunciation, and repeating it silently to themselves. Some people find it useful to use a mirror to check that they have the correct lip positions and so on.

If there is more than one technique for a particular learning task, then the learner has a choice; the point is that some techniques are more useful for one learner than for another, and learners have to be encouraged to find the best technique for themselves.

- *monitor their own learning;*

A very important aspect of being an active and independent learner, is your willingness to monitor your own learning; to check how well a piece of work was done, or how accurately a sentence was imitated and so on. A learner who is actively involved in her own learning is active in self monitoring.

These, then, are some of the characteristics of the autonomous learner. However, as I said above, autonomy needs to be learned, and the teacher has a vital role to play in helping students to learn it. What is the teachers' role; how can the teacher bring these about?

I have four suggestions of ways in which the teacher can promote learner independence. Briefly these are:

- *by legitimizing independence in learning through demonstrating that we, as teachers approve and encourage learners to be more independent;*

Most learners, unused to independent learning, tend to believe that learning is *only* possible with a teacher. They may be unsure of the legitimacy of independent learning, and may at least regard it as second rate compared to teacher directed learning. This implies that initially, learners should be eased into autonomous learning and encouraged to make decisions of their own in small areas, rather than being dropped into the deep end.

The second way in which the teacher can promote greater independence is:

- *by convincing the learner that she is capable of greater independence in learning, probably most effectively by giving her successful experiences of independent learning;*

Once again, this suggests a gradual introduction of autonomous learning, rather than a deep end approach; an arrangement where the autonomous learning is related to ongoing classroom based lessons, at least initially, will enable the teacher to suggest tasks which learners can pursue themselves, maybe as homework, or work in a self access center, and importantly, report back on in the classroom.

- *by giving the learner increasing opportunities to exercise her independence;*

A self access center is a useful device for giving practice in autonomous learning. However, it is only one way among many. The use of project work is another means, and indeed, any student centered methodology gives opportunities for the practice of autonomy. Once again, this suggests a gradualist approach, but with the intention of preparing the learner for full independence.

- *by helping the learner to develop learning techniques (learning strategies) so that she can exercise her independence.*

There is considerable interest nowadays in the study of the strategies which learners use in their learning, and in the possibility of teaching learners additional strategies. Learning strategies are usually divided into *cognitive* and *metacognitive*. *Cognitive strategies* are directly involved in language learning so they involve specific, conscious ways of tackling learning tasks. They are, in effect, *learning techniques* which learners select and apply to learning tasks. For example, a learner who needs to learn a list of words in the foreign language might try to do so by reading through them repeatedly, and then try to recall the list without reading the words. This is the (cognitive) strategy of repetition. Another learner might associate each word in the list with an object in the room in which he is studying. She then recalls the list by looking at the objects and remembering the words "in them". Later, she may recall those objects in her room and at the same time remember the word associated with each object. This is a more elaborate cognitive strategy.

However, a learning task involves more than the simple application of a cognitive strategy. The learner must first ensure that she knows what the task requires her to do, and then she must select the appropriate cognitive strategy for doing it. These decisions are made through a series of mental operations, which are carried out by using higher level strategies called *metacognitive strategies*. Some educational psychologists distinguish between cognitive and metacognitive strategies by using an analogy with the organization of business. *Metacognition* (the application of metacognitive strategies) is called *the executive*, because these strategies are used to manage or control the learning process as we can see in the analysis of a learning task which follows.

First, the learning task has to be identified, possibly by the learner asking herself questions like:

- What is the task?
- What kind of task is it?
- Have I done anything like this before?

It is only after the task has been identified that a cognitive strategy — to help directly in *doing* the task — can be selected. The chosen cognitive strategy is then used to undertake the learning task. Effective learners monitor the use of the strategy as they are working by checking that this is the best way of doing the task. Once the task is completed, they check that everything has indeed been done, and they make some kind of rough assessment on how well they have learned or understood.

In the process just described *metacognitive strategies* are used for the following operations:

- identification of the learning task;
- selecting the appropriate *cognitive strategy*;
- monitoring the use of the cognitive strategy;
- checking that the task is complete;
- self-assessment of the learning<sup>1</sup>.

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#### <sup>1</sup> *LEARNING STRATEGIES*

There are a number of recent books and articles which discuss learning strategies. The following are among the most accessible

DICKINSON, L. *Learner Training for language learning*. Dublin. Authentic, 1992.

This book regards learner training in large part as training in learning strategies. It describes learning strategies, and gives examples of them. In addition, it suggests ways that learner can be prepared for greater independence in learning

ELLIS, G., and SINCLAIR, B. *Learning to learn English; a course in learner training*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

This is a course in learner training designed for learners of English, but many of the ideas in the book could be adapted for use with learners of other languages. Stage 1 contains activities designed to prepare learners for language learning, while Stage 2 covers topics like Extending vocabulary, Dealing with grammar, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

OXFORD, R.L. *Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know*. Newbury House, NY: 1990.

The book is concerned with providing foreign language and ESL teachers with practical suggestions for helping their students to develop language learning strategies. Detailed suggestions for strategy use in each of the language skills are included, as well as case studies and suggestions for setting up similar programmes.

WENDEN, Anita and RUBIN, Joan. *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*. Prentice Hall International, 1987.

This book consists of a collection of papers written by prominent researchers in the field of learning strategies. It is an excellent introduction to research in this field, and is written in a way that makes it reasonably accessible to teachers new to this aspect of language learning.

WENDEN, A. *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. Prentice Hall, 1991.

This book is concerned with topics such as defining autonomy, helping students to become autonomous, the relationship of learner strategies with autonomy, and the integration of an autonomous approach with the

Current research into learning strategies suggests that one difference between good learners and the rest is the good learners awareness of and use of *Metacognitive strategies*.

I am currently engaged in a piece of research which aims to help learners towards a more active independent involvement with the target language, and especially aims to help them to use metacognitive strategies more actively, as I am now going to describe.

### GOAL

The procedure I have developed is called GOAL, for reasons which will become obvious. The system encourages learners to apply learning strategies to tasks that he or she is engaged in by offering a series of "self questions" that the learner can ask as he engages with the task.

### G O A L

G = GOAL	<i>What are the learning goals set for this unit or lesson?</i>
O = OBJECTIVE	<i>What are the immediate objectives of the task you are going to do? (i.e. do you know what the declared objectives of the materials are?) Do you have any additional objectives of your own which you wish to work on by using this task?</i>
A = ACT	<i>What is the best way of doing the task? (The purpose is to get the user to consciously select a strategy — even if this is to be consciously aware of the strategy implied in the materials) Is there an alternative? (i.e. keep on looking for something better)</i>
L = LOOK	<i>Look at your learning. Did you learn what you set out to learn? (If not, why not?) Look at the WAY you did it. Did it work well, or is there a better way? Look at how hard you worked. Did you work hard or not very hard?</i>

The user refers to a checklist whilst he is working on a unit of material. The checklist consist of a series of questions the user asks himself which are intended to encourage the use of metacognitive strategies. The procedure is intended to have built in redundancy, in that as users become familiar with it then the checklist is scrapped.

### PREPARATION NECESSARY TO UNDERTAKE THESE STEPS

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classroom. The book takes a practical approach to the topic and contains many activities to help teachers to devise and evaluate learning plans and materials for autonomy.



The first two categories concerned with goals and objectives can easily be raised to awareness in learners by the teacher first drawing the learners' attention to these questions in the table, then by the teacher asking these questions regularly, and finally by getting the learners routinely to note the answers to these questions before beginning a new unit ( for goal) and a new task (for objective).

Preparation for ACT and LOOK might involve (or select from) a number of things: Questionnaires on Learning Styles, Questionnaires on Strategy Use, the Good and Bad Learning Experience Activity and Group Discussions. (See Table)

In order to make decisions on the best way of doing a task ( i.e. selection of strategy) and in order to evaluate the use of the strategy, a learner has to have some notion of her own preferred learning style. Many learners have no awareness whatever of their preferred learning styles, and some will not even be aware that there are alternative styles. Consequently, an important priority for preparation is to raise awareness of learning style. Three suggestions for doing this are:

- Get learners to complete a learning style questionnaire. There is an example in Ellis and Sinclair's book *Learning to Learn English*<sup>2</sup> "What Kind of Learner Are You?"
- Get learners to complete a questionnaire on strategy use. There is an example in Oxford's book *Language Learning Strategies*<sup>3</sup> "The Strategy inventory for language learning"
- Get learners (in groups) to do the activity "Good and Bad learning Experiences." There is a description of one form of this activity in Dickinson (1992) <sup>4</sup> pp. 47-49, and in Oxford -who suggests a form of it specifically designed for languages learners. In each case after the activities, it is suggested that learners meet in groups to discuss their responses.

Learners can be helped to develop additional learning strategies in two ways. Firstly, through direct strategy training — in which the teacher teaches a strategy for tackling a specific learning task; and by discussions on strategies among groups of learners. Direct strategy training might be used, for example, to help learners to develop reading or listening comprehension skills by teaching them to review what they know of the topic of the passage before reading it or listening to it, and by identifying questions they might want answered from the text. The findings of strategy training research suggest that learners would benefit more if they are told the name of the strategy, what it is for and how it is likely to help.

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<sup>2</sup> ELLIS, G., and SINCLAIR, B. *Learning to learn English; A Course in learner training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> OXFORD, R.L. *Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know*. NY: Newbury House, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> DICKINSON, L. *Learner training for language learning*. Dublin, Authentic, 1992.

In addition — or alternatively — learners could be asked to share their preferred learning strategies in groups. After having done a language task, individual learners could be asked to describe the strategy they used for the task. Initially anyway, there is likely to be some variation in how the task was tackled, and group members may find other students' strategies useful. Group discussion can be followed by a plenary session, in which group reporters describe one or two of the strategies reported in their groups. At this stage, the teacher can also suggest an alternative strategy.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper the key feature in the definition of autonomy is that it is *an attitude to learning*. I have suggested that learning autonomy can be facilitated:

- by legitimizing independence;
- by persuading learners that they are capable of learning independently;
- by teaching them how to go about learning independently, that is, by teaching students how to learn.

Finally, I have argued that my view of autonomy is not a threat to the teacher's role or the teacher's job. The result of preparing learners for autonomy is a teaching/learning process in which responsibility is shared between teachers and learners, with learners becoming progressively more self-sufficient.



# Towards autonomy: the integration of learner-controlled strategies into the teaching event

Reinildes Dias

Learning and learning strategies are the central theme of this paper. Closely related to this main topic is the instructional or teaching event which is a goal-oriented teaching action aimed at supporting learners in their task of acquiring, retaining and retrieving knowledge and skills. In other words, the instructional or teaching event is a human undertaking involved with orienting learners to the learning tasks as well as with creating opportunities for them to *learn how to learn*. Learning, on the other hand, refers to all processes that lead to long-term changes in students' mind. These changes can occur either by reception or by discovery meaning that external and or internal conditions may provoke learning. Though learning may happen without any instruction, the effects of instruction on learning are often beneficial and easily observed.

Learning is intimately related to the following main components, the learner and the ways he/she gets involved with the learning experience, the instructor or the teacher, the teaching or instructional material and the learning environment. Of particular interest to the focus of this paper will be the learner and the teaching or instructional action. To understand the learner and the processes into which he/she engages during the learning experience, this paper will draw on the assumptions of a cognitive-oriented theory known as *schema theory* (Rumelhart, 1980; Leahey & Harris, 1989) and on the theoretical orientation of the *Information Processing System* (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). This research on how the mind works is rich with practical implications for the teaching event, that is, those external factors that can be used to provoke learning. To deal with the instructional or teaching event, this paper will have the support of the science of instruction whose main focus is the instructional process. The prescription of optimal methods of instruction to bring about desired changes in student knowledge and skills is the main concern of this discipline (Reigeluth, 1983).

If, on one hand, instruction can be understood as the set of events that affect learners in a way that learning is facilitated, on the other hand, the learning

event requires the activation of strategies for learning and remembering, that is, capabilities of self-management of the learning process. The instructional event can be related to ways of facilitating learning as well as to ways of teaching students *to learn how to learn* for them to acquire autonomy, with greater control over their learning experience. The underlying premise is that it is desirable and also possible to use learning strategies to give support to the learning task as well to teach students how to become more effective as learners in the acquisition, retention, and retrieval of information. This certainly implies that the instructional event is responsible for facilitating the learning process as well as for teaching students to learn how to learn.

## THE LEARNING PROCESS: A COGNITIVE VIEW

An important development in cognitive psychology has been the growth of *schema theory* (Rumelhart, 1980; Leahey & Harris, 1989). This theoretical viewpoint postulates that "a spoken or written text does not in itself carry meaning; rather, it provides directions for listeners or readers on how to use their own knowledge stored in their cognitive structures to retrieve and construct meaning" (Leahey & Harris, 1989, p. 84). A definition says that a schema (plural, schemata) is "a data structure for representing generic concepts in memory" (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 34). As such, a schema guides both information acceptance and information retrieval; it affects how we process new incoming information and how we retrieve old information from long-term memory. The goal of schema is to specify the interface between the learner and the learning material.

One function of a schema is to guide the drawing of inferences from a written, spoken or seen message and it is a natural process to draw inferences beyond the material actually presented. To illustrate, if a strongly implied instrument of some action is not explicitly mentioned (*John hurt himself while shaving*), it may be inferred and added to memory representation (*John used a razor*), just as if it had appeared explicitly. If questioned later about the way John got hurt, a person (reader/listener) making such an inference would probably refer to the razor as the instrument that caused the hurting.

Furthermore, exactly what inferences will be constructed by a particular listener/reader is in part dependent on what schemata are initially activated during the understanding process. For example, in a small experiment conducted with some graduate students at Concordia University in Montreal, the students were asked to read the set of guidelines provided below (Wittig and Williams, 1984, quoted in Leahey and Harris, 1989) (see Table 1). One group read the text from the point of view of *grass mowing* and the other group from the point of view of *suntanning* (Guimarães and Dias, 1992).

Both groups were asked to carry out the following activities: (1) Please read the text and write down what the following words refer to: *procedures, oil, problems, and ritual*; (2) Explain the meaning of sentence number 3. The answers

provided by the students, discussed below, support the view that comprehension is a schema-based process in which inferences depend on the schemata which have been activated before the processing of the information. For instance, *oil* was interpreted as *suntan lotion* by one group and as *lubricant oil* by the other. Ritual was *suntanning procedures*, while it was *mowing the lawn* in the other. Sentence number 3 was interpreted as *Don't take too much sun because your skin will become blotchy. Each part of your body should be exposed to sun for the same amount of time* by the suntanning group, while the grass mowing group interpreted the sentence as *Don't cut the grass too short*. In other words, the provided context activated the instantiation of different schema (grass mowing/suntanning) which led to different inferences based on the same message/text.

<p>To start with, here is a set of guidelines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wait for a sunny day. Depending on where you live, you may want to carry out the procedures all year, although many people start in the spring.</li> <li>2. Check the oil. Failure to monitor the amount of oil can create serious problems.</li> <li>3. Do not take more than recommended limits. If you take too much, it is possible everything will become discolored. Color changes can be embarrassing, particularly if you worked hard to make everything look right.</li> <li>4. One major concern will be bare patches. Sometimes, you will fail to notice all of them at first. Then, as you proceed, you will become painfully aware of uncovered sections. They will require special care. And you will need a good supply of water, although if it starts to rain, you will want to stop immediately.</li> <li>5. By autumn — again, depending on where you live — you may be tired of the ritual, and happy the season is ended. But generally, after a cold winter, you will probably be pleased to start again.</li> </ol>
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Table 1 — A set of guidelines (Wittig & Williams, 1984)

*The information processing system*

Research on the way the human mind works emphasizes the fact that interpretation is an *interactive process* which involves both previous knowledge and new incoming information. The way new information is taken in, selected, processed, and encoded for a future recall can be illustrated by the use of a diagrammatic representation (see Figure 1).

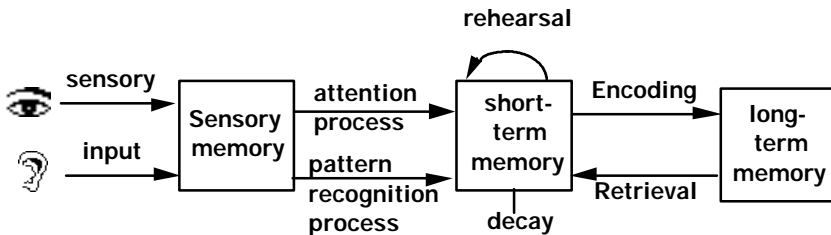


Figure 1 — The Information Processing System (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968)

As indicated, environmental stimulus enters sensory memory which holds information for a very short time. The processes of attention and pattern recognition select and identify some of the information held in sensory memory for further processing in short-term memory. This processing includes information that has just come in and prior knowledge that is retrieved from long-term memory. Information is recalled from long-term memory because we have to rely on knowledge already stored in our cognitive structures to process new incoming information. Information which is actively rehearsed remains in short-term memory before being encoded for future use.

### COGNITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

The pervasiveness of differences in learner performance in most instructional or teaching settings is evidence of the fact that there are different ways of going about learning. These ways have been variously referred to as learning strategies, cognitive strategies, study habits and approaches to studying which may be defined as mental operations or procedures that the students may use to acquire, retain, and retrieve different kinds of knowledge and performance (Rigney, 1978, p. 165). These strategies have been classified in a number of different ways; one of these approaches (West, Farmer, & Wolff, 1991) groups them into four different families according to the primary function they may perform in aiding or stimulating the learning process, namely, chunking or organizing strategies; spatial strategies; bridging strategies, and multipurpose strategies (see Figure 2). These strategies, as it will be pointed out later, may be instruction based, that is, may be used by the instructional material to provoke learning or they may be learner generated with the purpose of promoting learner's autonomy concerning the learning experience.

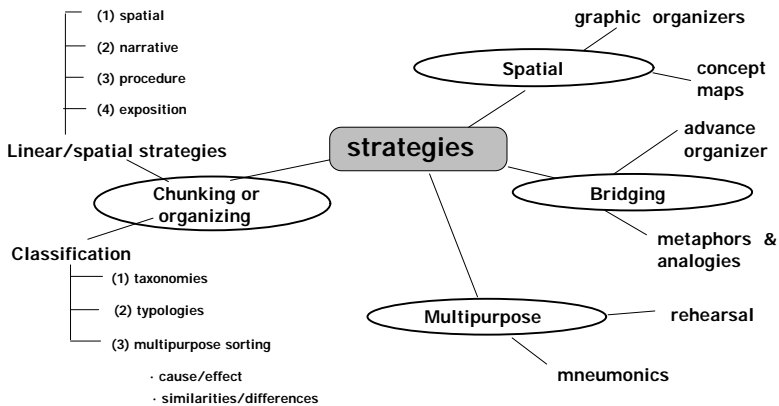


Figure 2 — Four families of Cognitive strategies

## *Chunking strategies*

These organizing strategies have the purpose of allowing learners to capture in a glance some of the main relationships established in a textual material in a structured way. By reducing the complexity of many relationships inside a text, these organizers help us to avoid an overload of information in short-term memory which hinders interpretation and understanding. They stretch our capacity for processing and recalling information beyond the magical number seven plus or minus two (Miller, 1956). Without the development of these chunking strategies, intellectual management of the very complex environment would probably be impossible. Chunking strategies may be classified into two broad categories: linear/spatial and classification.

### *Linear/spatial chunking strategies*

There are four common classes of linear and spatial strategies reflected in text and other forms of written and spoken communication. These are called *space*, *time*, *procedures* and *logic*. *Space* is the basic organizer in chunking arrangements found in a description of a scene, in materials concerning geography, in maps. When *time* is the basic organizer, sequencing or narration is the appropriate chunking strategy. Some narrative chunkings may be familiar as flow charts. When the events to be described must be in a sequence of required steps or stages, the organizing strategy is procedural chunking. Examples of this type of organization are the steps for loading a camera, for starting a car, or for tuning a piano. The two basic organizers are *the necessary sequence and time*. Expository or logical organizations are those which are structured around induction and deduction, following the rules of formal logic.

### *Classification chunking strategies*

These comprise some standard ways of sorting as, for example, *taxonomies*, *typologies*, and *multipurpose sorting*. Taxonomies are the appropriate chunking strategy when the information to be grouped is characterized by logical, law-like interrelationships. Typologies, on the other hand, are the choice when the sorting is based on obvious features, easily observed. Common examples are groups by size, shape and texture. Multipurpose sorting such as chunking arrangements by cause-effect relationships, by similarities and differences, by form and function, etc. are used to help to simplify and give sequence to complex arrays of information. These arrangements are commonly found in the development of the ideas of a text and have been referred to in the literature as "analysis systems of text structure" (Meyer & Rice, 1984).

### *Spatial strategies*

These strategies explore a two-dimensional perspective to provide a graphical arrangement of a substantial amount of information. They have the advantage of the chunking strategies in addition to being more visual. They have the characteristics of both the verbal system and the image system in that like texts, they explain and describe the relationships about concepts by means of words. Like images (pictures), they convey meaning through the exploitation of the two-dimensional space. Because of their dual representation of information (Paivio & Begg, 1981), these organizers may provide learners with some additional means for understanding and information retrieval. They also serve the purpose of providing a broad picture of what will be learned. Examples of such strategies are graphic organizers and concept maps. While graphic organizers comprise a great variety of grid-like arrangements like frames, diagrams, tables and so forth, concept maps involve the highlighting of concepts and specific relations between connecting concepts, normally in a hierarchical fashion.

### *Graphic organizers*

These strategies are two-dimensional matrices which present labels of main ideas in rows and in columns. They show visually the intrinsic structure of a text by displaying a large number of meaningful connections.

### *Concept maps*

Concept mapping is a way of displaying major concepts (from a text or lecture) and the relationships or links between them in a visual arrangement. Most often, the concepts are hierarchically plotted on a paper (or computer screen) with the most general encompassing the more specific with relationships or links between them shown in space by the use of lines (or arrows). Linking words of the type *is an example of, causes, enables* and so forth are written on these lines to facilitate the task of generating propositional statements (Novak, 1990).

The task of concept mapping involves mappers in dealing with four major components: (a) *concepts*, that is, a class name for objects (events, things) together with the corresponding meanings; (b) *connecting lines* showing the relationships or linkages between or among concepts; (c) *propositions*, that is, the statements which express verbally the specific relations between connected concepts; and (d) a *hierarchical structure* with more specific concepts and their links subsumed into more comprehensive concepts. The resulting map is a concept or propositional framework of the material mapped, hierarchically shown in a visual way. An example of a concept map can be seen in Figure 3.



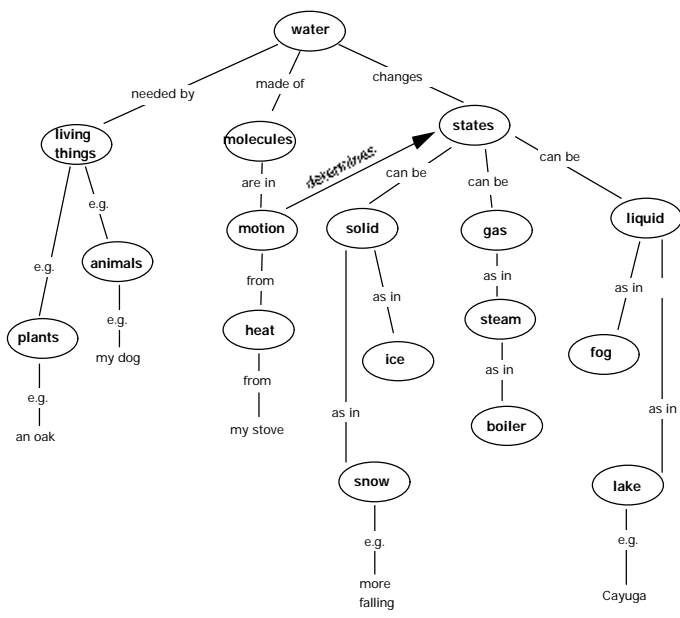


Figure 3 — A concept map for water, showing relationships among concepts

### *Bridging strategies*

These strategies have the useful function of acting as a bridge between existing knowledge and new information that will be processed. They have the capability of helping learners recall what they know and transfer that knowledge to new topics. As seen in the description of the Information Processing System, without such connections no comprehension and, consequently, no learning can take place. In this family are aids to processing such as advance organizers and analogies.

### *Advance organizers*

This type of organizer can be defined as a brief prose passage, usually about a paragraph in length which introduces or comes before a lesson. It is a rich and powerful transition statement that is placed before the main body of presentation (see an example in Table 2). More than an ordinary introduction or transition, the advance organizer is based on the students' prior knowledge. It is brief and abstract. It also organizes the material to be presented later by outlining, arranging, logically sequencing or patterning the main points, ideas or procedures.

Remember in our unit on World War I we studied several causes of that war. Among those causes studied were economic forces, political upheaval, internal strife and boundary disputes. Also, we learned about several important events which occurred just before the declaration of that war. In this next unit, we will learn that the causes of World War II are much the same and that there were very similar events which happened before each war.

Table 2 — Example of an advance organizer for causes of wars

### *Analogies*

These strategies provide an explicit comparison between one area of knowledge and another area of knowledge that is completely outside the first (Ortony, 1979). They act as links between existing knowledge and new incoming information. An instructional-oriented analogy contains at least one element that is within the prior knowledge of the learner, while the other is distinctly unfamiliar. The familiar term is termed the *vehicle* and the new content is termed the *topic* (Ortony, 1979).

There are two major ways in which the vehicle and the topic can share an analogical relationship. For instance, in a *structural relationship* vehicle and topic have the same general physical appearance or are similarly constructed. An example is *Each cell in the onion skin is something like a room. It has a floor and a ceiling as well as four walls*. In this case, the topic is *each cell in an onion skin*, while the vehicle is *a room with its main components*. In a *functional relationship*, on the other hand, topic and vehicle share similar functions. A third type of analogical relationship combines the structural and functional relationship. An example of a *structural-functional analogy* can be read in Table 3.

The structure and functions of our cells could be compared to a factory. The manufacturing processes may be compared to the life processes carried on in a cell. The finished products are the compounds that form the many parts of the cell ... The main office and planning department of our factory cell is the nucleus. The nucleus is the control center of the cell. It controls everything that goes on inside the cell.

Table 3 — An example of a structural-functional analogy

### *Multipurpose strategies*

These are bottom-up strategies because they are driven by the parts of the content rather than by holistic mental constructs. They are means of learning the parts and the details as opposed to getting the big picture which can be provided by chunking and spatial strategies. They are disintegrative strategies in that they divide and conquer. They allow the mastery of manageable chunks. Included here are rehearsal and mnemonic strategies.

## Rehearsal

Rehearsal can be defined as a temporary activation or recycling of information in short-term memory. This can be either *maintenance* or *elaborative* rehearsal. Maintenance rehearsal merely holds information in short-term memory long enough for it to be acted upon in a certain way as, for example, when one keeps repeating a phone number while dialing. There is no effort to encode the information into long-term memory. A brief maintenance in short-term memory is all that is required in such cases.

In contrast, elaborative rehearsal helps transfer information to long-term memory. Rather than a simple repetition of the to-be-remembered information, this type of rehearsal activity relates it to other concepts already in long-term memory and develops new associations among those concepts. It is a very helpful strategy in learning class material for exams. Among the rehearsal strategies, we can mention the following *questioning* and *answering*, *selecting*, *underlining*, *notetaking*, *repetition*, *cumulative rehearsal*, and the study system SQ3R which can be applied to the material to be studied. The acronym SQ3R stands for *survey*; *question*, and the three R's refer to *read*, *recite* and *review*. Learning these skills and using them often improves performance.

## Mnemonics

These are strategies for improving the encoding process. They are the products of conscious decisions to organize information into more meaningful units for the purpose of remembering it better. These strategies have been called *artificial aids for memory* in that they are devices which aid recall. Among the various types of mnemonic strategies we can mention the following *keyword*, *chain*, and the method of *loci*.

*Keyword* is a technique for remembering word pairs. It is a useful strategy when learners have to learn word pairings as countries with major products, words with synonyms, inventors with major invention, etc. *Chain mnemonics* are of three type, namely, *link*, *story* and *pegword*. In links, imagery is used to connect the strings of items to be learned. In story mnemonic, a story or rhyme is created to act as aid to learning. When a little song is added up, this provides the learner with two avenues for information retrieval. This is why advertising jingles are so durable in memory. The pegword system involves learning a system of associations in advance and then using these to 'peg' items to be learned on. One popular system involves the association 1 = bun, 2 = shoe, etc. To use the pegword system, associate the first item to be learned with a bun, the second with a shoe, and so on. To retrieve, simply count through the numbers and retrieve the associated images. The *method of loci* consists of using a familiar place such as a street or a room and imaginably locating there the items to be learned. To retrieve the information, visualize the familiar location and *pick up* the images left there.

## THE INCORPORATION OF LEARNING STRATEGIES INTO THE INSTRUCTIONAL EVENT

Instructional design, as *a discipline*, is a linking science between learning theory and educational practice, aimed at understanding and improving one aspect of education: the process of instruction. It comprises a body of knowledge that prescribes instructional or teaching actions to bring about desired instructional or teaching outcomes, such as achievement and affect (Reigeluth, 1983).

Instructional design, *as the process of creating instruction*, is concerned with *methods of instruction* that can optimize different kinds of instructional outcomes. It considers which methods are better for bringing about desired changes in students' knowledge and skills for a certain course content and a particular student population. In the specific case of this paper, focus on the process of creating instruction will be placed on the decisions related to the use of cognitive strategies for effecting better learner performance. Several other aspects could be considered as, for example, text structure, motivational components, nonverbal elements, and so forth.

Though learning strategies are mental activities, they may be incorporated into instruction to facilitate the process of learning as attested by current theoretical and empirical research in instructional design. Two are the ways in which cognitive processes can be enhanced with the help of instructional strategies to ensure maximum benefit for the learners. One of the ways is to orient learners' mental processes when they are interacting with the learning material by the incorporation of *mathemagenic strategies* (Rothkopf, 1970) into the instructional event. These are designed-imposed activities which seek to direct learners to the learning task with the purpose of showing them what is relevant and of increasing the chances of an adequate processing of information in short-term memory. This includes retrieval of previous knowledge and transfer or encoding of that information into long-term memory. Examples of such strategies are instruction-imposed chunking strategies, graphic organizers, advance organizers, instruction-based analogies, underlining, inserted questions or objectives and so forth.

These strategies will be chosen according to the primary roles they fulfill in giving learners assistance during the learning experience. For instance, chunking strategies will be the choice when the material to be learnt has to be structurally organized for a proper processing and encoding of information. Graphical organizers will be selected to perform the role of visualizing a great amount of information. As they convey information by means of words and through an exploitation of the two-dimensional space, they provide learners with more avenues for information retrieval. Analogies and advance organizers will serve the purpose of tying previous knowledge with new incoming information. The importance of taking new information and relating it to a larger and more meaningful context of organized knowledge cannot be overlooked, as seen in the

discussing of the Information Processing System, and analogies and advance organizers are ways of providing those links. The choice of strategies for instructional purposes will depend on the structure of the material to be learned, the objectives of the learning situation, and the roles they can fulfill in helping the processing, encoding and retrieval of information.

The other way in which cognitive processes can be enhanced is by the use of *generative strategies* (Wittrock, 1974; 1978). These operations are activated by the learners themselves in an attempt to construct their own interpretation of what is being learnt. By using them, learners assume more control of the processes that produce learning. Examples of such strategies are concept mapping, outlining, learner-based analogies or graphic organizers, mnemonics, and rehearsal activities. They encourage retrieval, integration, assimilation, and retention of text content and what learners generate is their own *representation of meaning* for the specific knowledge domain they are interacting with. Though in the beginning of the learning experience students have to be taught how to use the generative strategies on their own benefit, they gradually become skillful processors of these operations and aware of their usefulness. It is assumed that this will greatly contribute for their autonomy concerning the processes involved in learning.

## CONCLUSION

This paper briefly discussed the potential of the incorporation of two types of strategies into the instructional event to ensure maximum benefit for the learner. A point in common between mathemagenic and generative strategies is their intention of stimulating learners' involvement with the learning environment and their purpose of facilitating those mental operations necessary for learning. Mathemagenic strategies are instruction-controlled operations which are intended to engage and direct learners into mental processing of specific aspects of their subject matter. Generative strategies, on the other hand, are meant to give learners greater control of the learning experience and the choice to manage it in a manner that best suits them, positively contributing to their autonomy. Except for concept mapping which has been commonly used as a generative strategy and advance organizers which is often a design-based strategy, the other strategies may be used either as instruction oriented or learner generated. Rehearsal and mnemonics are also learner-controlled activities but the instructional event can provide time for them to occur, to encourage their use as well to train students in improving these skills. Theoretical and practical research has provided evidence that both types of strategies influence the cognitive processing capabilities of learners in positive ways.

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# In the search of the foreign language learner's autonomy: concept maps and learning how to learn

Marli Merker Moreira

## INITIAL REMARKS

As teachers we should look for or devise instructional routines to help students gain autonomy in their own learning. We can direct our teaching to develop ways of helping students take more responsibility over their own learning (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989). In order to do this there must be a shift in emphasis, that is, from a concentration on instruction aimed at improving students' performance to the current emphasis on instruction aimed at students' self-control and self-awareness of their learning processes (Brown et al, 1981, p.14).

Learners find their way to autonomy when teachers aid them to focus on the learning process, shifting gears from the usual stress on *what* to a stress on *how to learn*. Then students 1. may be better prepared to improve spontaneous performance; 2. may enhance their ability to perform other tasks of the same kind they have dealt with in classroom activities; 3. may get more consciously involved in the construction and organization of their own knowledge.

When students get autonomy in their learning, they may become "more effective learners and carry on their learning outside the classroom, transferring learning strategies from one specific school subject and/or activity to others" (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989). However, they will have a better chance to attain these ideal attitudes if the teacher aims his/her teaching at preparing students for independence.

What can be the possible outcomes of an education directed to help in the development of a mass of critical thinkers, of students who, in a way, master the process of their learning and are aware of the development, construction and organization of their knowledge? Is this good for governments that want to have easy reach over the minds of people, who, ideally, should be maintained less equal

than the thin slice of the dominating others? Is autonomy of learners a desirable outcome of educating in the 'dog eats dog' societies around the world?

According to Skinner (1984), students — and everybody else — cannot have autonomy since "they lacked any responsibility for anything, because determinism was true and hence was incompatible with the possibility of moral responsibility" (Ericson and Ellett, 1990, p. 4). Piagetians, on the other hand, "recognized the possibility of student responsibility, for Piagetians hold that the mind is active, not passive" (Idem, p.4). However, there is much more to the question of autonomy than just the case of the dichotomy between a determined mind x an active mind. This question of agency and autonomy through responsibility concerns bigger issues, such as social justice and educational opportunity for example.

When we say that emphasis should be redirected to students' autonomy, we mean that they should get their access to learn how to learn. We do not mean that they should be blamed for low achievement, for school drop-out, for questionable and ineffective teaching and schooling practices (Idem, p.4). Autonomy, in this context, is conceived as the ability to assume responsibility for one's affairs (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989).

Educating — the process, not the product — embodies the interaction of learner, teacher, curriculum, context and evaluation. Thus, learner's autonomy must be viewed within the framework of this sharing of various responsible agents, for it cannot happen in the vacuum. Although all of us might know a case of learning autonomy in spite of adverse situations related to teaching and schooling in general, it is the interplay of these five commonplaces that may generate autonomy for the learner to construct knowledge and to know how he/she learns.

We must be aware that autonomy is a multi-faced concept since there are various conceptions of democracy, and different societies and states have different ideas about what constitutes the proper form of good life and the proper form of the good society (Idem, p.6). Another point to ponder about is that sometimes what is a desirable goal or objective for educating might not be the same for the educational bureaucrats who lay out the blueprint for what educating and educational outcomes should be like for a whole area. Education is an undeniable human right and its "primary goal is to put students in a position to join in public conversation and help bring about the world. (...) Public education should help the students develop his or her rationality so that he or she can develop a reasonable view about particular virtues and forms of life. (...) For education as a right in a democratic society also obliges a sense of responsibility: to cultivate rational judgment and action" (Idem, p.9).

We will present one of many alternative ways to help students get this most desirable autonomy, not only in their learning to deal with texts in EFL classrooms, but to help them transfer this knowledge to other areas of study as well. Our search for the learner's autonomy has not ended yet but we believe that by directing our teaching towards meaningful learning we get there, if the student is really willing and ready to learn. Concept maps, as instructional tools, offer the students opportunities of knowledge construction and organization and of getting a certain degree of autonomy.



## THE PROBLEM

What are the students doing in the classroom? Are they learning anything? Are they just responding automatically to the stimuli presented by teachers/textbooks/materials according to what they expect to be the correct answer or reaction the teacher/textbook has for that particular question? Are students and teachers engaged in thinking while learning or teaching? How can we devise instructional routines to help students gain autonomy? How can we help them learn so that they can be responsible for their own learning?

Texts, non-literary and literary, are a major source of input in foreign language studies. Students have to handle a plethora of texts for reading, listening, writing, speaking and culture emphasizing the importance of prompt automatic reactions from the students. Supposedly the text contains all the answers, therefore it is only a matter of scanning it with the right set of conceptual goggles (Gowin, 1981) and, then, of copying or repeating, in almost verbatim manner, the information that is already there, in the text or with the teacher.

The right set of goggles puts the student in fine tune with the teacher and/or the textbook. Clever students, sometimes, do well in school exactly for having got wise about the ways of the teacher. This student will try to read and listen to with the eyes and ears of the teacher, therefore he/she will extract from the written or oral material only what he/she suspects has been selected by the teacher, or textbook producer, as the right answer. These are strategies of instruction oriented towards improving performance and not towards self-control and self-awareness. However, how do the students organize these answers in their cognitive structure? Is there a hierarchical organization of interconnected concepts or just a configuration of isolated concepts distributed at random?

Foreign language learners get most of their input from texts in the target language. Texts are a powerful source of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) that may become intake by the interaction among students, and between students and teacher, in the sharing of meanings embedded in those texts, providing a two-way street not only for communication but for the construction of knowledge.

How can we bring autonomy to our EFL classes? How can we bring back thinking to our classrooms? There might be many ways of doing it successfully, such as with activities involving text transformation, comparison and analysis. Theater in the classroom can also help promote thinking when students (characters) and teacher get together to present their views on the story, the characters, feelings the mood, the language, and to listen to the opinions and suggestions of the other members of the group. Theater — a play or part of it, a sketch — can serve as a springboard to bring feelings and thinking into the classroom when everybody puts his/her meanings on the table for discussion in order to come up with a way, or ways, to make their presentation, or reading, more meaningful.

Concept maps, too, are a tool to achieve the engagement of learners and teacher in thinking while learning/teaching and, besides, they can help put the

student in control of his/her own learning. They provide a kind of a road map to any type of text, and they can aid the student/teacher to hierarchically organize the knowledge he/she has constructed from activities that include, for example, comparison, analysis, summarizing, paraphrasing, contrasting, concluding, drawing inferences, relating and/or transferring information in the development of the five basic skills — reading, writing, speaking, listening, and culture.

This paper deals with concept maps as an instructional tool, among others, to foster autonomy and thinking in EFL classes and, thus, to help students make a more profitable use of the texts they have to handle in their studies and in their life outside the classroom. The theoretical foundation for this work with concept maps in EFL classes includes meaningful learning theory (Ausubel 1963, 1968, 1978; Novak, 1977; Novak and Gowin, 1984), the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) and Gowin's theory of educating (1981).

### WHAT IS A CONCEPT MAP?

A concept map is an instructional tool that allows for the hierarchical structuring of the knowledge contained in a text. Then all these concepts and their relationships can be hierarchically organized to build up knowledge, which is a human construct (Gowin, 1981), and has attached to its structure the idea of all the work that has been done to attain that knowledge.

The hierarchical organization of the map (Ausubel, 1968; Novak, 1977; Gowin, 1981; Novak and Gowin, 1984) is accomplished by placing the most inclusive, most general concepts at the top, and going to progressively less inclusive, more specific concepts towards the bottom of the map. The reason for this hierarchy is that new concepts are subsumed under others, more general and inclusive. The central point of concept maps is precisely the representations of those hierarchies in the construction and organization of knowledge.

Learning is a continuous process (Brown, 1980), in which *no concept is finally learned* (Novak and Gowin, 1984, p. 44) but is always being progressively differentiated (Ausubel, 1968; Novak, 1977) through new relationships, or propositional links, with other related concepts, thus expanding its meaning, and the meanings of other interrelated concepts, in inclusiveness or specificity. A concept map makes explicit the extent of this differentiation.

The "learning how to learn" approach to educative events in concept mapping (Gowin, 1981; Novak and Gowin, 1984) and contained in Ausubel's and Novak's theory of meaningful learning can guide students to the achievement of self-educating, when they learn how to take responsibility over their own learning. They start investing time and effort in materials and activities that will help them relate novel ideas to what they already know.

As instructional tools they offer students and teacher "a way to help learners and educators see the meaning of learning materials" (Novak and Gowin, 1984, p. 2). Learners are free to construct knowledge without the usual classroom

constraints of "right-wrong" instances, by testing their hypotheses about a text based on their prior experiences (Brown, 1980), emphasizing a process of creative construction.

Generally speaking, concept maps are two-dimensional diagrams that show relationships among concepts. Specifically, however, they are hierarchic diagrams which represent the conceptual organization of a body of knowledge. They can represent the learner's and/or the teacher's conceptual framework related to a text, an author, a research paper. They illustrate the meaning the learner holds for each of the concepts represented in a given context.

Students always bring to the learning task something of their world views that they want to share with others. New concepts can be difficult to relate to that "old" knowledge they already have. Mediating activities such as concept mapping can help promote meaningful learning because they can assess what the learner already knows and, therefore, lead him/her to express the way, or ways, knowledge has been organized in his/her cognitive structure.

### HOW IS A CONCEPT MAP DRAWN?

There is no such thing as *the* concept map since it can be modified by new connections, new contexts or by linkages with other concepts from other topics or subject areas, which may add a novel dimension and meaning to these "old" concepts. However, the key-concepts and their hierarchical organization will be basically the same (Moreira, 1985, p. 84).

The vertical dimension of a map confers it the hierarchical configuration (Moreira, 1985), and horizontality reflects a lesser degree of inclusiveness of the concepts in a map. The lines linking concepts and their labels suggest the type of relationship between/among them.

When working with concept mapping, the teacher has to make sure the students have mastered the mechanics involved in the activity. In order to get engaged in understanding the text, students cannot be distracted by any difficulties with the instrument itself. For this reason, on day one the teacher explains the procedures involved in the construction of a map, discussing the meaning of concepts such as "concept", "concept map", "hierarchy", "proposition(al)", "inclusiveness", "specificity". Students discuss these terms based on what they already know or think about these meanings; the teacher, then, clarifies these concepts according to the context of concept mapping and encourages learners to ask questions related to it.

Afterwards, the students receive the basic guidelines of concept mapping:

1. Read the text carefully. Do not worry about isolated meanings of words or sentences.
2. Think about the text you have just read.
3. List the five (or seven or ten) key-concepts of the text.
4. Order these concepts from the most inclusive to the most specific.

5. Draw a map with the concepts of your list and place the most inclusive/general/important concepts at the very top of the map and, gradually, all the others in a decreasing order of inclusiveness.
6. Remember that concepts at the same level in the horizontal axis are equally important and inclusive.
7. The vertical axis shows the degree of inclusiveness (as it moves upwards) and specificity (as it moves downwards).
8. Connecting lines establish the relationships between or among concepts. Connecting lines are propositional. There is always a word or label (preposition, relative pronoun, verb, conjunction) that defines the kind of relationship between two or more concepts.
9. When you have finished drawing your map, remember to give it a name (e.g. "A concept map for OUR TOWN", or "A concept map for Ichabod Crane in "The legend of Sleepy Hollow").
10. Try to reconstruct the text from it. Go back to the text to solve any remaining problems.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to provide a classroom atmosphere in which students are encouraged to take risks, and feel free to ask questions, to present their thoughts and to defend their ideas. Students must know that there is no such thing as *the* concept map, but a concept map and, furthermore, that a concept map is never final since it changes as knowledge is constructed.

Another helpful idea is to draw the first map on the blackboard or the overhead projector with the participation of the whole class and with the guidance of the teacher. This collective example-map about a text should be simple enough in terms of story, vocabulary, structures not to interfere with the learner's concentration on the drawing itself. They are interacting in the production of this example-map with the purpose of learning the mechanics of concept mapping. When the students come to an agreement about the hierarchy and the propositions of this map, they go back to the text and then they may suggest modifications to improve the quality of the map, justifying those changes with an analysis of similarities and differences between map and text.

When the learners have mastered the basics of concept mapping they may work in small groups with a text, using the guidelines (which should be worded, selected and organized in agreement with the age and/or level of students to whom they are directed). Students, then, select the key-concepts and organize them in a hierarchy from the most inclusive to the most specific, according to the text. Students may add other important concepts. They discuss this organization among themselves and draw a map presenting the reasons for having some concepts at the top as the most inclusive whereas others are at the bottom of the map. They should remember to externalize with propositions the type of relationship between/among concepts.

Next, the groups present to the classroom their views on the hierarchy of the concepts, on the linkages and on the map itself. This is followed by a class

discussion that may lead to changes in the hierarchy, links and/or propositions in the map. Finally, they reconstruct the text from the information they have on the map and speak and/or write about it.

## HOW TO PROMOTE AUTONOMY, THINKING AND INTERACTION?

The author suggests some ideas to promote autonomy through thinking and interaction in EFL while drawing the maps.

- Use only English in your explanations. Use the native language only when crucial to understanding the mechanics of concept mapping.
- Organize the class into small groups and establish your "house rules". The use of English in the discussions is a major rule, and these discussion sessions are the springboard to the thinking part of the construction of knowledge and taking responsibility over their own learning.
- The group should be democratic/collaborative and members should find ways to come to an agreement on their work (concept mapping) through sharing their ideas and feelings about the text, the concepts and the map.
- The drawing of example-maps in the beginning is relevant to the activity because it makes clear to the teacher how much of the mechanics of concept mapping students have grasped. It helps solve many misinterpretations or problems learners may still have.
- Students should present and explain some of their maps orally to the other students who are encouraged to ask questions. They may also write down their explanations.
- The text can be given beforehand and the teacher can ask students to read it, to prepare a list of concepts and to draw a map of the text as a home assignment. In class, students bring their maps, discuss them with their peers and construct a group-map of the text. This preparation at home encourages more interaction in English between peers and among groups because students feel quite confident about what they are saying since they know the text and have already constructed and organized their knowledge about it.
- Another teaching suggestion has to do with the presentation of the maps. A good alternative is to have one student of each group bring their map to the front/center of the classroom and explain it: why they think the concept(s) at the top are more important/inclusive than others; why the concepts at same horizontal axis are in the same level of importance; why some concepts are linked to others and the type of relationship they establish; why some concepts are at the bottom. Students from the other groups ask him/her questions about his/her group-map. Members of the same group contribute with explanations and answers to the "audience".

- After the presentation of the maps by the groups, students take a look at the all the maps and compare them in terms of hierarchy, key-concepts, links and propositions. Volunteers point out at similarities and differences in the maps, emphasizing that although the maps may have different forms/configurations there are some commonalties in all of them.
- A follow-up activity that has been successful with most students is to, after working in class with concept maps, have then reread the text and draw a new map taking into consideration what they have learned so far about the text and its conceptual organization, and their own comprehension of the text.
- The maps can serve as a road map to reconstruct the original text either in speaking or in writing. The concepts in a map are taken from the text. The teacher, however, as a brush-up activity, can suggest a map of the student's personal interpretation of the text, in which the student can add concepts that can be related to the text but that do not appear there explicitly (e.g. "A concept map of my views on the character Rip van Winkle").

Perhaps the most important tip to bring autonomy through thinking and interactions to the EFL classes using concept maps is that the teacher cannot "judge" the students' maps with a template, marking them right or wrong according to his/her pre-established model. When a teacher uses this instructional tool, he/she has to change his/her view on traditional evaluation methods. There is much more than "correct" or "incorrect" when evaluating a map: everything has to be verified, from concepts, linkages, axes, propositions to the map itself and its explanation. Then, if there are signs of lack of comprehension, ask the student to read the text again and draw another map. The students/the groups are responsible for revealing the way they have constructed and organized knowledge about a specific text. Normally, they take responsibility over their own learning and demonstrate satisfaction in learning more about their learning process.

### EXAMPLES OF MAPS

The maps presented in figures 1 and 2 were drawn in class for two different texts: the poem "Miracles" by Walt Whitman and the short story "The Mask of the Red Death", by Edgar A. Poe.

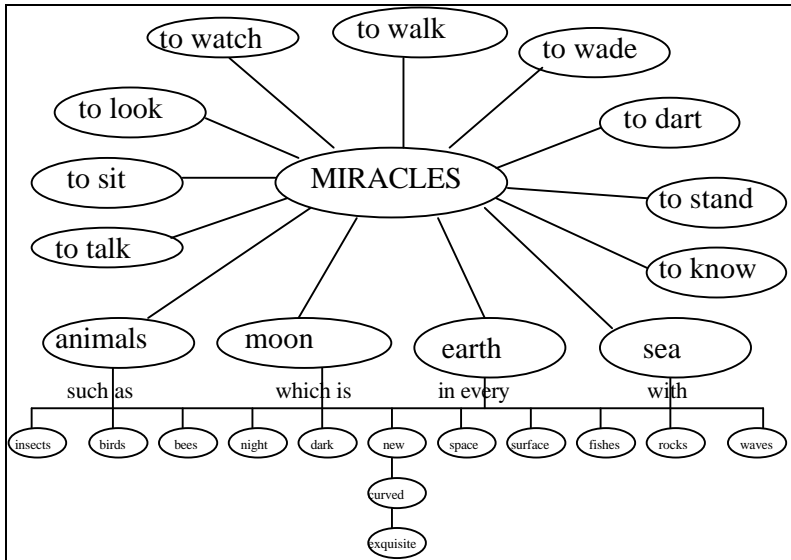


Figure 1 — A concept map drawn by student #10 from the poem *Miracles* by W. Whitman.

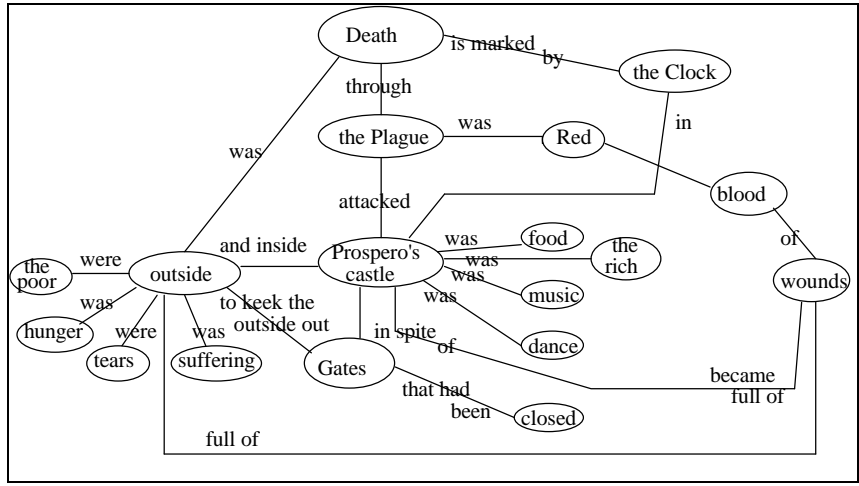


Figure 2 — A concept map by student # 3 for *The mask of the red death*.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We believe that underlying this work with concept maps is the idea that learning situations should help students reflect upon their own experience and build new and deeper meanings from what they already know. Students should learn how to learn and construct their own knowledge, understanding *how* and *why* this new knowledge relates to his/her experience of the world concerning that specific 'chunk' of knowledge. This is one way of becoming autonomous.

Concept maps can help students build up self-confidence on their ability to use newly acquired/learned concepts in new contexts. They may be useful tools to enter the structure and the meaning of the knowledge students *want* to construct and understand. They can also be used by teachers and learners as strategies to increase and improve cooperation and the sharing of meanings.

The use of concept maps in EFL classrooms can have other effects on teaching and learning, such as: more communication in English; motivation to read the texts and talk about them; a congenial learning atmosphere with students more involved with the desire to communicate than with the form of the communication itself (less fear of making mistakes and a lowering of the affective filter); students want to perform in English; a participative and cooperative classroom.

Although the first days of work with concept maps have to be very well planned and need an extra care concerning the detailed explanation of the mechanics of concept mapping, students will do most of the work and most of the talking in class once they get the gist of working with this tool. The teacher has to plan the activities and draw his/her map, supervise the individual and group work, guide presentations and discussions.

The response we get from most of the students at the end of the semesters is enthusiastic and they ask the teacher to continue using this tool with them and with other students, too. They often ask for more information on how to use this tool/heuristic with students in elementary and high school, and some even report their experience in using it with their students in the first grades of elementary school.

Concept maps offer a means to bring autonomy through thinking to the EFL classroom. Students who have gone through the process of organizing and constructing their knowledge using this tool while evaluating the semester wrote, I've never spent so much time thinking about what's going on inside my head when I try to learn, or In the beginning it is very difficult because I was not used to think about what I had read in a text and display this knowledge I got from this text, so I had to think about what was going on inside my head when I got to understand a text, or Answering to questions about a text is a lot easier. We don't have to think much. With concept maps we have to stop and think about everything. It was very difficult. Now I can think better and I can use this thinking to other texts, in other disciplines.

Autonomy for the learner means that he takes responsibility over his own learning process. It does not mean that learners are to be held responsible for the



failure of educational systems throughout the world. Teachers must find ways to lead their learners to this autonomy, however, they have to share with them this responsibility of helping students develop their rationality and of helping them cultivate rational judgment and action.

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Credits

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# Vygotsky, second language acquisition and learner autonomy: some preliminary considerations

Maria da Graça Gomes Paiva  
Sílvia W. Dias de Freitas

(...) learning does not imply development; however, learning, if appropriately organized will turn into mental development and set into motion various development processes which, otherwise, would be impossible to occur.  
(Vygotsky, 1987 - our translation)

## INTRODUCTION

Having the acquisition of new knowledge as their present major goal, the active participation of the authors of the present article in the Seminar entitled "Cognitive Development and the Socio-Educational Process", lectured by Prof. Juan José Mouriño Mosquera, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>, has given rise to a wide range of reflective thoughts about the very outstanding work of Liev S. Vygotsky (Vygotsky), one of the landmarks in the fields of soviet psychology and sciences. Vygotsky's passion for human mental processes as well as his concerns about proposing "a psychology of man" (Vygotsky, 1987), has triggered off the authors to the extent of searching for convergent and divergent features between his methods of investigation and some current theories of second language acquisition (the latter based on Ellis, 1986 and Klein, 1990), aiming at evaluating issues related to human cognitive development — particularly, the role of language in the structuring of thought and of the learning processes.

The goal of the present paper is reporting, through a comparative study between two different fields of knowledge, preliminary considerations about their similarities and/or differences and their relationship with the question of autonomy. Pedagogical implications will be referred to towards the end of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Seminar was held during the first semester of 1992, as part of Graduate Program on Teacher Education at the Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUC-RS).

paper, followed by some suggestions and/or personal conclusions about the topic under discussion.

## VYGOTSKY'S MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS

One of Vygotsky's (1896-1934) main contribution to Contemporary Psychology was his "Theory of Higher Mental Functions", also called "The Theory of Cultural Development", described in his famous piece of work "La Historia del desarrollo de las funciones psicológicas superiores", written between 1930-31, and which only became known in the literature around 1960. On the other hand, most of his work dates back to the period of the breaking out of the Soviet Revolution, where the academic environment was dominated by the work of figures as Hegel, Marx and Engels and by the theories of evolution from the Natural Sciences. Thanks to his creativity, despite its common origin with the Natural Sciences, his ever-growing personal contribution to Science made him stand out as an international intellectual figure.

Man, for Vygotsky, was conceived as both a biological and social being. The human brain was considered as "conscious matter", which, in turn, became "humanized" due to the interaction of man and nature — both belonging to a particular socio-historical context. Knowledge, on the other hand, would consist of a biological basis to be developed and reinforced by means of human interaction with the social milieu, fulfilling, in this way, the so-called double dimension: the historical and the social one. Such interaction between human matter and cultural environment was carried out through the *mediation* of tools and symbols. Tools should be understood here as ranging from axes made of stone and widely used by the primitive man to more sophisticated equipment from contemporary technology. Symbols, on the other hand, are closely related to different possibilities and dimensions of *language* use.

In Bruner's words:

The main issue about Vygotsky's work was that man was subjected to the dialectical game between nature and history, between his skills as a biological human being and as a product of human culture. (1988, p. 81 — our translation)

Consequently, when a child is born, he or she is surrounded by products of his or her own cultural context, which he/she begins to perceive as real objects, assigning them sense and meaning through language. These first stimuli will then determine the child's *lower mental functions* due to his/her straightforward relationship with the former ones.

Later on, such inherent relationships between external and internal activities will constitute the basis for the *higher mental functions* (voluntary memory, voluntary attention and thinking). This means beginning with social

phenomena as external activities — the so called "signs" which are outlined according to the individual's biological and social development. The "signs" referred to exert an influence on the individual. In spite of their differences in origin Vygotsky provides an example about the nature and the function of "signs", as follows:

The new concepts of the higher mental functions alter, in turn, the meaning of those of the lower mental functions. The adolescent who is aware of algebraic concepts has reached a rather privileged position in his understanding of mathematical concepts, in a broader sense...

...All higher mental functions are, in fact, internalized relationships, of social nature, as well as the basis for the social structuring of human personality. (our translation).

Thought, language and volition, therefore, are the main constituents of what Vygotsky called the higher mental functions.

A question necessarily demands to be answered from what and how are the higher mental functions developed?

The first evidence was that between the primitive and the contemporary man no striking differences have been detected - concerning biological features — that could naturally justify the remarkable differences found dealing with behavior patterns; biologically speaking, both the primitive and the contemporary man have identical features. But how to explain the differences concerning behavior patterns? Vygotsky provides the following answer:

...higher mental functions cannot be clearly understood without carrying out sociological studies; in other words, they are the product not from biological development but mainly from the development of social behavior patterns. (1987, p. 38 — our translation)

Vygotsky also stresses the relevance of culture as promoter of new thinking patterns as well as transformer of the *kind of activity* developed by the higher mental functions. What is being under discussion here is, in essence, *quality and structure changes*.

In addition, Vygotsky goes on to compare the primitive and the contemporary child for further findings about the influence of culture upon the whole human development process.

As disfunction is the negative pole of talent, primitiveness is the counterpart of culture. The primitive child is the one who has not gone through the route of cultural development, or, to be more precise, who is experiencing lower levels of cultural development. (1987, p. 48 — our translation)

Such Vygotskian views on mental human development processes have strong implications for the field of education since it is assumed that whoever

child that is *set aside* the evolution of society — like the one belonging to low — income social groups — he/she will remain, but closer to animal or sub-human social conditions. However, the biological contemporary man, despite his living conditions, is gifted with internal natural mechanisms that allow him to grow up as much as he wishes to, the same not being the case within the animal world. It is as if the animal world is well-structured already but just to grow, biologically speaking.

For Alvares & Del Rio:

Man exerts influence upon his siblings through language. Consequently, we can assume that human creatures qualitatively change and/or transform themselves into children of our culture, because they were not born in the world of silence. Instead, they develop interpersonal relationships with their partners who are, in fact, the ones who hold the keys for unlocking their internal framework of signs. (1985, p. 76 — our translation)

The chart below summarizes the main assumptions presented so far.

### Process of Cultural Development

3 sources		
1	2	3
Relationship between mental processes and social interactive processes.	Linguistic Mediation between the two processes stated in (1)	Language and its multiple functions  Between language and action there is some continuity both internal and external which is revealed through different functions and structures. (The dynamic view of language).

...according to Vygotsky, it is not due to genetic heritage or to human 'birth conditions' that human phenomena are made real. Instead, it is due to the origin of man - the changes from the anthropoid ape into humankind, as well as, from a child into an adult are, in fact, due to a "joint activity" that is guaranteed and perpetuated by means of educational social processes, in a broader sense, rather than according to the current parameters of school education currently described in historic educational accounts. (Our translation)

### *Learning and biological development*

For those experts that lived at the same time as Vygotsky, practical intelligence (the one closely related to the use of tools) and language development (the use of signs) were viewed as separate entities. However, although the two systems may be considered separately in early childhood — at least in some

particular cases — the *essence* of the complexity of human behavior patterns is the very outcome of the dialectical interaction between the two.

Any child begins to learn about his/her surroundings through language use, at the same time that he/she is engaged in new relationships and, by extension, in modeling his/her behavior patterns.

Therefore, it may be pointed out that the main role of language is that of being an effective *tool for social contacts*, quoting Angel Rivière.

Based on these preliminary considerations, we are now ready to introduce some Vygotskian assumptions about learning and development:

During the time he was carrying out his researches on human mental processes, three different trends prevailed concerning learning and development, namely:

- the one that described development as an "a priori" requirement for learning, rather than as the outcome of learning (Piaget, Binet);
- the one that viewed learning and development as two simultaneous processes (Thorndike);
- the one that matched both, learning and development as interactive phenomena (Kofka, Gestalt).

Vygotsky takes, as the starting point, the assumption that there are two levels of development, as follows:

1. *the real level of development* — that is, the child's capacity for independent problem solving. Such level is connected to the child's development of mental functions achieved at some period of his/her life. This level can be measured and assessed through aptitude tests.
2. *the potential level of development* — that is, the child's ability to solve problems but "under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Wertch, 1988).

In other words, two children may reveal similar development levels even though the learning conditions are radically different. That is to say then that *the real level* is concerned about development already achieved, whereas *the proximal level* refers to its future potential development.

Such possibility, though, embodies some constraints. Vygotsky emphasizes that a child is capable of solving problems that are beyond his/her real level of development, as long as he/she has the guidance of a teacher; however, as the level of complexity faced becomes higher, the child will reach a stage in which his mental development will have improved considerably.

The dynamics of the zone of proximal development in fact reinforces the social nature of the learning process which is "a universal but necessary feature

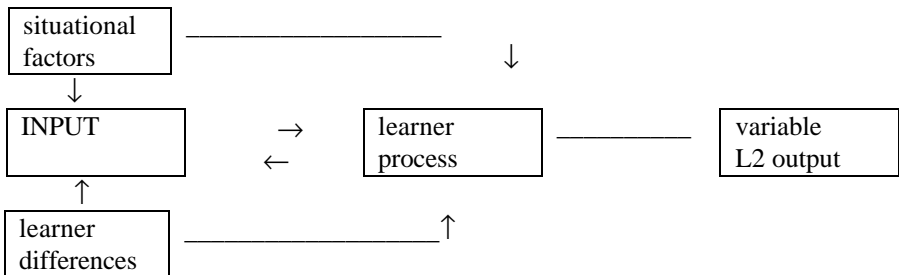
of the typically human and culturally organized development process of the psychological functions." (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 139 — our translation)

From this viewpoint, Vygotsky understands learning as prior to biological development and, as such, it should be guided towards those evolutionary steps that are closer to those already achieved by the human being, taking into account the connections between internal development and learning.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THEORIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Although research on Second Language Acquisition only dates back to three decades ago, both Ellis (1986) and Klein (1990) agree that there is already significant variety of "theories, models, laws, approaches and principles" about "the learner's system of rules". According to Ellis, however, in spite of the wide range of proposals, they share a common feature concerning the form, in which the linguistic system is described in the current literature. In other words, there is a tendency — among specialists — to make either a *description* of the steps followed in the acquisition of linguistic forms (i.e. "description of the nature of linguistic categories that make up for the learner's interlanguage at any level of his development" — (Ellis, 1986, p. 249 — Russian translation), or to *give explanations* about *what*, *how* and *why* the learner learns new linguistic systems.

The author puts great emphasis on and critically describes seven (07) theories of second language acquisition, namely: a) the acculturation model (and, by extension the nativization model); b) the theory of accommodation; c) the theory of discourse; d) the monitor model (Krashen); e) the variable competence model; f) the universal hypothesis and g) the neurofunctional theory. All of them, the author goes on to affirm, incorporate — to a certain extent or another — the basic principles required of any theory of second language acquisition, as displayed in the chart below:



(Ellis, 1986, p. 276)

Our reading of the summarized chart of the seven theories of Second Language Acquisition (Ellis, 1986, p. 227) points out towards convergent features



found between them which corroborates with Ellis assumptions about their sharing of common similarities:

- strong emphasis on *the linguistic form* rather than on *linguistic function* (only two theories stress the communicative function of language: the Monitor Model and the Variable Competence Model); the major goal tends to be on hypothesis generation and hypothesis testing, focusing on how the learner develops internal grammar mechanisms rather than on how he competently applies such knowledge in real- life communication.
- when attempting to find answers for the development process of morpho-syntactic linguistic structures, the authors of the theories try to set up regular patterns of linguistic aptitude, but always from the point of view of *form*. The link between *form and function*, for Ellis, is still to be made, as long as new fields of knowledge are incorporated as basic components of any linguistic theories, such as: the lexicon and some typical pragmatic skills related to the use of the target language in real communicative situations — that is, the social function of language.
- there is a tendency to describe the acquisition of grammar forms in isolation, conveying to both teacher and learner the idea that every learner develops his internal grammar by means of individual structures, not related to or integrated with one another.
- usually, the different theories of second language acquisition focus on the *internal* learner's mechanisms (even when the *input* is external) to acquire language, describing them in either linear or longitudinal form rather than following a dynamic and dialectical approach (the latter widely referred to in the works of Vygotsky).

Summing it up, it is worth mentioning here that neither theories of second language acquisition provides a sound explanation for the relationship between learner's biological development and learner's learning process.

#### VYGOTSKY AND THE THEORIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: BUILDING UP SOME CONNECTIONS

Cognitive development, for Vygotsky, means the process of acquiring one's own culture, in which both individual and social features are constituents of a unique interactive system. Consequently, language and thought are synonymous; due to their inherent dynamism thought is, also viewed as *action*, since — as Vygotsky points out — "human consciousness has a social feature; in fact, it is social consciousness that is built up as people communicate with each other".

From this standpoint, the link between *form and function* seems to be more predominant in Vygotsky's proposal of a "psychology of man" rather than on the theories of second language acquisition referred to by Ellis and Klein.

Another claim to be made is about Vygotsky's significant contribution on the relevance of cultural interchanges for the learner's cognitive development outside the context of formal instruction.

The third and last positive Vygotskian contribution refers to the role of the zone of proximal development in the whole process of teaching and learning, and the pedagogical implications concerning the role of the teacher — not a model to be imitated but, instead, the promoter of changes in a "partnership enterprise" towards learner cognitive development. "Teaching" is now defined as "something beyond the mere offering of models for spontaneous responses".

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

a) On the question of *autonomy*.

Among four definitions of *autonomy* (Thavenius 1989; Derk & Weightman, 1989; Dam, 1986 and Caride, 1984). Caride's was elected as the one that actually shares more features in common with Vygotskian conceptions about biological development and learning. Autonomy, for Caride, is defined as "autonomous and integral development". In his words it is:

(...) la liberación de los individuos para hacer de ellos agentes activos, responsables críticos en la edificación de su propia cultura y de su propia sociedad.

A few lines below, Carides adds up that it is:

(...) es ayudar a los hombres a pensar, decidir y ejecutar por sí mismos. (Caride, 1984, p. 100)

Consequently, it is our understanding that experts and/or educators in the field of second language acquisition should review or improve their assumptions about what it means to learn another language based on Vygostky's contributions previously described in the present article.

b) On curriculum design and the context of classroom learning

Paraphrasing some of the ideas presented formerly — particularly those related to the Vygotskian concept that "learning is not synonymous of biological development", it is suggested that current 3<sup>rd</sup> level curricula should be urgently reviewed for the purpose of transforming them into more flexible means for the promotion of learning. For instance, by incorporating more features of extra mural activities into the process of learning a second language.

In addition, special attention should be taken whenever discussions are brought about dealing with students' real motives for learning a second language. The truly social function underlining the whole process should be emphasized in the first place; in other words, students should be made aware of the relevance of learning a second language as a means of broadening up their views of the world they live in, since it improves their cognitive potential skills.

It should also be pointed out that there is the need for applying methods and techniques in the language classroom as well as for the design of instructional materials that would be more suitable for the variety of students' difficulties of learning as an attempt to overcome standardized views about students' learning patterns and behavior as identical. Learning differences should be both respected and promoted in the classroom since "everyone learns at his/her own pace and in a different way" — as Vygotsky points out (our translation). Such assumption is still to be incorporated in the daily classroom routines, though.

Aware of the hard enterprise undertaken, concerning the interdisciplinary approach we have tried to follow — i.e. the attempt to find similar/different features between Vygotskian psychology and some current theories of second language acquisition — it should be stressed here that the present study is still at an embryonic stage. Other alternatives/issues certainly deserve to be analyzed and criticized towards the actual building up of a more effective interdisciplinary work.

Therefore, it is hoped that other further studies and considerations will be carried out on the topic — particularly concerning about the role of language as well as the knowledge of other languages in both biological and learning development of the learner, aiming at making him into a better social being, capable of effectively interact with his own history and his own culture.

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# Autonomous learning and post-graduate work

Nelson Mitrano-Neto

## INTRODUCTION

What I am about to present is by no means a discussion on the nature of the notion of autonomy, but rather, what I intend to do here is to foster a debate on the role that such a notion has to play with respect to post-graduate training in TEFL in this country. Although in the interests of focus of presentation I shall be limiting my considerations to the post-graduate level of EFL teacher training, I hasten to add that quite a lot of the present exposition is indeed also applicable, even desirable I should say, both in relation to undergraduate training and to education as a whole. My specific aim is then to open the floor for a discussion on what seems to be an indispensable pre-requisite for post-graduate work, namely learner autonomy, in the light of the present Brazilian educational framework.

My motivation in writing this paper, and therefore trigger off a discussion on this topic, stems from a long-term observation of our educational tendencies with respect to the roles that teachers and students play in the teaching/learning relationship. Personally, both as a student and lecturer, I have always felt a little uneasy about the high level of centralization around the figure of the teacher and so little room allocated to the creative capacity that undoubtedly each and every learner brings into formal education as a result of their own personal past experiences.

I could clearly see how uneasy I had been when my MA supervisor opened my viva session by excusing herself from any commitment to the contents of my dissertation; no wonder, I had seen her only once during the supervising period. I am not saying that leaving learners to their own devices is a desirable situation. Quite the contrary, all I am trying to illustrate is that learners must be provided with some room in order to make use of their previous learning experience, both formal and informal, and develop towards a given target with the aid of both their own learning strategies and the exploitation of such wealth of resources and others external to them by the instructor. It is in this sense that Allwright's (1990, p. 1) definition of autonomy, as a *state of optimal equilibrium*

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*between dependence and self-sufficiency*, seems to synthesize my long-term feelings about the teaching/learning relationship.

A quite recent instance of learner dependence upon tutors occurred last week when a post-graduate student on one of my courses handed in a sheet of paper with several questions concerning bibliographic research. Amongst several things, she wondered whether there had been studies on the acquisition of a couple of modals by native speakers of English and, if so, would I have copies of such studies. Naturally, tutors are indeed part of the resources learners can resort to but in many cases they should try to find the information on their own. In this particular case, she would certainly benefit much more if she sat in a library room for, say a few hours, to go through what is available. In the information-seeking process, she would certainly come across related information that would only add to the quality of an eventual project she might wish to carry out. No doubt what we seem to have here is an instance of learner dependence which is reinforced by the fact that more often than not libraries are not so well equipped. Learners seem to have lost faith in the external resources available to them. Tutors have been filling in for such lack but in the long run this will certainly mean a decrease in standards and learner self-development.

In order to achieve my aims with this lecture, I shall firstly review two topics related to the notion of autonomy which seem to be essential to the ensuing discussion. I shall briefly review the nature of *self-access learning* and *autonomous learning*, as discussed by Sturtridge (1982) and Allwright (1990). Next, I would like to outline my own views on the nature of some essential characteristics of a post-graduate program which aims at achieving a high level of learner independence; namely, the nature of taught courses, tutorials (supervision), self-access work and autonomous learning itself. Finally, I intend to relate these characteristics to the post-graduate framework in this country to call for more effective departmental/institutional integration to make up for two, in a way related, impediments to autonomous learning: lack of a wider selection of choice for learners and external resources.

## RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Autonomy can, and indeed must, be connected to at least one other topic in modern pedagogy. When we speak of learner autonomy, we insert such a notion in the context of individualized learning. It does not seem possible to aim at autonomy unless such individualization is considered. In principle, it seems to constitute a solution to the now widely accepted drawbacks of teacher-directed instruction. However, most EFL professionals end up feeling disheartened when they try to make use of the approaches made so far to individualized learning. According to Sturtridge (1982), such disappointment arises due to two main causes: firstly, successful implementation of individualized learning more often than not is associated with learners who have very little in common with the

students sitting in our classrooms: the actual teaching situations described in experiments usually verge on the ideal, which makes us question the external validity potential of such experiments. Secondly, since "there is no such a thing as a method labeled "individualization" that teachers can learn and apply easily in their own foreign language classroom,...[teachers] see that a certain amount of re-organization of resources and management is necessary" (p. 8). In some institutions such a re-organization may prove extremely 'painful' and, thus, lead to frustration.

In spite of such difficulties, a change in our attitude may be fruitful enough to start a process that might lead to more substantial changes in future. In fact, meeting individual needs was attempted with the use of programmed instruction. This, however, still represented a straight jacket in the sense that learners were still being directed, not by the teacher but by the program itself. Computer-assisted learning, in this sense, is no different. Although there are of course advantages in using such 'methods', in terms of individualized learning they only solve one of the problems of teacher-directed instruction, namely, learners are free to work at their own pace. In other respects learners have little choice and independence.

Self-access work seems to constitute a way round such problems. In self-access work, Sturtridge (Op. cit., p. 10) claims, learners should be able to "decide what work...to do, find the material, work through the material, correct or assess [their] answers where necessary [and] evaluate [their] work where desired, all without help from the teacher." By this definition, self-access seems to impart a measure of choice and independence to the learning process. Not only do self-access materials allow students to work at their own pace, but they also provide more possibility of choice and a greater measure of independence than that found in programmed instruction.

In spite of coming closer to meeting individual needs, self-access has, nonetheless, certain disadvantages. Setting up a self-access center can be a daunting job in that such a bank of materials must be rich enough to become really effective. In fact, quite often what we find is a center that provides practice materials for consolidation of teacher-directed classroom work or even remedial work. Whilst there is no inherently negative criticism to be made about such centers, with respect to individualization they run the risk of being just a modern version of programmed instruction. The more variety in terms of materials, the more successful the enterprise is likely to be in achieving the aims of individualized learning.

Proposals concerning autonomous learning are meant to move a step ahead in the direction of true individualization. As was mentioned earlier, autonomy constitutes a balance between dependence and self-sufficiency. There are two other important aspects that Allwright (1990) considers in his study. Firstly, we must bear in mind that, on close analysis, autonomy is to be distinguished from *independence*. Although we tend to use these terms interchangeably (and I might have done it myself in this paper), independence is

to be equated with total self-sufficiency "whereas 'autonomy' accepts dependence as natural and as something to be exploited productively, given the prior development of inner resources" (ibid, p. 3). In fact, Allwright (ibid) considers a third position, *subjection*, which is an unhealthy acceptance of dependence. Secondly, autonomy should be viewed as a developing process rather than a steady state. As Allwright (ibid) explains, if we accept autonomy as optimal equilibrium, we must also accept that to keep such a balance it must be constantly changing to match circumstances, the progressive development of inner resources and the differential availability of external resources.

Another aspect of autonomy, now mentioned by Sturtridge (1982), is that *learning to learn* not only requires high motivation but also some background training. I would like to add that it seems that the point of equilibrium should be regarded not as a fixed measure but one that will vary individually and, indeed, situationally. Some learners will place that point towards the left end of the 'dependence — self-sufficiency' continuum, whereas others will move it towards its right end. In other words, some need more guidance, others will produce more effectively if left on their own. Following this line of reasoning, we must also realize that the same learner will probably shift his or her point of equilibrium towards the left or right end in the light of the pedagogic and even psychological context at hand. In gauging this continuous movement, we must consider a number of variables: the inner as well as outer resources available, learners' learning styles and motivation in view of the proposed task and the actual amount of familiarity with such a mode of educational development on the part of the learner. In any case, what must be stressed is that the process towards full autonomy is something to be developed as far as whatever point along the continuum. In approaching autonomous learning, we should look at what is possible and desirable within a particular situation.

## AUTONOMY AND POST-GRADUATE WORK

Turning now to the main focus of these considerations, post-graduate work seems to be the ideal ground on which to foster autonomy. Not that it should be disregarded at lower academic levels. Actually, most of the work done in this area concerns EFL teaching at all levels. However, it is at the post-graduate level that a high degree of autonomy is intuitively expected from learners, even when no such attitude has been fostered at earlier stages. Interestingly enough, such an expectation seems to be found with learners as well, even when they have not been exposed to it before. To my mind, a clash comes about because in expecting autonomy both teachers and learners encounter a number of impediments inherent in our educational framework. In what follows I shall outline some of the main points to be addressed in trying to encourage learner autonomy. I hasten to add that this is not to be taken as a finished proposal. Rather, these are considerations

of a general nature that, to my mind, should be present in any attempt to set up a program at this level of teacher training.

First of all, post-graduate programs in this country on the whole seem to be shaped as taught courses that leave little room for self-development. I do not mean to say that individual teachers do not sometimes work towards fostering individual development. What I mean is that there are institutional constraints that more often than not discourage this kind of attitude in the interests of following a pre-established tightly knit program. It is true, however, that there seems to be a nationwide tendency to decrease the number of courses required in such programs, but such a procedure has other aims and motivation than that of enhancing individual self-development proper. It seems then that in directing our efforts towards autonomous learning, we should de-emphasize taught courses in the benefit of a program that would be flexible enough to leave room for self-study.

Another aspect that should accompany such a change of focus is a slightly different attitude towards the actual contents of the courses. It seems that in order to stimulate autonomy, course contents should have a general, but questioning, nature. This would serve the double purpose of building up learners' inner resources<sup>5</sup> for the development of autonomy as well as opening up an array of options of possible areas of relevant improvement in their professional field. This, in a sense, constitutes the first step in a program that would aim at training learners for more self-sufficiency. Passing on information, however necessary, should not be an aim in itself, teaching learners to fend for themselves is undoubtedly our greatest contribution to education in this country. In addition, courses should include a component that would encourage learners to try to solve problems they experience in their work by resorting to resources already available to them. In doing so, we would aim at training learners on how to narrow down those general questioning points of a theoretical or practical nature. Actually, a balance between theory and practice would always be welcome in all courses. At this level, it seems to be desirable that learners be able to make a bridge between what they practice and a general understanding of the possible principles regulating that practice.

Secondly, greater emphasis on tutorials seems to be called for. To start with, if we aim at full autonomy, we need a teaching/learning relationship that can occur at a more individual level than the lecture room work does. In general, tutorials have the advantage of allowing for greater interaction between learners and teachers in terms of their expectations. Learners' objectives can then be attended to in a much more satisfactory way. In addition, individual learning styles need not be interfered with. Quite frequently, we can approach an academic

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<sup>5</sup> The term "inner resources"...refers to the development of the ability to take decisions about one's own learning and how it should be managed. For example, any fully "autonomous" learner will be aware of his or her most productive learning strategies, and will be able to apply that awareness to the selection of learning materials. Allwright (1990, p. 2).



task (and a practical one, for that matter) from more than one perspective. It is not very rare for teachers to impose a mode of learning upon learners that might not coincide with what would have been more productive in relation to their individual learners. Of course, teachers do that in the belief that this is the best route to take. Also, teacher/institution-directed instruction does not allow much room for teachers themselves to even intuitively perceive that had they left their learners exercise an autonomous mode of inquiry, the results would have been identical, to say the least.

Tutorials should then be shaped in such a way as to foster autonomy by taking learners one step ahead in the refinement of their lines of inquiry. They should run parallel to lectures. Here, two components seem to be essential. Firstly, a self-access center would back up the work being developed in tutorial sessions. In other words, after narrowing down areas to manageable research problems, further work and investigation could be made feasible by a well set up center. Here we can see that the nature of this center would have to be twofold: it should include material for academic research proper (such as periodicals, papers of various sorts, teaching materials) but also language development materials. As for the latter, it would be interesting to have materials that would tackle pragmatic aspects of language development. Not only does this area constitute the major problem for foreign language users, but by becoming more proficient pragmatically student-teachers will be acquiring more efficient tools for carrying out TEFL research.

The second component, in a way related to the kind of work just proposed, would be an emphasis on *exploratory teaching*. The refinement of areas of investigation to be dealt with in tutorials could be inserted in the framework of exploratory teaching. An interesting proposal is the third type of relationship between research, teaching and professional development indicated by Allwright (1993, p. 127)<sup>6</sup>. Involving learners in exploratory teaching from the very beginning would be an effective tool both in encouraging professional development and also in directing them towards the identification of fruitful academic inquiries. Actually, this could serve as a general framework for tutorials — all this departing from the general discussions provided in the course work. In reporting the work done in Brazil over the past two years (in the Cultura Inglesa, Rio and with the PIMEI project), Allwright (*ibid*) mentions a list of general

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<sup>6</sup> Research as the driving force for development and development as the driving force for research progress. This third position, and my own preference, is to go one step further and suggest that if teacher research is made central to the pedagogy, and is in fact successful in enhancing teachers' understanding of classroom language pedagogy, then not only will the professional development aim be well served, but so will potentially an additional aim of general "research progress". By "research progress" I mean a sense that the profession as a whole is developing its general understanding of classroom language learning and teaching.

procedures derived from such projects that could well constitute our point of departure.<sup>7</sup>

In the present state of affairs, it seems that there is a gap between what goes on in the lecture room and the expectations at the dissertation-writing stage. Learners seem to be usually exposed to an enormous amount of information of a specific nature without being given the possibility of developing skills necessary to digest all this academic 'mess' and turn it into profitable academic contribution and professional improvement. Quite often lecturers and students feel frustrated, especially when a supervisor turns to a student to say that his or her project proposal is a long way from being acceptable. I might be wrong in my conclusions, but it seems that this is more the rule than the exception. Therefore, something seems to be at least inadequate in the process. Why is it that we, lecturers, always expect a quality level that is frequently well above what our own learners produce? If you allow me a metaphor, it is as if we crossed the river and they could not see the bridge and stayed on the opposite margin.

Some might say that it is at the supervision stage that learners end up finding the bridge and eventually succeeding. However, it seems to me that it has been such a painful 'search for the bridge' that I honestly wonder whether we are not getting 'wet' students on the other side. In other words, are we not accepting less than what reasonable standards would require? I am perfectly aware that this is a complex issue: what is a reasonable standard? Many variables would have to be considered here. Standards will always be prone to improvement; it is a continuous process, not a clear-cut state. But if we have a way of improving standards in relation to their present level, whatever such a level might be, why not? Besides, what seems to matter is not so much crossing the river as finding the bridge. Once it is found, you can always cross the river again. As Allwright (1990, p. 5) points out,

It is arguable...that the really important effects of autonomy will come not in the form of directly enhanced learning effectiveness..., but in terms of an enhanced willingness and capacity to undertake further learning, beyond what can be offered by any institutionalized education. Given the limits of what any society is able to offer its members in terms of institutionalized educational opportunities, it becomes important to a society to develop the capacity to learn well beyond the limits of formal education.

I would like to turn back for a moment to the self-access component in order to discuss a few practical points. As was mentioned earlier, a self-access center must be a rich bank of materials if it is to be effective. Setting up such a

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<sup>7</sup> Identify puzzle area; refine your thinking about that puzzle area; select a particular topic to focus upon; find appropriate classroom procedures to explore it; adapt them to the particular puzzle you want to explore; use them in class; interpret the outcomes; decide on their implications and plan accordingly — Allwright (1993, p. 133-3).

center seems to be more discouraging now than ever in view of the present economic situation in this country. Funding is becoming scarce by the minute. However, a few steps can nonetheless be taken. It is at this point that my call for more effective integration comes in. The idea of a self-access center, as I understand it, should, at a post-graduate level, rely not only on the actual materials available in the center but, mainly, on the possibility of reaching knowledge wherever it is. An integrated program within and between universities involving human and material resources would certainly minimize the problem in question.

Post-graduate learners, working within an autonomous framework, will somehow or other feel the need to consult with experts from various areas, ranging from statisticians to psychologists, sociologists and computer scientists. Linguistics, and especially applied linguistics, at this point in time will only make progress if placed within the bounds of interdisciplinary enterprises. Of course I am aware that in principle such a scope is anticipated in university management. However, for such a system to be effective it must be inserted into a general program that would view such procedures as a form of routine. In other words, a learner should feel that consulting with a psychologist for, say, finding out about a research methodology s/he needs, is as straightforward a procedure as it is to go into the resources room to borrow a book or carry out a programmed activity.

The same would apply to inter-university programs that would allow learners from other institutions to seek information that is not available to them. Once again, in principle this can happen already and I am sure it has been happening. However, it is only when such an exchange occurs as part of a program that aims at fostering autonomy that it will produce effective general results. As it happens now, it seems that only those that manage to catch a 'glimpse' of the bridge are benefiting from such possibilities. Would they not cross the bridge anyway, I wonder. Without training in 'learning to learn' in conjunction with an explicit program to give access to autonomous inquiry, the positive effects of such an exchange will remain minimal.

Turning now to the last aspect of our considerations, supervision, I would like to say that after having gone through the proposed program, learners should be ready to offer an effective contribution in terms of a project proposal and refinement of research procedures in addition to the actual skill of academic writing. After having drawn on inner and outer sources of knowledge (and here of course I include tutors), learners should be capable of proceeding to work on a project that will certainly make sense academically speaking and will have developed professionally as well. In this sense, the supervision period will no longer be the lecturer's and the learner's nightmare but just a natural follow-up to the work being carried out. Reliance on a well set up self-access infrastructure will certainly constitute a very positive bonus to an ever-increasing level of academic excellence. At this stage learners should be able to exercise much more autonomy over their own work than they do now. Supervisors will continue playing an indispensable role, though. Such a proposal as this one does not exclude the

participation of lecturers. In fact, they will probably notice that their participation will vary in terms of amount, depending on the individual they are dealing with. In some cases, they will need to intervene more often than in others. However, I doubt such a participation will be of the same nature as usually happens now when quite often we must start from scratch at this stage which is indeed the final stretch of the process.

The operationalisation of the present proposal will of course assume various guises. I do not think there is one way of doing it. A number of local factors will have to be considered. In fact, we can even think of a model that would dispense with taught courses altogether. A well set up scheme could provide the means for self-study which would probably have to be assessed at regular intervals but which would only work in terms of tutorials and supervision: a degree by research. Whatever form of operationalisation is favored, one thing seems to be essential: more autonomy to the individual departments/institutions involved in the process. No doubt total independence is utopian, and perhaps not even desirable, but more flexibility to handle programs seems to be a 'must', especially because autonomy presupposes flexibility and indeed very little uniformity. Uniformity, and therefore centralization, is doomed to fail, when we try to implement programs that are supposed to cater for individual needs. It requires, instead, organization of resources in a de-centralized fashion so that opportunities for learning can be made readily available. And this can be achieved by a constant flow of exchange of departmental/institutional academic assets.

Departmental autonomy here refers to at least some possibility of academic as well as managerial re-organization. Naturally, some sort of constraint will have to be imposed, but this can be decided locally in the light of available resources and market prospects. Evaluation, no doubt indispensable to the running of whatever programs, seems to be much more effective when exercised by the users themselves. In an autonomous learning environment, learners themselves will be much more in control and aware of relevant objectives and, therefore, in a much better position to evaluate the performance of the program they are taking part in.

In a teacher-directed, centrally controlled environment, learners do not even know what is good or bad since things are inherently neither good nor bad. They are viewed as good or bad when judged against some sort of parameter. Now, in this kind of environment we may end up in a vicious circle that can represent a great risk to our own work. If university standards are low, the market forces become less demanding in terms of quality because we are shaping the market and, therefore, we might find ourselves being content with very little. As teachers, we all know that a demanding class always gets much more from us than a less demanding one. In the end, we ourselves might lose sight of the true parameters against which standards should be set.

Of course I realize that this issue is far more complex than I am perhaps giving to understand here and that it goes far beyond the capacity that most of us will have in terms of an effective influence on the system. However, on a par with

the tenets of the notion of autonomy itself, the implementation of a learning autonomy program carries (to use pragmatic terminology) the natural *implicature* that we must depart from a local perspective (to attend to individual, local needs) to reach a level of sharing of material and human resources (mutual interdependence). With present-day scientific advances it seems utopian to expect that a single department, or even institution, will be able to cater for individual needs at a post-graduate level on its own. Rather than centralization, autonomous learning seems to presuppose some sort of central co-ordination.

As was mentioned at the beginning, such a need for a re-organization of resources may be frustrating due to the teacher-directed educational framework most of us are inserted in. Nevertheless, a program aiming at a gradual implementation seems to be perfectly feasible even within the bounds of our present educational framework. As Allwright (1990, p. 8) points out, "the easiest way of thinking about the process of learning to be autonomous is perhaps in terms of scope" — cf. Sturtridge (1982, p. 11). We could start by expecting learners to be minimally autonomous and in relation to a small area and gradually broaden the scope. This procedure is particularly useful in that we can keep things under control, evaluate the implementation process relatively well and, above all, minimize the problem of lack of resources. In fact, Allwright (*ibid*: 8-9) concludes that "on balance it seems preferable to opt for a relatively limited scope in the first instance, unless you are sure that circumstances generally are so favorable that a broader scope is a practical possibility..."

Before concluding this paper, I would like to go back to something I mentioned in passing at the beginning, namely, that although the present discussion would be centered around post-graduate TEFL training, it could in fact be applied to education as a whole. Sturtridge (*Op. cit.*, p. 8-9), quoting Carl Rogers, says that "the man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security." Education for autonomy is a contribution that in fact goes beyond TEFL training. In our role as facilitators of learning we are giving our learners much more than the development of a skill to guide their search for knowledge in future; we are making them realize that discovery will be a never-ending process in their lives; we are making them realize that there is no end of the road, but rather a continuous turning into different ones. They will also realize that our inner development as human beings will be enormously enhanced as long as we understand that our relation with learning is a two-way road: we, as learners, in possession of our inner resources and in combination with the available outer resources can search for the answers to our queries ourselves; finding answers is a question of knowing how to search and this is what learners must be 'taught'. This measure of individuality seems to be very positive in society when it is understood as autonomy, as defined in this paper. This means to say that the individual is not to consider him/herself self-sufficient but a unique piece that turns to other unique pieces for mutual interdependence. And here I am at

one with Allwright (1990, p. 4) when he says that "democratic citizenship requires people who can develop their individuality while making the most of, rather than denying, their mutual interdependence."

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I tried to raise a number of issues related to the idea of fostering autonomy at a post-graduate level of teacher training in TEFL within the bounds of the Brazilian educational framework. An outline for possible programs which accounts for learner individuality and local conditions has been presented. In order to foster autonomy, it is felt that our learners must be provided with more access to human and material resources otherwise frustration during the supervision period is likely to occur. In view of the difficulties we face at present in this country, we call for an educational framework that presupposes more co-operation between departments and institutions. Rather than emphasizing taught courses, we believe that emphasis should be placed on self-study. In addition, it seems that effective reliance on learners' inner resources and their own work experience would definitely help increase motivation and independence. Ultimately, such procedures are believed to contribute to the achievement of higher quality standards.

The present proposal can be viewed as a combination of a 'taught course' component and self-access study placed within the bounds of an 'exploratory teaching' framework which would pave the way to the main project to be developed at the supervision stage. Lectures would aim at both providing essential general information and also developing 'learning to learn' skills. All this within a structure that would stimulate inquiry on the part of learners. This proposal can also be adapted to conditions that would favor a program by research, in which case the 'taught course' component would be dropped and its role played by the tutorial component. In this case tutors would, for instance, encourage both the development of mini projects within the 'exploratory teaching' framework and also the undertaking of bibliographic research in connection with the aims of such mini projects. In either modality, learners should always be encouraged to fend for themselves academically and intellectually speaking. Our role, as tutors, would be that of facilitating such an enterprise by releasing the cord gradually until learners felt confident enough to carry on their own.

Amongst the various advantages of such procedures, we mentioned that (a) this would be a way round the present lack of options and external resources, both essential in fostering autonomous learning; (b) fewer problems encountered at the supervision stage which is often frustrating to both learners and tutors alike and (c) an effective contribution not only to learners' professional development but also, and above all, to their development as human beings who should be able to stand on their own feet as members of a democratic society. Ultimately, learners'

contributions as professionals and citizens would become much more meaningful and of a much higher standard.

An additional advantage that was not actually developed during the present exposition was the affective effect that such procedures might have upon learners. As we will all have experienced, learners' anxiety level in post-graduate programs is more often than not very high. By working at their own pace and taking responsibility for their learning, students are likely to feel much more at ease, realize that the task ahead of them is not only simpler than they believe but also that their professional experience can be utilized for the benefit of their own development. This, together with a closer relationship between tutors, learners and inner/outer resources, will effectively contribute to a decrease in anxiety level.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that what I have presented here is by no means a finished project but just considerations on what I believe to be some of the essential elements to be taken into account in our trying to approach teacher training from the perspective of autonomous learning. The actual implementation of such programs might assume different guises but learners, and indeed we ourselves, would certainly benefit enormously from more effective co-operation shaped around the premise that team planning as well as team work is more likely to produce satisfactory results than isolation.

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# Classifying SLA theories

Paula Fatur-Santos

In the last 25 years, there has been much growth in the field of Second Language Acquisition, but research from the mid-1980s on is specially important for the great number of theories produced in that period. The theories that have emerged show to be very controversial, particularly the psycholinguistic theories of SLA. The reasons for this controversy are various, but certainly the most important one has to do with the nature of psycholinguistic theories: as their name suggest, they are to a great extent derived from Linguistics, which is a discipline largely based on theoretical concepts rather than empirical ones, such as the notion of linguistic competence. Thus, a good deal of the assumptions found in SLA theories fail to prove empirically what they claim and such practice is perfectly acceptable in the area. Chomsky's theory, for instance, is not committed to psychological or neurological reality.

A problem created by the fact that theories are multi-disciplinary is that it is difficult to set limits to the distinct areas that form them, and such difficulty brings about several misunderstandings. One of them is that theories originated from different areas or which are influenced by different areas are sometimes put together in a classification. Although it is not an easy task to find out the theoretical underpinnings of SLA theories, I propose that a classification that accounts for that (and thus sets limits to the different areas that form theories) would bring certain clarifications to the whole picture of psycholinguistic research in SLA.

Another source of controversy among SLA theories, which is expressed also in their classifications is that there is no consensus about what constitutes the main issue of a theory. This can be perceived, for example, by the following issues, which appear interchangeably in the construction of SLA theories:

- the description of the competence system, or mental grammar, in the Chomskyan sense, or still knowledge about the language, as it has been called more recently;
- the description of processes to build the competence system, or developmental processing, as called by Sharwood Smith (1991);



- the description of procedures to access the competence system, or the ability to use language, or, following Sharwood Smith's terminology, on-line knowledge processing.

As perceived by some experts of the area, such as those who developed the classifications that will be shown, theories do not state clearly their objectives as far as the three issues presented above are concerned. It is not clear what is the real purpose of the theory, is it to describe the learner's competence, to explain how competence is built up, or to explain how it is accessed? Or maybe a combination of two or the three of them? The result is a general confusion that leads to misunderstandings. Thus, the need for classifications to clarify the picture.

Still an additional word of explanation must be said about SLA theories. Different theories cover different aspects of the learning process, such as the affective aspect, the social, the cognitive. However, these areas are not well determined by researchers in their theories, mainly because they are interrelated. In spite of this, there is a general common division which distinguishes between theories that describe/explain the internal factors responsible for the learning process and the external ones. The first group is known as psycholinguistic and the second as sociolinguistic. In this work, I am concerned with psycholinguistic theories and classifications of these theories. It may be the case, however, that a theory or a classification covers an area which includes both aspects of the learning process, such as interactional theories/classifications, that intend to cover socio-psychological aspects.

In what follows I present the different SLA classifications quoted in the literature, as well as my own.

In his article, McLaughlin (1990) discusses the face validity of theories which rely on the conscious/unconscious distinction. Despite the fact that he does not attempt to categorize theories in the conventional sense, he does so through analysis of different debates among several authors:

- The Krashen/McLaughlin debate, which refers basically to the acquisition/learning dichotomy.
- The Reber/Dulany debate, which relies on the notion of implicit versus explicit learning.
- The Rumelhart, McClelland/Pinker, Prince debate, which is a connectionist debate, and as such deals with the enigma of whether language consists of a network of input-generated units which are strengthened or weakened through parallel processing, or whether it consists of mental representations of rules.

The debates can be summarized in the following chart:

Krashen/McLaughlin	Reber/Dulany	Rumelhart,McClelland/Pinker, Prince
acquisition x learning	implicit learning	Connectionism
automatic x controlled processing	explicit learning	unconscious mental rules

Fig. 1 — McLaughlin's debates

Larsen-Freeman (1991) classifies theories as nativist, behaviorist or environmentalist, and interactionist. Nativist theories are those in which "learning depends upon a significant, specialized innate capacity for language acquisition" (p.323). They are best exemplified in Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar, which gave rise to many studies, when applied to SLA. The objective of these theories is the description of competence or grammatical knowledge. Behaviorist or environmentalist theories are those in which "the learner's experience is more important than innate capacity" (ibid). This division is devoted to Connectionist/Parallel Distributed Processing (PDP) models, which do not presuppose any innate ability for the acquisition of languages. Finally, interactionist theories refer to those in which "both internal and external processes are responsible [for SLA]" (ibid). Interactionists or variationists tend to explain *how knowledge gets realized as use*. It is represented by Ellis' (1985) Variable Competence Model. This model is based on Tarone's (1979, 1983) *Capability Continuum Paradigm*. Linguistic knowledge is described by way of a continuum of speech styles, which ranges from the careful style to the vernacular. The linguistic knowledge (and thus the styles) is accessed by the pragmatic context. Ellis goes further in his model, assuming that what enhances learning is free variation.

Larsen-Freeman's classification is sketched in the following chart:

Nativist	Behaviorist or Environmentalist	Interactionist or Variationist
Chomsky's UG applied to SLA (White 1988, Felix 1985)	Connectionism/PDP (Rumelhart,McClelland & PDP Research Group)	Variable Competence Model (Ellis 1985 based on Tarone 1979, 83)

Fig.2 — Larsen-Freeman's classification

In her article, Bialystok (1990) has objections on a previous classification of SLA theories proposed by Spolsky (1989), namely competence and processing theories. Bialystok not only objects against Spolsky's typology, but she also tries to re-classify the theories, based on the assumption that theories

usually classified as competence theories do not fulfill criteria posed by Chomsky to describe a competence theory: *knowledge as mental structures* and *idealization of operationalization of the competence system*. In this way, what is known by Spolsky as processing theories are actually competence theories, because they emphasize the structure of the system and not its use. On the other hand, what is known as competence theories are in fact processing theories, because they explain access to use language, or, in other words, learning is described *procedurally*. According to Bialystok, a processing theory must be "neutral, regarding the structure of the mental representations that underlie performance, and they must be descriptions that apply over a limited and specific point in time" (ibid, pp. 645-46).

Competence theories can be exemplified by theories derived from Chomsky. Another example is Jackendoff's (1987) theory, also known as the Preference Model. In fact, what is explained by Jackendoff is a process, but his theory is classified as a competence theory because, according to Bialystok, it is "an idealization of how knowledge stored in certain kinds of mental structures works."

Processing theories are, for example, Tarone's model and Connectionist models, because these models explain the learning process and cognition without assuming a rule system. Although the models propose rule-like behavior, specially the Connectionist models, there is no such thing as a "competence" system.

Figure 3 shows Bialystok's classification:

Competence	Processing
Information-processing models (Jackendoff 1987)	PDP/Connectionist model (Rumelhart, McClelland) Tarone 1988*

\*See Larsen-Freeman's classification for an explanation of this theory.

Fig. 3 — Bialystok's (1990) classification

Finally, Snow's (in press) categorization of theories includes five major groups, being the first one related to second language pedagogy and focusing on product rather than on process, and the last one a sociolinguistic division. Both groups are not of main interest to this paper. Hence, the groups that involve cognitive theories of SLA are three:

1. Child language researchers who believe that first language acquisition is similar to SLA in many ways. This group refers to developmental psychologists.
2. Linguists interested in Universal Grammar applied to SLA. Theories that have a Chomskyan influence belong to this group. These theories are also called competence theories by Snow, and they focus on rules.

3. Psycholinguists interested in language processing issues, who see language learning as a type of information-processing. These models focus on performance in opposition to competence, and on strategies in opposition to rules. McLaughlin's information-processing perspective (also called Cognitive theory) belongs to this division, as well as MacWhinney's Competition model applied to SL research. This model has to do with processing tendencies that are transferred from the L1 to the L2. Sentence interpretation is one of these tendencies. According to the model, sentence interpretation *is governed by accumulated knowledge of the likelihood that certain cues indicate certain semantic roles*. The processing of sentence interpretation is conveyed to the L2, but if the L2 does not follow the same kind of processing, the transference can impede rather than enhance the learning process.

According to Snow, most theories and models have characteristics of different groups, or at least of more than a group, in such a way that it is hard to exemplify a group by using an individual theory or author.

I have summarized Snow's classification in Figure 4:

Child language researchers (Developmental psychologists)	Linguists	Psycholinguists
First LA = SLA theories	Chomsky's UG applied to SLA theories or competence theories	SL information-processing theories MacWhinney 1987 McLaughlin 1983 White 1990

Fig. 4 — Snow's classification

I propose a classification of theories which considers the central features of a theory of second language the processes described to acquire it and the kinds of knowledge that result from the use of these processes. The proposed classification is divided into models or theories that have a linguistic influence and those who have a psychological influence as they try to explain the SLA process. Since both linguists and psychologists who work in the area are frequently called psycholinguists, the term was set aside in order to avoid misunderstandings.

From generative linguistics emerges the view that language (knowledge) is modular, and that language is a special faculty of mind; from Fodor (1983), whose ideas were heavily influenced by Chomsky, comes the insight that the language system is modular (Fodor calls it an 'input system'). It follows from these premises that the acquisition process is "subconscious and relatively inaccessible to introspection" (Sharwood Smith 1991, p.13). Thus, linguistic theories have basically a modular subconscious view of the language acquisition process (the

issue of innatism is not under discussion). In the words of Chomsky, "we cognize acquired knowledge as well as innate knowledge" (Chomsky 1975 in Krashen 1982, p.102).

Psychologists believe that the development of language is not the task of a special cognition in the mind, but part of the general cognition. Their view stems from cognitive studies, a fertile area of research which appeared in Psychology parallel to Generativism in Linguistics and which is an independent area now, known as Cognitive Science.

As a result, the views of the process through which a second language is acquired are different ones. In the first case, the process resembles that of the first language, the so called "creative construction". The natural route/agenda is the route taken by this construction process. In the second case, language has to be automated as any other skill in order to be used fluently, once it is seen as an ability like any other, or sometimes as a kind of knowledge like any other, like encyclopedic knowledge.

While theories influenced by linguists propose that the acquisition process produces a "competence system", which is language-specific in essence, theories influenced by psychologists (Bialystok's [1987] knowledge and control dimensions; McLaughlin's [1983] information-processing theory) such as Ausubel, propose the building up of cognitive structure through assimilation of new knowledge to previous knowledge. Such a mechanism is not language-specific in the sense that any kind of knowledge can be acquired in this way, including language knowledge. Besides, this kind of knowledge acquisition demands attention and awareness at first, being called controlled processes, but can become automatic processes when rehearsed or practiced. Because this type of knowledge is conscious, it is known as "statable" knowledge, that is, it can be verbalized through introspection.

Other psychologists characterize knowledge acquisition as storage of information, and for that purpose they propose memory models. Schmidt's (1990) view of the second language learning process is based on such a model, a multistore memory model (Kihlstrom 1984 in Schmidt 1990), in which attention is required for storage.

Linguists see a significant contribution of the learner's cognition, besides acknowledging the imperative role of the linguistic environment to the learning process — input — and the need for the input to be adjusted to the level of the learner. Psychologists also recognize the great contribution of learner's cognition and of the linguistic environment (but in a different way from linguists I would say), as well as recognize other variables that interfere in the SL process, such as affect.

One resulting feature of my classification is that the learning and the acquisition processes (in the Krashian sense) do not belong to the same paradigm. The acquisition process, as described by Krashen, is a notion influenced by linguistics, whereas the learning process resembles the simple acquisition of

encyclopedic knowledge. Figure 5 shows the characteristics and the theories/models that belong to the proposed classification:

Because of their different theoretical underpinnings, the most pertinent way to classify SLA theories is according to the areas from which they emerge or which constitute their main source of influence. This does not mean, however, that this classification is a final one. Other aspects may be found to be more important sources of similarities or differences among the theories, and thus it may be changed. On the other hand, it seems to me that, although it provides a clearer picture of cognitive theories of SLA, it still shows us a theoretical or intuitional level of research. What may contribute to the solution of this matter, showing us a realistic picture of the process, is neurolinguistic research.

	Linguistic	Psychological
c h a r a c t e r i s t i c s	Modular view UG "Creative construction"  _____   acquisition   unconscious   competence   inaccessible "in principle"	Language fallout view Memory models Automatic/controlled process Attention  _____   learning   conscious   cognitive structure   access via introspection
t h e o r e t i c s	Chomsky (1972) Krashen (1982) Pienemann (1984) Prabhu (1987) Seliger (1983)	Ausubel (1978) Bialystok (1978) McLaughlin (1983) Schmidt (1990)

Fig. 5 — The proposed classification

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## PART TWO: THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

PART TWO  
THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION



Financial Center, New York





# A computer-centered text reconstruction experience

Ana María Burdach R.  
Olly Vega A.

## INTRODUCTION

Computer assisted language learning can be of great methodological help in the language teaching environment; this potential can be exploited to improve specific linguistic skills and the language learner's motivation towards L2. This paper, part of a research carried out at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile to implement a Multimedia Centre in the Department of Modern Languages, explores the use of an authoring program, Storyboard, in the development of the ability to understand and to reconstruct written texts. In what follows we explore the possible uses of the computer in the development of linguistic abilities, the testing instrument, the methodology, the difficulties encountered by the subjects, an observation of their strategies and the results achieved by the experimental and control groups. The experiment was carried out with first year Spanish speakers who are learning English or French as a foreign language.

## THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

For some time a number of technological devices (language laboratories, videos, slide projectors...) found their way into the foreign language teaching classroom to improve the language learning-acquisition process. In the same way, nowadays, computers are being introduced into the foreign language classroom with the purpose of developing specific linguistic skills. CALL, or Computer Assisted Language Learning, emerges in this field, as a new methodology which emphasizes the use of the computer as a means of reinforcing and evaluating the

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development of specific linguistic skills. The computer, with its reinforcing and evaluating role, has consequently come to shift the traditionally teacher-centered language learning-acquisition process, with its traditional initiation-response-feedback classroom structure exchange (Coulthard, 1975), into a learner-oriented process in which the learner is stimulated to develop strategies of discovery through which he can "learn how to learn" (Johns, 1991). The use of the computer has then come to be conceived not as surrogate teacher or tutor, but rather as a special kind of informant which stimulates inquiry and speculation on part of the learner; in other words, as a coordinator of a student-oriented interactive learning process. Consequently, the learner is conceived as an interactive discoverer whose learning needs to be driven by access to linguistic data stored in the computer.

## THE COMPUTER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LINGUISTIC ABILITIES

At the morphosyntactic level, the types of programs available for the development of grammatical language competence favor mainly multiple choice, information gap, sentence matching, question and answer, sentence word order inversion and concordancing programs. Although the make-up of many present an inductively oriented approach, which favors inferencing through trial and error, the KWIC or keyword-in-context concordancing program, seems to be the more successful one, particularly, if a text data base is available. It makes possible a new style in grammar teaching, namely, "grammatical consciousness raising" (Rutherford, 1987) in a "data-driven learning" approach (Johns, 1991). Concordancing programs place the learner's own discovery of grammar at the center of language-learning; they stimulate inquiry and speculation, and help to develop the ability to view patterning in the target language and to form generalizations which account for such patternings with evidence drawn from authentic language texts.

At the lexical level, the activities are also varied. Many programs require the learner's discovery procedure of lexical elements based on cloze testing, word formation, word association games, lexical fields and collocations. The identification of lexical discoursal clues constitutes also an efficient activity for which text reconstruction and concordancing programs provide a rich source of data to stimulate the learner's questions.

At the textual level, authoring programs prove to be valuable means of identifying text organization, cohesive devices and language functions. In the stored texts the learner can find lexico-grammatical signals, and social and cultural information around which the texts are structured.

If the learner uses the computer as text processor, he can correct errors, insert words and phrases, make structural changes, discuss the right strategies to use, and change the order of sentences and paragraphs by taking care of their cohesive devices. This improves his ability to produce well structured coherent

descriptive, narrative, and argumentative texts, and his attitude towards writing in the foreign language.

## OBJECTIVES

The wide range of methodologies offered by CALL motivated us into finding out whether the use of the computer constituted an efficient language teaching device in the foreign language teaching classroom.

For this purpose we established the following objectives in which, on the basis of the student's background linguistic knowledge, he was to develop the ability to reconstruct medium-sized texts on the screen by skimming and scanning for global and partial meanings, by identifying lexico-grammatical elements and by discovering their functional distribution in text.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *The testing instrument*

To prove the efficiency of the use of the computer in the language classroom we used the computer program Storyboard (1990), an authoring program for computer assisted language learning, available at our Department in its Macintosh version.

Unlike the cloze test methodology developed for reading comprehension, where missing words are inferred from the context, Storyboard obliterates the whole text, leaving only title, punctuation and spacing intact. The learner is then highly motivated to solve the linguistic puzzle by guessing single words which, when found, are printed wherever they occur in the text. He is also given a breakdown of his performance with the number of wrong guesses, help features and the number of the right words recalled.

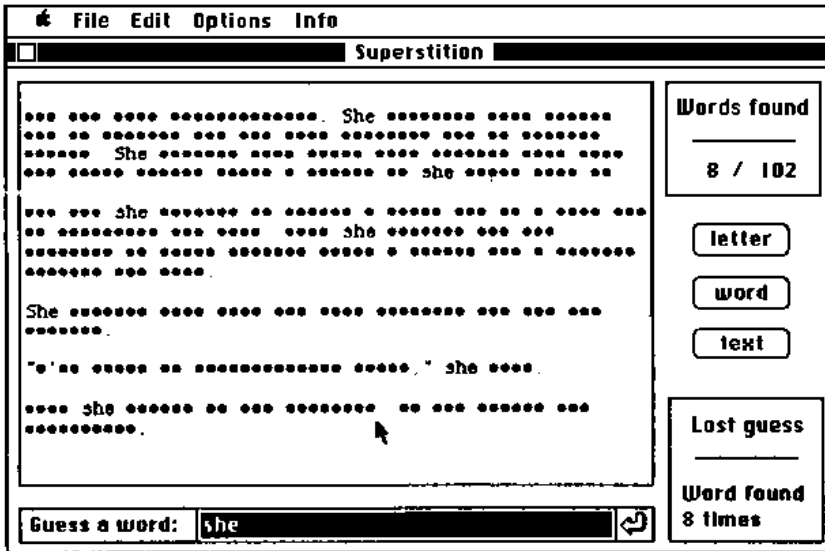


Figure 1 — Working with *Storyboard*.

We thought this experiment, proved to be a good opportunity to evaluate the six original English texts included in *Storyboard* and the six newly authored French texts. The stored texts were similar in thematic, lexical and grammatical complexity and contained a large number of high frequency words, repeated words, a title reflecting content and a textual organization providing clues to its typology (dialogic, narrative, argumentative, advertising). Their extension did not exceed the 1100 characters required by the program.

#### *Selection of the sample*

To assess the results of this experimental research experience, we evaluated a sample of 50 first year students (30 students of English and 20 of French) in their second semester of Applied English and French Grammar in 1992. The English test, the TOEFL, and the French test, elaborated from two exams on linguistic knowledge of the United Nations, were applied at the beginning and end of the experience. In both cases, the audio-oral and writing sections were omitted.

Given that we had only two Macintosh Classic 4/ HD computers available to carry out our experience, we selected a restricted sample of twelve subjects, six students of English and six of French, of which three belonged to the experimental group and three to the control group. The selected sample was classified according to the results obtained in the tests into high, mid and low (65,9%; 42,5%; 29,3% and 64,2%; 41,6%; 24,6%, respectively).

### *Pre-testing stage and research plan*

We considered it necessary to start our experience with a pre-testing stage with one subject from each language. For this purpose, a text with similar characteristics to the selected ones was authored. Both subjects followed the same methodological steps designed for the experimental group. They were instructed about the use of the program and the computer keyboard; the initial approach to the text (reading aloud 2 minutes) and silent reading (2 minutes); filling in cards with words of different grammatical categories to facilitate recall; the text reconstruction procedure and the evaluation of the activity (score obtained, time and help features required).

After the pre-testing stage we programmed six sixty-minute working sessions within a period of two months. In the first sessions the subjects worked in groups of three, interacting in the target language; in the last two, individually. In each session they proceeded in the same way as in the pre-testing stage: skimming and scanning the text on the screen; re-reading the text; writing down grammatical and lexical units; text reconstruction, and help features. After each group and individual session their score was written down. The observation of their strategies was recorded according to a teacher reading strategies observation guide devised by Hosenfeld et al. (1981)

## THE RESULTS

After the text reconstruction sessions, the subjects of the experimental group were asked to fill in a questionnaire to give an overall evaluation of the activity, the results of which we present in this section. We also include the results of the observation of the reconstruction strategies and the linguistic competence achieved by both the experimental group and the control group.

### *Initial experimental difficulties*

An analysis of the responses of the subjects showed that they had a fair amount of difficulty regarding the linguistic complexity and length of the texts (66.6%). The same numbers claimed that lack of vocabulary in the target language made text reconstruction more difficult. Likewise, 50% felt that the initial reading time assigned to scanning and skimming the text on the screen had been too short. This was reflected in their difficulty to recall words (50%); a fact which, however, did not diminish motivation towards the activity.

Table 1 — Initial experimental difficulties (%)

	high	average	little
complexity of text	16.6	66.6	16.6
lack of vocabulary in L2	16.6	66.6	16.6
short initial reading time	—	16.6	50.0

### *Lexicogrammatical difficulties*

An analysis of the types of lexicogrammatical difficulties encountered showed that they related mainly to tenses (66.6%), identification of grammatical categories and their functions in text (66.6%), subordination (50%), compound sentences (50%), affixation (50%), conjunctions (66.6%), proforms — anaphoric and cataphoric — (66.6%), polysemy (66.6%), unknown words (66.6%) and formulaic expressions (66.6%).

In general, these results show that the nature of the difficulties point to the morphosyntactic, cohesive, logical and lexical relationships established by the lexicogrammatical elements in a text; in other words, to the textual organizing features.

Table 2 — Lexicogrammatical difficulties (%)

	great	average	little
tenses	66.6	16.6	16.6
grammatical categories & their functions	66.6	33.3	—
subordination	50.0	50.0	—
compound sentences	50.0	50.0	—
conjunctions	16.6	66.6	16.6
proforms (substitutions)	16.6	66.6	16.6
affixation	50.0	—	50.0
polysemy	—	66.6	33.3
unknown words	16.6	66.6	16.6
formulaic expressions	—	66.6	33.3
correlation of form & gender	—	33.3	66.6

### *Opinion about the computer program*

As to the opinion expressed by the subjects about the computer program, 66,6% found the activity highly motivating. They felt the experience increased their vocabulary (66.6%), improved correlation of form and gender (66.6%), helped to keep the contents of the text in mind (66.6%) and to understand and reconstruct texts (66.6%); 50% wanted more sessions, and other programs

integrated into the activity. The students enjoyed the opportunity offered by the program as it presented a different approach to the language learning-acquisition process.

Table 3 — Opinion about Storyboard (%)

	high	mid	low
motivating	66.6	33.3	—
more sessions	50.0	—	—
more variety of programs	50.0	—	—
increases vocabulary	66.6	33.3	—
improves correlation of form & gender	66.6	33.3	—
helps to keep content in mind	66.6	33.3	—
helps to understand & reconstruct texts	16.6	66.6	16.6

*Observation of the activity*

The observation of the reconstruction process, done according to the reading strategies observation guide devised by Hosenfeld, revealed that the subjects of the higher level inferred the overall content of the text from the title; whereas the subjects of the mid and low levels acquired this ability in the fourth session. Furthermore, the subjects of the higher level tended to keep whole sentences in mind and to infer meaning from previous and subsequent contexts, while the subjects of the mid and low levels recalled only words in isolation. Nevertheless, the mid and low levels gradually developed the ability to recall sin-tagms, whole sentences, and to deduce the meaning of unknown words during the group sessions. In spite of this, evidence shows that 66,6% managed to infer meaning from the text and 50% kept global and partial meanings in mind.

On the other hand, the subjects of the higher level tended to use their world knowledge to reconstruct the texts and to recognize fixed formulae and content-specific expressions; whereas the subjects of the mid and low levels gradually developed this ability by interacting with the higher level subjects. Hence this reduced the number of calls for letter help features, frequently required in the initials sessions. Due to their restricted linguistic competence, all three levels encountered orthographic difficulties, but throughout the experiment, 50% managed to improve it. In addition, 50% of the subjects of the three levels gradually overcame the difficulty to identify grammatical categories.

*Final evaluation of the subjects*

After two months, a final evaluation of the subjects revealed that both the experimental group and the control group improved their general linguistic competence by 30.75% and 20.9%, respectively. Thus the experimental group achieved 9,85% more than the control group. This degree of improvement was particularly noticeable in the high and low level subjects of the experimental group who showed 7.35% more than the high and low level members of the control group.

## CONCLUSIONS

The positive results achieved prove that the use of the computer for text reconstruction makes demands on the learner's general linguistic competence of the target language not just at the level of lexis and grammar, but also at the level of text. Through it the learner is stimulated to make his own judgments as to what combinations of words are permitted by the grammatical rules of the language and what grammatical forms words should take. Consequently, it reinforces the ability to solve linguistic tasks by inference and deduction, association, analogy and contrast. It activates the learner's cognitive processes to understand and reconstruct texts, and to improve his ability to write coherent texts.

By interacting with the text during the reconstruction process, the learner becomes aware of the cohesive devices and stylistic features which give coherence to texts. Thus he is allowed to control previous and subsequent paragraphs, a strategy usually applicable at later stages in written production. The learner progressively advances in the identification of the form and function of text genres, and improves his general apprehension of global and partial meanings in text.

In addition, it develops the learner's conscious or unconscious ability to use his world knowledge, his expressive knowledge or his awareness of what is adequate in L2, and his idiomatic knowledge, all of which apply to the written production of foreign language texts.

Furthermore, the use of the computer in text reconstruction stimulates motivation to wards language learning tasks. It proves to be a new challenge which requires the learner to use his linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge. Likewise group interaction activities stimulate the improvement of communicative competence in the foreign language and lead the learner towards linguistic autonomy.

Moreover, authoring programs are a natural tool for the teacher who encounters new materials or wants to create or present material in a new stimulating way. As such they become flexible tools that can be used at practically any level from elementary to native speaker.

For all the above stated reasons, computer assisted language learning can and should be included in the methodological activities of foreign language learning.



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# The use of video in intercultural projects as a means of promoting learner autonomy

Maria da Graça Gomes Paiva  
Rosalina Donadio Franco

One must be proud of belonging to his/her culture, at the same time that he/she is open to a plurality of cultures in or outside his/her country. (Gomes de Matos, 1991 — our translation).

Based on the statement above and on an experiment as an intercultural project with junior high school students of English as a foreign language at a local state school, working cooperatively with American students of two schools in Indiana — the sister-state of Rio Grande do Sul — the present workshop aims at inviting the participants to reflect upon the relevance of the use of video in intercultural projects as an effective teaching aid to promote learner autonomy.

The main objective of this workshop being held at the XII National Convention of College Teachers of English (ENPULI), however, is to make 3<sup>rd</sup>-level teachers reflect upon the possibility of developing similar projects but with college students, while sharing a common goal, that is, better promotion of autonomy in the classroom and the broadening up of learners' own concepts and knowledge of the world.

Considering that students' linguistic and communicative competences — at 3<sup>rd</sup> level — are at a more advanced stage than that of the students who were involved in the present project, it is assumed that the chances of a positive outcome may be considerably higher compared to those of the formers.

The workshop has been divided into three moments:

## *First moment*

- review of terminology (based on your own teaching experience, how would you relate — or not — the following words: *video*, *intercultural projects* and *autonomy*?)

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- simulation of a situation in which a proposal of producing a video with emphasis on intercultural education is presented.
- reading and discussion about project layouts

### *Second moment*

- presentation of a video with emphasis on intercultural education.
- critical reflection upon the feasibility and/or constraints with regard to the production of intercultural videos.

### *Third moment*

- designing an intercultural project with the use of video.
- presenting the projects in a poster session.
- final comments about the workshop as a whole.

As warmers charts with quotations and students' and teachers' opinions introduce every session, aiming at making the participants reflect or question upon the activities to be developed. Tasks to be carried out in small groups were divided according to the following criteria:

- type of institution (private or state schools, private English courses or colleges)
- students' grades (first, second or third level).

As for the simulated pedagogical tasks, the participants are invited to reflect upon the following questions:

Now imagine you are regular students at one of these levels (junior or high school, college or private English courses) and we are teachers at each one of those institutions. We've just received an invitation from three teachers of our sister state of Indiana. Here is the invitation:

Suggest to your students the design of a project with video whose objective will be the exchange of cultural issues both American and Brazilian — by only using the English language knowledge they already have.

In small groups, participants are asked to make a sketch of an intercultural project, having the following texts as references:

Summary of the main ideas about project work from the book: *Project Work* by Diana L. Fried-Booth. Alan Malley (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

CARMONA, Rodrigo Fernandez et al. Developing Project Work in the English Classroom. In: *English Teaching Forum*. v. XXIX, n. 3, July 1991, p. 45-7.

As a second step, the video "Welcome to our world", devised by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders of Escola Estadual de 1<sup>o</sup> Grau Oswaldo Vergara under the supervision of Mrs. Rosalina Donadio Franco — the state school teacher — is shown to the group with the following objectives in mind:

- to illustrate what a proposal for intercultural education would be like through the use of video;
- to reflect upon the feasibility/possibilities and/or constraints of such a project in the educational context the participants of the present workshop belong to.

As a closing-up activity, the teachers are requested to devise a similar proposal of an intercultural project with the use of video, having as references:

- the texts previously discussed;
- the quotations and/or students and teachers' opinions presented on the charts;
- the video shown as an example of intercultural educational project, as well as the new concept for the use of video as a means of promoting learner's autonomy suggested by the authors of the present paper.

The chart below illustrates what the new concept is and how it differs from the traditional one.

Use of video

Current Concept	Proposed Concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promoter of equality;</li> <li>- promoter of reproduction of external models, instead of different identities;</li> <li>- transmitter of knowledge;</li> <li>- unidirectional.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a broader renewed concept;</li> <li>- no reproduction of ready-made, external things;</li> <li>- production of new knowledge;</li> <li>- student as author, actor, consumer and exporter;</li> <li>- promoter of autonomy, of differences;</li> <li>- promoter of different cultures;</li> <li>- promoter of universalism, solidarity, world peace;</li> <li>- promoter of a new concept of cognitive man for the 21<sup>th</sup> century;</li> <li>- bi-directional.</li> </ul>

As a third step the projects are then presented to the whole group in a poster session — as the closing-up activity, followed by the conclusions, final comments, suggestions and evaluation of the workshop.

Before concluding, we would like to emphasize that all the workshop was inspired by the following thoughts:

I don't want to be confined in my house, as if there were neither doors nor windows. I want all cultures from every part of the world ventilate my home with

as much freedom as possible. I resist, though, to the idea of these winds making me move away from my own cultural situation.

(by Mahatma Gandhi. In: Francisco Gomes de Matos. Comunicação Intercultural para professores de línguas. Revista Cultura Vozes. Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, 1991 — our translation).

(...) autonomy is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, an independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of this learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider context.

(...) autonomy is not a matter of organization, does not entail an abdication of initiative and control on the part of the teacher, is not a teaching method, is not to be equated with a single easily identified behavior, and is not a steady state attained by a happy band of privileged learners. (Leni Dam. Developing Student's autonomy in a school context. Denmark, 1986. Mimeographed paper).

Suggestions of intercultural activities from this workshop:

#### Proposal 1

a) *Objective*: showing aspects of Letters undergraduate students' way of living within a particular cultural setting.

b) *Place*: any university campus in our state.

c) *Materials*: VCR camera, pictures and/or posters about different regions of the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

d) *Steps*:

- discussion about objectives and content of the video;
- poster session, closing-up with a set of pictures from the chosen town;
- overview of the campus (showing aspects of students' daily life);
- students' interviews and comments.

e) *Organization*: contact with the academic department building staff to allow the filming sessions.

f) *Linguistic abilities emphasized*: mostly writing and speaking.

g) *Follow-up*: exchanging materials with students from another 3<sup>rd</sup> level institution on a national or international basis.

h) *Duration*: 30 minutes for the whole recording.

i) *Project designed by*: a group of college teachers.

#### Proposal 2

a) *Objectives*: showing aspects of college students' lives, aiming at exchanging cultural information with American students.

b) *Place*: university campus and places students usually go to.

c) *Materials*: VCR camera and tapes, CDs, books, paper, computer.

d) *Planning the video*: "vestibular" celebration, "bixos" party, "shootings" of ordinary activities, graduation ceremony, interwoven with psico-social-cultural aspects of students' lives.

e) *Language skills emphasized*: the four skills.

f) *Follow-up*: sending both correspondence and the video to other institutions (in USA) to set up a partnership.

g) *Duration*: 30 minutes.

h) Project designed by: Niura M. Fontanta (UCS), Giselle O. M. Dal Corno (UCS), Maria Mercedes Rivero (FURG), Gonçalves Simões (PUC-Uruguaiana), João P. Teixeira (PUC-SP), Eliane Simas Breda (ULBRA), Valmi Hatje (UFSM), Janete Cecin (UFSM)

### Proposal 3

a) *Objectives*: beginners (7<sup>th</sup> graders) telling about who they are and their likes to people from other cultural settings.

b) *Place*: the neighborhood, schools, shopping centers, parks and clubs.

c) *Materials*: tape recorder, leaflets, photos, pictures, garment, previous recorded materials from trips, songs, articles from magazines and newspapers, VCR camera.

d) *Procedures*: Introducing oneself (family and neighborhood), talking about one's experience with different cultures, city tour.

e) *Organization*: working in small groups.

f) *Follow-up*: sending the video to other classes, schools, cities and abroad.

g) *Duration*: 30 minutes.

h) *Project designed by*: Cláudia Gabellini, Nina Soares, Pérola Citrin.

### Proposal 4

a) *Objectives*: beginners (8<sup>th</sup> graders) describe the habits of Brazilian families in their daily lives to be compared to American families.

b) *Places*: home (meals, parent-children relationship, housework), leisure (sports, night life, weekends), school (schedule, subjects, homework).

c) *Material*: VCR camera.

d) *Planning*: written script, rehearsal, performance.

e) *Follow-up*: self-evaluation and exchanging videos with American eighth graders.

f) *Duration*: 20-30 minutes.

g) *Project designed by*: Vergília, Marta, Eva, Sônia, Dora.

### Proposal 5

a) *Objective*: describing any Brazilian student's daily life.

b) *Place*: familiar and school contexts.

c) *Script*: breakfast, going to school, school routine (classroom, break...), leaving school at 12 o'clock, family eating habits, extra-curricular activities (language classes, sports...)

d) *Project designed by*: Ceres Postales Marcon, Andréa Dumoncel, Adriana Tosi, Liz Berni Peixoto, Silvia Mazzoni Jalmusny, Gislaine Sandri, Maria Ângela Aguiar, Cândida dos Reis.

#### Proposal 6

a) *Objectives*: showing the similarities and/or differences between Brazilian teenagers (12-16) and Americans (garments, musical preferences, movies, sports, school life, dating, family life) — "Hanging out".

b) *Place*: "shootings" at shopping centers, "Oswaldo Aranha" Avenue, General Store, beaches, Encol Avenue, Marinha do Brasil, "Parcão, Ocidente (night life), Ópera Rock, school, home.

c) *Materials*: video camera, microphone...

d) *Planning*: showing similarities; showing differences (likes & dislikes)

e) *Duration*: 30 minutes.

f) *Project designed by*: Lúcio, Joice, Alice, Marlene, Janaína, Luíza, Ana Paula, Ana Lúcia, Virgínia, Clara, Cláudia.



# Computers in language education

Iolanda B. C. Cortelazzo<sup>o</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten to 12th grade students have been born in a fast changing world and are not fearful of all the new technology and media put at their disposal. However, a long distance separates them from their teachers and educators.

Most of the College of Teachers all over the world still educate their teachers in the old paradigm: students come with their empty minds to be filled in with the knowledge their teachers have.

Workshops, seminars, conferences, meetings reach only part of them and involve them in the new process of teaching and learning.

Most of the teachers have to be "caught" by the restructuring of School and understand the new paradigm: Students bring their own background and learning styles so all the teachers have to take it in consideration and assume their new role. They are not "knowers" to fill in empty minds; instead, they are going to furnish students content, right tools, orientation and help them to build up the basis to construct their own knowledge.

English, an international language, is the foreign language taught in the public and private schools. It is largely used in any academic, business or industrial area; therefore, students of either the technical schools or regular courses in the university must have proficiency in English for an efficacious professional performance after finishing school. However, the approach used to teach it deals with the language just as a language, working with grammar and translation and does not consider it as another means of communication. Students can learn a language in a very transparent way, if teachers make them use it to communicate about and with people from different countries and cultures and

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understand their life styles, their ways of thinking as well as what their scientists think of us. Teaching language linked to other subjects such as History, Science or Math will make students use the foreign language the same way they use their native language without fear of frustration or anxiety.

Moreover, most of the professional opportunities in communication, industry, business, publicity, ask for proficiency in English. Most of the scientific journals and magazines are written in English; if teachers do not change their teaching they are in a certain way closing the doors to success and progress for many of their students since most of them cannot afford paying for a private English course.

Computers, multimedia and networking are some of the tools that can help teachers in this task.

## NETWORKING IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Networking has often happened in the foreign language teacher development in Brazil as well as in other fields too. However, our country is too big and distance means time and money expenses. It is very difficult to have up-to-dated teachers since they have so many bureaucratic activities and so many hours to work that they hardly have time to answer a letter or to send a suggestion to each other. Some schools also develop networking with students, but it also takes a long time to happen and when it does, students and teachers are already disappointed or bored.

Since we can communicate through computers connected to the telephone we have been engaging teachers and students in a very wide computer networking.

Computer networking is an educational resource that can help both teachers and children in the teaching and learning process.

We know that computer networking can tear down walls and diminish distances, that is, it can bring the real world into the school. Students and teachers from all different regions of the world can be together in a global meeting and learn much more about each other's culture, history, problems and success as well as share their joys and victories and good or bad experiences and, most of all, learn how to live in peace.

### *Kidnet*

Some projects have been carried out involving children from Brazil with children in the USA and in Israel. Students really involve themselves in the projects. According to teachers' and parents' information, many children did not want to travel during the holidays in February because they were charged of observing the experiment they had been carrying out since they have to collect data and exchange them with their colleagues in the USA and Israel.

## *Teachernet*

Computer Networking is very important for Brazilian Education since it is not very expensive and reaches the farthest regions both in Brazil and abroad. Some schools are a six-hour boat trip far from the College of Teachers in many regions in Amazon, for example. It is also assynchronic. The teacher can have the information on the screen whenever she has time to turn on the computer.

Computer networking is a kind of a development of snail mail network. If students and teachers are used to travel to conferences, meetings, symposia where they meet interesting people and make useful contacts, they can keep on contacting them using the computer.

Computer networking is part of the Distance Education Program we are developing in the School of the Future. We can both raise the teachers' needs and interests and design a course to answer to their expectation keeping them developing in-service. On the other hand, we are planning a program to assist the teachers who work in the formation of future teachers. And we can involve them using the computer networking which is faster and cheaper since it is supported by a Foundation.

As computer networking has been developed here recently, we have a lot to do to engage teachers and students in it, even though the teachers are resistant to innovations. We have been doing some workshops and forming multipliers to convince educators that computer is an efficient tool if correctly used for the benefits of education and, consequently, computer networking is a powerful tool to develop teachers and students.

## *Teleconference*

Teleconferences are electronic meetings between people who are not in the same place and, even so, exchange voice, graphics, texts, images in a satisfying communication.

There are five different types of teleconference:

- audio conference
- audio conference enhanced by video
- video conference
- conference on BBS
- conference on computer

In Brazil, the RENPAC and Alternex systems offer electronic teleconferences. A specialist in some field posts a text on a given topic. Readers of the text can send (upload) their questions or comments to the system. These comments can be read and responded to by the specialist or to other network readers.

During 1991, Dominique Monolescu, a collaborative researcher of the School of the Future worked with my help on a project of teleconference enhanced by video with a group of teenagers with cancer, one from São Paulo and another, from Campinas, a city next to Sao Paulo. Each of us had a camera phone connected to a TV, to a camera and to a speaker phone. Dominique had been in Campinas many times for test and preparation and I had stayed in Sao Paulo. For three times, we met the groups and the teenagers in each city could talk about their sickness, frustrations, worries and expectations. They could tell each other how desperate they were or how they could overcome their disease. They could see themselves on frozen images which were sent through the phone line to the other city. When the experiment finished they continued to correspond by mail.

Manuel Araujo Filho and Flavio Jorge Ferreira, teachers of Physics from Escolas Paulista and Nove Julho have been carrying out some sessions between their school with their students' participation.

### THE PROJECT SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE AND GETEL

The School of Future is a laboratory of the University of Sao Paulo under the Pró-Reitoria de Pesquisa where new technologies of information are investigated on their educational applications. Its work has begun in 1989 and nowadays it has more than forty researchers, teachers and students from several and various departments of the University. The researchers use the most advanced technologies to create and experiment new teaching materials in different areas such as Multimedia, Science Teaching and Networking, BBS, Language Education and Networking, Holography, Educational Surveys, etc.

The School of Future has been carrying out some projects since 1990 — REDE GURI (now, Science Teaching and Networking), and since August, 1991 — GETEL Group of Studies of Computer Networking and Language Teaching.

In August 1991, Richard Boyum, English Teaching Officer of USIS/American Consulate, and I, researcher of The Project School of the Future — USP, created GETEL (a Group of Studies of Networking and Language Education).

While Rede Guri works with students, involving them with students in Brazil and in the most different regions in the world, GETEL intends to work with teachers engaging them in activities such as BBS, Forums, Teleconferences, Teacher's Clinic and workshops.

At the first meeting, we realized that we would have to begin a work of sensitizing teachers to rethink education and accept new technologies as a support to their work as well as a means of communication. The group has been meeting monthly, GETEL has already organized some workshops on New Technologies and Language Education, Computers and Under-used Technologies both for private and public schools.

## WORKSHOP ON THE USE OF THE COMPUTER IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

During the XII ENPULI, as the coordinator of GETEL, I did a work similar to that done in other events and meetings for teachers of languages in Sao Paulo.

I talked about the resistance teachers present to the use of new technologies and gave examples of how and why this resistance must be transformed in a will to apply them as well as in a way to rethink language education.

The teachers answered a first questionnaire on the use of technology such as pencil, paper, pen, chalk, slide projector, film, video, TV, computer, CD-ROM player, Interactive video disc player, networking, by students, teachers, and administrative staff at school and most of the answers, indicate the use just of the first five technologies.

Although TV, video, computer and networking have been used for some years in American and European schools, most of Brazilian teachers and educators don't use them.

The teachers raised some objections against the new technologies because most of their schools don't have the basic conditions to develop a good work. Then, we discussed the necessity of rethinking education and using what the school has, the students' interests and needs to adapt the techniques used with the new technologies to the technology they have access to.

After attending the demonstration of a colorful software to stimulate reading and writing, one of the teachers said that she did not have a computer at her school but the teachers and students could create a bank of magazine cutouts and the students could make collage with them to indicate the comprehension of a descriptive text or create a collage and write about it individually or in a collaborative work.

As Tom Snyder Productions (<sup>1</sup>) show in a demo video, the computer can be used :

- with groups of 30 students as group discussion, problem solving or lesson review;
- with small groups in collaborative activities (while a group is writing a text, other group is reading and discussing, other can be making a map and other is at the computer changing their turns at the various activities.
- the presentation of software with the help of a laptop, or a desk PC, a color VGA monitor, an overhead projector, a datashow and a large screen help the teacher to supplement and spice up the illustration of ideas and concepts for the whole group.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Snyder Productions, *Technology Planning Guide A very Interactive Workbook* (acompanhado do vídeo *The One Computer Classroom and More!*), Watertown MA, Tom Snyder Productions, 1992.

- as a learning center for those students who need remedial work or those who want to learn more or even to foster cooperation.

The rest of the meeting sessions the teachers were working with the computers, in a computer laboratory and I answered his questions with the help of a technician as they were naturally coming out because they were PRACTISING.

Teachers sat down in front of the screen as if they were students and they learned how to manipulate both hardware and software. They were as excited as a group of teenagers and they could evaluate the support the computer could give them.

They did not have a technical lecture about what a computer is and what it does. They knew the computer and they experienced the use of the computer to learn a language using shareware and commercial programs. They could experience the same troubles their students could have when trying that new technology.

They worked with a word processing, a simulation, a game and ten CALL shareware programs. Every two teachers used a computer and worked in a collaborative way. Both at each computer could try a number of different programs and learn how to manipulate the floppy disks, the keyboard and face some common troubles that happen when using a computer .

The last session was planned to clarify doubts and discuss their feelings on the experience. It was carried out in a classroom where the teachers could talk and would not be fascinated or distracted by the computer. We could talk about the computer as another tool teachers have to support them and what to do if they do not have it in their classroom but have at least themselves, after all, the teacher is the first audiovisual in the classroom and must be aware of that. In this kind of session, teachers overcame their fears and resistance. They brought their real classroom situation to discussion. Many of them really rethought the way they had been teaching and, they immediately found a way to "borrow" some ideas from the use of the computer and how they can adapt them to their classrooms where they do not have a computer and will not have one very soon. Some presented new suggestions and shared their experience with their colleagues. They also discussed the lay-out of a computer lab and the number of students using a computer.

## WORKSHOP EVALUATION

At the end of this session, teachers evaluated the workshop pointing out the positive and the negative points to be analyzed and used as reference for next works.

Their evaluation reflected their anxiety for experiencing more. They pointed out PRACTISING, sharing and supporting as positive points and they indicated they need more time to practice and different shareware to work with. We realized that those who had already worked with the computers found the

programs old and they wanted some more updated. They also criticized the working conditions at the laboratory. We had the opportunity to talk about it during the workshop and I pointed out how important is the administrative staff to be in contact with the teachers to know what for they want the technology in the classroom to be able to have the design of the lab or the classroom to answer the needs and expectations of students and teachers. For example, if you have rows of computers, a collaborative group work will not be possible.

Here are some of their writings:

The workshop was good and stimulated me to project many of the points touched upon my teaching environment. I go back to Chile full of new ideas to put into practice...

We're not afraid of computers anymore!

The real application of something we just knew as theory. Factual data — use and usage.

I think the workshop was very interesting but we need more time to work with the computers.

I hope in the future we can exchange information through our computers.

The workshop was very interesting. The teacher cleared the problems we have using computers.

Considero o workshop como muito proveitoso em todos os aspectos: apresentação do computador como instrumento de ensino e aprendizado. Boas e claras explicações, pacientemente apresentadas. Rara oportunidade de atualização para professores de TEFL ou TESOL.

Explicações claras e sintéticas para aqueles que nunca trabalharam com computador. Mesmo sem muito tempo, despertou a curiosidade e avontade de aprofundar. Pouco tempo para que todas as dúvidas fossem elucidadas.

Como ponto negativo, citaria o LAB que não dá condições ideais para trabalho cooperativo. Anyway it was a nice experience.

I want more! I would have liked more personal attention. Too many people in the same uncomfortable room.

O problema que ocorreu foi o seguinte: o laboratório pequeno e, principalmente, os computadores estavam sem as condições ideais. De qualquer forma foi extremamente interessante para mim.

Como alguém que não tinha noção de computador, o workshop foi de muito auxílio. Cabe ressaltar como positiva a apresentação inicial das conexões possíveis através do computador (net, modem, etc).

Eu confesso, era leiga no assunto e consegui esclarecer muitas dúvidas. Mexer no computador foi fascinante.

Começou bem do básico, o que facilitou o entendimento daqueles que não haviam mexido com o computador.

...a maioria dos programas apresentados eram muito antigos.

...mas tenho restrições quanto aos programas usados: são muito antigos.

As informações fornecidas durante o workshop foram muito úteis e pertinentes. Embora o grupo tivesse níveis de informação sobre computadores bem diferentes, as informações foram relevantes, aparentemente, para todos. A praticidade do workshop tornou-o sem dúvida muito proveitoso.

Aspectos positivos: esclarecimento genérico da pauta: computadores; aspectos negativos: explicações longas de mais (que poderiam ser suprimidas com 'handouts' que sumarizassem os pontos principais como a terminologia computacional).

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# Video use possibilities in autonomous learning

Angelita Gouveia Quevedo

## INTRODUCTION

*The listening process:* Listening is only part of the overall process of communication, and for our purposes the following definition is useful:

*Communication involves the sharing of meanings.*

In the communication process we make use of verbal and nonverbal messages; the latter include the following: voice, gestures, body movement, eye contact and facial expression, spatial distance and appearance. Therefore, listening is a process of receiving, interpreting, evaluating and responding to messages. The listening process starts with our senses — primarily our sense of hearing and our sense of sight. Besides that, we tend to "read" other people's nonverbal signals to get the whole message. Our eyes can give us information that helps us interpret the words and vocal tones.

Once an individual has received a message through his ears and eyes, he has to use his own background knowledge to decode what he has just heard. After "getting" the message, he has to connect that message to his ideas or feelings. He has to decide whether he agrees or disagrees, if he needs more information, and so on. Almost all messages require a response. Generally, what happens is that, first we have a purpose for listening; second, we create a number of expectations depending on the purpose we establish for the achievement of our goal; third, we are required to give an immediate response to what we hear.

In a listening situation, for the achievement of the goal mentioned above, the individual has a task to perform and there are several steps or sub-tasks involved in the whole process. Besides that, he has no control of the speaker's choice of structures, vocabulary, pace of speed, etc. Consequently, the individual must have a much more developed competence to understand and be able to keep



an interactive situation. That is why the students have to be taught to *listen to comprehend*.

According to Brown, G & Yule (1983), *Comprehension is not simply 'the reduction of uncertainty' as has sometimes been claimed; it is also the 'integration into experience'...*

Connected to that, it would be advisable that students could face as many real-life situations as possible:

1. listening to the news/weather forecast/announcements etc. on the radio;
2. discussing work/current problems with family or colleagues;
3. making arrangements/exchanging news etc. with acquaintances;
4. making arrangements/exchanging news etc. over the telephone;
5. chatting at a party/other social gathering;
6. hearing announcements over the loudspeaker (at a railway/bus station, for example);
7. receiving instructions on how to do something/get somewhere;
8. attending a lesson/seminar;
9. being interviewed/interviewing;
10. watching a film/TV program etc;
11. hearing a speech/lecture;
12. listening to recorded songs;
13. attending a formal occasion (e.g., wedding);
14. getting professional advice (e.g., from a doctor);
15. being tested orally in a subject of study, etc.

Perhaps, more important than presenting the students with these situations would be to emphasize some important rules any individual must consider before facing a listening task (Brown & Yule, 1983):

- We listen for a purpose and with certain expectations.
- We make an immediate response to what we hear.
- We see the person that we are listening to.
- There are some visual or environmental clues as to the meaning of what is heard.
- Stretches of heard discourse come in chunks.
- Most heard discourse is spontaneous and therefore differs from formal spoken prose in terms of amount of redundancy, "noise", colloquialisms, etc.

*Listening to understand* is the basis for the other types of listening. Unless you understand a message accurately, you cannot analyze the other person's ideas or respond to the other persons' feelings.

## BARRIERS TO LISTENING

All listeners discover certain barriers that keep them from listening effectively. Each one of us can remember times when someone was talking and suddenly we realized we had no idea what was being said. We simply tuned out. This sort of situation can be included in what is known as the eight common barriers to good listening. They are:

- a. External distractions — refer to situations in the environment that keep from paying careful attention to the speaker;
- b. Internal distractions — refer to situations when you find that your worries or your excitement over an upcoming event distracts you from listening;
- c. Conflicting demands — refer to situations when you are trying to do too many things at once, so you cannot listen;
- d. Speaker's credibility — refer to how believable the speaker is to you;
- e. Speaker's style — refer to the speaker's appearance, manner of speaking and ability to relate to the listener;
- f. Your personal biases — refer to some people who see only what they wish to see and hear only what they wish to hear;
- g. Your lack of information — refer to situations when your experiences do not give you the background for understanding the nonverbal clues;
- h. Your desire to talk — refer to people who find themselves always trying to get in the next word.

These common barriers to good listening can and have to be pointed out for the students to make them aware of what also happens throughout the whole listening process; so that they can try to avoid them.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

All verbal messages occur within a context. By context it is meant the background of a message that provides information about the meaning of the words. The context provides clues for interpreting the words accurately, and effective listeners read the clues and try to understand the background to find the very best possible interpretations of a message. In short, they try to put the message in context.

To place a message in context, the student needs to think about:

1. The person — the more a listener know about a speaker, the easier it is to put the speaker's remarks in context;
2. The setting — how place and time influences the message;

3. The occasion — how an occasion or an event calls for certain types of communication, and as a listener, the student needs to ask himself, "How might the occasion be affecting this person's speech?";
4. The verbal/nonverbal connection — a listener depends on nonverbal clues to interpret. The speaker's vocal tone, gestures, facial expression, and movements would probably tell him about the intent of the message. There is a strong relationship between verbal and nonverbal parts of a message.

### THE USE OF VIDEO AS A RESOURCE FOR THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION TRAINING IN AN AUTONOMOUS WAY

Considering the use of what we call non-didactic material, video can be a very good resource for the listening comprehension training in an autonomous way, and thus make the students effective listeners. It is important to provide the students with some listening theoretical background before the student actually starts his listening comprehension training. Only after that, he can be considered ready to go through the video packages.

A video listening task (or video package) can be designed including a number of important points:

- Some written explanation of the listening skill he chooses to develop (e.g., focusing, guessing, selecting specific details and/or ideas, summarizing, etc.);
- Some written explanation about the listening task itself, that is, its main objective, the way it is divided, the probable time required for its total accomplishment, whether it is the sort of task that can be done individually or not, the presupposed level aimed at, etc.;
- The video listening task itself, which must include a pre-listening phase and a post-listening phase (or follow up);
- The answer key, i.e., the possible responses for that video listening task;
- The transcript of the scene or scenes, if necessary;
- The evaluation form to be filled in, and which includes the grades he would give for the task itself, for the selected video material, and for his performance as a listener.

It is very much important that the teacher includes in the listening task questions related to the nonverbal elements provided by the visual language that can surely be used as a way to facilitate comprehension itself.

The so called nonverbal communication may:

1. Support verbal messages — for example, people who are serious about a message do not laugh; rather, they may look directly at someone and refrain from smiling;

2. Highlight the point or saying — for example, when the speaker holds up three fingers to signify three important points in his speech;
3. Replace verbal messages entirely — for example, nodding to answer a question or using a hand for greetings or directions;
4. Contradict what the person is saying verbally — this is often referred to as "mixed message". The speaker says there's no rush, but he keeps looking at his watch;
5. Regulate the flow of someone's verbal message — if a person as a listener appears to be bored, the speaker may talk faster to finish up or stop abruptly.

The questions designed for this listening activity should somehow show that it is not practical or necessary, especially when developing the listening skill in a second language, to try to hear and understand every word that someone says. Certainly, equal concentration on every word can be very demanding, very tiring, and even inappropriate because the individual words that people speak are not equally important in meaning. In other words, we should be more concerned with some information as we are likely to understand better the important things if we are prepared to listen for them.

When the student understands the different kinds of words that speakers use and the different ways that they pronounce them, he can improve his ability to focus on important details and ideas. It should be clear for the students that the most important or most meaningful words are usually the content words. They are nouns, the main parts of actions verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Function words like articles, prepositions, linking verbs, helping verbs, and connecting words like and have meaning and help to show relationships between content words, but they are relatively less meaningful or less important. Generally, a speaker will emphasize some content words in a sentence even more than others in order to make his or her message clear. Listening for these words in particular is a good way to get at least a general understanding of what one hears, and it is a good way to begin improving listening comprehension.

I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant. (Anonymous)

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## Heading toward 2001: the brave new world of education through technology

Richard Boyum

Before we talk about the future, I would like to take a stroll down memory lane and look for a moment into the past. Let's all close our eyes and go back to the year 1985. Where were you? Were you teaching or studying? Were you abroad or in Brazil? What happened that year in your life, in Brazil, internationally? Those are fresh memories, aren't they? Nineteen eighty-five doesn't seem so long ago. Let's continue remembering 1985 for a bit longer, and let's talk about technology. In 1985 how many of you were using...

- a ball point pen;
- a telephone;
- a manual typewriter;
- an electric typewriter;
- a computer;
- a fax;
- a computer with modem to access networks like Bitnet/Internet;
- a scanner to capture images and transfer them to the computer;
- a CD-ROM.

How many of you didn't even know what the last four or five items were in 1985? Now let's come back to the present. Let's answer the same questions for 1993. How many of you are now using, or have had some experience with...

- a ball point pen;
- a telephone;
- a manual typewriter;
- an electric typewriter;
- a computer;
- a fax;
- a computer with modem to access networks like Bitnet/Internet;

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- a scanner to capture images and transfer them to the computer;
- a CD-ROM.

Now how many of you don't know what the last few items are? What was unknown in 1985 is commonplace in 1993. Nineteen-eighty-five was just eight years ago. Eight years from now is 2001. The year of Stanley Kubrik's Space Odyssey. One whole year into the new millennium.

What are we heading toward? What is the technology that you will be using then that you don't know about now? What is the technology that will be available then that is not available now?

The eight years from 1985 until now have seen incredible advances in the technology available to educators. What are the advances that we will be looking back upon eight years from now — in 2001?

It will be a Braver, Newer World of Education facilitated by Technology.

I'd like to borrow an old audio-lingual technique and take a closer look at the title of this talk — building it up from the back.

## TECHNOLOGY

The dictionary I have at hand (New College Edition of the American Heritage Dictionary, 1975) gives us the following definition of technology:

1. a) The application of science, especially to industrial or commercial objectives.  
b) Entire body of methods and materials used to achieve such objectives.
2. Broadly, the body of knowledge available to a civilization that is of use in fashioning implements, practicing manual arts and skills and extracting or collecting materials.

From the Greek "tekhnae" — skill or art.

It's interesting to note the primary reference to industry and commerce. But in the nearly 20 years since this dictionary was written, the term "technology" has taken on a common usage much closer to the second part of the definition. Nowadays I think we can consider technology as *the body of knowledge available to a civilization that is of use in...extracting or collecting materials* (including knowledge and experience).

In terms of extracting or collecting knowledge or information, the implements we have now are simply logical extensions of the implements that have been a part of technological evolution since the dawn of time.

As human beings we extract and collect knowledge of the world with our five senses. And, as human beings, we have always striven to do so more efficiently. The club was a caveman's extension of the manual force of his arm. The plow was the extension of hands that dig. The telescope and then the

microscope were extensions of humankind's visual capacity. Radio and television are extensions that allow us to hear and see things as they happen at great distances. Computers allow us to quickly do calculations that would take us months to do in our heads. Computer networks allow us to access information that would require intercontinental travel to obtain otherwise.

The evolution of technology into the future is as inevitable as it has been from the past to the present; and is as fraught with controversy. At one time the ability to write on papyrus was the mystical province of Egyptian priests and initiates. The advent of the printing press and then mechanized printing enabled mass distribution of the printed word. At the time certain religious and political leaders saw this as a dangerous thing that threatened the status quo. These same attitudes are still present among some in regard to information access via computer and networks. Technology has always had its opponents as well as proponents.

Let's move back to our backward buildup and take a look at the second to last concept in the title of this talk.

## EDUCATION

We come to a point when it is healthy to ask ourselves, "What is education?" My American Heritage Dictionary says, *The act or process of imparting knowledge or skill; systematic instruction; teaching.* I think our understanding of education has evolved since that entry was made.

We live in a world that has a growing ecological awareness. We see the holistic interaction of all the parts that make up the whole. Even in the field of foreign language teaching we talk about integrating the skills; we see the intimate connection between grammar and communication; we no longer consider language a series of discrete items put together like beads on a necklace.

Education is a holistic effort. We no longer consider the teacher the font of all knowledge. The student is no longer considered an empty vessel. Teaching and learning are said together so often they have almost become a compound word. Teaching/learning is one process with the distinctions blurred as to who does what in the process. I don't know how many times I've heard educators use the phrase *take responsibility for one's learning or the teacher as facilitator.*

There's an oriental saying that states: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. We can paraphrase that second line as teach a child how to look up a word in the dictionary and you teach a skill that leads to a lifelong ability to spell correctly; teach a child how to find information and you teach a skill that leads to a lifelong ability to tap the world's expanding knowledge base" (Cathryn Conroy, *Hyperlearning Begins at Home, Online Today*, July 1993).

Lifelong learning is a concept that is now a reality. The "half-life" of knowledge grows ever shorter. The knowledge a university graduate has of her or



his field today will be a tiny fraction of the knowledge of that field in five to ten years. If that graduate doesn't keep learning she or he will left in the professional and intellectual dust.

Philosopher Eric Hoffer tells us, "In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists" (in *Learning to Learn Across the Lifespan*, Robert Smith, 1989)

Coping with the world as it exists is a skill that citizens of the future must possess in order to survive. New information is accumulating at such a rate that only those who know how to access and deal with it will stand a chance of making it in tomorrow's world.

In fact, the use of technology in the foreign language classroom has implications beyond facilitating the learning of English. Familiarizing students with computers and computer networks is also providing them with valuable skills that will be needed in the workplace of tomorrow (if they're not already needed in the workplace of today).

Many teachers here in Brazil and throughout the world feel that computers in the school are a distant dream; that computers in the classroom are for the rich; that basic needs take precedence over the introduction of technology. And basic needs are a legitimate concern.

But I would also remind the holders of such opinions that the children of today will be entering the workforce of tomorrow. And that workforce is increasingly being affected by technology. It is precisely the disenfranchised who most urgently need contact with technology in order to be competitive in tomorrow's workplace. Remember that the telephone was an esoteric novelty at the outset. There was no one else to call. Now it is an indispensable tool in all areas of work. The fax has already passed through its phase of novelty and is now commonplace in schools and university departments throughout Brazil and around the world. And so it is with the advance of technology.

Let me tell you a story. The teenage son of some friends of mine was looking for a summer job. He saw an ad for a job as a worker in a lumber yard warehouse. He had visions of toting long planks on his shoulder all day long, but he went for a job interview anyway. The first question at the interview was, *Did we know how to use a computer?* Workers in the lumber warehouse carry handheld computers to keep an up-to-date inventory. They still carry planks on their shoulders too. That's today's workplace — not tomorrow's.

Let's go back to our title and continue our backward buildup.

## WORLD

World of education. What is the world we are educating for? As professionals in the area of English language teaching and training, it is apparent to us that the world is ever shrinking. That world is being evermore united by the

English language. It is clear that all sorts of large and small businesses have an international component for buying or selling. It is clear that academic research for advanced degrees requires accessing the international journals, so many of which are published in English. English is the most common medium of communication. Communication is nearly instantaneous via phone, fax and network.

The world is largely one place now. Global consciousness is on the rise. Geographic and political boundaries are being transcended by new information infrastructures that know no boundaries.

You don't need a passport to travel the Internet.

## NEWER

Newer World. The fact that the world is largely one place now is the new element for us all.

Newer World of Education. In many countries, the educational system is in crisis. It has not kept pace with social, economic or technological change.

The very classroom format with a teacher at the front and students in desks has not changed for centuries. At one time, that's basically how people lived: the chieftain or tribal leader was at the head of the village and the others lived in smaller houses scattered around. The village was the universe and the elders were the font of knowledge.

Today students are living in a world of cable television, video arcade games, Nintendo and Game Boy. Whatever neighborhood you visit you will find TV and shops with video arcade games. It is not merely the province of the wealthy anymore. The fast pace of TV drama, the scene changes, the multiple story lines, the information overload of TV advertising and the intellectual and motor dexterity required by arcade games form the cultural milieu in which young people live today. It is stimulation and information overload.

Certain sectors of society have kept up with social economic and technological changes. Business certainly has and even leisure time activities have.

The modern travel agency uses computers to make jet plane reservations to exotic places for people who use a plastic credit card to pay monthly installments with interest calculated automatically.

Weekend joggers wear shoes of space-age molded plastic and use high tech wristwatches that measure blood pressure and heartbeat as they run.

But what about school? The classroom? Students sitting still, in a row, with one person talking on one topic for one hour?

That's information underload. No wonder kids find school boring and irrelevant. The truth is, we live in a technological age and education must keep pace.

Back to the title.

## BRAVER

Courage. It takes courage to confront the waves of change that are engulfing us. To move ahead in our own professional development to include technological advances that are unfamiliar to us takes courage. But bravery pays off.

Braver, Newer World. It sounds hopeful rather than depressing like the novel.

The braver newer world is our world. Let's take a look at what it is already like — as we begin the countdown to the year 2001.

So how is technology being used in schools today?

## KIDS AND COMPUTERS IN BRAZIL

By connecting a computer to a "modem" and then to the telephone, it is possible to send messages and data to millions of other computers around the globe. The communication is asynchronous — the other person does not need to be using his or her computer at the time — so spanning different time zones is not a problem.

I recently received an email message from Maceio regarding *Kidsnet Brasil*, a Portuguese version of an international link-up that asked young people who they were, where they lived, what kind of a world they wanted when they grew up, and what they were willing to do to achieve that world. During Eco '92 in Rio, *Rede Guri* was run by young people who sent out their own news reports over the Internet to students in many different countries.

In English language networking, several public and private schools in Sao Paulo participated in a science project with schools in the US. and Israel.

The Casa Thomas Jefferson in Brasilia pioneered the National Geographic Society's *Kidnet* scholastic program. Students there formed part of an international team that did a study unit on ecology. Many other programs link students here with students in other countries via networks.

I've been amazed at the number of English language programs here that are using CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) as part of their instructional program. CALL efforts in Brazil vary from individual sessions in laboratories that have up to 15 computers, to one computer per classroom where groups solve problems in communicative activities.

## ADULTS AND COMPUTERS IN BRAZIL

The adults are not left behind. Hundreds of university professors in Brazil are users of Bitnet and Internet, the international networks that link 10 million computers around the globe. They correspond with each other here in

Brazil, and with colleagues abroad to exchange ideas and organize research projects. I know PUC/Rio has had some interesting projects with the University of North Carolina. Many others are now accessing the card catalogs of foreign libraries and obtaining bibliographic references on a topic of research.

### OTHER OPTIONS

- Distance Education. The State University of New York lets students use "Distant Learn" computer program to search through 7,000 courses around the country that are offered through correspondence, by satellite or by computer. Distance education programs are turning to computer networks as fast, inexpensive means of off-site course participation.
- Various "Virtual Salons" are convening on the Internet. In the tradition of turn of the century salons in Paris or Berlin, artists and intellectuals are "gathering" on the Internet to discuss topics of interest. Some salons operate in real time, while others are in the form of messages that are left to be read and commented upon by others. One group interested in computers and writing "meets" once a week at a given time for discussion — members include faculty from USP.
- Online full text retrieval is steadily advancing. In January, there were 859 host sites that promoted the sharing of full-text documents, graphics and freely distributed software packages. Full text versions of journals and magazines are now available on CD-ROM, which can be read and printed from a personal computer.
- Graphic images are now sent across the Internet. Soon full motion video and sound will be added, particularly as fiber optic technology is refined and made available. Sounds fantastic, doesn't it? By the way, the University of São Paulo state university system is now fully connected by fiber optic cable — connected to a satellite dish and the Internet.

### KEEP AN OPEN MIND

It's interesting that all of the above was overlooked by the futurists who exhibited the newly developed computers at the New York World's Fair in 1963-64. Experts of the day predicted that by the 1980's large, centrally located computers would control homes, businesses and factories.

Only one small item was omitted. The one that would have the biggest impact.

Not a single exhibitor at the World's Fair in 1964 envisioned the development of the desktop computer — let alone laptop, notebook and eventually pocket models.

But in your enthusiasm for new technology, don't forget the predictions made about television when it first appeared. It was said that the medium would revolutionize education, replace hundreds of teachers and bring literacy to the far reaches of the globe. Video has similar glowing predictions.

What will the future hold regarding the new technologies? What is it that we can't see in our crystal ball? We don't really know. I expect that what we're seeing is a powerful tool to be used by teachers.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

As we look forward to a Braver, Newer World of Education through Technology, I would like to share three challenges that were raised by David Thornberg in a seminar at USP.

The Great Challenge is making use of the technology. Computers, modems, CD-ROM all exist. One needs to acquire them and acquire programs that unlock the potential.

The Greater Challenge is getting teachers and school systems ready.

Administrative and teaching staff need to be made aware of the possibilities technology holds. Old notions and prejudices need to be replaced by hands-on learning experiences. Once staff members are familiar and comfortable with equipment, they will be ready to share it with students and use it for their own professional development.

The Greatest Challenge is learning to think in a Digital Mode. Up until now, our lives have been run in an analog, or linear mode. We begin with book one, unit one and advance steadily through unit two, three, etc. We are accustomed to thinking that there is a beginning, middle and end to everything. But in many educational topics, there is simply information. Acquiring the information can be done in any fashion or any order. Various tasks can be done at once. Projects can be undertaken that work on several dimensions of a problem at once. Multimedia computer programs combine visual, auditory and interactive aspects in a holistic, integrated process.

Already language learning has gone beyond the grammar-based view of language teaching as a prescribed sequence of steps starting with the simple present tense to an integrated functional/communicative view. This viewpoint can be fully supported by technology in its myriad forms.

It's just a matter of learning how to do things differently, and more importantly, learning how to do different things.

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PART THREE: THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

PART THREE  
THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE



Baker Street, London  
(Original photo by Maria Luiza Baethgen Oliveira)



## From product to process: what about grammar?

Maria Lucia Vasconcellos

The teaching of grammar alone does not improve composing competence, which does not seem to be a function of linguistic knowledge (See Krapels, 1990). From this perspective, the paradigm shift in composition orientation from product to process is a real contribution in helping students to learn how to deal with the constraints of writing. Theoretically derived insights gained from writing process-oriented research have changed both teachers' and students' attitudes towards writing, which has come to be seen not as a way to demonstrate ideas, but a way to discover them (Raimes, 1986).

To see the teaching of writing as attention to product alone is thus a drastic reduction of the complexities inherent in this activity. Sole attention to process, however, is an equally reductive attitude. Raimes (1986) raises the question of how to reconcile the product/process dichotomy. The process approach, she argues, does not have to neglect concern with the written product at all but to modify the approach to it so that attention to form and accuracy is included as writers interact and negotiate with their emerging text. Following this line, this paper proposes to examine ways in which grammar concerns can be integrated into the process approach.

I will first examine the basic premises of both product and process oriented approaches to writing and their treatment of grammatical instruction. I will then suggest possible ways in which grammar can turn out to be an analytic and stimulating concern, rather than a fact-oriented, passive study. It is important to make clear, however, that this paper focuses mainly on the question of grammar instruction for L2 learners, not L1 learners. There is a qualitative difference between the function of grammar instruction in L1 and L2 teaching: While L2 teachers are concerned with teaching basic grammatical structures in the target language, L1 teachers focus on usage and finer points of grammar. This difference definitely affects the teacher's attitude toward grammar instruction, which impacts the instructional process: In L2 teaching, traditional grammar instruction within the context of product-oriented approaches tends to be reduced to identification of troublesome areas, application of corresponding grammatical

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rule to solve the problems and memorization of the rule for further use through a number of specific exercises.

Product-oriented approaches are usually equated with traditional rhetoric and ready-made formulas for organizational aspects of text. From a prescriptive view, they focus on "the plan-out-before-you-start procedure" (Raimes 1986, p. 159). Research in this area examines text features of written products of L2 writers, with emphasis on form, rhetorical patterns, grammar, prescribed topic, purpose, and audience.

This instructional after-the-fact procedure has all teaching activities rooted in the traditional paradigm, with form-based task including analytic exercises to teach organization, guided writing, and controlled composition. On discussing what she calls "the tyranny of the form" (p. 157), Raimes points out, the major goal in this type of approach is accuracy in producing target rhetorical structures, grammar and lexicon. As a consequence, teaching deals primarily with rhetorical organization by assigning guided writing for which prescriptions are handed out by teachers, who correct errors.

In the book *Essay and Letter Writing*, by Alexander (1965), we can find a typical instance of this approach. From the foreword, the author explicitly defines the teacher's role as that of one who will "Keep a close check on the written work of his pupils." To carry out this task, "he will have at his disposal a great number of exercises and topics," to guarantee controlled practice and accurate products. The most common kind of exercise is the sentence combining type, but even more complex activities, like the writing of an argumentative essay, receive a similar prescriptive treatment. Topics are given, ideas suggested, and the plan is outlined in the form of introduction, development and conclusion. See Appendix 1 for the full lay-out of a lesson.

The student's task is to work on the given material and perform strictly prescribed operations on it. The teacher's intervention amounts to little more than checking out the correct development of the prescription, spotting grammatical errors and referring students to good exercise and grammar books.

This approach could, at lower levels, bring about "correct" products, since all the learner has to do is fill in the blanks according to the situation in question. Most of the assignments, however, are decontextualized and have nothing to do with the student's reality and writing needs. Consequently, they are of little or no use at all in helping the learner carry out significant writing when confronted with real situations and communicative needs not catered for in the prescriptions. In other words, procedures like these fall short of producing effective results in both fluency and error control.

Certain beliefs underlie the product-oriented approach: the linearity of the composing process, the idea that teaching editing is teaching writing and, finally, that competent writers know what they are going to say before they begin to write. Hailstone (1982) provides a detailed discussion of this issue and argues that ideas like these did not grow out of research or experimentation but derive from the



classical rhetorical model. They seem to be based, she points out, on "some idealized and orderly vision of what literature scholars... seem to imagine is an efficient method of writing" (p.78). Since actual writers in the actual writing activity are not taken account of in this model, the pedagogical principles derived from it become inefficient in improving students' writing ability.

The orientation towards the process in teaching writing considers the cycle enclosing the whole composing task. This approach is marked by de-emphasis on the final written product and emphasis on what writers do as they compose. As a consequence, it shows a departure from the paragraph patterns, guided writing, controlled composition and grammar exercises that characterize a more traditional approach to teaching L2 writing.

Some assumptions inform the process approach: extensive practice, writing as discovery of content, recursiveness of the process, focus on content and communication of meaning, understanding of the motivations for writing, awareness of audience in terms of real readers, peer-group response and collaborative work (a detailed account laid out by Leki, 1990, is provided in Appendix 2). Grammar instruction is not considered a tool for improving writing. It will just come into play in the form of interventions in the writing process during drafting and revising or proofreading stages. These are levels that can exercise little or no control over purpose, plans, content, and style, as Hillocks Jr. duly reminds us (1987, 76). Therefore, we cannot expect knowledge of grammar to influence the quality of writing.

Emphasis on what writers do as they compose has led to classroom procedures that emphasize strategies for facilitating the composition process and for discovering content. Idea-generating strategies like pre-writing, freewriting, brain-storming are specific to the process. Journals, peer-group work, invention and revising strategies are encouraged, with feedbacks from peers/teacher in multiple drafting as opposed to the after-the-fact intervention typical of product-oriented approaches.

Leki (1990) provides an example of this approach (see Appendix 3). She suggests writing journals as a way to develop fluency, get students excited about writing and push them toward taking risks in English. As stated explicitly, the purpose of the activity is not to practice grammar. The students are to keep all journal entries in a notebook of some kind, put a number and date for each entry, write regularly from two to four times a week for ten-twenty minutes. Response to this kind of writing activity might be in the form of peer-group response or teacher-response and will function as on-line intervention, helping the student-writers in the process of constructing their text.

Both product and process approaches have their merits, but are ineffective if used in isolation. As Pica (1982) points out, the goals of the product approach — accuracy in producing target structures, grammar, and lexicon — are essential to effective writing. In a process approach, students are given opportunities to review, clarify, and organize what they have written on their own, away from their teacher's intervention. Both approaches will surely provide

students with some amount of feedback regarding their work. Unfortunately, neither of them used in isolation can make all of these contributions to learners' needs.

The same issue is raised by Raimes (1986, 162), who claims that to pay attention to process "does not mean going all the way and throwing out form, or throwing out grammar." In an attempt to blend process and product concerns, she suggests that it is possible to attend to grammar and error as part of the process of generating a product and it is possible to do this in a content-specific way, as well. While primarily concerned with content, students can be led to pay attention to concrete problems as they arise in their emerging text instead of dealing with abstract grammatical and rhetorical concepts.

In the same line, D'Eloia (1987, 378) discusses the uses of grammar for students in a process approach, pointing out that grammatical study should be kept in the background, "subordinated to the elimination of error". The implications of this position are that grammar should take away as little time as possible from actual writing practice and that instruction should proceed with a minimum of terminology. D'Eloia suggests using the traditional terms but supplementing them with the visible forms which we want our students to produce. For example, the use of expressions like "the -ing form in a noun position" will suffice for the purposes. She rightly argues that grammatical terms divert attention from the operation at stake besides suggesting a handling of the concept as an abstraction, which definitely does not constitute an asset for the student interacting with his emerging text.

The objective of outside interventions changes as a result of the integration of grammar study and writing. Consequently, the type of grammar instruction advocated by teachers using the process approach is qualitatively superior to that suggested by the product approach: grammatical issues are dealt with, concretely, as problems arise in the various drafts. A recognition of the points where their actual texts vary systematically from a hypothetical standard form might guide the students towards an understanding of some idiosyncratic rule system underlying their production. This awareness work seems to enable learners to produce more accurate and fluent versions, which does not seem to result from the intervention-after-the-fact procedure.

The systematic deviations are discussed by Bartholomae (1981). He argues that errors can be viewed as windows into the process and that "the unconventional features in the writing are evidence of intention, being, therefore, meaningful" (304). Through them, he says, we can chart systematic choices, individual strategies, and characteristic processes of thought.

Within the perspective of errors as necessary stages of individual development (see Selinker 1972, for a discussion of this notion), failed productions can be seen as results of intelligent cognitive strategies. They constitute data that provide insight into the idiosyncratic practice of language users at particular points in their acquisition of a target language. The student, it

is argued, forms a theory about the target language system at each stage of his interlanguage. The forming of the theory opens up the possibility of inquiring about the reasons motivating the linguistic choices the learner is making. Thus, the individuals' statements about their selections can be used as potential explanatory and predictive constructs to explain their perspectives, expectations and beliefs concerning the language they are producing.

If we are interested in the reasons given by the student to explain his written product, retrospective verbalizations potentially constitute an appropriate technique. These verbal reports can be used to elicit metalinguistic judgments from the students on the grammaticality of their own products, as explained below.

Retrospective reports consist of memory for sequences of heeded thoughts. These reports are accounts and observations by the subjects themselves on the cognitive processes involved in a performed action, drawn from interviews with the researcher. Retrospective verbalizations can be of two kinds, immediate and delayed. These different retrospective techniques provide different types of information on the process, as Zimmermann & Schneider (1987) point out.

The first kind, known as immediate retrospection, consists of reports given by the subject on his action immediately after the task is completed. The purpose of this kind of retrospection is to elicit information about the problem-solving strategies used by the learner.

The second kind, delayed retrospection, consists of reports by the subject on his action some time after the performance of the task. Information is supplied by the learner about the reason why he thinks he selected those specific problem-solving strategies. At this phase subjects make metalinguistic statements about their behavior during the task. Cognitions of the types described above can be reconstructed by the researcher in the form of a "subjective theory", through which errors could be explained.

The notion of "subjective theories" I refer to was developed in German psychology and educational science, under the denomination *Research Programme Subjective Theories (RPST)* (Grotjahn 1991).

Subjective theories are defined as aggregates of cognitions composed of subjective hypotheses and subjective constructs, which can potentially account for phenomena observed. They constitute a manifestation of the agent's first-person perspective and refer primarily to the motive and belief system involved in the individual's action. Thus, they answer questions of *why* a performance has occurred. RPST proposes a methodological framework for the analysis of such action-guiding cognitions.

To explain a fact, for example an error, a subjective theory may be reconstructed on the basis of the subject's arguments in retrospective sessions. In order to clarify the notion, Grotjahn (210) gives an example of the investigation of the treatment of errors in Italian and Spanish in high schools in the Federal Republic of Germany. The research was carried out with eight teachers. The data collected through retrospection and focused interviews showed that one teacher

tended to correct his students very rarely. To explain this fact, the following subjective theory was reconstructed on the basis of his arguments:

I want to adapt my style of error correction to the students' expectations as much as possible (motive system), because I am convinced that I can best meet my students' expectations by correcting them as rarely as possible (belief system). Hence, I correct the students as rarely as possible (conclusion).

The teacher's approach to correction is then reconstructed in terms of the construct referred to as "subjective theory". The subjective theory is formulated in the first person to make it clear that it represents the subject's perspective. For a discussion of the validity of subjective theories, see Grotjahn (1991, 192-200).

In discussing the use of subjective theories as explanatory constructs, Grotjahn argues that the concept may be integrated into teaching situations. Some issues involving cognition lend themselves to a fruitful application of RPST. Among these, explanation of students' performance given by the students themselves, which may include metalinguistic judgments on the grammaticality of their own products.

Extending this to the writing process, student-writers can have a clear idea of how their texts are emerging by being given a chance to reflect on the motivations informing their choices. From this perspective, the reconstruction of the subjective theory will facilitate the analysis of the mental processes underlying L2 individual writing. By means of such constructs, errors can be dealt with not as after-the-fact deviations but as in-progress evaluation.

In analyzing different designs for process-oriented writing courses, I have found that many times errors are indeed dealt with as in-progress evaluation. What I have observed, however, is that they are still seen as deviations to be eradicated. An example of an interesting design is provided by Keh (1990). The plan (see Appendix 4) includes the following phases: Input, Write First Draft; Peer Evaluation; Write Second Draft; Writing Workshop; Student-teacher session; Final Draft. In the student-teacher session, Keh suggests speaking individually with students about their papers. What she does at this phase is to include some kind of "remedial" grammar lesson, as she calls it. The use of the word "remedial" has a number of implications for the treatment of errors. "Remedial" is the attribute of an action intended to correct something that has been done wrong or to change something that is considered to be harmful. Thus, if some remedial work is to be done it is because errors are considered unacceptable productions which should be eliminated without any further and more careful thought. This approach runs against the orientation of the treatment of errors underlying my reflections.

What I suggest is the possibility of making use of a conference of this kind to encourage the student to produce retrospective verbalizations on his writing process. Subjective theories could then be reconstructed from the metalinguistic judgments made by the own student on the grammaticality of his

emerging text. From reconstructions like this, through which explanation of the causes and effects of strategy selection processes and the resulting grammatical choices are likely to emerge, improvements could come about.

Finally, as Grotjahn points out (198), RPST includes the aim of increasing the subject's everyday rationality and reflectivity. Its goal is then not only to make the reflective subjects more self-aware in the focused situation, but also to help them transfer this increased self-awareness to everyday action. Through revealing students' belief systems and the relationship among beliefs, actions and outcomes, subjective theories can raise their self-awareness. Thus, a first step is taken toward changing inadequate beliefs and resulting practice.

## CONCLUSION

The question raised in the focused situation, but also to help them transfer this increased self-awareness to everyday action. Through revealing students' belief systems and the relationship among beliefs, action and outcomes, subjective theories can raise their self-awareness. Thus, a first step is taken toward changing inadequate beliefs and resulting practice. This paper stems from concerns which have accompanied my teaching activity: How is grammar instruction to be dealt with in teaching writing to L2 students? Concerning the necessary knowledge writers need for effective writing, one thing is certain: That definitely does not include the traditional study of grammar. Some grammar should be integrated in the process, especially in the form of awareness raising work, at the stages of proofreading and revising, which are levels that exercise little control over purpose, plans, content, and style.

The kind of grammatical instruction suggested in this paper is based on the notion of errors as windows into the writing process. By means of consciously activated reflections on their written products, students could produce retrospective accounts of the cognitive process involved in the writing of the different versions. From these, "subjective theories" could be reconstructed and help in the recognition of points in which their products vary systematically from standard norms. This was suggested to be the first step towards the changing of wrong beliefs.

As the ideas put forward are grounded on theoretical claims, they need to be tested for feasibility and effectiveness. They do have, however, potential explanatory force to help students to test hypotheses about rules for writing in L2 via outside feedback derived from their own cognitions.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Source:

ALEXANDER, L.G. 1965. *Essay and Letter Writing*. London: Longman, 109.

*Subject*: "No matter how good a film is, it can never equal a really fine play."  
Support this view.

*Attitude*: Support this view.

### *Ideas*:

Different aims. Cinema: techniques: scenery, spectacular events; close-ups. Cinema replace theater? Saturday afternoon. Theater: acting: the main thing. Presentation. Celluloid. Dimming lights, curtains etc.: imitating the theater. Actor and audience.

Plan:

Cinema	Theater
<i>Introduction</i>	
<i>1. Attitudes: a general comparison</i>	
<i>Development</i>	
<i>2. Presentation</i>	
The past and the present (comfort, luxury etc.) Techniques: curtains, lights etc.	Hushed expectation
<i>3. Aims:</i>	
<i>People acting out situations.</i>	
Resources: time and place: scenery: variety; spectacular events. Close-ups.	More limited: it is the acting that matters.
<i>Conclusion</i>	
<i>4. Relationship between actor and audience.</i>	
Poor film better than bad play. Actors: celluloid.	Immediate contact: Human feelings.

## APPENDIXES 2 AND 3

### USING A PROCESS APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

Ilona Leki, University of Tennessee, 1990

Available from E/CEM

English Language Programs Division

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Washington, DC 20547

## APPENDIX 2

Source:

Hand-out # 1

Some Assumptions of the Process Approach

Writers learn to write by writing, not by hearing someone talk about writing.

Writers don't always know what they want to write until they have written at least some of it.

Writers don't usually say exactly what they want to say exactly the way they want to say it the first time they try to write it down.

Writing improves when writers focus on content first and leave details of editing until later.

Writing improves when writers care about what they are communicating to their reader.

Writing improves and is easier to produce when writers know why they are writing, who their reader is, and why their reader might be interested in reading what they've written.

Writing improves when writers read what other people are writing.

Writing improves when other people sympathetic to the writer's purpose read and comment on what they have written not to evaluate it but to help writers express what they want to express.

### APPENDIX 3

Source: Handout # 2

#### *Writing Journals*

Purpose: to develop fluency;  
to get students excited about writing;  
to use as source material;  
to take risks in English; NOT to practice grammar.

*General rules:*

Students:

- Keep all journal entries in a notebook of some kind
- number and date for each entry
- write regularly: 2-4 times a week for 10-20 minutes
- spend first 1 minute emptying mind, breathing
- decide with teacher if journal is private, semi-private, or public.

Teacher:

- checks journal every week
- decides how to respond

*Responding to journals:*

Between each student and teacher

Between all students and teacher

*Journal suggestions:* (adapted)



## Sample Journal Suggestions: Day by day

Discuss the questions orally first and write individual reactions to the following:

What is your first memory? How old were you? Describe everything you remember.

Think of a dream you have had and write it down in as much detail as possible. Try to remember everything you can about the dream.

What mistakes have you made in the past which you will probably make again? Which will you never make again?

## APPENDIX 4

Source:

KEH, Claudia L. A Design for a Process-Approach Writing Class. *English Teaching Forum*. January 1990.

INPUT	1-11/2 generating ideas
WRITE FIRST DRAFT	(outside class)
PEER EVALUATION	(focus on content only)
WRITE SECOND DRAFT	(outside class)
WRITING WORKSHOP	(teacher collects second drafts and looks at content and grammar separately)
STUDENT-TEACHER SESSIONS	(remedial grammar)
FINAL DRAFT	(outside class)



# Vocabulary development and grammar practice: do they create independent learners?

Célia Lacerda Jaguaribe

In addressing the question of whether grammar practice has a rôle in developing learner autonomy, I would like to start by quoting Wilkins who, in 1976, in his discussion of the applications of the notional syllabus, wrote:

The grammar is the means through which linguistic creativity is ultimately achieved and an inadequate knowledge of the grammar would lead to a serious limitation on the capacity for communication. (Wilkins, 1976: 66)

Wilkins' contention stressed the importance of grammar as a means to communication, but the years that followed the advent of the notional syllabus were very much characterized by a proliferation of language courses and approaches to language teaching that, despite their focus on language functions and their aim at promoting interaction, have largely ignored the rôle of grammar in the effective communication of ideas, beliefs and feelings.

The dissociation of grammar and communication for pedagogic purposes was not a new phenomenon, though. In structural approaches to language teaching, for example, grammar and communication were considered independent features, with language exercises aimed at the practice of grammatical structure with little or no account of the context in which these structures occurred.

In recent discussions concerning language pedagogy, Canale (1980:6) has defined communicative competence as a complex notion, involving four areas of knowledge and skill, namely: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. He characterized grammatical competence as the mastery of the language code; sociolinguistic competence as the ability to use both form and meaning appropriately in different contexts; discourse competence as the capacity for handling both cohesion and coherence in the structure of texts; and strategic competence as the ability to enhance the effectiveness of the message.

Given the interrelationship of these four aspects, as underlying an individual's linguistic competence, a direct implication is that grammar practice is

necessary for language learners to develop communicative competence, an important aspect of which is the learner's capacity to use the language accurately and appropriately.

If, as claimed by researchers, (Oxford, 1990; Ellis & Sinclair, 1987), language learning requires active self-direction on the part of learners in order for them to reach an acceptable level of communicative competence, then, it seems reasonable to redirect our question from a consideration of *whether* grammar practice creates independent learners to *how*, in fact, grammar can be made effective in aiding learners to achieve self-direction and, therefore, attain communicative competence.

I would like to discuss this question, by considering it in relation to three essential aspects in the teaching-learning process, namely: the approach, the syllabus and the teaching materials.

What kind of approach, then, to use in grammar practice? In 1984, in the VI ENPULI, held in Recife, Hutchinson, in a most amusing lecture, offered cogent arguments for a cognitive approach to the teaching of grammar. Defining grammar as "the element that makes any creative language use possible", which incidentally reaffirms Wilkins' contention, mentioned earlier, he pointed out that in a cognitive approach to learning, 'language use' means "mobilizing the learner's language resources to solve communication problems."(Hutchinson, 1985:40). This is effected through the activation of thinking processes and emotions, where rules play a fundamental rôle in strengthening these processes.

Among the various benefits of a cognitive approach that were cited by Hutchinson, one seems to me, quite pertinent to our question, i.e. the fact that through rules one learns not only about the language, but also about learning. Thus, in a cognitive approach to grammar, if learners are given the opportunity to discover the rules underlying the system of the language for themselves, they will not only become more motivated because of their involvement in the learning process, but they will also activate a process of hypothesis formation closer to the one underlying first language acquisition, which is extremely beneficial, as far as learning is concerned. In addition, by using their existing knowledge to find meaningful patterns and relationships in the new language presented to them, learners will develop their own strategies of learning. As Hutchinson (1985:51) puts it: "a cognitive approach to grammar can help all students to develop the strategies of the good language learner."

Our next question, then, is how to integrate and implement this sort of grammar practice within the communicative framework of a language syllabus. I think the key word here is contextualization. It is the context that can tell why certain grammatical choices are made in favor of others in the expression of a given language function.

It is important to consider here the correlation of grammar points with other aspects of language, such as, social, semantic and discourse factors. Thus, the choice of modals, as for example, 'can', 'must' and periphrastic forms, 'be able to', 'have to' is essentially constrained by social factors. Their use, in other words,

is dependent on a number of social variables, including politeness and directness, in addition to situational factors, register differences, as well as matters of personal choice. It is customary, however, for these forms to be taught from a notional viewpoint, as discrete items, having semantic equivalents, as when 'must' is equated with obligation, though it may convey other meanings, again depending on the social variables of the situation in which it is used. There are contexts, for example, in which 'must' outranks 'should' and 'may' as a more polite form for offerings, such a choice being dependent on the relative status of speaker and hearer, as well as in the desirability of the act in question. A semantic approach to the teaching of modals is, therefore, restricted and inadequate.

Tense and aspectual choice are also grammar features that cannot be learnt as semantic discrete items, as they have specific discourse functions. Stubbs (1983:26) has shown, for example, that complex tense and the simple present tense are more typical of utterances that preface or introduce stories in a conversation, whereas the actual narrative is mainly advanced through past tense forms. Since these differences can only be appreciated within a context, simply correlating tense forms with time concepts will not really account for their different uses. For notions, however, whose meaning contrasts are mainly realized through morphological, lexical, or syntactic alternations, such as location, quantity, degree, a semantic approach will certainly be useful.

A direct implication of these facts is that grammar practice should not be restricted to sentence level, nor should it be implemented out of a context. The goal of grammar practice in a communicative syllabus, as Rea Dickins & Woods (1990:636) point out, is to assist the learner in developing both an awareness of grammatical choice and the capacity to make the appropriate choices according to given contextual constraints. From this viewpoint, then, grammar does not function as an end in itself but, rather, as a means toward successful communication.

What kind of language materials can, therefore, provide the learner with contextualized grammar practice? Is it really necessary to design new materials afresh, or can old materials be revised so as to turn them into communicative tasks? According to Hutchinson, even the old substitution table, so much used in structural approaches to language teaching, has its validity, since it can be turned into a simple and concise way of presenting a grammar point by having students complete some missing slots, making up contexts for some of the sentences there used, as for example, telling a story where someone says one of the sentences, and as a follow-up, having the students make up their own substitution tables. The exercise can be made even more realistic if the substitution table is designed in connection with a particular text.

Similarly, the typical traditional grammar exercise of manipulating isolated sentences for the purpose of grammatical operations, such as changing from present into past tense or from active into passive voice, can be made less mechanical, if presented in text format with students having to make decisions

about the use and appropriateness of the grammatical forms on the basis of their function within the overall context. A reading passage, for example, can be effectively used to explore time-relations in context. Students can first be asked to identify those places in discourse where the temporal reference changes and to determine the expressions that realize such changes. The location of the different temporal frames in a text makes it easier to understand the semantic-syntactic constraints between, for instance, verb and adverbials, a correlation which, incidentally, is not usually given proper focus in the teaching of time reference in English.

It is also customary in some approaches to the teaching of English grammar, for the lesson to contain an explicit account of the rule underlying the grammar point to be practiced. In such cases, rather than provide the students with the rule, it will be more beneficial, if students, as pointed out before, are led to create their own rules, having first practiced and used the relevant language in a context. Celce-Murcia (1991: 2.3.4-6) provides a good illustration of how to implement this technique with beginning students to practice using the simple present tense and making generalizations. First the students themselves, are led to generate the vocabulary necessary for developing a specific theme, e.g. talking about one's daily or usual activities. They can do this by filling in a list, providing information on activities they seldom or frequently do or that they do every day. For this initial assembling of information the students can use their mother tongue, when they lack the relevant vocabulary. The teacher, then, helps the students express generalizations using the information in the lists, as they practice saying or writing a few sentences about themselves and their classmates, thus ensuring variation in the verbal forms used. As a third step, they use the information they have generated to write a simple letter to a pen-friend, introducing themselves. At a later stage, the teacher uses the data generated by the students to ask them to work out the rule underlying the verbal forms used.

With intermediate and advanced students, authentic language data by native speakers can be used as the source of the language point to be focused on, as for example, an extract of spontaneous conversation, which can be explored with respect to the forms used by speakers as a strategy to hold the floor, such as, fillers (you know, you see, well) and hesitation devices. First students listen to the recording, marking down in a list those expressions that they managed to identify. Then they focus on these forms and analyze their specific function within the conversation. As a third step, they work in pairs, telling one another a story which is recorded, and then later analyzed by the students with respect to naturalness and their use of those conversation devices.

In the activities I have described, grammar work is central to the learning unit, rather than its ultimate purpose. It functions, indeed, as Hutchinson (1985:48) puts it, as a pivot point mediating between meaningful input of the grammar point in use and the students' actual use of the language in a communicative situation. In addition, these activities have the features described by Celce-Murcia (1985:32), as being most effective in focusing learners' attention

on form, i.e. they are communicative rather than manipulative; they are embedded in a context, therefore, text-rather than sentence-based; they are purposeful, cognitively challenging and motivating.

It is to this last point that I would like to cast my attention now, since it bears directly on the learner autonomy issue. I think that a motivated learner will naturally become responsible for his/her own learning. As Carver & Dickinson (199:15) put it: "being responsible is an attitude of mind". However, it is also true that the teacher plays a rôle in activating his/her students' capabilities, making them aware of their own resources as language learners. Now, it happens that many such techniques for training learners in self-direction are, as pointed out by Carver & Dickinson, those already commonplace in many classrooms and more usually known as language learning techniques. They have, therefore, an implicit dual function, namely, to promote language learning and at the same time to train in self-direction, this last goal being achieved by teachers allocating more time to these activities rather than to activities in which students take a passive rôle. Among these techniques, Carver & Dickinson mention the use of content, and suggest several ways "in which content is related to the growth of self direction in language learning".

One suggested way is by learners' using their language skills to acquire and organize information. Students, can, for instance, do a reading task, such as to find information about some specified topic in , say, a newspaper or magazine, and then, working in groups or in pairs, organize the material into a summary. I think this kind of activity can be a natural follow-up of a lesson in which students have discussed and analyzed some logical connectors, (e.g. even, though, although, unless) within a stretch of discourse that illustrates their use. Students, then, cooperate with one another in the solution of a communicative task (i.e. making the summary) that requires using their knowledge of the grammar point in question. In carrying out these activities, students perform a cognitive strategy (i.e. summarizing) and a social strategy (i.e. cooperating with others). The former strengthens grammatical competence, while the latter encourages authentic communication, enhancing, therefore, discourse competence.

Another key technique for fostering learners' self-direction, as discussed by Carver & Dickinson, is the elicitation of rules, which we mentioned earlier, in connection with our discussion of a cognitive approach to grammar. In stating the grammar rules for a grammar point that they have practiced, students learn to think by themselves, thus becoming less dependent on the teacher.

To encourage students to design their own practice material can be both stimulating and rewarding and serves as a technique for training them to be independent. Written texts, for example, can be a source of students' own material. Using two copies of reports in newspapers or magazines or extracts of short-stories, the teacher can guide students to create 'cloze' exercises on some grammar point they want to practice. Keeping one of the copies for correction, they use the other one for blacking out the grammar items in question, and

working in pairs, they exchange the texts, each student completing a different text which is then returned to the original student to be corrected. An extension of this technique can be for the students to use short extracts of written discourse and make appropriate changes from, say, statements to negatives, or from active into passive voice, and in pairs consider the implication of these changes.

Both elicitation of rules and students' own implementation of teaching material are cognitive strategies that require mental processing of the language, fostering both grammatical and discourse competence in the foreign language.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that one of the implications of a cognitive approach to grammar is that language learning is a decision-making process which involves making grammatical choices in favor of others within a particular language context and situation. It is this making of decisions that largely contributes to fostering learner autonomy and creating independent learners.

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## Vocabulary development: does it create independent learners?

Solange Coelho Vereza

For many decades, throughout the whole structuralist era, vocabulary was to a large extent neglected by most linguists since it was not considered part of the more systematic dimension of language. This dimension, syntax, represented the central object of analysis of both European and American linguistics. Chomsky (1965), for example, acknowledged the existence and centrality of the semantic aspect of language, but he believed that syntax was the only linguistic level from which one could develop an economical, reliable and rule-generating theory of language.

More recently, however, there has been an increasing interest in vocabulary. Semantics, for example, has been explicitly incorporated into generative linguistics and componential analysis has also received a lot of attention from both semanticians and language philosophers. In psycholinguistics, the mental lexicon, lexical representation and processes, is a very fruitful area of research.

As language teaching tends to reflect developments in linguistics, particularly in the design of syllabi and textbooks, vocabulary was for a long time neglected and treated with little systematicity. Within the structuralist-situational approach, which is still very popular despite its frequent functional — communicative make up, vocabulary is selected according to its frequency, range and appropriacy within the theme, situation or function which characterizes particular units. No matter the criterion for selection, vocabulary items are frequently seen as a set of idiosyncratic, self-contained units which are treated as elements of a set, and not as parts of a system. Thus, the role of the textbook and of the teacher is to present these items and try to group and classify them so that students can grasp their meaning and memorize them through regular exposure, practice and cognitive strategies. Teachers are aware that the exposure factor is very limited in a foreign language context, a problem which makes the teaching of vocabulary, an area thought to have very little potential for productivity.



From the students' point of view, vocabulary is normally viewed as both essential and frustrating in terms of language learning. When answering a questionnaire on the difficulties of developing fluency in both production and comprehension, students from advanced courses at PUC-RIO singled out vocabulary as their arch-enemy, i.e., the greatest obstacle to be overcome in their learning processes, and, at the same time their greatest ambition as a learning target. If only they had an automatic "mental word-processor" or a "mental dictionary", their lives as learners would be much easier.

In the case of one's mother tongue, unknown words abound in technical, academic, literary or other specific texts. If you are a member of that community, you are familiar with different discourse worlds which require not only linguistic but also pragmatic and encyclopedic familiarity. With this awareness, the reader or listener puts unfamiliar words in their right perspective: he or she knows that these words are in most cases markers of a symbolic universe he or she is simply not acquainted with.

In the case of a foreign language, on the other hand, unknown words usually have a devastating and overpowering impact on the reader. They are seen as reminders of the learner's not belonging to a language community he or she is trying to be part of, and might even be taken as signals of ignorance, never-ending obstacles to be overcome or sources of frustration.

Another feature of vocabulary learning which is equally frustrating is the highly familiar gap between passive and active vocabulary. The learner may understand the meaning of a word when reading a text without being able to use it in his or her written production. Similarly, he or she can grasp its meaning when engaged in oral discourse without feeling confident enough to use it in his or her oral production.

These difficulties point to the complexity involved in determining what knowing a word is and, by the same token, what not knowing a word is. In the research mentioned above, students were asked to underline the words they did not know. What was to be a very simple lexical inference exercise, ended up unveiling the difficulty in conceptualizing vocabulary knowledge as students underlined words which were considered unknown simply because they had never come across them before in a text, or they did not know their translation in Portuguese or, most importantly, because they could not give a general definition to it or answer the question *what does "X" mean?* But in many cases they could grasp the semantic and pragmatic value of the word in context. Nevertheless, they still regarded it as totally unknown.

If knowing a word involves familiarity with its phonological, orthographic, morphological, collocational, pragmatic, encyclopedic or schematic dimension together with its denotation, sense relations and conceptual mapping, one could not expect lexical proficiency in the first contact that the learner has with a word. There is a gradual process developed through exposure to the word in different contexts of language use.

When learning a foreign language, it would be reasonable to suppose that we transfer much of our conceptual mapping of words from our language to the target language as it is now believed there might be 'conceptual primitives' which seem to be universal, a theory recently developed by Jackendoff (1990). Knowledge (conscious or sub-conscious) of sense relations, particular kinds of collocation and of the argument structure which characterize a word may also be successfully transferred.

The development of the remaining levels are part of an ongoing process derived from spiral practice and regular exposure. To meet this need for vocabulary development and practice, many applied linguists are now developing innovative ideas for classroom procedures which focus specifically on vocabulary. The increasing number of teacher books and materials on this area reflects the equally increasing interest of teachers and researchers and the obvious needs of students. Authors such as Carter(1988), McCarthy (1990) and Nation (1990), for example, have given an invaluable contribution to the field. Willis (1990) has proposed an entire syllabus based on high frequency words selected from the twenty million word Cobuild corpus.

But, from all the levels of lexical knowledge proposed earlier, there is one which, in my view, is directly related to the theme of learners' autonomy and has not been treated in the literature as problematic. This is the so-called definition, generalization or denotation of a word.

The primordial metaphor of literality, as Rosemary Arrojo (1992) has called the notion of literal meaning seems to dominate both students', teachers' and many people's expectations towards vocabulary knowledge.

The very acceptability of a question such as *what does X mean*, when X has been decontextualized, implies in the existence of literal meanings as though words existed independently of men in a platonic ideal world. We can surely talk about predominant conventional uses of words which, in turn, can be generalized into prototypes with particular salient features. But these features are not in the words but in the uses we make of them.

How come, then, our conventional generalization or definition of an item many times does not coincide with its most frequent use? Examples taken from the Cobuild corpus are the words "movement" and "penny". When people are asked to give a definition for "movement", they normally refer to the replacement of an object from a position A to a position B. However, the majority of uses of the word refer to political or social movements. In the case of "penny", the obvious definition would be that of a metal English coin. But the communicative use refers to money in general or financial means like in, *She hasn't got a penny*. Can we say that these are just extensions or metaphorical uses of those words? Synchronically, since our mental representations are not developed with the knowledge of language diachrony, which came first, the chicken or the egg? The word or the metaphor?

My contention here is that these literal meanings do not exist in the words themselves, and not even depart necessarily from their uses, but they are social constructs, metaphors which were developed through particular ways of approaching words in general.

Education, undoubtedly, reinforces this metaphor of literality, which does not have to be necessarily seen as intrinsically negative. Talking about words is a potentially thought provoking and stimulating experience. But, in a foreign language environment, taking the word out of its context and giving it a literal definition is not a guarantee to learning it.

Vocabulary in reading activities is a good example of possible misuses of this practice. The pedagogic text in foreign language textbooks is very often approached as a display of grammatical and lexical items which are introduced through pre-reading activities and practiced in post-reading activities.

Since language learning is by its very nature limited in terms of amount of language exposure, it is natural to expect some sort of pedagogic shaping of language samples. However, even in such contrived texts, vocabulary cannot be seen in isolation: its contribution to the meaning of the text can be to a large extent inferred from the context itself and from the learner's knowledge of vocabulary structure in general and of the world. The meaning of the word does not have to and will never be inferred in its integrity. Partial understanding might suffice for the purpose of the reading task. The proper definition of the word in relation to the context of its appearance can be left to a much later stage if words are seen, primarily, as tools in the construction of the text by the reader. Words serve discourse, and not the other way around.

In my view, then, vocabulary development encourages independent learning if it is seen not as a dictionary to be gradually and painfully built up but as an integral part of discourse. Within this perspective, we can think of particular ways of tackling unknown words which highlight the dynamic nature of discourse. Exercises on lexical inference through contextual clues, for example, are very popular in ESP teaching. Not only are students encouraged to guess the contextual meaning of words, but in doing so, they make use of discourse features such as lexical cohesion and thematic organization. In this way, sense relations such as hyponymy, synonymy, antonymy and paraphrasing are explored as their use in a text indicate the meaning of words in relation to other words in the text.

An equally important strategy to deal with the "enemy" (to use Lakoff's war metaphor that has been mentioned here) is to introduce, since the very elementary stages, the so-called procedural words, or high order words such as: problem, ideas, notion, type, kind, manner and way, which can help in establishing the contextual meaning of other words.

In the same way, the rhetorical organization of the text can also be explored through its lexical markers. The macro or super structure of discourse, such as introduction, evidence elaboration, reiteration, conclusion, cause and effect, etc. are often lexically marked. By being familiar with such items, students

can establish textual super-structure which, in turn, will facilitate the inference of other more specific words.

To conclude, then, my answer to the question posed in this round table: *Vocabulary development. Does it create independent learners?*, would be "yes". The very process of learning words may lead to learner's independence or optimize autonomy if, and only if, students do not only learn words, but learn *from* words, only if words are learned in such a way that could help the learner in, to use Henry Widdowson's expression, transcending the data.

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# Automated systems in spoken language: a case study of the pronunciation "problems" of an advanced speaker of English as a foreign language

Camille Amos

The present case study will focus on the analysis of a sample of the subject's spoken English for the purposes of (1) identifying characteristics of the subject's spoken English; (2) compare the spoken English of the subject with that of the native speaker; (3) analyze the differences between the subject's speech and that of the native speaker and (4) to investigate subject awareness of those differences in order to confirm whether the subject's "pronunciation" is due to lack of knowledge about spoken English or to another source. It is hoped that through the process, objective evaluation criteria can be established for diagnosis of spoken English and for the planning and implementation of remedial training.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, studies of written language have focused on texts as products while spoken language has been studied in terms of the psychological processes that go into the production of language. I propose to join process and product approaches in this investigation. By making a transcription of a taped conversation it becomes a product to be analyzed in order to identify what takes place in the conversation. In addition, the processes involved will be examined in order to provide explanations for what takes place during the spontaneous act of speaking as well as what kinds of "pronunciation" problems interfere with communication.

### *Subject*

The subject is a female Brazilian doctorate candidate at a Brazilian university. Her written English is excellent: she is able to organize her ideas and express them clearly with few grammatical mistakes. However, she was

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recommended for remedial work in pronunciation. As a native speaker and doctorate candidate, I was given the task of helping the subject improve her pronunciation of spoken English.

Even though the subject's written English demonstrates an excellent command of English grammatical structures as well as the ability to organize and communicate ideas with clarity, as Crystal points out "it would in fact be quite inaccurate to see adult reading and writing as being a reflection of speech" (Crystal; 1969, p. 64).

The incongruity between the informational content and pronunciation of spoken English (in the judgment of one of those who recommended remedial training for the subject) was confirmed by an incident reported later in a taped conversation with the subject. The subject's teacher had planned to discuss the material by specific authors that had been covered in an oral presentation by the subject. However, the teacher decided not to cover that material in class due to the fact that the student in question had already presented an overview of the material.

Two things are apparent from the subject's report of this incident that the teacher had perceived): (1) that the content of the presentation was more than adequate and (2) that while the subject's pronunciation of spoken English was seen as less than adequate, she still was able to get her ideas across to the audience. Thus it appears that it is not the information content or the organization of that information that caused the recommendation of remedial work for this student.

## PERCEPTION OF *PROBLEM* AS PRONUNCIATION OF PHONEMES

In an initial interview the subject had been asked to describe her "pronunciation problems" and was able to give a description of what she perceived as her problem: the pronunciation of specific phonemes. The subject's self analysis of this aspect of her 'pronunciation' problems in spoken English was quite accurate. She was able to identify which sounds were difficult for her to say at the micro level of sounds in isolated words. However, many of my Brazilian have some difficulty with the pronunciation of these same sounds and yet are not difficult to understand.

The student identified the production of the following sounds to be problematic:

1. "th" -- /θ/ /ð/  
(in beginning position) -- as in "this", "that", "think", "thin"  
(in middle position) -- as in "bother", "brother", "rather"  
(in final position) -- as in "bath", "teeth", "both", "with"

2. "r" \_\_ /r/ /♦/  
before "d" -- as in "word"  
before "ld" -- as in "world"  
after "b" -- as in "brother", "break"
3. "e" -- /i:/  
added as an extra syllable to the end of words ending in consonants -- as in  
"break + e", "think + e",
4. "ed" -- / d/  
at the end of past tense verbs pronounced as a separate syllable such as "like +  
ed" instead of "liked<sup>t</sup>."
5. difficulty in distinguishing the difference between:  
"i" /i/ in ship and "ee" /i:/ in sheep  
"e" /e/ in pen and "a" /æ/ in pan

An analysis of a taped conversation between the subject and the researcher demonstrated that: (1) the subject was able to identify the sounds that are problematic for her; (2) the subject's "problems" with the pronunciation of the above listed sounds does not present a great barrier to understanding because, even though they are some what difficult for her to say, when she is not under stress to speak "correctly" she is able to arrive at a close approximation to them; and (3) it is interesting to note that the subject's awareness of the correct pronunciation of these sounds does not keep her from mispronouncing them, nor does she consistently "mispronounce" them.

During the conversation there are three occurrences of 'enthusiastic'. With the first use the subject pronounces the extra 'e' on the end of the word. The other two occurrences of 'enthusiastic' do not have the extra syllable. The word "tape" also is used 5 times and only once does the subject pronounce the extra "e" as an added syllable on the end. Altogether there are 13 occurrences of 'e' as an extra syllable. In terms of "ed" as an added syllable, there are 8 occurrences. This is an indication that the subject's performance was not based on what she knew about the pronunciation of English phonemes, but due to her production skills in speaking which may in turn be due to a variety of unconscious behaviors that affect a variety of the prosodic features of English.

## ANALYSIS OF PROSODIC FEATURES

### *Comparison and Contrast: Subject vs. Native Speaker*

The analysis also provided evidence that there is in deed a difference between the subject's intonational, rhythm and stress patterns and those of the native speaker. The following excerpt from the transcript provides a typical example:

1 D: what / should we / talk about / do you want to comment about the tape-e  
i lis-ten-ed?

2 C: Yea

3 D: Yea

4 C: yea / wha-d-ya-think-about / the Dyer tape?

Portuguese equivalent of subject utterance number 1 (according to the subject):

O que deveríamos/ conversar?/ Voce quer-que-eu-comente/ sobre-o- tap-e/ que-  
eu-escutei?

In utterance number 1, the subject (D) pronounces the words separately, while in the fourth utterance the researcher (C) who is a native speaker of English runs the words together. Running the words together makes the pronunciation of the words different from that of the non-native speaker who pronounces the words separately and distinctly, which also modifies the rhythm and the stress, which in turn affects the intonational pattern. In addition, the extra syllables on the word "tape-e" and "listen- ed" interfere with the rhythm and intonation.

In the above example the following impositions appear to have taken place: (1) the Portuguese phonetic system (the extra syllables on the end of words ending in consonants as in "tape-e" [tape-e is the same word suggested by the subject in the Portuguese "equivalent"] and "lis-ten-ed") which alters rhythms because of the added syllable; (2) Portuguese syntactic structures (the English verb "listened" is not followed by the preposition "to" — in Portuguese "escutei" does not need a preposition). (When I asked the subject later about her knowledge of the use of "listened to" as collocational patterns in English syntactic structures, she confirmed that she was aware of them, and was surprised in fact to find that she had not said "listened to".); (3) rhythm — which includes grouping of words and pauses (which is also related to Portuguese syntactic structures — the word groupings of "should we" and "talk about" could be due to the one word equivalents "deveríamos" and "conversar" in Portuguese); and (4) Portuguese stress patterns: In Portuguese the new information frequently comes first and is stressed while the given information frequently follows it and is unstressed. In English, it is usually the given information that comes first as unstressed which is followed by the new information that is marked by stress (in the native speaker the "wha-did-ya-think-about" is run together and unstressed as given information while "Dyer tape" is stressed as new information).

Therefore, it can be seen that the most apparent difference between the speech of the two speakers has to do with stress and rhythm which in turn affect intonation: (1) The native speaker runs word together in clusters. The pronunciation of these word clusters by the native speaker is such that they sound almost like one word with the sound boundaries between words being softened and some of the sounds being eliminated. A good descriptive term might be "run-on-words". On the other hand, the subject pronounces the words more separately and distinctly. As a result, the sounds appear to be harsher and a more staccato rhythm is present in the utterances. When word clusters do appear, in the



majority of cases, the words are joined in the manner described above, which is not in keeping with the speech of the native speaker of English.

According to Halliday, "One of the main problems faced by foreign learners of English is getting the rhythm right" (1989, 52). It is his contention that incorrect rhythm "can be one of the main reasons for not being understood by English speakers " (Op. cit, 52).

In addition, according to Halliday, rhythm, tonicity, and tone are part of the grammatical system of English. Rhythm is made up of the FOOT, and the feet are constructed into TONE GROUPS which organize discourse into INFORMATION UNITS, "with each information unit comprising the functions of Given and New (Halliday, 1985, p. 271).

Idea units (according to Halliday) imitate the formation of memory storage in which words that are frequently used together form patterns of language in use. An example of these grammatical structures is repeatedly used word groups (which appear to be spoken as if they are one single unit) is the opening question that starts the discussion: *What should we talk about?* The way these type of utterances are spoken seems to be related to how they are stored in memory. Halliday contends that they come out of the mind in whole units with slots to be filled in at the moment. The pause before a slot has to do with the time needed to place the appropriate word in the slot while the pause after the filling in of the slots is related to returning to the rest of the program. If the words are not already associated in grammatically correct word groupings (what Halliday refers to as preformed idea units), the word search will take longer if initiated from thought to word because of the necessity to match up each word necessary to convey the thought. However, if the words already form idea units, the thought automatically calls up all the words in an idea unit.

<p>wha-did-ya-think-about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● pre-formed word group</li> <li>● a "run-on-word"</li> <li>● an "idea unit"</li> <li>● Given information</li> <li>● grammatical unit used in formation of question</li> <li>● request for opinion of the receiver about something the receiver already knows about</li> </ul>
<p>the Dyer tape?</p> <p>for speaker to:</p> <p>for hearer to:</p>	<p>pause before is necessary</p> <p>locate correct word to fill in slot with specific time period in question</p> <p>have time to connect slotted word/s in memory with thought related to function of word in memory</p>

Two observations can be made from the above examples: (1) For the hearer who is a native speaker, the "run-on-word" (the Given word group) will not be a problem for understanding because it is part of a chain, i.e., if you hook into part of the chain you get the rest, permitting your mind to fill in the part which is not pronounced distinctly due to the rhythm and intonational patterns which are clearly predictable. On the other hand, the "slot" (or New information) needs to be distinct in the mind of the hearer because it is not so predictable. Therefore the before and after pauses are necessary to insure that the words (the New information) are clear (the mind cannot fill in what it does not already know or is not able to predict). Secondly, according to Halliday, words that are not expected or predictable will interfere with the predictive capacity of the mind to fill in the gaps, thus affecting comprehension of the utterance as a whole.

### *Automated language systems*

Fluent speakers of a language participating in casual conversation, perceive and construct meaning without giving much conscious thought as to how meanings are made: when we want to say something, we think about what we want to say and go directly to saying it. We think very little about grammatical structures or tonal inflections and contours of intonation or rhythm; we usually do not worry about whether or not the people we speak to are going to understand us; and we quickly grasp what the other person says and respond, sometimes without letting the speaker finish the utterance. Our perception of and response to what other people say is automatically structured, with conscious thought focused on what is being talked about and not on the myriad of environmental, psychological and physiological components that make that communication possible.

This is due to the organization of perception in such a way that activities such as speaking or driving a car function within, what Fodor (1983) calls "automated systems". In an automated system, our perception focuses only on that information considered to be pertinent to task performance while at the same time it utilizes other necessary factors, without the necessity of being consciously aware of them in order to use them. Fodor provides the following anecdote as an example of the organization of perception in the mind:

E: Please look at your watch and tell me the time.

S: (Does so.)

E: Now tell me, without looking again, what is the shape of the numerals on your watch face?

S: (Stumped, evinces bafflement and awe.) (See Morton, 1967) (Fodor, 1983, p. 57).

Obviously, the subject saw the numbers on his/her watch when looking at it to see the time. However, the shape of the numerals was not consciously perceived due to the fact that the subject was only interested in knowing the time

and so the specific details on the face of the watch were not remembered. Rather, the image of what a watch face must be like is used to read the time. The subject looks at the watch for the purpose of seeing the time, automatically notes the time and disregards information that is not pertinent to being able to tell what time it is (in this example: the shape of the numbers). Fodor calls this organization of perception "informationally encapsulated", which means that input is organized in such a way that only information that is pertinent to the task at hand is remembered which permits an automated output. Because conscious thought is not necessary for the processing of input and the planning of output in order to produce the appropriate response, the delay between input and output is minimal.

On the other hand, when learning to speak a foreign language, those aspects of perception that have become "informationally encapsulated" and are therefore part of the automated systems of our native language. These aspects, however, frequently do not find automated means of interpretation and expression in a foreign or second language while it is being learned.

*How* to say something in a foreign language does not just involve the choice of words to use; it also involves making choices about pronunciation, rhythm, tone of voice, and intonational contour. If we are successful our meaning will be understood. The more unfamiliar we are with the language, the more we pause to search for words and/or correct pronunciation in the middle of our utterances, which interrupts the flow of speech and interferes with comprehension of the message. It is possible that the subject as a non-native speaker of English may be so involved in the word search that aspects of the language in acquisition such as intonation, stress and rhythm are ignored entirely, which allows the automated sound systems of Portuguese to be unconsciously imposed on her spoken English. It is my contention that it is this imposition of automated systems that interferes with the effective functioning of these interacting prosodic features of English which interferes with ability to the subject of this study to be understood.

## CONCLUSION

In the process of analysis and identifying the subject's pronunciation "problems" in English, I did not want to insist that what is 'acceptable' speech for non-native speakers be the same native pronunciation that I have for three primary reasons:

1. Due to the establishment of speech habits. It appears that, at this subject's advanced stage in the acquisition of English, that pronunciation patterns have become habituated. This is suggested by the very accurate and detailed description of the "problem sounds", as well as various other prosodic features of English, where the knowledge of what is correct, does not correlate with the subject's actual usage.

2. Time constraints. The time allowed for the remedial work is very short and extensive reformation of habitual speech patterns demands intensive work over an extended time period; this means that identification of what the "pronunciation" problems are (within a more general pattern) would provide a more adequate direction for the remedial work.
3. Due to individual as well as regional variation in the pronunciation of native English speakers, I see no reason to impose my pronunciation patterns (at the phonemic level of the "problems" described by the subject) on this or any subject for that matter. After all, if all native speakers of English do not speak alike, it should not be necessary for a non-native speaker to be required to pronounce phonemes in the same way I do: there are individual variations as well as those that can be attributed to regional or class differences in pronunciation. However, within individual, regional and class variations in speech, native speakers of English share certain characteristics which mark them as native speakers. These common characteristics appear to be related to overall patterns of intonation, stress and rhythm, which in turn alter the pronunciation of words in a stream of speech making them different than when pronounced in isolation.

In order to achieve native like performance, it appears that the EFL learner must find the means for automatizing the systems of the spoken language. This need has been substantiated in this study by the fact that the subject's conscious knowledge about English prosodic features has not allowed her to use them effectively. The issue for the subject then becomes one of how to acquire the automated sound systems of English. I have no definitive answer as to how this can be accomplished. However, over the two month period of time since the taped conversation that has been the object of the analysis in this paper, the subject has been given a variety of tasks: (1) to listen to the taped conversation between herself and the researcher to identify the speech characteristics of both; (2) to listen to other tapes by native speakers and identify the overall characteristics of their speech; and (3) has done a wide variety of drills in listening and repeating phrases by native speakers in order to automatize the prosodic features of native speaker speech. Most importantly, the subject has been encouraged to speak English at every possible opportunity with her fellow classmates and teachers. She has also made the commitment to meet with this researcher on a regular basis to have the opportunity to practice speaking as well as get feedback on her progress. However, even though it appears that the subject is making progress toward her goal, habitual speech patterns, like any other habitual act, require time and effort to change. Further follow-up work will be necessary to determine if in fact the remedial training is to be successful.

Finally, I want to add a note of caution about recommendations for remedial training for non-native speakers: speaker competence may vary between speech situations. Let me illustrate my point. While doing the analysis of the

tape, I noticed that one section of the tape stands from the rest when the subject tells about an event that happened to her. The narrative style of the subject in this section of the dialog is very free flowing and articulate. It has the appearance of a story that is preformed in the mind of the subject which allows her to tell it without monitoring what she wants to say or how to say it. She runs the words together, not quite like the native speaker, but it lacks the longer pauses while the subject searches for words that characterize the rest of the dialog and therefore gives her speech more appropriate rhythm and stress patterns. Furthermore, it is much easier to understand because the prosodic features seem to be in closer approximation to the patterns of native English speakers even though her Portuguese accent is still noticeable. The appearance of such an integral narrative in the middle of the dialog suggests that the subject's spoken English skills may vary within differing contexts and speech registers. Therefore, it is clear that the identification of a subject's strengths as well as weaknesses be taken into account when evaluating speaker performance.

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# Perception and production of prosodic prominence: a discourse framework

Inês Kayon de Miller

This paper investigates the notion that perception of prosodic features may affect production and avoidance strategies. The analysis focuses on the relationship between the perception and production of prosodic prominence by a group of thirty fairly fluent Brazilian EFL majors at PUC-Rio.

The data were analyzed from a discourse perspective through a taxonomy of discourse categories generated for this study. Three discourse features (Focus, Emphasis and Contrast) served as dependent variables in the correlations, factor analysis and comparison of means performed to compare perception and production as an independent variable. Observed discrepancies and correlations between (mis)perception and (mis)placement of prominence are discussed in terms of theoretical and pedagogical implications for listening/speaking development.

The present study is part of a broader research project aimed at developing a taxonomy of error patterns against which problematic areas in the spoken discourse of Brazilian EFL university majors can be empirically identified. An initial investigation (Miller, 1991), carried out with prospective EFL teachers at PUC-Rio, confirmed empirically that the area of stress, both at word and sentence level, proved to be the most problematic. This result led the author to further observe the allocation of sentence-stress or prominence in the speech of a wider population of EFL majors at PUC-Rio.

Evidence gained through teaching and research suggests that students tend to stress polysyllabic words on the wrong syllables, assign stress to expectedly unstressed words in utterances and misuse or underuse the discourse functions of prominence allocation. Other research done with Brazilian speakers of English (Garcia, 1984, 1990; Miller, 1991,1992) has also shown that most problems fall within the area of stress and rhythm.

Observation obtained from the author's ongoing research and experience in teaching oral skills and phonology courses shows that the average EFL majors

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at PUC-Rio also have difficulty in perceiving salient or prominent words when listening and, similarly, do not give enough prosodic prominence to the words that carry high information load in their own discourse.

These difficulties seem to be caused by a lack of sensitization to the crucial elements and functions of suprasegmental phonology or prosody. As we know, the prosodic elements — Tone Unit, Prominence and Intonation — can perform several functions. By highlighting one particular word in an utterance, prosody can convey focus as well as indicate the *discourse role* of an utterance. It is mostly through prosody that the speaker's intention is conveyed in spoken discourse (Kreidler, 1989).

When we consider prominence in spoken discourse we are really considering the extent to which speakers' and listeners' worlds converge (Brazil, 1988). What is signaled as prominent (i.e., selected by the speaker from a list of possible alternatives and projected as a significant element of the message), is set against that which can be assumed as part of the taken-for-granted elements of the message (McCarthy, 1991). It is my contention that awareness for this *interactive choice* realized as prosodic prominence can and should be developed in EFL learners if we seriously expect them to engage in successful verbal communication. "Selective attention" (Kahneman, 1973) to prosodic prominence may help them acquire production and decoding concepts that they may not need to employ in their first language (Rost, 1990).

Furthermore, this study is based on the assumption that suprasegmental elements can best be understood as part of a discourse system that helps convey and capture meaning. This analysis focuses on the perception and production of prosodic prominence by a group of Brazilian EFL majors at PUC-Rio and investigates the notion that perception of prosodic features may affect production and avoidance strategies.

The discussion will address the following theoretical issues:

Will the difficulties that Brazilian speakers have in producing prominence be related to how they perceive this prosodic feature?

This question was triggered by Wong's suggestion (1987) that skillful listening carries over as skillful speaking. An affirmative answer to this question was anticipated:

*How will students' perception of prosodic prominence when listening to a passage read aloud compare to their production when engaged in free speech about the same passage ?*

The intention in posing this question was to observe the extent to which skill (listening or speaking) affects awareness of prosodic prominence.

Are students as listeners/speakers sensitive to prominence as a feature that they can use consistently in capturing and conveying the intended meanings in spoken discourse?

No a priori answer was formulated for this question though inconsistent use of prosodic allocation was suspected.

## METHOD

### *Subjects*

The 30 subjects involved in this study were all the undergraduate students enrolled in the Phonology Course offered at PUC-Rio during the second semesters of 1991 and 1992. They were all fairly fluent Brazilian EFL majors who had studied English for about ten years before entering the university. However, they clearly lacked any previous sensitization to the relevance of prosodic prominence. Only ten out of the 30 students had lived abroad; five of them having attended high school (from 1 to 3 years) as exchange students.

### *Materials*

A 316-word excerpt from the text entitled "Pronunciation Achievement Factors" in Gilbert (1984) was used to generate two modes of students' oral production — reading aloud and free speech. The total amount of recorded time (reading and speaking) is equivalent to approximately ten hours.

A native-speaker recording of the same passage was used in order to capture the subjects' perception of the words made prominent by the reader in his rendering of the text.

In the attempt to analyze the students' perception and production of prosodic prominence from a discourse perspective, a discourse framework was developed by the researcher.

The basic notion underlying the features included in the discourse framework presented in this paper was expressed by Brown and Yule (1983) when they said that phonological prominence in English has a general WATCH THIS! function.

For the purpose of the present stage of this study, the proposed discourse framework will include three categories. The category FOCUS (from Kreidler's Syntagmatic Focus) includes all those instances in which students perceived and/or produced prominence in association with high information content elements.

The categories EMPHASIS and CONTRAST attempt to represent specific uses of the WATCH THIS! function. Kreidler (1989) explains that through such emphatic and contrastive uses speakers achieve Paradigmatic Focus.



By emphasizing one word the speaker is excluding any other word that might occur in the same position or with the same general function. Just what is excluded depends on the context and what the speaker and hearer know about each other.

It might be argued that these two features could be considered as one, but they were kept separate in the proposed framework since the researcher intended to carry out careful analysis of students' performance of emphatic and contrastive uses of prominence. Previous research (Miller, 1992) shows that EFL speakers seem to create *unintentional* emphasis and *unbalanced* contrasts by failing to assign prosodic prominence to the elements they actually intend to emphasize or contrast. These inconsistencies create a problem in interaction due to the fact that listeners seek motivation for unexpected prominence as part of the general desire of participants to find coherence in discourse (McCarthy, 1991).

### *Procedures*

The data related to the students' oral production of prominence were collected through arranged interviews during which each student was asked to read and comment on a part of the text "Pronunciation Achievement Factors" in Gilbert (1984).

The data related to the students' perception of prominence were collected a few weeks later, during a regular language laboratory session. The subjects were given a copy of the text and were asked to indicate the prominent words as they listened to the native speaker recording of the passage. This activity was preceded by brief training and exemplification of how to mark perceived prominence on the printed page.

The free speech samples produced by students were first transcribed and then marked for prominence production. The data obtained from each student through the listening (perception) task required no special treatment before being tabulated.

The recordings for each student's reading are being analyzed at present and the results will be communicated in the near future. The students' individual prominence production during the reading task is being transcribed on separate transcripts and tabulated.

Each occurrence of prosodic prominence was classified as an 'observed correct' or 'observed incorrect' instance for each of the three discourse features included in the discourse framework (Focus, Emphasis and Contrast). It should be pointed out that the 'observed incorrect' category included not only a) incorrect allocation but also b) non-allocation of prosodic prominence.

The examples below, where F, E and C stand for Focus, Emphasis and Contrast respectively, illustrate the analysis carried out with all the data collected.

(from listening and reading passage)

C  
We ALL know that it is difficult for adults to learn  
F E C  
accurate PRONUNCIATION. We ALSO know that SOME people  
C C  
achieve BETTER results than OTHERS.

(from students' speech)

F C  
People who SPEAK more have the opportunity to LEARN more.

E  
If you HAVE the chance to talk ...

C C F  
People have MORE ++ SOME people have more ABILITY than  
C  
OTHERS.

Such classification and scoring procedures for the listening and speaking tasks yielded the following categories:

LISTENING FOCUS OBSERVED CORRECT	(LFOC)
LISTENING FOCUS OBSERVED INCORRECT	(LFOI)
LISTENING EMPHASIS OBSERVED CORRECT	(LEOC)
LISTENING EMPHASIS OBSERVED INCORRECT	(LEOI)
LISTENING CONTRAST OBSERVED CORRECT	(LEOC)
LISTENING CONTRAST OBSERVED INCORRECT	(LEOI)
SPEAKING FOCUS OBSERVED CORRECT	(SFOC)
SPEAKING FOCUS OBSERVED INCORRECT	(SFOI)
SPEAKING EMPHASIS OBSERVED CORRECT	(SEOC)
SPEAKING EMPHASIS OBSERVED INCORRECT	(SEOI)
SPEAKING CONTRAST OBSERVED CORRECT	(SCOC)
SPEAKING CONTRAST OBSERVED INCORRECT	(SCOI)

The data analysis for this study was performed by combining skill (LISTENING and SPEAKING) as an independent variable and FOCUS, EMPHASIS and CONTRAST as dependent variables. Each occurrence or absence of prosodic prominence in the entire corpus was first classified into one of the twelve variables listed above and then hand-counted.

All the data obtained for each subject were then entered as percentages on the Quattro Pro Spreadsheet program. The scores were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, a statistical software program through which all the statistics were calculated.

Correlations, factor analysis and means and standard deviations were calculated for the entire corpus. Due to length constraints, this version of the paper will present a brief report on statistical results in order to allow reasonable length for the discussion section.

## RESULTS

### *Correlations*

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between perception and production of prosodic prominence. The results of the correlation analysis were significant if higher than the  $r$  critical for a sample of  $N = 30$ , which is .4093 (Fisher and Yates, 1963), with the alpha value set at  $< .01$ . The correlation coefficients were considered meaningful if  $r > .60$  (Brown, 1988).

Some correlations confirmed theoretical views regarding prosodic prominence (Brown and Yule, 1983; Kreidler, 1989) and the researcher's main assumption about the students' use of this prosodic feature.

The high positive correlations found between LEOC and LCOC (.6944), between LEOI and LCOI (.7142) and the high negative correlations between LCOC and LEOI (-.7129) reinforce the theoretical framework adopted for this study. Within this discourse framework, Emphasis and Contrast are seen as subcategories of a broader discourse feature referred to as Paradigmatic Focus (Kreidler, 1989).

The correlations results obtained (see Appendix A) confirmed the empirical observation that most students are unaware of how to capture and convey emphasis and contrast as expressed, in speech, through prosodic prominence.

It is interesting to note that the correlations emerged regardless of correctness. The positive values correlated correct and incorrect occurrence of Emphasis and Contrast indistinctly.

Yet, results of the correlation analysis indicate that significant correlations between Emphasis and Contrast were only found within the listening skill. The correlations which emerged within the speaking skill are below the  $r$  critical, probably indicating that the relation between emphatic and contrastive uses is not systematic when free speech is produced by the same students. It still remains to be seen how these two features will emerge when the analysis of the reading corpus is completed.

### *Factor Analysis*

The Factor Analysis performed in this study yielded five factors (see Appendix B). The intention in using this technique was to capture statistically and in a meaningful way what was common among the variables.

We found that Factor 1, which is always considered the strongest, combined occurrences of Emphasis and Contrast within the listening skill with high positive values (.92491;.90531, respectively).

It is worthwhile pointing out that the feature Focus associated with Listening (LFOC .00082; LFOI .00131) and all the variables referring to speaking (SEOI .04854 to SFOC .12058) add almost nothing to this factor.

Factor 2 combined significantly only correct and incorrect occurrence of Focus within listening (LFOC -.97964; LFOI .98175).

Interestingly, factors 1 and 2 already confirm an orientation previously indicated by the correlations calculated. Emphasis and Contrast seem to be so strongly linked as to form one factor and Focus is found to independently load on to a separate factor.

Factors 3, 4 and 5 were all loaded by the three variables related to speaking. Variables SFOC (.97951) and SFOI (-.98033) loaded on to Factor 3, variables SEOC (.98998) and SEOI (-.99182) loaded Factor 4, and variables SCOC (.96140) and SCOI (-.96231) loaded Factor 5. The variables associated with correctness appeared in all the three factors with positive values, while the variables associated with incorrectness had negative values.

### *Means and Standard Deviations*

Means and standard deviations were calculated by skill (listening, speaking) in an attempt to throw some light on the influence of skill on the use of the discourse features being analyzed (Focus, Emphasis and Contrast).

Results show that the means for the listening skill correct scores were consistently lower than those for the speaking skill correct scores (see Appendix C). This pattern may confirm a difference in level of performance between the two skills already indicated by the correlations and the factor analysis performed.

In effect, when perception is involved the highest means are found for incorrect uses of the discourse features. Exactly the opposite trend is found to be the case for the production skill — the highest means are found for correct occurrences.

The low mean (20.64) obtained for perception of emphatic use confirmed the researcher's anticipated results. The value of 37.26 for Focus reflects better performance but still problematic. Perception of contrast offers a mean of 43.30, which shows that for the listening skill none of the discourse features produced a mean higher than 50.00. On the other hand, the high scores obtained for the production skill consistently fall within the same range for the three discourse features (74.04 to 77.70).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the statistical analyses performed for the corpus of this pilot study (N=30) raise some crucial issues concerning a) the original research questions and b) the discourse framework proposed for analysis. These issues will

be discussed at this point but it should be kept in mind that a larger corpus and more statistical analyses need to be performed in order to confirm these results.

Cautiously interpreting the strong correlations obtained, the loadings in the factor analysis and the means and standard deviations by skill, it seems possible to reject at this point, the null hypotheses for research questions 1 and 2. Tentatively, it could be said that, for the subjects analyzed in this study, at the moment of data collection, perception and production of prosodic prominence differ consistently. Wong's statement (1987) that skillful listening carries over as skillful speaking does not seem to hold in the case of these 30 subjects, whose scores for speaking are systematically higher than their listening scores.

Furthermore, the a priori prediction implicit in research question 1 — that the difficulties Brazilian speakers have in producing prosodic prominence could be related to their difficulties in perceiving this prosodic features, could be momentarily contradicted. The subjects in this study did not seem to have as much difficulty in producing prosodic prominence as in perceiving it. The means for skill scores reflect this difference quite clearly. The fact that both in the correlations and in the factor analysis loadings listening and speaking were consistently kept separate also seem to confirm, at this point, the difference between perception and production.

The clear-cut separation of variables related to listening (perception) and speaking (production) in the loadings that formed Factors 1 to 5 seem to suggest that there is less common ground between the two skills than might have been expected when posing research question 2. Both skills were in no instance found to contribute to one factor, perception and production were in all cases kept separate.

Discourse features Focus, Emphasis and Contrast, however, did not behave as consistently as the two skills being compared. Factor 1 presented the common ground existing between Emphasis and Contrast when perception was concerned and rejected Focus which, by itself formed Factor 2. Factors 3, 4 and 5, on the other hand, show that when oral production was in question Focus, Emphasis and Contrast had high values and managed to form factors independently (see Appendix B).

Despite the apparent distinctness of the skills, we would be willing to speculate, based on previous classroom and research experience, that sensitization towards the use of prosodic prominence in oral discourse could lead to improvement of performance in both listening and speaking scores. Longitudinal pre-test/post-test studies could be carried out to investigate if awareness of the notion of prosodic prominence does carry over to listening and speaking. Another possibility would be to check if subjects' awareness of their own skillful production when speaking would facilitate more skillful listening by the same subjects. This carry-over, if confirmed, would assume the subjects' ability to transfer their own understanding of the discourse system when, as speakers, they are in control of the flow of information to a better understanding of other speakers' intentions when, as listeners, they do not hold control of the information flow.

Regarding research question 3, we can see that the observed score means by skill seem to suggest that the students analyzed are consistently sensitive to prosodic prominence as a way of conveying their intention as speakers but are not as consistently aware of prosodic prominence as a signal that can help them capture intended meanings in spoken discourse.

Further research in interactional situations (inside and /or outside the classroom) could attempt to show whether the difficulties indicated in listening have any effect on the interaction among EFL speakers (teachers/students) or among EFL speakers and native speakers. It is felt, at this point, that very often EFL Brazilian speakers fail to understand their interlocutors' intention as expressed through speech and, consequently, miss the chance to interact successfully.

The strong correlations between the discourse features included in the framework used in this study were considered meaningful and raise important issues concerning the analytical framework proposed, as was explained earlier. The discourse features Emphasis and Contrast were included in the framework as separate categories, although they are believed to be subcategories of a broader discourse feature which was named Paradigmatic Focus. The consistently strong correlations and some factor analysis loadings could be meant to suggest that, despite our analytical interest in keeping Emphasis and Contrast apart, these two features are strongly linked in discourse. This intimate relationship is especially apparent within the analysis of the subjects' perception of these features.

The connection between Emphasis and Contrast, which became apparent through the statistical results, also reflects the difficulty confronted by the researcher when attempting to classify some occurrences as either emphatic or contrastive. Such delicate decisions were often faced and could be a justified argument for collapsing the two features into one broader category that would include both. The emergence of a new Emphasis-Contrast variable would certainly turn data analysis a considerably easier task and probably make the framework more powerful.

Yet, this researcher would consider that such a "merging" decision should not be taken before the corpus is significantly expanded and the analysis for the reading mode of oral production completed. Only then would it be advisable to adapt the present framework.

Another fundamental point to be discussed is that the pedagogical purpose which underlies this empirical study should be taken into serious consideration. The researcher's knowledge and experience as a Phonology teacher has certainly influenced the design of the analytical framework. It was the clear attempt to sort out problematic areas across skills and discourse features which motivated the analysis by skill and the artificial separation of such closely related features as Emphasis and Contrast. Working under the pedagogical assumption that it is worthwhile to sensitize students to both Emphasis and Contrast as two very rich discourse possibilities for expressing Paradigmatic Focus, this researcher

would maintain the present framework until further investigation in this area is carried out with a considerably larger corpus.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained through this empirical study provide some support for the importance of carrying out data-based analyses of spoken corpora despite the undeniable difficulties involved.

Although there seems to be a definite need for refining data collection procedures, studies that investigate both speech perception and production should be encouraged. Researchers interested in aspects of native and non-native spoken discourse should devote every effort to devising novel ways of collecting, sharing and analyzing larger samples of planned and unplanned discourse.

In this study, selecting a discourse framework of analysis and calculating several statistical measures for the same corpus was found to be quite productive. Not only did it help interpret the data from a broader perspective but it also raised important theoretical and pedagogical considerations.

Further insights into the relationship existing between EFL Brazilian students' perception and production of prosodic prominence will be gained when the analysis of the data obtained through the reading task is completed. High correlations are expected between listening and reading scores due to the fact that, in both tasks, students dealt with the same text and were not in control of the information flow.

In future research to be carried out on this topic, an attempt will be made to collect data concerning perception and production of prosodic prominence in a more interactive way. Thus it is hoped to allow for a closer observation and analysis of EFL speakers/listeners management of prosodic prominence in oral interaction.

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## APPENDIX A

### *Correlations among variables*

Variables	LFOC	LFOI	LEOC	LEOI	LCOC	LCOI
LFOC	<b>1.0000-</b>	<b>-.9939**</b>	<b>.1325</b>	<b>-.1375</b>	<b>-.1082</b>	<b>.1039</b>
LFOI	<b>.9939**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.1295</b>	<b>.1335</b>	<b>.1117</b>	<b>-.1076</b>
LEOC	<b>.1325</b>	<b>-.1295</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.9908**</b>	<b>.6944**</b>	<b>-.6960**</b>
LEOI	<b>-.1375</b>	<b>.1335</b>	<b>-.9908**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.7129**</b>	<b>.7142**</b>
LCOC	<b>-.1082</b>	<b>.1117</b>	<b>.6944**</b>	<b>-.7129**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.9998**</b>
LCOI	<b>.1039</b>	<b>-.1076</b>	<b>-.6960**</b>	<b>.7142**</b>	<b>-.9998**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>
SFOC	<b>.1417</b>	<b>-.1232</b>	<b>.0848</b>	<b>-.1477</b>	<b>.2706</b>	<b>-.2707</b>
SFOI	<b>-.1155</b>	<b>.0971</b>	<b>-.0647</b>	<b>.1329</b>	<b>-.2558</b>	<b>.2554</b>
SEOC	<b>-.0452</b>	<b>.0621</b>	<b>-.1176</b>	<b>.1334</b>	<b>-.0660</b>	<b>.0725</b>
SEOI	<b>.0052</b>	<b>-.0235</b>	<b>.0997</b>	<b>-.1167</b>	<b>.0604</b>	<b>-.0668</b>
SCOC	<b>-.2688</b>	<b>.2574</b>	<b>-.2131</b>	<b>.2442</b>	<b>-.0764</b>	<b>.0841</b>
SCOI	<b>.2881</b>	<b>-.2766</b>	<b>.1825</b>	<b>-.2116</b>	<b>.1133</b>	<b>-.1204</b>

Variables	SFOC	SFOI	SEOC	SEOI	SCOC	SCOI
LFOC	<b>.1417</b>	<b>-.1155</b>	<b>-.0452</b>	<b>.0052</b>	<b>-.2688</b>	<b>.2881</b>
LFOI	<b>-.1232</b>	<b>.0971</b>	<b>.0621</b>	<b>-.0235</b>	<b>.2574</b>	<b>-.2766</b>
LEOC	<b>.0848</b>	<b>-.0647</b>	<b>-.1176</b>	<b>.0997</b>	<b>-.2131</b>	<b>.1825</b>
LEOI	<b>-.1477</b>	<b>.1329</b>	<b>.1334</b>	<b>-.1167</b>	<b>.2442</b>	<b>-.2116</b>
LCOC	<b>.2706</b>	<b>-.2558</b>	<b>-.0660</b>	<b>.0604</b>	<b>-.0764</b>	<b>.1133</b>
LCOI	<b>-.2707</b>	<b>.2554</b>	<b>.0725</b>	<b>-.0668</b>	<b>.0841</b>	<b>-.1204</b>
SFOC	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.9777**</b>	<b>.0852</b>	<b>-.0741</b>	<b>-.0452</b>	<b>.0983</b>
SFOI	<b>-.9777**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.1160</b>	<b>.1030</b>	<b>.0513</b>	<b>-.1001</b>
SEOC	<b>.0852</b>	<b>-.1160</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.9961**</b>	<b>.2286</b>	<b>-.1827</b>
SEOI	<b>-.0741</b>	<b>.1030</b>	<b>-.9961**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.2273</b>	<b>.1779</b>
SCOC	<b>-.0452</b>	<b>.0513</b>	<b>.2286</b>	<b>-.2273</b>	<b>1.0000</b>	<b>-.9301**</b>
SCOI	<b>.0983</b>	<b>-.1001</b>	<b>-.1827</b>	<b>.1779</b>	<b>-.9301**</b>	<b>1.0000</b>

**p. > .01; r > .60**

## APPENDIX B

### *Factor analysis — varimax rotation*



	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4	FACTOR 5
LFOC	.00082	-.97964	.07244	-.00279	-.14472
LFOI	.00131	.98175	-.05569	.02116	.13111
LEOC	.92491	-.15984	-.06963	-.04254	-.09419
LEOI	-.92576	.15526	.00186	.05996	.12202
LCOC	.90531	.16509	.20726	-.02385	-.01841
LCOI	-.90542	-.16184	-.20706	.02959	.02500
SFOC	.12058	-.07781	.97951	.03830	-.02452
SFOI	-.10301	.05032	-.98033	-.06867	.03795
SEOC	-.06297	.03222	.06060	.98998	.09876
SEOI	.04854	.00855	-.04479	-.99182	-.10223
SCOC	-.09570	.13438	-.00234	.12639	.96140
SCOI	.09399	-.14130	.06115	-.07993	-.96231

## APPENDIX C

### *Comparison of means by skill*

Variables	Listening (Perception)		Speaking (Production)	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
FOC	37.26	8.38	77.70	7.76
FOI	62.50	8.45	20.70	8.70
EOC	20.64	18.97	74.04	15.58
EOI	78.13	18.07	25.10	15.89
COC	43.30	14.03	77.97	12.56
COI	56.60	14.06	21.17	13.14



# The production of genitive forms in *his* and *her*-contexts<sup>1</sup>

Marília dos Santos Lima

This paper focuses on the use of the genitive forms *your*, *his* and *her* in third person singular contexts in the speech of Brazilian students. The informants (n=64) were learners of English at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, who aimed to become English teachers or translators. They were classified into three proficiency groups on the basis of the Michigan and Cambridge Tests. The materials included three brief stories produced by the informants. As expected, they showed *person* and *gender* difficulties by using *your* and *her* in *his*-contexts and *your* and *his* in *her*-contexts. Crosslinguistic interference is suggested as one factor causing learner difficulty.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the patterns of production of the genitive forms *his*, and *her* by three groups of Brazilian learners of English at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Sixty-four informants were divided into three proficiency groups — the low proficiency (A) and the intermediate (B) groups had 21 learners each, and the high proficiency (C) had 22 learners. I concentrated the investigation on finding out whether the informants followed the rules of English grammar by referring to the correct *third* person singular or plural *referent* when employing which *his* = Jane). A13

The possessive pronoun *his* or *her*. In this sample, (1) below is grammatical, whereas (2) is ungrammatical.

(1) She went back to her boyfriend (in which *her* = Jane). B6

(2) She go back to his boyfriend (in s were produced by the learners while telling three stories in English (Reunion, The Dinner Party, and The Waitresses). The stories were tape recorded by the researcher. The informants did not know the purpose of the research or which items were being focused upon.

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<sup>1</sup> The data included in this paper were taken from Lima (1993).

## ORIGIN OF THE PROBLEM

The observation of classroom behavior has demonstrated that Brazilian learners show some degree of difficulty in the use of the genitive forms *his* and *her*. This difficulty is manifested in the substitution of *your* in both environments and also the incorrect interchange between *his* and *her*. In other words, Brazilian learners show *person*-difficulties by using a second person genitive form (*your*) where they should use a third person form, *his* or *her*. They also show *gender*-difficulties by using *his* before masculine words in L1 and *her* before feminine words in L1, irrespective of whether the referent is *he* or *she*. Therefore, it is my assumption that the Portuguese genitive system exerts some influence in this respect.

## THE PORTUGUESE GENITIVE SYSTEM

We will briefly discuss two forms of third person singular and plural genitive pronouns relevant to our investigation: (i) *seu(s)*, *sua(s)* and (ii) *dele(s)*, *dela(s)*. For the purposes of this discussion we will follow Quirk et al.'s (1985) terminology for the classification of English genitive pronouns, which can be applied to the Portuguese system as well. They distinguish between *determinative* and *independent* functions. *Determinative* function is the position in which the pronoun modifies a head noun by preceding it, as in *sua casa*/'his house' or, in Portuguese, by alternatively following it, as in *a casa dele*/'his house'. On the other hand, they say that a genitive form is in *independent* function when it occupies the position of a head noun as in *Aquela casa é sua* or *Aquela casa é dele*/'That house is his'. Both types of Portuguese possessive pronouns can fill either function, i.e. determinative or independent. Since there are no morphological clues to the distinction between determinative or independent functions, they are defined only by their noun phrase environment. My concern here is to find out what forms are employed by the informants in the *determinative* function in English. Pronouns in this function are introduced to the learners before those used in independent function. Difficulties in the production of genitive forms in English were observed in both functions. Some future investigation contrasting the use of genitive forms in both functions will have these results as a starting point and will benefit from the findings briefly summarized here and which are exhaustively discussed in Lima (1993).

The possessive forms *seu*, *sua*, *seus*, and *suas* refer to both third person singular and plural nominative pronouns, i.e., *ele*, *ela*, *eles*, and *elas*. Besides, the same forms are used as the genitive case of second person singular and plural *você* and *vocês*. From the point of view of the possessor, these forms can lead to ambiguity of gender (*ele(s)* or *ela(s)*) and person (*você(s)* versus *ele(s)* or *ela(s)*). When that is the case, context will be used to disambiguate their reference. Alternatively, the pronouns *dele(s)*, *dela(s)*, which are exclusively used in

reference to *third* person singular and plural, can be used to eliminate ambiguity between second and third person referents, and third person singular and plural referents (Cunha & Cintra 1980).

Like the English forms, *seu, sua, seus,* and *suas* designate the *possessor*, but unlike English forms, they also indicate the *gender* and *number* of the possessed entity. In addition, it is important to note that nouns in Portuguese are morphologically marked for masculine or feminine gender.

In sum, it is my assumption that the use of the same genitive pronouns in reference to various *persons* in L1 forms the basis of a possible *overgeneralization strategy* followed by our learners in instances when they should employ *his*, or *her*. As already explained, in L1 the genitive forms referring to *third* person singular and plural nominative cases are the same as those used to refer to *second* person singular and plural nominative cases. This could lead our subjects to follow the Portuguese rules and use the English genitive form which refers to the second person singular referents, *your*, as the norm and overgeneralize this form to *his*, and *her*-contexts.

Apart from *person* difficulties, classroom observation also shows that Brazilian learners of English display *gender* difficulties as well by mistakenly interchanging *his* and *her*. Crosslinguistic interference seems to be a strong factor affecting their performance, since they tend to follow the Portuguese rule, i.e. possessive pronouns should agree with the gender (and number) of the possessed element.

## OTHER ISSUES

First, since *person* and *gender* rather than *number* were predicted as the variables affecting the learners' performance, all head nouns modified by the genitive pronouns selected were *singular* in our input texts.

Second, since it is my assumption that the *gender* of the possessed entity in L1 affects the learners' production whenever there is a choice between masculine (*his*) and feminine (*her*) pronouns, I have first analyzed those occurrences of genitive forms referring to (i) *third person singular masculine nominative entities (he)* which were followed by *feminine* head nouns in L1, e.g. *sua namorada*/'his girlfriend', and (ii) all forms referring to *third person singular feminine nominative entities (she)* which were followed by masculine head nouns, e. g. *seu namorado*/'her boyfriend'.

Third, all tokens were classified as *grammatical* or *ungrammatical*. However, I expected some learners to produce grammatical *and* ungrammatical items in the same environment. One very important assumption here is that learners who employ grammatical *and* ungrammatical forms are a step beyond those who produce ungrammatical forms *alone*.

*Ungrammatical items* were those which did not follow the English rules of use as in example (2) above. Ungrammatical items were further analyzed in a separate section in order to investigate which type of errors were made by the informants in each group. Two types of ungrammatical item were considered in our findings: straightforward errors involving no self-correction (e.g. *his boyfriend* meaning *her boyfriend*), and self-repaired items, that is, those noun phrases with more than one determiner (genitive pronoun) before the noun (e.g. *his + uh + her boyfriend*).

*Self-repair and ungrammatical items.* Although the concept of *self repair* implies the notion of awareness of the correct rule, we also see it as an indicator of a problematic area. The reason for classifying self-repaired items as ungrammatical lies in the assumption that foreign language learner productions reflect the existence of conflicting internal rules coinciding with different stages in the acquisition of the target language. Therefore, self-repaired items are seen as reflecting the learner's effort to sort out rules of language use as an attempt to approximate the target language system. I adopted Levelt's (1983) description of *self-repair* to classify the data.

## HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

*Hypothesis 1* — proforms *his* and *her*: Less proficient learners will tend to use *your* in both environments.

*Hypothesis 2* — proform *her*: Less proficient learners will ignore the gender of the possessor in English and will use *his* in *her*-environments before words which are masculine in Portuguese.

*Hypothesis 3* — proform *his*: Less proficient learners will ignore the gender of the possessor in English and will use *her* in *his*-environments before words which are *feminine* in Portuguese.

## RESULTS

### *His followed by feminine head nouns*

The frequency and percentages of *his*-tokens produced in response to the input clauses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of grammatical and ungrammatical items in *his*-environment with feminine head nouns across groups.

	GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C	
	tokens	Ss	tokens	Ss	tokens	Ss
grammatical	19 30%	13	44 59%	20	64 81%	22
ungrammatical	45 70%	21	30 41%	16	15 19%	10
total	64 100%		74 100%		79 100%	

The majority of informants in Groups B and all learners in Group C produced grammatical items, whereas 61% of Group A's informants did so, irrespective of having produced ungrammatical items as well.

A chi-square test was performed to look for significant group differences as to the production of grammatical versus ungrammatical forms. The test showed significant differences ( $X^2=38.412$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=.0001$ ) between groups. The table shows that percentages for total items in each category are revealing. Percentages of grammatical items increase gradually from the low to the intermediate and high proficiency groups. Overall, the difference between groups was significant. The differences between the frequencies of grammatical items between Groups A and B, and between Groups B and C were both found to be significant at the .05 level ( $Z=2.07$  and  $Z=2.51$ , respectively), confirming three proficiency groups.

No informants in Group A produced grammatical items alone. *Your* and *her* prevailed as ungrammatical items in Group A's productions, a factor that indicates *person* and *gender* difficulties in the use of the pronoun *his*. Groups B and C showed *gender* difficulties. *Your* was not used by the learners.

In sum, the findings above suggest that Hypotheses 1 and 3 were confirmed as far as the use of the pronoun *his* is concerned. In other words, less proficient learners did show difficulty in using the pronoun.

#### *His followed by masculine head nouns*

The production of genitive forms referring to third person singular *masculine* nominative entities, that is, followed by masculine head nouns in L1, as in *seu carro*'his car', did not suggest any difficulties by the learners as far as gender is concerned. *Her* was not significantly used in this environment. Only 9% of 58 tokens by Group A and 3% of 64 tokens by Group B included *her*. No such errors were found in Group C's productions, which amounted to 66 tokens. These findings suggest some effect of *transfer*, since *her* was used in *his*-contexts by the learners only before words which are feminine in L1.

The use of *your* followed a pattern similar to the one described above.

## HER-PRODUCTIONS

### *Her followed by masculine head nouns*

Following Hypotheses 1 and 2, the use of *her* preceding masculine words in Portuguese was tested. The pronoun was tested in the story *The Waitresses*, where it was followed by the masculine head noun *namorado*'boyfriend'. The frequencies and percentages of items are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of grammatical and ungrammatical items in *her*-environment with masculine head nouns across groups.

	GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C	
	tokens	Ss	tokens	Ss	tokens	Ss
grammatical	12	11	38	19	52	21
	25%		70%		79%	
ungrammatical	36	19	16	10	14	9
	75%		30%		21%	
total	48		54		66	
	100%		100%		100%	

Significant group differences ( $X^2=36.818$ ,  $df= 2$ ,  $p=.0001$ ) were found. Percentages in the table suggest *two* performance groups: Group A versus Groups B and C. Using a test of proportion, as in the analysis of *his*-results, it was found that the difference between Groups A and B was significant at the .01 level ( $Z=2.77$ ), whereas the difference between Groups B and C ( $Z=0.86$ ) did not reach significance. These results suggest the existence of two groups.

The ungrammatical items mostly used by Group A were *his* and *your*, showing that they have *gender* and *person* difficulties, respectively. On the other hand, *his*-tokens prevailed in Group B's production. In addition, compared to Group A, Group B's frequency of *your*-tokens was too low to suggest person difficulties. The findings indicate that Groups B and C had *gender*-difficulties.

From the findings above one may conclude that Hypotheses 1 and 2 were also confirmed with respect to *her*-productions.

### *Her followed by feminine head nouns*

The production of *her* referring to third person singular feminine entities, that is, followed by feminine head nouns in L1, as in *sua casa*'her house' did not suggest any difficulties in learner production as far as gender is concerned. Only 7% of 54 tokens by Group A, 5% of 59 tokens by Group B, and 1% of 58 tokens in Group C's productions were *his*. Again, these findings suggest some effect of *transfer*, since *his* was used in *her*-contexts by the informants only before words which are masculine in L1.

As to the use of *your*, the pattern was similar to the one described above.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

With respect to the pronoun *his*, the comparison between grammatical and ungrammatical items indicated significant group differences between Groups A and B and Groups B and C. Group differences in the productions of the pronoun *her* were not as clear-cut. In this case, significant differences were found between Groups A and B but not between Groups B and C.

Finally, Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were confirmed, but need clarification. The informants did show difficulty in the use of *his* — and *her*-tokens. A high incidence of *your* and *her*, and *your* and *his* was employed by Group A in *his* and *her*-environments, respectively. These findings suggest *person* and *gender* difficulties. On the other hand, Groups B and C's difficulties were restricted to the *gender* distinction, since the use of *your* was not significant in Group B's productions or did not occur at all in Group C's.

Based on these findings, I can now propose a tentative picture of the general stages Brazilian informants go through in learning these genitive forms. The reader should bear in mind, however, that these stages are proposed for the type of learners I have investigated. One should also assume that there can be some previous stage(s) to the ones I will mention for those learners who are being introduced to the English language. All informants in this investigation already had some experience with the target language when the data were collected. The stages I propose for the specific population I tested are as follows.

*Determinative pronoun his:* (i) *your* and *her* are used together with grammatical *his*, but the ungrammatical forms prevail; (ii) *her* occurs together with grammatical *his*, but the latter prevails; and (iii) the grammatical form is used in all environments.

*Determinative pronoun her:* (i) *his* and *your* are used together with grammatical *her* and the ungrammatical forms prevail; (ii) *his* still occurs, but *her* appears in most environments; and (iii) the grammatical form *her* is used in all environments.

These results suggest that crosslinguistic interference may be one strong factor causing *gender* difficulties for our learners, as manifested in the misuse of *his* and *her*. That is, the learners follow the Portuguese rules of concord: the genitive pronoun should agree not only with the possessor but also with the gender of the possessed. Therefore, the tendency was to use *his* before masculine nouns and *her* before feminine nouns. Similar observations were made by Felix & Simmet (1982) about the patterns observed in the productions by L1 German students learning English in a classroom situation. Although no precise explanation was provided by the authors about what was causing the pattern to



occur, there may be some explanation in the German genitive system, associated with gender and person, causing the learners to produce those errors.

Still speculatively, I would like to propose three factors which could contribute to the informants' *person* difficulties. That is, we will speculate on the reasons why they tend to use *your* especially in *his* and *her* environments. The factors are: speech roles, formal pedagogic presentation of genitive forms in Portuguese and English, and pronominal position in English and its association with Portuguese pronominal pronouns.

Firstly, I will consider this overgeneralization phenomenon from the point of view of *speech roles*. Speaker, addressee and non-participant encode different roles and are the core pronominal concepts (Chiat, 1986: 340). Our L2 learners are first introduced to *I* and *you* which are *basic* forms in the communication chain. Besides, in Portuguese, *seu/sua* referring to second person is less complex than *seu/sua* referring to third person, which brings about ambiguity in L1 (Oliveira & Silva 1984). That would make *your* easier than *his* or *her*.

Secondly, I assumed that the use of the same genitive form *seu/sua* in reference to various persons (second and third singular and plural forms) in Portuguese could form the basis of an overgeneralization strategy followed by Brazilian learners when learning how to use the genitive forms under investigation. That can lead them to use *your* as the norm and generalize its use to *his* and *her*. However, a potential difficulty with this assumption lies in the fact that the use of *seu/sua* referring to *ele*/'he' or *ela*/'she' seems to be less prominent in Brazilian (informal) speech. Additionally, this assumption would lead us to presuppose that Brazilian subjects learning English naturally (that is, in an English speaking community where English is used for everyday activities) would not go through the same stage. No reference to that was found in the literature. Postnominal pronouns *dele* and *dela* are more frequent in speech. However, Brazilian learners are forced to learn and memorize the pronouns *seu*, *sua*, *seus*, and *suas* as referring to various persons. One could then speculate on the possible effect of the formality of classroom situation as contributing to this phenomenon indirectly.

Thirdly, the order of content presentation in the classroom could also contribute to that as well. Learners are introduced to the English genitive system by observing possessive pronouns in determinative function, that is, in *pronominal position*. They would then be led to associate that with the position of the L1 forms *seu/sua* (as opposed to *dele/dela* which occur in postnominal position) and overgeneralize the rule by transferring it to English.

We do not know which of these factors exerts a stronger influence on the learners' behavior. It is also possible that a combination of the three factors is at work here. The answer to these questions could be the purpose of further investigation if all these variables are properly controlled.

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# Practicing conversational features

Célia Lacerda Jaguaribe

## INTRODUCTION

Conversation, as described by Abercrombie (1968:3), is genuine spoken language, different in various respects from spoken prose, which, he argues, is "essentially language organized for visual representation", i.e. language to be read from a prepared text. Conversation, by contrast, concerns

all those linguistic occasions when there is the opportunity for give and take: when it is understood that, at least in theory, there is more than one active participant, however long one of the participants may go on for. (Abercrombie, 1968:2).

This account of conversation is very much in line with more recent studies in conversational analysis, which see conversation as "a joint production composed in real time". (Stubbs, 1983:22). In other words, conversation is essentially an interactive event, where there exist both cooperation and negotiation. In a conversation speakers constantly take account of their hearers' knowledge, who, in turn, are competent to analyze the implication of utterances, being able to predict and interpret what comes next. They demonstrate that they are paying attention, ratify topics and indicate comprehension with appropriate comments, providing the current speaker with frequent feedback. This interactive process takes place in a fraction of a second, an indication that conversation is organized locally, rather than "a priori".

## CONVERSATIONAL FEATURES

Some features are typical of conversation, providing it with an organization of its own. Its coherence, for instance, is dependent on different types

of mechanisms, including the repetition of words and phrases, pauses and the great occurrence of structural markers, often realized by apparently meaningless words and phrases, such as, "you know", "I mean", "well", "kind of", "sort of", as well as, vocalizations (e.g. mm, ah-ha). These markers have functions beyond that of conveying information, namely, making the hearer feel at ease, and "en rapport" with the speaker, enabling speakers to keep talking while they think of what to say next, or prefacing answers and requests. They operate, therefore, within what Di Pietro (1981:28) refers to as the transactional and interactional dimensions of discourse. The former concerns the exchange of strategies between speaker and hearer, whereas the latter, the social, maturational and emotive rôles assumed by speaker and hearer.

Given these discourse characteristics, structural markers or, more precisely, conversational markers, are essentially multifunctional. They may serve as evaluations (e.g. I see), as back-channel responses, i.e. providing hearers with feedback (e.g. mm, ah-ha, right, now), or transactional elements (e.g. right, okay). Richards & Schmidt describe them as "feedback and comprehension-indicating devices for informing on reception". (1983:147). Though pointing out the universality of these features as basic requirements in a communication system, they contend that differences in form and distribution are to be expected across languages. Hence, the need for comparative studies to unveil the similarities and differences between two languages with respect to conversational devices.

## CONVERSATIONAL MARKERS IN ENGLISH AND PORTUGUESE

Comparative analysis at discourse level is particularly relevant to the area of language teaching, having direct implication in the design of teaching materials. McCarthy (1991:121) has observed, for instance, that whereas native speakers of English preface invitations and disagreements with forms that soften the force of their utterance, non-native speakers are often too formal or too blunt. What happens, in fact, is that such forms are often not directly translatable from language to language. Vocalizations, for example, as well as short words and phrases (e.g. yeah, no, right, sure) do vary from culture to culture. The problem, then, lies in transferring features of conversational competence in the mother tongue into the foreign language with more serious consequences than, say, errors in syntax or vocabulary, since as pointed out by Richards and Schmidt (1983:150), conversational competence has largely to do with conveying an image of ourselves to others. It follows, then, that cross-cultural differences in conversation need be especially considered in the teaching of conversation.

In a recent study of English and Portuguese conversational structure, Silva (1993) has shown that, though English and Portuguese conversational mechanisms are not so dissimilar, there are differences in the use of

conversational markers, both with respect to equivalence of forms and overlapping of functions for certain markers.

One of the major differences noted by Silva, concerns the form "you know", said in a rising tone, a very common marker in English conversational exchanges. It occurs almost everywhere, in different positions in the utterance and serving various functions. It is used, for example, as a floor-holding device, sharing with repetitions and hesitation noises, the same function of allowing the speaker time to think, as s(he) maintains the turn to speak. It may, however, be used in mid-utterance with a repair function, i.e. introducing an attempt by the hearer to explain his meaning further. In this use it is close to "I mean", one of the most common repair devices in English. An additional use of "you know" is in utterance-final position with a function similar to that of tag questions with a falling tone, namely, of seeking agreement on the hearer's part. It is, therefore, a potential "locus" for turn-change, as hearers are given an opportunity to interrupt.

By contrast, in Portuguese, as Silva's analysis shows, "sabe?", the nearest equivalent of "you know", has a rather restricted distribution, as compared to "né?", possibly the most frequent marker in Portuguese conversational structure. In utterance mid-position "né?" shares with "então", "ai", "entende?", "certo?" the same function of holding the floor, whereas in final position, again overlapping in its distribution with "entende?" "certo?", it functions as a marker signaling potential turn-change.

Considering native language transfer habits, Brazilian learners of English will certainly need greater exposure to and practice of those conversational features which do not directly match the Portuguese system. It is as equally important for them, for example, not to overgeneralize the use of "you know", as it is not to punctuate their English conversational discourse with forms directly translated from the mother tongue. The form "do you understand?" would certainly not be appropriate as a substitute of "you know", nor could the use of "isn't it?" be extended to match all instances of English tag question formation and use.

## LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AND THE PRACTICE OF CONVERSATIONAL MARKERS

Oxford (1990:201) has pointed out the importance of learning strategies in the development of communicative competence. She maintains that "language learning requires active self-direction on the part of learners (...) if they desire and expect to reach an acceptable level of communicative competence". It is, therefore, necessary for learners to develop strategies that aid them in the learning task, as they gain knowledge of the formal features of the language. As Holec (1981:23) puts it: "Teaching must also help the learner acquire autonomy for himself, i.e. to learn to learn".

Though learning strategies are not new in the sense that learning is part of our human condition, being conscious of what steps to take to enhance one's own learning can enormously facilitate the process of learning a foreign language. A way to do this, as discussed by Ellis and Sinclair (1989:9) is to integrate learning strategies into language learning activities, even at the beginning stages of learning, but more effectively so, at intermediate levels, when learners are more capable of completing activities in the target language. This integration can be effected through activities that lead learners to interact realistically using meaningful, contextualized language. A particular teaching context for practicing learning strategies, while at the same time, focusing on the language features to be learnt is that of the conversational class, where strategies of conversational interaction and the use of authentic language naturally arise. Focusing specifically, on the use conversational markers, I discuss below three kinds of activities which combine learning strategies and the practice of language skills.

### *Language-awareness activities*

These are activities whose primary objective is to raise learners' awareness of the language to be taught. Their rationale is the need for learners to attend to the features being taught and becoming conscious of their use and function. The rôle of attention in language learning has been stressed by Schmidt (1990:1.2.7), as he puts it: "... attention (to both form and meaning) is the psychological mechanism through which linguistic information contained in input becomes intake for language learning."

The observation tasks proposed by Nolasco & Arthur (1987) are particularly directed towards this goal and focus on particular features of conversation, including conversational markers. These tasks have learners listen to authentic recorded material of people talking spontaneously, and then do some sort of activity, such as, for example, choosing from a list of conversational markers those expressions that the speaker uses in order to gain time to think of what to say next, so that the hearer knows the speaker is continuing to speak. The students, later, discuss their choice both with their peers and the teacher as to which expressions were mostly used, or not used at all and why.

Tasks such as these demand some kind of judgment or thinking, at the time that they direct the learner's attention to specific features of the language. They combine, therefore, the cognitive strategy of practicing, i.e. requiring mental processing of the language and the metacognitive strategy of centering one's learning, i.e. giving it a focus and directing one's attention towards it. Both kinds of strategies are essential for successful language learning, as pointed out by Oxford (1990:136).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cognitive strategies together with memory and compensation strategies are classified by OXFORD (1990:151) as direct strategies, which she describes as learning strategies for dealing with the target language, requiring some mental processing. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, are strategies for general

### *Feedback activities*

The main purpose of these activities is to provide learners with feedback on accuracy. Experiments, as discussed by Schmidt (1990:1.2.16), have shown that learners benefit from feedback on their hypothesis testing. The rationale, then, is the need for students to try to think and decide for themselves whether something is appropriate or not. In other words, students should be encouraged to formulate their own judgments.

Again, conversation serves this purpose well. As Weissberg (1988:6) puts it: "Conversation permits learners to test hypothesis they have formulated about how the language is put together and to receive feedback on the success of their attempts."

Some of the activities presented by Nolasco & Arthur (1987) consist of learners listening to short extracts of own recordings and being geared towards an analysis of their performance, with respect to some particular feature, as for example, hesitation devices. In this activity students work in pairs making a recording of one another telling a short story, which they listen to afterwards in order to discuss its naturalness, whether, for example, items such as "erm", "mmm", "er", phrases like "you know", "you see" were used, and how their recordings could be improved so as to sound more natural.

In these activities three different kinds of learning strategies are practiced. First, students are led to reasoning deductively, a cognitive strategy centered on a specific language task, namely, the use of hesitation devices. Secondly, in judging their performance, they feel encouraged by their successful attempts, an affective strategy that enhances motivation and helps reduce anxiety. And thirdly, in identifying errors in producing the language, they practice the metacognitive strategy of learning from one's errors.

### *Spontaneous activities*

In these activities language is used for actual communication. Their rationale, then, is based on the view that they approach natural language use. They take learners' attention away from language learning and direct it toward the communication of meaning. Their purpose is to practice oral language skills in an informal setting, and as such the small conversation group seems to lend itself better. Weissberg points out that

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management of learning. This group includes metacognitive, as well as affective and social strategies and concerns learner's reflection on the learning process.

the informal conversational atmosphere of the small group also allows students to develop discourse and sociolinguistic competencies in English, such as turn-taking and polite disagreements. Weissberg (1980:6)

It is, therefore, the perfect environment for practicing strategies of conversational interaction. Though admitting that "the design of classroom activities to replicate casual conversational settings is notoriously difficult", McCarthy (1991:135) points out that it is possible for the teacher to generate activities where the learners are required to carry out a certain task, for example, to decide on how to arrange a room for some school celebration and then to leave a note for the school caretaker to act upon.

In this kind of activity students have to make decisions in order to achieve a specified goal. This naturally leads to discussion and the use of transactional markers such as "right", "now", "okay", "so". Such task-based learning certainly approaches natural language better than the rôle-playing activities, where students are so intent on formulating their contribution that they do not pay attention to the contribution of others, simply concentrating on the propositional content of their utterances, with an overall impression of artificiality. Jakobovits and Gordon's (1980:14) contention that the cues of real talk only spring spontaneously from involvement in real relationships and that individuals can only learn to talk by being treated as talkers, explain the unnaturalness of many rôle-playing activities.

Task-based activities are also natural in the sense that they integrate language skills (in this case speaking and writing) in much the same way as these skills are normally "integrated" in real life. In other words, one skill follows naturally from another, not because of a pre-established sequence, but rather out of a "real" purpose, i.e. because it is appropriate or necessary to do so.

When engaged in activities which call for responsibility in achieving a specified goal, students feel motivated and willing to cooperate with their peers. At the same time that they practice the language, they develop social strategies of cooperation, of great benefit to the learning process. They not only provide the students with the opportunity for more language practice with greater use of different language functions, but also make them less dependent on the teacher, and consequently more confident of their language abilities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The three kinds of activities just described all originate in conversation being used as a teaching aid. Though these activities are certainly more appropriate for students at intermediate level or above, it should be possible to adapt them to earlier stages by using shorter exchanges of genuine conversation for listening practice. This will be a good way to familiarize students with the natural flow of oral language from the very beginning. The teacher should then



capitalize on any occasion in the classroom when, say, one wants to request information, apologize, describe something or express pleasure, to make these exchanges approach as much natural language use as possible. Genuine conversation can thus begin in the earliest stages of language learning and be a source of activities for developing both language skills and strategies of learning, essential for fostering learner autonomy and consequently a communicative competence in the foreign language.

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# Don't order, please! Request, will you?

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In analyzing some data collected from a group of English-speaking people living in Brasília, the high frequency of the formulaic expression *por favor* (*please*) was observed when requests were made in Portuguese. This observation triggered a contrastive study of the expression in English and Portuguese requests and commands. This paper aims at presenting the partial results of this study.

In the context of the classroom situation in our dealings with English speaking people in Brasilia we often come across remarks about Brazilian politeness. A frequent complaint is that Brazilians do not say *please* when speaking English or, even more appalling, they do not use the expression *por favor* when speaking in their own language, Portuguese<sup>3</sup>.

Considering that Quirk and Greenbaum (1978) include *please* — along with *kindly*, *cordially*, *graciously* and *humbly* — in a group of formulaic adjuncts used as markers of courtesy, at first sight its absence in requests and orders made by Brazilians could be understood as a lack of courtesy.

To better understand what happens with Brazilian requests/commands, both in Brazilian Portuguese and in English, let us take into consideration some basic premises.

First, it should be clear that formulaic adjuncts, as those mentioned above, are not the only markers of courtesy available for sentences having the function of requests/commands in Brazilian Portuguese. As a matter of fact rising tone and diminutive suffixes are important markers of courtesy among Brazilians and either one is used in a higher frequency than the expression *por favor*.

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<sup>3</sup> We are not taking for granted that Brazil is a monolingual country but, in this study, we are considering the native language of the large majority of Brazilians, Portuguese. All Brazilian informants had Portuguese as their first language.

Second, learning a new language may not always make the speakers aware of the subtleties of that language. As Tannen (1984) suggests "one who learns the explicit vocabulary and the grammar of a new language is likely to stuff it into the implicit paralinguistic and discourse casings of the native communicative system". This leads us to believe that Brazilians may omit the formulaic adjunct *please* in requests and commands made in English because they are inserting vocabulary and grammar of the L2 (English) in the casings of their discourse in L1 (Brazilian Portuguese). On the other hand, English-speaking people are bound to insert vocabulary and grammar of their first language (L1) to the second one (L2), Brazilian Portuguese, as in the case of our study.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to check the above hypothesis we applied a questionnaire with eight proposed situations of requests/commands to five English speaking informants:<sup>4</sup>

1. G. N., female, 60, American, living in Brazil for 30 years.
2. O. W. female, 69, American, living in Brazil for 25 years.
3. D. S., female, 35, Canadian, living in Brazil for 7 years.
4. B. A., female, 60, American, living in Brazil for 30 years.
5. V. N., female, 59, American, living in Brazil for 29 years.

The following questionnaire was given in English to be answered in Portuguese<sup>5</sup> and the answers were recorded, transcribed and then analyzed:

1. You are feeling cold. Ask your friend to close the window.
2. Ask your secretary to type an urgent letter.
3. You are lost and you need to reach UnB. Ask somebody (in the street) how to get there
4. You are at the table with your family. Ask your son (husband, mother, etc.) to pass the salt.
5. You are the teacher. Ask the student (s) to read aloud a given piece of writing.
6. You are in a taxi. Ask the taxi driver to take you to the airport.
7. You are in a shop. Ask the clerk to show you an item.
8. You call your friend's house and somebody you don't know answers the phone. Ask this person to call your friend.

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<sup>4</sup> All these informants have university degrees (BS's or MA's).

<sup>5</sup> In a further study we shall discuss the data collected from Portuguese speaking people to whom the same situations were proposed in Brazilian Portuguese to be answered in English.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Our analysis took into consideration the context of the utterances given as answers. We know that in order to fully understand the meaning of a sentence we must also understand the context in which it was uttered.

According to MacHarris et al. (1988), four aspects of this context are to be taken into consideration: (a) the *physical* context; that is, where the conversation takes place, what objects are present, and what actions are taking place; (b) the *epistemic* context, background knowledge shared by speakers and hearers; (c) the *linguistic* context, utterances previous to the utterance under consideration; and (d) the *social* context, the social relationship and setting of the speakers and hearers.

Below, the answers to situation (1) are used to show the context analysis we proceeded. However, all utterances given as replies to the other seven proposed situations<sup>6</sup> are included at the end of this paper (Appendix 1).

ANSWERS TO SITUATION (1)	
G. N.	Maria, você pode fechar a janela por favor?
O. W.	Você quer fechar a janela porque eu estou sentindo um pouco de frio?
D. S.	Estou com frio. Pode fechar a janela, por favor?
B. A.	Estou sentindo frio. Faça o favor, feche a janela pra mim?
V. M.	Feche a janela, por favor?

Situation (1) did not have a defined physical context when first proposed. When interviewed G. N. said that she considered the proposed situation to happen at her home, not at her friend's. The other informants did not state the physical context so it could have well happened at the speaker's home or her friend's or even somewhere else where they both would be.

The social context tells us that the conversation between speaker and hearer in a situation (1) is symmetric. Neither in the questionnaire or in the informants' utterances were there any mention of the age or social rank of the participants.

Concerning the epistemic knowledge, it is socially acceptable that friends express their feelings towards one another in Brazilian culture. Furthermore, it is expected that when one gets cold s/he seeks warmer places, or ways to warm the environment.

The linguistic context revealed to us the presence of the formulaic expression in all of the five informants' requests:

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<sup>6</sup> No grammatical corrections were made in the sentences uttered by the informants. The written text is the exact transcription of the oral one.

CONTEXT IN SITUATION (1)					
	G. N.	O.W.	D.S.	B.A.	V.M
PHYSICAL CONTEXT	at home				
	(or) at your friend's home				
	(or) somewhere else				
SOCIAL CONTEXT	symmetric conversation between two friends. (age and social rank were not under consideration).				
EPISTEMIC CONTEXT	* Friends should be able to express their feelings towards one another. * People look for warmth when they are cold.				
LINGUISTIC CONTEXT	#Formulaic expression	#Formulaic expression	#Formulaic expression	#Formulaic expression	#Formulaic expression
	#indirect request	#indirect request	#indirect request		
		#reason	#reason	#reason	
				#imperative	#imperative
	# verb <i>poder</i>		#verb <i>poder</i>		
	#Christian name				

The linguistic context also revealed to us that indirect requests were used in three interrogative sentences. In two of these sentences the verb *poder* (*can*) is used as a clear shift of authority towards the speaker. In Portuguese the use of the verb *poder* in *yes/no* questions involves the listener's authority<sup>7</sup>:

Speaker 1: Eu <i>posso</i> abrir a janela? May I open the window?	
Listener/Speaker 2: NEGATIVE ANSWER: Não, não abra... No, don't open it...	+ JUSTIFICATION : ... porque lá fora está muito frio. because it is very cold outside.
AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER: Claro que pode!... Of course you may!	+ POSSIBLE COMPLEMENT: ... Quer que eu abra para você? ... Should I open it for you?

<sup>7</sup> The speaker's authority is involved in statements that use the verb *poder*.  
*Você pode abrir a janela. Nós estamos agasalhadas (permission).*  
*You may open the window. We are wearing warm clothes.*

In order to contrast the information obtained originally from the English-speaking subjects, eight Brazilian females aging 40 to 60<sup>8</sup> were asked the same questions. Their answers are listed below:

<i>P. C.</i>	Fecha esta janela pra mim?
<i>H. L.</i>	Ai, por favor, fecha a janela. Eu estou louca de frio.
<i>M. C.</i>	Dá uma fechadinha nesta janela?
<i>H. B.</i>	Fecha a janelinha para mim?
<i>I. C.</i>	Você pode fechar a janelinha pra mim?
<i>L. F.</i>	Estou com frio. Você fecha a janela, querida?
<i>C. P.</i>	Eu posso fechar a janela?
<i>T. M.</i>	Você podia fechar a janela pra mim?

We can observe that just one of the eight informants used the formulaic expression *por favor*. Six of them used indirect requests, while the seventh, in fact, asked permission to close the door herself. One used an affectionate term, *querida* (honey, darling).

Two of them used diminutive suffixes which are used to soften commands as they may indicate endearment and/or familiarity. The verb *poder* (may/can) is used three times allowing the listener to decide about what to do.

Interestingly enough, all Brazilian informants used a rising tone which was absent in the requests performed by the English speaking people. As a politeness strategy, the rising tone in Portuguese enables us to make a gentle command, and a persuasive request.<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

In this preliminary study our analysis of recordings resulted in three interesting features concerning the use of *por favor*:

- In Brazilian Portuguese *por favor* is often excluded in requests made to our 'nearest and dearest' people. Situation (1) takes for granted that the hearer is near and dear.

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<sup>8</sup> The Brazilian informants are from Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Campo Bom (MS). As the English speaking informants, they all have university degrees.

<sup>9</sup> On manipulative politeness see Brown & Levinson (1978) and Schulze, R. (1984).

- Most of the time Brazilians use *por favor*<sup>10</sup> to soften imperatives or to tone down the abruptness of a command. A similar linguistic fact happens in English because the formulaic adjuncts *please* and *kindly* are also used to soften imperatives.<sup>11</sup>
- The more frequent use of *por favor* in Portuguese by English speaking people or the not so often use of *please* in English by Brazilians are "interlinguistic pragmatic errors" (Chein Alonso, 1985), that is errors caused by interference of L1 in L2.

Although such features still need to be further checked with a more detailed study of both male/female discourse and the speech of different age groups, it has become evident that the apparent lack of *please* in the speech of Brazilians in English is misleading because there are other important markers of courtesy which take the place of *por favor* in the Brazilian Portuguese discourse.

This, of course, leads into different styles of politeness (formal and informal) which are important to be taught in the language classroom.

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<sup>10</sup> To a lesser extent the expression *por gentileza* (*kindly*) is also used.

<sup>11</sup> Both *kindly* and *please* appear before imperatives though the first is restricted to initial position while the latter is mobile: *Kindly leave the room. Please leave the room* (or *Leave the room please*).

## APPENDIX 1

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maria, você pode fechar a janela, faz favor?</li> <li>2. Susafn, eu preciso entregar esta carta ao meio-dia. Faz favor, coloca no computador.</li> <li>3. Com licença, você pode me informar onde fica a rua mais direta para ir pra UnB.</li> <li>4. Filhinho, passa o sal faz favor. (ou) Filhinho, passa o sal.</li> <li>5. Você pode ler o primeiro parágrafo da página 22.</li> <li>6. Eu tenho hora marcada e gostaria que o senhor me pegue em casa 8 horas.</li> <li>7. Gostaria de ver na vitrine aquele sutiam cor-de-rosa.</li> <li>8. Com licença. Gostaria de falar com o Paulo. O senhor pode chamar ele por favor.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Por favor, você quer fechar a janela por que eu estou sentindo um pouco de frio?</li> <li>2. Por favor, você pode datilografar uma carta?</li> <li>3. Eu estou procurando a Universidade de Brasília. Você podia me ajudar com as direções?</li> <li>4. Por favor, me dá o sal.</li> <li>5. Por favor, você pode ler o trecho que você tem o manuscrito na mão?</li> <li>6. Por favor, eu gostaria de ir ao aeroporto porque eu tenho avião às 8 horas.</li> <li>7. Por favor, eu gostaria de ver se você tem uma camisa bege com listras brancos.</li> <li>8. Gostaria, por favor, de falar com Dona Maria.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Estou com frio. Pode fechar a janela, por favor?</li> <li>2. Angela, pode bater isto para mim?</li> <li>3. Com licença, estou perdida. Onde fica a Universidade de Brasília?</li> <li>4. Jimmy, pode passar o sal, por favor?</li> <li>5. Rafael, pode ler isto pra todo mundo?</li> <li>6. Bom dia. Aeroporto, por favor.</li> <li>7. Tem isto no tamanho 38, por favor?</li> <li>8. Sara está em casa? Pode chamar pra mim, por favor?</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Estou sentindo frio. Faça o favor, feche a janela pra mim.</li> <li>2. Tenho uma situação muito urgente. Favor, datilografa esta carta pr mim.</li> <li>3. Com licença, estou perdida. Será que pode me informar como chegar à UnB?</li> <li>4. Por favor, passa o sal pra mim.</li> <li>5. Agora vamos ter uma aula de leitura oral.</li> <li>6. Por gentileza, eu desejo chegar no aeroporto.</li> <li>7. Por gentileza, estou procurando tal coisa. Pode me mostrar?</li> <li>8. Alô, a Gretchen está em casa? Pode chamá-la pra mim, por favor?</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feche a janela, por favor.</li> <li>2. Helena, eu preciso uma carta datilografada logo, logo. Por favor.</li> <li>3. Eu estou procurando UnB. Pode me dar informações como chegar lá?</li> <li>4. Meu bem, faz favor, passe o sal.</li> <li>5. Agora eu quero que a Judy leia em voz alta a página 3.</li> <li>6. Aeroporto, por favor.</li> <li>7. Eu posso olhar aquele item lá em cima?</li> <li>8. Por favor, estava querendo falar com Janete.</li> </ol>





## Variation in request patterns in British English from a social perspective: strategy types and internal modifiers

Dalva da Silva Gomes  
Kátia Modesto Valério

How do you ask someone to turn down the TV?

- (A) Turn that bloody racket down (t: 74)
- (B) Could you please turn down the volume (t:)
- (C) It's rather loud, isn't it? (t:)
- (D) Are you deaf? (t:)
- (E) Any of the alternatives above, depending on the context.

The answer to this first question is obviously letter (e). These directives have the same illocutionary point, i.e. the speaker is trying to get the hearer to turn the TV volume down, but their force varies along with their differing realization patterns. Thus, considering the type of strategy used to issue the directive, these tokens range from a direct way of requesting to more indirect ones<sup>12</sup>. In addition to the strategy type, the impositive force of directives can also be modified by syntactical or by lexical or phrasal elements which are internal to the request sequence. Elements such as PLEASE in (b), RATHER and ISN'T in (c) mitigate the coerciveness of the directives whereas BLOODY and RACKET in (a) as well as DEAF in (d) increase the degree of imposition conveyed by these speech acts.

In this paper, which results from two Master's Dissertations written under the supervision of Dr. Nelson Mitrano-Neto at the Universidade Federal Fluminense, we contend that such variation in the realization patterns of directives is chiefly determined by the features of the context of situation in which the interaction occurs. The theory underlying our work was mainly provided by the contributions of Searle (1969, 1971, 1975) and of Brown and Levinson (1978).

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<sup>12</sup> Here we use the terms "requests" and "directives" interchangeably. We have decided to do so because, in the instrument we used, subjects were instructed to ASK people to do things, the informants were the ones who chose to make their requests through different speech acts.

In our research the construct "context" was operationalized as independent variable by means of the following features:

- Social Distance, specified as Immediate Family (IF), Extended Family (EF), friends (FR), Colleagues (CO) and Outgroup (OG).
- Dominance, specified as speaker's authority over the hearer (+A), hearer's authority over the speaker (-A) and equal authority between speaker and hearer (=A).
- Pragmatic Presupposition, specified as expectation of compliance (+C), expectation of noncompliance (-C) and neutral compliance (NC).

The empirical studies carried out by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and by Edmondson et al. (1984) set up an indirectness scale which includes three different levels: directness, conventional and nonconventional indirectness according to the degree of illocutionary transparency. In these studies internal modifiers to directives were classified as upgraders when they increased the impetive force of the request and downgraders when they mitigated it. Here, the construct "request variation" was operationalized as dependent variable through a scale of indirectness which included Explicit Direct, Conventional and Nonconventional Indirect strategies and through categories of internal modifiers, grouped as Upgraders and as Positive Politeness Downgraders, promoting social closeness, or Negative Politeness Downgraders, which function as distancing elements between speaker and hearer.

Figure 1 shows the indirectness scale adopted and the types of internal modification which featured in our pragmatic analysis.

**Figure 1**

*Dependent Variables*

Scale of Indirectness

<p>EXPLICIT DIRECTNESS</p>	<p>Turn down the volume, will you (t: 73) I would ask you strongly to present it to the board (t: 239) I really do need to ask you if I could go home early again please (t: 265) I'm afraid you're going to have to move your car... (t:316) I need to leave an hour earlier... (t: 276)</p>
<p>CONVENTIONAL INDIRECTNESS</p>	<p>If I was you, I'd reconsider your decision... (t: 203) Could you turn it down a bit, please (t: 82) Please, will you lend me your binoculars... (t: 160) Would it be possible to borrow your car... (t: 185) ...can I leave an hour early today? (t: 271)</p>

NONCONVENTIONAL INDIRECTNESS	<p>Are you sure you haven't raised the amount too much? (t: 207) (When asking someone to see sense and reconsider a decision).</p> <p>Have you any other views on what you just said? (t: 301) (When asking someone to reconsider an aspect of what they have just said).</p> <p>If you leave your car there, it's going to get bumped. (t: 326) (When asking someone to move their car so that other people and the speaker can park).</p> <p>But surely, that won't work. (t: 302) (When asking someone to reconsider an aspect of what they have just said).</p>
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Scale of Mitigation      Internal Modifiers

ATTENUATION (Use of internal downgraders)	<p>NEGATIVE POLITENESS</p> <p>POSITIVE POLITENESS</p>	<p><i>Would you mind if I were to borrow your binoculars for a while.</i> (t: 186)</p> <p><i>I was wondering if you could paint her portrait from this photo.</i> (t: 139)</p> <p><i>I don't suppose</i> there is any chance in me using your car. (t: 186)</p> <p>Could you turn it down <i>a bit, please...</i> (t: 82)</p> <p>Could you <i>possibly</i> resubmit the proposal next time? (t: 229).</p> <p>OK, now we <i>won't be</i> mentioning the tool kit, <i>will we?</i> (t: 20)</p> <p>Couldn't get me some cardboard from the shops, <i>eh!</i> (t: 55)</p> <p>Could I <i>pop off</i> early this afternoon? (t: 278)</p> <p>Let's <i>just</i> keep it to <i>mates, eh?</i> (t: 32)</p> <p><i>You know,</i> I really don't think you are telling us the whole story. (t: 222)</p>
NON-ATTENUATION	<p>### MODIFICATION</p> <p>AGGRAVATION (Use of internal upgraders)</p>	<p>Don't say anything about my party next week to cousin Fred... (t: 27)</p> <p><i>Can't</i> you park it in a proper parking place? (t:313)</p> <p><i>If you say anything to Dad about it, I will <b>brain</b> you</i> (t: 17)</p> <p>I suggest <b>strongly</b> that you reconsider your decision (t: 215)</p> <p>Turn <b>that bloody racket</b> down (t: 74)</p> <p>Don't you <b>dare</b> invite Peter to my birthday party. (t: 38)</p>

(**boldface** = lexical or phrasal modifiers/*italics* = syntactic modifiers)

Based on the results of the empirical research carried out by the CCSARP Project (Blum-Kulka et al., *ibid*), on Brown and Levinson's (*op. cit.*) politeness theory, on House-Edmondson (1986) and on Weizman (1989), we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1- Increasing social distance will elicit indirectness and attenuation by means of negative politeness strategies;

H2- Speaker dominance will elicit directness and attenuation by means of positive politeness;

H3- Expectation of politeness will elicit directness and attenuation by means of negative politeness;

H4- Nonconventional indirectness will be the strategy least used.

The technique employed to collect the data analyzed was elicitation and the instrument was a written questionnaire similar to the "Discourse Completion Test" devised by the CCSARP Project (Blum-Kulka, *ibid.*). Altogether 360 requests were collected. Chi-square tests were then carried out in order to check whether the contextual features were in fact significantly affecting the choice of request strategies and of internal modification. The results obtained can be described thus:

## Figure 2

### *Results*

#### *Theory (1)*

When people engage in communication, they are concerned with face saving. Requests are face-threatening acts and impinge on the hearer's claim to freedom of action and imposition. Greater social distance and hearer's power over the speaker increase the degree of imposition and demand more face work on the part of the speaker.

#### A) Observed Behavior / B) Possible reasons

A1) As expected concerning strategy type, apart for nonconventional indirectness, whose peak was under

IF/+A

B1) Nonconventional indirectness is not always viewed as politeness, being at times more impolite than directness. No concern with face.

A2) Speakers used more attenuation by means of negative politeness under FR than under CO.

B2) The notion of hierarchy typically found at work and the presupposition of cooperation under CO.

A3) The peak for non-attenuated tokens was under OG/+A.

B3) The speaker's lack of concern with his/her relationship with the hearer added to his/her higher rank makes the bluntness of the request innocuous for the speaker.

A4) The peak for attenuated tokens was under IF and CO/-A.

B4) The notion of hierarchy in work environments and within IF.

A5) Speakers used more attenuation by means of negative politeness under EF than under FR

B5) EF relations are established by kin and are not as spontaneous as FR relations. Therefore, the former might presuppose greater distance between speaker and hearer.

*Theory (2)*

The threat to the hearer's freedom of action seems to be related to his/her disposition to comply with the request and expressing the assumption of compliance is a positive politeness strategy.

A1) The peak for directness and non-attenuation was under -C.

B1) A reflection of the complexity of an interaction where the speaker knows in advance that the hearer is not willing to comply. Speakers resorted to directness and to non-attenuation in order to ensure compliance.

A2) Concerning politeness strategy, speakers behaved similarly, irrespective of pragmatic presupposition.

B2) Pragmatic presupposition does not affect the choice of politeness strategy

*Theory (3)*

Nonconventional indirectness compels the hearer to a certain amount of inferential work to decode the message due to the extreme illocutionary and/or propositional opacity.

A1) There were fewer instances of explicit directness than of non-conventional indirectness.

B1) Special situations involving hearer's beliefs or duties to perform the requested act might have led to the great amount of hinting used by speakers — either not to impose on the hearer's beliefs or, as in the case of some hints, to impose on the hearer who must do what s/he should have already done.

Concerning the hypotheses formulated, we could see that the interactions under the minimal (IF) and the maximal (OG) expansions of the social distance dimension confirmed H1. The investigation of the variable dominance (H2), when considered separately, also confirmed our predictions. Our hypothesis in relation to pragmatic presupposition (H3) and nonconventional indirectness (H4) were not confirmed, though.

Considering the results outlined above, we conclude that social factors significantly affect the realization pattern of requests in British English. However, request mitigation does not follow a steady trend across each social situational dimension as we had expected. In fact the situational parameters investigated interact and each situational condition has features of its own. The analysis as a whole revealed the prominence of conventional indirectness and of attenuation by means of negative politeness as highly favored requesting options used by the speakers.

Besides serving as a starting point for pragmatic contrastive analyses, this research can aid the elaboration of syllabuses and course books which concentrate on more pragmatically precise use of language to improve learners' ability to communicate accordingly through the selection of adequate linguistic behavior in different situational contexts.

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# Genre analysis: a comparative study of the discourse structure of abstracts in English and in Portuguese

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an analysis of the rhetorical structure of abstracts based upon Swales' (1990) model, which was specifically postulated for introductions to research articles. We believe there is enough rhetorical parallelism between these two different aspects of scientific writing.

Swales (ibid.: 143) proposes the following general scheme for the rhetorical analysis of introductions to research articles:

The CARS (Create a Research Space) Model

**Move 1 ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY**

- Step 1 Claiming centrality and/or
- Step 2 Making topic generalization(s) and/or
- Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research

**Move 2 ESTABLISHING A NICHE**

- Step 1a Counter-claiming or
- Step 1b Indicating a gap or
- Step 1c Question-raising or
- Step 1d Continuing a tradition

**Move 3 OCCUPYING THE NICHE**

- Step 1a Outlining purposes or
- Step 1b Announcing present research
- Step 2 Announcing principal findings

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## THE PRESENT CORPUS

The corpus we studied is composed of ten abstracts of academic research articles, five of them in Portuguese and five of them in English, published in the following journals: English for Specific Purposes - Pergamon Press; GURT - Georgetown University Round Table in Language and Linguistics; the ESpecialist - PUC-SP; Letras de Hoje - PUC-RS.

## THE PRESENT ANALYSIS

We intend to illustrate the various rhetorical moves proposed by Swales with excerpts from the abstracts we examined.

### Move 1 - ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY

#### *Step 1 - Claiming centrality*

"Claiming centrality" means appealing to the scientific community to accept that the paper being described plays an important role in the area of research in question.

We found only three occurrences of that Step in our corpus:

(1) There has been *considerable recent* interest in...

(2) With *increasing* interest in...

(3) ... tem se mostrado um campo extremamente fértil para pesquisas, as quais, em inúmeros casos, resultaram em obras de grande relevância climática.

'..[ ] has proved to be an extremely useful field of research which, in several cases, have resulted in works of great scientific relevance.'

#### *Step 2 - Making topic generalization(s)*

This Step was largely used in the corpus. In fact, making generalizations is one of the main characteristics of scientific discourse.

(4) Theories ... have been based *almost exclusively* on ...

(5) These differ from ... in having a base in ... rather than ...

(6) A leitura constitui um processo ...

'reading constitutes a process...'

(7) ... *it is important* to integrate descriptions of both ...

(8) Na construção desse sentido devem ser percorridos...

"In the building up of this meaning one should..."

As far as linguistic structures are concerned, it is worth noticing that, both in English and in Portuguese, whenever reference is being made to the field of research in question, plenty of adjectives are used, as can be seen in the examples above.



In examples (4) and (7), the authors, not only make generalizations about the subject, but also anticipate the theoretical gap that they intend to occupy. Linguistically, this critical appraisal is realized by: *almost exclusively* (4), which refers to the inherent limitations of the theories being mentioned, and *it is important* (7), where the author clearly states that the descriptions should be integrated.

### *Step 3 - Reviewing items of previous research*

Swales (1990: 148) considers this to be the only obligatory Step in the first Move in Introductions to research papers. Reference to previous research is many times expressed very succinctly in abstracts, as can be seen in the following examples:

(9) Montague's theory of ..., which I do not try to describe ..., has two important benefits ...

(10) ... that one component which realizes generic distinctiveness is the textual metafunction of language, Halliday's notion of theme.

(11) A leitura, ....., constitui um processo ativo de comunicação que ...  
'reading ... constitutes an active process of communication that ...

(12) O objetivo do trabalho é apresentar e discutir os princípios de avaliação formativa.

' the purpose of this paper is to present and discuss principles of formative evaluation'

Reference to previous research (Move 1, Step 3) can co-occur with a different rhetorical move. Example (12) above represents, simultaneously, reviewing previous research (Move 1, Step 3) and outlining purposes (Move 3, Step 1a).

The occurrence of more than one step, or even distinct rhetorical moves, within the limits of a single complex sentence, is partially related to the concise character of the discursive genre we are examining. When writing an abstract, the researcher usually decides on more concise linguistic structures, eliminating redundancies and any other elements that may be omitted from the text.

## Move 2 - ESTABLISHING A NICHE

### *Step 1a - Counter-claiming*

In the example below, the only one in the present corpus, besides counter-claiming (Move 2, Step 1a), the author also establishes part of the theoretical gap which he intends to occupy (Move 2, Step 1b). It is worth pointing out here that the *CARS Model* does not allow for the co-occurrence of these two steps.

(13) , it is argued that if polysemy is taken into account, as it must be, a certain class of theories of the structure of the subjective lexicon are shown to be inadequate.

The linguistic items which signal counter-claiming, in the above example, are the verb *argue* and the modalizing expression *as it must be*.

### Step 1b - Indicating a gap

Swales' observations on Introductions also apply here: in order to indicate a theoretical gap to be filled by their paper, authors make use of various linguistic structures. In the examples below, the expressions *largely ignored* (e.g. 14), *in the search for* (eg. 15) *inadequate* (eg. 16) and *possiveis problemas* (eg. 17) fulfill this function.

(14) ... politeness in writing has, until now, been *largely ignored*.

(15) I believe that *in the search for constraints*, on the theory of language...

(16) ... a certain class of theories ... are shown to be *inadequate*.

(17) *Possiveis problemas* ... são examinados e suas implicações são avaliadas.

'possible problems ... are examined and their implications are evaluated.'

(18) The basic fact of...*has not been considered* in the formulation of...

(19) Recent work has shown that ... and ... *are not* so incompatible as they might seem at first.

Negation of the verb phrase can be coupled with other linguistic structures, as a means of mitigating previous claims which might be considered otherwise too strong a criticism. In the previous example, *so* and *as they might seem at first* have the function of softening the author's critical stand towards some of his own previous assertions.

Another means of pointing out the existence of a gap to be fulfilled is by expressing the importance of the work to be done, as can be seen in the example below.

(20) ..., it is important to integrate descriptions of both ... and ...

### Step 1d - Continuing a tradition

The existence of theoretical gaps can also be fulfilled by adopting some well established assumptions, which the *CARS Model* identifies as "continuing a tradition".

(21) It has been suggested that one component which realizes generic distinctiveness is the textual metafunction of language, Halliday's notion of *theme*.

## Move 3 - OCCUPYING A NICHE

By using this move, authors occupy the research gap identified in Move 2. According to Swales, the rhetorical intention of occupying this gap, is realized linguistically by different structures, as will become clear when we describe the coming steps.

### Step 1a - Outlining purposes

Linguistically, outlining purposes is frequently done by using final clauses. Consequently, there is a high proportion of occurrence of verbs in the infinitive, as shown in the following examples:

(22) I am concerned with the goal of developing a theory of semantics...

(23) ... one possibly fruitful approach is *to try to constrain* as tightly as possible the connections ...

(24) Neste artigo ... na tentativa de aclarar conceitos ... e elicitar discussões ...

'in this paper ... in an attempt to clarify concepts .. and elicit/provoke discussions...'

(25) O objetivo do trabalho é apresentar e discutir ...

'the objective of this paper is to present and discuss'

### *Step 1b - Announcing present research*

The description of the research article was the step of greatest occurrence (eight instances in ten abstracts) in all abstracts examined. We noticed a similar situation in relation to the use of deictic expressions in abstracts, as previously pointed out by Swales in relation to research article Introductions: there is a high occurrence of deictics which point to the very paper being described. The examples below are instances of this step.

(26) In *this model* it is proposed that the specific...

(27) *This paper* characterizes such syllabuses, paying attention to ...

(28) I am going to illustrate the way in which a tight constraint between semantic and ...

(29) For *this study*, ... were compared to ....

(30) In order to explore their potential for ..., marked themes ... were analyzed and described.

(31) *O presente trabalho* relata uma pesquisa conduzida na ...

'the present work refers to a piece of research carried out in the...'

(32) *Neste artigo* procurei analisar como... Observei a visão...

'in this paper I tried to analyse how... I observed [ 's] view...'

### *Step 2 - Announcing principal findings*

The announcing of findings is, certainly, one of the main purposes of any scientific paper.

(33) The results indicate ... striking differences in...

(34) These findings suggest that ... may be perceived ...

(35) Results indicate that ... can be predicted...

### *Step 3 - Indicating the RA structure*

There was only a single instance of this step in the corpus examined:

(36) No trabalho são apresentados os resultados da pesquisa, conclusões da autora e implicações pedagógicas do estudo.

'in this paper, results of the research, author's conclusions and pedagogical implications of the study are presented.'

CLAUSES	ABSTRACTS IN ENGLISH					ABSTRACTS IN PORTUGUESE				
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
1	1-2	1-1	3-1a	1-2 2-1b	1-1 1-2 2-1b	1-2 1-3	3-1b	1-1	3-1b	3-1a
2	2-1b	1-2	3-1a	3-1b	2-1d	1-2	3-1b	3-1a 3-1b	3-1b	1-2
3	2-1a 3-1b	3-1b	2-1b 3-1a	3-2	3-1b	1-2	3-1b		3-2	3-2 2-1b
4	3-1b	3-2	1-3	3-2	3-2	1-2	3-1b			3-2
5	3-1b		1-3	3-2			3-1b			
6	3-1b		1-3	3-2			3-3			
7	3-1b		2-1b 3-1b							
8			3-1b							

Figure 1 - Rhetorical moves in the corpus

a) Abstracts I, IV and V in English show three rhetorical moves in the same order as they appear in the CARS' model;

b) As in the introductions examined by Swales, Rhetorical Moves 1 and 3 may occur in the first position; in four abstracts in English and two in Portuguese Move 1 shows up in first position, whereas Move 3 is topicalized in one abstract in English and in three abstracts in Portuguese;

c) From a total of 48 sentences in the 10 abstracts examined, 32 of them (66%) were used to realize Move 3, 14 sentences (29%) were used to realize Move 1 and only 8 of them (16%) realized Move 2; Move 2 does not occur in all abstracts, as Swales also pointed out in relation to Introductions (cf. *ibid.*: 159). On the other hand, Move 3, *Occupying the niche*, which occurred in 9 out of 10 abstracts examined, was the most regular occurrence in this corpus. We wondered whether this is the obligatory move in abstracts. Only abstract VI does not present Move 3, and we thought that abstract presented a very peculiar structure, to the point that we found it difficult at times to determine, whether the author was reviewing his own previous research or describing his present one. Throughout the abstract, various generalizations are made and the reader finds it hard to conclude about the objectives of the article.

d) The abstracts in Portuguese, except for one, only show Moves 1 and 3. The small number of abstracts, however, doesn't allow us to conclude anything definite about the rhetorical structure of abstracts.

## FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The abstracts examined show clearly that Swales' (1990) proposal about the discourse structure of Introductions to research articles is quite adequate for describing research abstracts. Our analysis also shows that these structures are valid both for English and for Portuguese abstracts. From all this, we think it is valid to conclude that the structure at issue is the structure of *abstracts of scientific articles* in general, quite independently of the language they are written in. Obviously, the validity of this second conclusion depends on further empirical evidence, although we firmly believe our hypothesis will be confirmed. The present investigation raised a number of further questions which we hope to be able to examine in future investigations:

1. Is there a preference for the use of certain rhetorical moves across languages?

2. What is the reason for the occurrence or not of certain rhetorical moves; does this fact reveal certain characteristics of natural languages in general or does that show some linguistic characteristic of the speaker?

3. Is the occurrence of certain moves related to the specific area of research?

4. Is it possible to determine a discourse typology of abstracts, so that we may be able to help future researchers to successfully have their papers accepted by the various editorial boards of journals?

5. How exactly do different rhetorical moves co-occur?

6. Do more than two rhetorical moves ever occur simultaneously?

7. Can we draw similar conclusions about the different Steps of the various rhetorical moves?

We are trying to answer some of these questions in FERREIRA & CARVALHO (in preparation).

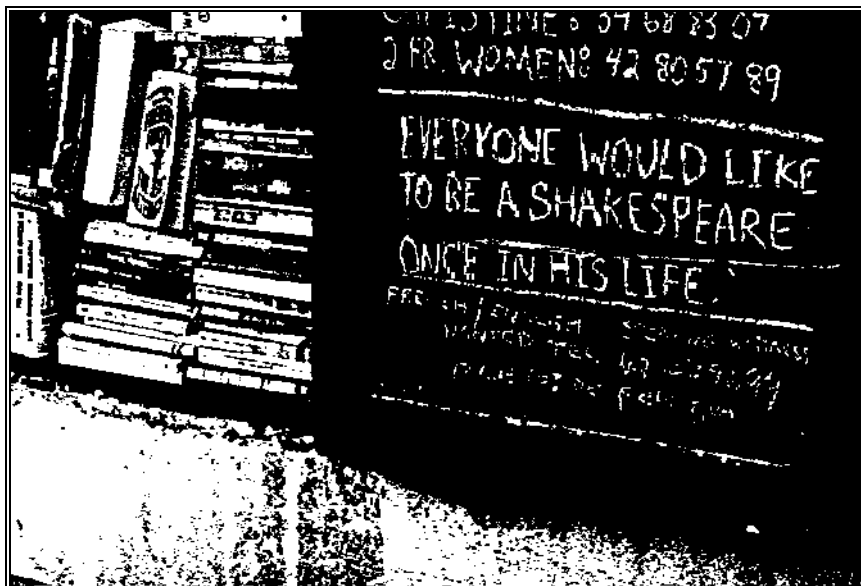
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Table of Contents PART FOUR: THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

PART FOUR  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING



Shakespeare & Co, Paris  
(Original photo by Ubiratan Paiva de Oliveira)



# The perception of the composing process by Brazilian EFL learners

Hilário I. Bohn

## INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades the ability to write has been neglected in foreign language (FL) teaching. The methodologies used in the classroom (audiolingualism and communicative language teaching) favored oral comprehension and production. Advances in communication and technology such as TV, telephone, answering and taping machines seemed to give pragmatic support to such a trend. However, the computer age and the widely used network of international communication developed in the last few years such as e-mail, internet, fax and telexes and the significant improvement in the mail system worldwide, seem to signal toward a new direction. The role of the written word, because of its characteristics and because of the technology and the attitude of the international community, has been strengthened and foreign language learners with a professional motivation have a need and are deeply interested in developing their writing ability. In response to such attitude and needs, researchers and language teachers are seeking out for a better understanding of the writing process, the problems of contrastive rhetoric and of structural and linguistic nature FL learners writers face in the acquisition of the composing ability.

One of the aspects that immediately strikes the reader of research in foreign language writing acquisition is the deep influence it suffers from mother tongue writing research (Silva, 1990). This influence can be seen in the questions investigated and in the design of research. This close relationship has brought some problems to L2 writing researchers but it has not prevented them to bring into the arena for discussion a significant number of issues, and the principles and generalizations drawn from the findings and debates can become the initial step for the shaping of a theory of foreign language writing acquisition.

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The influence of L1 on the design of L2 research is summarized by Krapels (1990) in the following propositions:

- There is a tendency for studies in L2 writing to suffer the influence of L1 writing process research.
- Most research uses the methodology of case studies.
- The subjects of most published studies are females.
- The writing tasks vary in number, in discourse mode and in topic type.
- Time allotted for completing a task varies from twenty minutes to as much time as needed to complete the task.

The binding of L2 studies on the findings and methodology of L1 research seems to be one of the reasons why researchers have not been able to develop a comprehensive theory of L2 writing. Needless to say that the context, the writer, the text and the reader make the second language (SL) writing processes quite unique. On the other hand, research findings of the L2 composing process in the last two decades, albeit methodological problems, signal to some broad, important and recurrent generalizations that can be seen as the basic building blocks for the establishment of a theory for foreign language writing acquisition. Krapels (1990) suggests six of these generalizations that can be summarized the following way:

- Writing difficulties are related to lack of composing competence rather than to poor linguistic competence.
- The composing processes of unskilled writers in L2 are similar to those of unskilled writers in L1.
- L1 writing processes transfer to L2 writing.
- L2 writers commonly use L1 in their writing as a composing strategy.
- Vocabulary is the most common L1 linguistic aspect used by L2 writers.
- Certain writing tasks elicit more L1 use in the L2 composing process than others.

For some of the above generalizations there are contradictory findings in research. The finding, for example, that the composing processes of unskilled writers in L1 and L2 are similar has been supported in some studies, while opposite findings have been reported in other research (Cf. Krapels, p. 49).

Albeit methodological problems, researchers have expressed enthusiasm on the insights writing studies have brought to the understanding of the composing processes in L2. However, a careful survey shows a great shortage of studies on the acquisitional aspects. Most research focuses on the writing of advanced or competent foreign language learners. The different writing stages learners maze through in the acquisitional process in L2 is a neglected field. There seems therefore to be an urgent need for the development of research projects in the area of the acquisitional stages of the writing skill.

The following questions need to be investigated:



- When should the teaching of composing start in the acquisition of L2?
- How should activities and tasks be graded?
- What is the teacher's role in these activities?
- How important are teacher-students, and student-student interactions?
- How important is feedback?
- When should students' awareness on comparative rhetoric be developed?
- How do students view the writing process in L2?
- What are some of the linguistic and textual characteristics of the beginner, intermediate and advanced L2 discourses?

They are all questions writing teachers have to face in their daily classroom work and to which research has not been able to provide adequate answers.

In this paper I will address the question of the writer. How he perceives writing in terms of objectives, how he sees the writing process, for whom he writes, what he thinks about feedback, what strategies he uses in his composing processes and what problems he faces in his writing.

## METHODOLOGY

The research reported here refers to the first results of a longitudinal study being developed in the Foreign Language Department of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil. The study aims at the understanding of the composing processes of L2 beginner, intermediate and advanced Brazilian foreign language learners.

The data for this paper come from two written questionnaires answered by 50 FL students of varied linguistic competence levels.

The first, rather short questionnaire was applied in the beginning of the second semester of 1992, and a longer questionnaire was answered in December. Both were applied by an assistant researcher and by the classroom teachers.

The subjects are all English foreign language majors. First and second semester students were considered beginners; third and fourth semester intermediate learners; and fifth and sixth semester students were classified as advanced learners.

The foreign language program at the UFSC puts great emphasis on the development of the four language skills. Students are exposed to 10 weekly hours of English and content is distributed among language and literature. In the first stages the emphasis is in the development of the four skills and from the fifth semester the focus shifts to grammatical content and literature. Subjects' age ranged from 18 to 27 years and they were predominantly females. They were all working towards a degree in English which will qualify them to teach in the Brazilian public and private school systems.

## FINDINGS

In this section I present the students' opinions and perceptions of the writing process. Six issues will be considered: 1) writing objectives; 2) the learners' perception of the writing process; 3) the writer's audience; 4) writing and evaluation; 5) writing strategies used by learners, and 6) main difficulties encountered.

### *Writing objectives*

Students were provided with six alternatives when asked about why they write:

- To improve the structural aspects of their writing.
- To receive a good mark in the course.
- To inform the reader.
- To use writing for acquiring and integrating new knowledge.
- To meet the reader's expectations.
- To meet the teacher's expectations.

The analysis shows a very strong tendency for all competence level students to choose as the most important objective of their writing the development of linguistic accuracy. According to this group of foreign language writers, the primary objective of writing is not to inform but rather to develop structural linguistic competence which leads to more accurate writing. Out of 50 students only 13 chose the alternative 'to inform the reader' as the third and fourth most important objectives of their writing. It is about the same number of choices than the objective 'to get a good mark' received.

The data analysis also shows that 19 subjects write to meet their teacher's expectations and 16 state that their third and fourth objectives when writing is to fulfill their readers' needs. However, if on the one hand there is a strong tendency among students to write for grammatical knowledge and to meet their teachers' expectations, in opposition to inform, there is also a reasonable number of students (30) who consider writing as a useful activity to acquire and integrate new knowledge. This objective has been singled out in the literature as one of the major objectives of writing.

The writing objectives selected by the subjects of this study are very similar for beginner, intermediate and advanced learners. There is, however, a tendency for advanced learners to become more 'evaluation oriented', i. e., "to write for a good mark", objective that did not seem important for beginner and intermediate students received significant attention from advanced learners. Another interesting finding is that only two students in the two advanced groups (17 students in all) see writing as *an exercise to generate and integrate new*

*knowledge*. Such a finding should certainly be of great concern of the teacher staff.

### *Learner's perception of the writing process*

This section reports on two questions of the questionnaire (3 and 6). The first asks students to choose, among seven alternatives, the four that best characterize the way they view the composing process. The content of these alternatives allows us to group them into the following categories:

- Writing as a laborious and difficult task.
- Writing as a language evaluation and language learning activity.
- Writing for informing and integrating knowledge.

A number of learners (32) found writing a laborious process and a difficult task, full of grammatical and organizational difficulties. However, what seems to characterize the whole group of students surveyed is their belief that the act of writing is a good way to learn a foreign language, and a good activity to evaluate linguistic competence. The items of the questionnaire related to these two aspects were marked off 71 times by the learners. The informative aspect of writing only received 36 choices. The intermediate and advanced students entirely ignored it. The finding is consistent with the analysis of the objectives (see previous sections) of writing in which the 'informative' aspect was also rated quite low.

The FL students surveyed in this study seem to have adopted the view discussed in Silva that writing is somehow the "handmaid" of the other skills in language learning. "The writer is simply a manipulator of previously learned language structures" (1990, p. 13). In this perspective "The text becomes a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items — a linguistic artifact, a vehicle for language practice" (idem). Why, when and where students developed such a view of writing is an important question for teachers to reflect on.

When students were asked to choose four alternatives from nine choices related to the methodology used by writing teachers at UFSC, (question 6) the majority of the students did agree that the methodology used to teach writing gradually develops their writing capacity, making them competent FL writers. However, they did not see writing as an exercise to develop their critical capacity and only five students considered writing as an informative activity. Again, students see writing as a grammatical exercise.

A significant number of beginner students see the writing course at the University as not meeting their needs. They also see the writing activities in the Course as very disorganized with no clear objectives. Each teacher following his/her own methodology and establishing his/her own priorities. The item *each teacher uses his/her own methodology* was chosen 37 times by students.

In summary, students see the writing courses at the University as not meeting their expectations, they see it as an disorganized activity along the

different semesters of language teaching, in which grammatical aspects are over emphasized in detriment to the informative aspect.

### *Writing for an audience*

Writers, and researchers with a special interest in writing, know that the content and the form of writing is deeply influenced by the reader/audience the writer has in mind when composing a text. The group of students surveyed for this study, when asked whether their writing in class could have other audiences than their teachers, all said yes. However, when asked for whom they write in the foreign language class they all pointed out their teachers as the primary audience. Friends and peers were also named as possible readers but nobody extended the audience beyond the university community. Writing for these foreign language learners is directed to and constrained by the boundaries of the classroom walls. The limited number of readers foreign language writers have may be one of the most constraining elements of the foreign language classroom. The absence of an audience to write for severely inhibits the L2 writing. It becomes very difficult, may be even at all impossible, to produce a good communicative text if the writer, while composing, does not have an audience in his mind. This may be one of the chief reasons why many foreign language classroom writing develops into simple grammatical exercises and why texts produced under such circumstances lack communicative power.

### *Writing evaluation*

Evaluation has been introduced in the questionnaire within three perspectives: a) Self-evaluation, b) teacher's evaluation and c) how the writing class prepares students to communicate in the real world.

#### a) Self-evaluation

Students were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the texts they produced in the foreign language class and why. Out of 48 students who answered this question 28 said they were not satisfied and 20 said they were satisfied. It is important to point out that dissatisfaction is more common among 4th, 5th and 6th semester students who should have their writing ability well established because they have been exposed to up to an average of 720, 900 and 1800 hours of English classroom work respectively.

When subjects were asked about the reasons of their satisfaction they mentioned the following:

- The development of the ability to express ideas.
- The improvement of their language knowledge.
- The ability to convey information in spite of poor language competence.

- Their learning about text structure and text production.
- Their ability to master certain forms of expression.
- The improvement of their writing.

Students in the advanced stages felt they had improved their grammar, had learned to generate ideas, had improved their spelling, text structure, text cohesion and coherence.

The dissatisfaction was expressed by motifs such as:

- Lack of grammatical knowledge.
- The great difficulty in expressing ideas.
- The great number of mistakes.
- Unknown topics or not part of students' daily life.
- Lack of composing competence.
- Inability to develop ideas.
- Lack of vocabulary.
- Lack of background reading.
- Inability to produce good texts in reasonable time.
- Teachers' constraints on students' creativity.

Students in the advanced group still related their composing difficulties to lack of linguistic competence in the FL and lack of composing competence. They also complained about their ignorance of text structure. The overall most recurrent complaint was lack of linguistic competence even in the advanced groups of students. The literature however insists that there is no close relationship between L2 linguistic competence and ability to compose.

It is possible that learners in fact experience difficulties in their writing not because of lack of structural/grammatical knowledge in the FL but they may be reporting on what their teachers have emphasized in their teaching and writing evaluation: Grammatical accuracy rather than ideas and information. It is interesting to notice that the reasons reported for satisfaction do not emphasize the capacity to generate or express ideas either. The 6th semester students, the most advanced group in the sample, clearly emphasize grammatical and text structure improvements as the main reasons for satisfaction.

#### b) Students' attitude towards correction and evaluation

Among the six alternatives available in the questionnaire students concentrated their choices on two rather positive aspects of correction: *asks for clarification on the comments and corrections made by teacher* (25 choices), and *reads carefully the comments and corrections made by teacher and accepts them without further questioning* (19). The two alternatives seem to divide the classroom into an active, participating, questioning group and a rather passive group who shows concern but then does not take any action leading to the

learning or correction of the mistakes pointed out by the teacher. The active group also has a tendency to comment the suggestions made by the teacher with colleagues and meet with the teacher to discuss and comment on the feedback received. It seems that learning, i. e. integrating new knowledge into the previous cognitive structures, will only happen if the learner is committed to learning. The passive group does not seem to have one of the basic learning requirements, the 'student set', pointed out by Ausubel (1978) as a basic prerequisite for meaningful learning.

c) Do writing classes meet the communicative needs of the real world?

When students were asked if the writing classes prepared them for the real communicative needs of the world, 27 responded negatively and 23 responded positively. When asked to justify their answers in an open-ended question, subjects offered the following reasons for their positive feelings.

The list of reasons why students think the L2 writing class does not prepare them for the communicative needs of the world is the following:

- Difficult topics.
- Little time to develop the skill.
- Writing classes are not related to the students' world.
- Teachers use poor methodologies in the classroom.
- Poor learning.
- Learners have not been taught the structural characteristics of a good text.
- Topics are repetitious.
- There is not enough writing.
- Poor presentation of classroom content.
- Too much content.
- Too much emphasis on grammar.
- Poor teacher's involvement.
- Other skills (oral) seem more important.
- Writing classes do not encourage creativity.
- Writing classes have not developed critical thinking.

The reasons why students think courses do not prepare them for the communicative needs of the real world are quite self explanatory and they offer substance for writing teachers to rethink their methodologies, syllabi, classroom content and activities.

Students offer the following suggestions to improve writing classes:

- To update topics based on the local and international press.
- To explore topics in depth.
- To update the bibliography of the writing courses.
- To increase the number of writing classes in the curriculum.

- To stimulate writing by offering rewards for the best texts.
- To stimulate students to write short stories, poetry, etc.
- To emphasize grammatical learning and accuracy.
- To have a homogeneous methodology along the different semesters.
- To encourage students to write for audiences other than classroom.
- To encourage writing since the very first semesters of the Course.
- To prepare better and more competent teachers of writing.

### *Strategies used by L2 writers*

The analysis of the students' answers on this topic of the questionnaire shows that they use rather few strategies in their writing. There is of course the possibility they will be using strategies not tapped by the questionnaire. However an overall finding is that very few students use certain strategies systematically.

The strategy *think about a topic and then write all the ideas that come to mind and only then evaluate and organize them* is the most common strategy used by the group. Fifteen students stated they use it all the time and 17 students use it very often. There are also some students that never use this strategy in their writing. Other very common used strategies are *to produce an outline before writing*, *to produce several drafts until they conform to the intended structure and has in mind specific reader other than the teacher*. The last strategy mentioned is in contradiction with other answers of the same questionnaire in which subjects show evidence that they focus primarily and exclusively on the "teacher reader".

There are also several strategies students of our sample never use. The most common examples are the following:

- To immediately produce a final draft (i. e. students produce several drafts).
- To produce several drafts and then choose the best one.
- To ask colleagues or friends to read the text.
- To have the teacher as the only reader of their writing.
- To read a text (in English) related to the topic before starting to write.

A striking result is that very few students use the strategies mentioned in the questionnaire all the time. Out of 500 possibilities, the alternative *all the time* was only chosen 49 times. First and sixth semester students are responsible for over 50 percent of these choices. The fifth semester students only contributed to this number with three alternatives.

The questionnaire does not offer an exhaustive list of strategies in writing. The results of this study seem, however, to signal that learners are not highly committed to the writing task, and the dissatisfaction with their writing competence may be a consequence of such a learning set. An overall count of the choices gives the "seldom" and "never use" of the different strategies more than the double of alternatives than the "always" and "very often" use of the strategies.

Another finding is that the strategies useful for generating ideas *reads on the topic before writing* and *does some research and uses his/her own world knowledge* were chosen by very few students. Again, informativeness does not seem to be of special concern to the writers.

### *Problems writers face*

Finally, how did our subjects feel about their difficulties in writing? Where did their difficulties lie? Are the content and organizational difficulties more severe, or do they blame the lack of grammatical competence for their problems, or else, aren't learners concerned about difficulties at all?

The analysis of the responses to the question whether students had problems in generating, choosing or organizing ideas, show the following results:

- 1 Students did not seem to have special problems with generating ideas. The great majority only had "some" or "no" problems in opposition to "many" or "rather frequent" problems.
- 2 Very few students had many problems in selecting the ideas. The slot "many problems" was left empty in most cases, even by beginners.
- 3 A more significant group of students had organizational problems. Twenty eight students marked the high frequency slots "many" and "rather frequent" problems for this category.

The analysis also shows that learners have a relaxed attitude towards the use of the dictionary. Very few resorted to it and the frequency of use was low. For the ones that did use the dictionary the average use by subject was lower than three times for the first composition. The learners overwhelmingly considered the writing task as an easy one. However, their anxiety level is rather high both in L1 and L2 writing. In fact, a quick look at their compositions does not seem to show such an easy approach to writing. Beginner students' texts are rather short, with no linking elements between clauses, with little information and poor grammar.

How did learners feel about the grammatical difficulties? The categories surveyed were verb forms, spelling, prepositions, conjunctions, sentence structure, paragraph organization, text organization and vocabulary.

The general tendency was to say that they encountered "some" difficulties in these areas in opposition to "many" or "rather frequent" problems. First and fourth semester students marked significantly more often the two upper slot choices "very often" or "rather frequent" difficulties for most grammatical categories. These two groups also find prepositions and conjunctions specially difficult and first semester students chose verb forms and sentence structure as difficult categories.

I suspect there might be a clear mismatch between what subjects have stated in the questionnaire and what the text analysis will reveal about their writing. I think we can hypothesize that the first semester students will find quite



severe problems to compose a coherent, well structured, communicatively rich and grammatically accurate text. It is my feeling that the subjects of this sample interpret and evaluate their difficulties against their level of competence and lose sight of the overall perspective of well structured and highly informative texts that advanced learners can produce or that they themselves can produce in their mother tongue. Writers of the sample under analysis have therefore an optimistic view of their composing capacity even in the first stages of language acquisition.

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

The literature surveyed for this study shows a great lack of research on the acquisition of foreign language writing, in opposition to research on SL writing which is much more extensive. There seems to be therefore an urgent need to study the composing processes of foreign language learners. Most principles and generalizations forwarded by L2 researchers on writing refer to high intermediate or advanced students and the acquisitional aspects are shuffled aside. However, pedagogically and methodologically it is the acquisitional aspects that have a direct binding on the planning and implementation of the educational process.

Based on students' answers to the questionnaires we may conclude that the focus on writing activities in the FL classrooms still converges towards students' language learning processes rather than to writing processes. "Teaching writing is to teach the formalities and technicalities of language" (Leki, 1992, p. 5). Writing becomes a vehicle for language practice. The result of such a pedagogy is that students write for grammatical accuracy rather than for informing.

The analysis of students' answers to the questionnaires also allows to conclude that there is a tendency for students not to perceive or consider their writinglogy of closed written questionnaires for data collection is a limiting factor in our research. A close look at difficulties. Even students who produced small, grammatically and structurally poor texts do not significantly differ from their more competent writers in the way they perceive difficulties. Lack of awareness of their own writing difficulties seems to plague L2 writers.

A consequence of the above problem is that students perceive writing difficulties as a homogeneous pattern along the different language competence levels, i.e., beginner, intermediate and advanced learners have similar L2 composing difficulties.

Finally, a word of caution. The decision to use a methodostudents' responses clearly shows the need for oral protocols to complement their written answers. The need for L2 writers to be moving between two languages and two cultures makes the L2 composing processes complex and it would seem that only longitudinal and cross-sectional studies using varied quantitative and qualitative methodologies would unveil such processes.

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# Interaction in written discourse

Antônia Dilamar Araújo

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, interaction in both spoken and written discourse has received great attention by many linguists. The issue of interaction has been examined through different perspectives. One of them, intratextual interaction, which is the concern of this paper, emphasizes the relationship between signals in a text that guide the reader to perceive discourse organization (Hoey, 1983; Tadros, 1985 and others). In reassessing textual interaction, Grabe (1988) points out that the linguistic elements of texts combine interactively to define textual functions. According to Grabe (*ibid.*: p. 64) textual interaction means the use and manipulation, by the writer, in a purposeful way, "of different combinations of linguistic signals in different text types and genres."

In addition, several scholars (Winter, 1977; Hoey, 1983; Widdowson, 1979 and others) view the text as a kind of dialogue between the reader and text/the writer and reader, in which the writer uses linguistic signals to orient the reader as to how he/she should interpret the relations between the segments and perceive the writer's intentions.

Through different approaches, all these scholars have attempted to answer crucial questions such as : "How is interaction to be recognized in a written text?" and "How does interaction take place between the reader and the text?".

In this paper, I discuss and review intratextual interaction and review approaches of Winter/Hoey and Tadros. These approaches help us understand the cooperative enterprise through which writers and readers construct meanings together.

## INTERACTIVE VIEWS OF WRITTEN TEXT

### *Intratextual interaction*

One sort of interaction which deserves attention concerns the relationship between signals which constitute texts. This perspective of interaction looks at the relationship among linguistic forms to guide the reader to perceive discourse organization and to distinguish different types of texts.

Hoey (1983) sees text as a collection of related sentences, in which any sentence, parts of sentence, or group of sentences may be in a relation with any other within the same text. According to this view of discourse, the relations between clauses or parts of clauses are not identified by intuition alone. They are linguistically signaled.

Hoey (ibid) and Winter (1977, 1986) assert that the meanings in the text are built around two types of clause relations: *matching relations* in which pieces of information are matched against each other in terms of contrast, compatibility, generalization/example, etc. or *logical sequence relations*, in which the relations are connected logically in a sequence, i.e. one relation is prior to the other and this includes cause-consequence, instrument-achievement, time-sequence, etc. The relations between clauses in a text contribute to the organization of discourse in basic text structures such as problem-solution, general-particular, hypothetical-real, which can be identified by the interaction between lexical signals and also between clauses. According to them, interaction in text is related to the writer's ability to organize his text in such a coherent way that he facilitates, through signaling and repetition, the target reader's perception of the semantic relations that make up the text.

In describing the nature of textual interaction, Hoey (1983, p. 171) states that the writer, by selecting or creating a certain discourse pattern, uses three kinds of clause relational signals: *subordinators* (because, whenever, after, as far as, etc.), *conjuncts* (but, however, therefore, etc.) and *lexical signals* (contrast, method, problem, reason, achieve, follow, etc.) which express matching and logical sequence relations between clauses.

The following extract taken from a real text constitutes an example of a matching relation of contrast and of logical sequence relation.

In Britain, the power of the unions added an extra dread, which made British politics a special case; On the Continent, Margaret Thatcher was regarded as something of a laboratory experiment, rather like a canary put down a mine-shaft to see if it will sing. (*The Sunday Times Magazine*, 30 Dec. 1979 , apud McCarthy, 1991, p. 30.)

A cause-consequence relation is evident between the first two segments in which the subordination *which made British politics a special case* is a

consequence of the power of unions in Britain. The first segment taken together becomes a larger segment which in a matching relation contrasts with the rest of the text. The contrast is signaled by the syntactic parallelism *In Britain/On the Continent*. This way the sequence of relations between the segments supported by signals leads the reader to perceive meanings and deduce the relations expressed in the text.

Besides clause relational signals, *repetition* also plays an important role in connecting meanings in the text. The repeated information in the text acts as a framework for the interpretation of the new information. In repeating items or clauses, the writer negotiates meanings in the text by creating semantic relations and focusing on the continuity of topic under discussion. In this sense, repetition creates interpersonal involvement providing a resource to keep talk going, where the text is a sign of willingness to interact.

Winter's notion of repetition provides the basis for comparison and for identifying matching relations. The important point concerning repetition is that it allows the focus of attention to be placed on what has been replaced, i.e., the changes or additions to the repeated clause structure, made by the writer, giving it new meaning as clause. The new information in a clause is termed by Winter as *replacement*. For him, repetition is not only a method of connecting sentences but also a contributor to their interpretation, because where two sentences have material in common, it is what is changed that receives attention by the reader.

An analysis of the following text illustrates Hoey and Winter's approach at work:

In the past, the search for other worlds has been hampered by two factors. First, planets are tiny objects compared with stars: for instance, the sun, a typical star, is 300,000 times more massive than the Earth. Second, planets do not shine but only reflect light dimly from stars.

But Dr. Campbell and his colleagues got round this problem by using high-resolution spectroscopy to measure accurately variations in a star's light. Slight differences in a star's light showed that many were being pushed and pulled out of their paths by unseen planets.

(*The Observer*, 5 Jul. 1987, p.4 , apud McCarthy , 1991, p. 79.)

Looking at the relationships between the clauses and sentences in this text, the reader can perceive that although there is no explicit subordinator linking the clauses in the first paragraph, there is a logical sequence relation of cause-consequence in which "the factors" presented in sentences 2 and 3 can be seen as causes for the problem mentioned in S1. The relation between S1 and S2-3 could be paraphrased by a reason subordinator "because" or by a conjunctive item such as "this is because". The second clause of sentence 2, represented by *the sun, a typical star, is 300,000 times...Earth*, provides the basis for the reason. Furthermore, the writer uses in S1 the term "factors", one of the lexical items listed by Winter (1977) as a member of Vocabulary 3, which has a connective function between the clauses . As this word is, in a sense, semantically

incomplete, it requires lexical realization which is supplied by S2-3. However, the second paragraph tells the readers that the problem does not exist any more. The use of *but* signals a contrast between the past and the present showing that the first sentences of each paragraph are in a matching relation of contrast.

In addition, the writer avoids repeating the predication structure by substituting the sentence which represents the problem by the signal *this problem* in the second paragraph and the focus of attention is placed on the subject *Dr. Campbell and his colleagues* to contrast with the subject of the first clause which is not explicitly stated in the text. Thus the connections between clauses and sentences are signaled by lexical items, clause relations and repetition of information.

The connections between clauses help to build meanings in the text and guide the reader to perceive the meta-structure by which the text is organized. In this particular example, the words in bold predict and reinforce a problem-solution pattern. The words *hampered* (s.1) and *problem* (s.4) signal the problem, which is the unsuccessful search for other planets, while *got round*, which is a vocabulary 3 item requires lexical realization which we find in *by using high-resolution spectroscopy* (s.4) indicating a positively evaluated response. The solution/response can be linked to the problem because the signaling item "got round/problem" anticipates the "content" that is realized in the following complement. The signals *slight differences* and *showed* (s.5) reinforce the writer's evaluation of the response.

Within this perspective of interaction as an intratextual phenomenon, Tados' (1985) model is concerned with the mechanics by which the interaction is produced. By creating a hierarchical model, Tados claims that the writer is in agreement with the propositions presented in his text unless he signals his detachment from them. Thus, the concepts of involvement and detachment are crucial for understanding Tados's model.

The central feature of Tados' model lies on the notion of prediction, which involves a commitment, on the part of the writer, that one point in the text another subsequent linguistic event will occur. The writer's commitment expressed by certain signals creates expectations, on the part of the reader, that it will be fulfilled. This way predictive signals confirm the writer's promise to what he has said he will do in his text and help the reader to recognize the commitment.

Such a notion of prediction has led Tados to identify six categories of prediction in academic written texts, namely: enumeration, advance labeling, reporting, recapitulation, hypotheticality and question. The basic feature of each category is the relationship between the predictive item (V member) and the predicted member (D member). Thus one type of interaction (intratextual) in her model lies on the relationship between the V member and D members of each category which are realized by lexical and grammatical features in the text. As the purpose of this study is not to examine each category in detail, but rather to

discuss interaction in texts, two examples illustrating the categories of *enumeration* and *reporting* presented below will serve the present purpose:

(V member) There are three reasons words may be considered equivalent for the purpose at hand.

(D member) First, they are equivalent if they have the same referent. For example... another source of equivalence is similarity of meaning... Finally, if the text explicitly provides an equivalence, then this equivalence can be used as instantial equivalence set up by the text.(Fries, 1992:76)

In the text above, there is evidence of the interactive relations between the several sub-parts of the text. The writer, through the numeral *three* and the noun *reasons*, commits himself to enumerate the reasons by which words may be regarded equivalent. This commitment raises the reader's expectations that more than one D member will follow. The linguistic items *first*, *another* and *finally* signal that the writer intends to fulfill his promise in the text.

The following example illustrates the category of *reporting*, in which the writer detaches himself from the propositions in his text in order to evaluate them later in the same text:

(V member) Both Mountford (1975) and Jones (1974) attempt to describe academic written discourse in terms of an exchange structure model developed for spoken classroom discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard).

(D member) Unfortunately, written discourse is characterized by the absence of speaker-change, and in consequence there is no structural basis for decision-making, e.g. (Cooper, 1982:405)

Here the writer first introduces a view about the structure of academic written discourse attributed to Mountford and Jones and then, through the lexical item *unfortunately*, he introduces his evaluation of it, presenting a contrasting view. This way, *prediction* is one type of intratextual interaction which organizes the relations between the several components of the text (Meurer, forthcoming).

In broad terms, it seems that intratextual interaction encompasses both the combination of form and function leading the reader to recognize not only the writer's intentions but also text structure through the identification of linguistic features expressed in different text types. The perception of this interaction of signals within the text constitutes the basis of discovering the structure of the text.

### *Interaction as a dialogue between readers and writers*

Hoey (1983) also suggests that the identification of a textual pattern can be done by the projection of a text into a dialogue i.e. by regarding a monologue as a form of a dialogue between the reader and the writer. According to this view, the reader matches the clauses and connects them in logical sequences by means of questions. The reader asks questions based on linguistic signals and repetition,

and on the examination of the content of the clauses and of the context in which they are used. Matching and logical sequence relations are viewed as forms of abstractions from the questions a writer anticipates and seeks to answer for the reader at particular points in his text such as How?, Why?, what for?, what happened next?, How does X differ from Y?, etc.

But in interacting with the text all readers do not always create expectations which may be translated into questions. What the reader does is make predictions about the content to follow based on cultural and linguistic expectations about the type of discourse found and based on what has previously been said in the text. Hoey's (ibid) describing this phenomenon shows that in the process of text comprehension, the reader recognizes the relations between clauses that the writer is implying. The reader is also able to guess or predict what questions asked by himself are going to be answered in the text.

In trying to find the answers to his questions or to confirm his expectations, the reader scans the sentences in the text. In scanning a sentence, he can: (1) recognize the sentence as answering his question/expectation, (2) recognize the sentence as answering another unanticipated question/expectation; and (3) may still not recognize the sentence as answering any anticipated question. He uses intratextual interaction to relate to what came before in the text. When the reader finds unrelated signals to his anticipated question/expectation, he then retrospectively recreates the question to be answered. Thus, what helps the reader to make predictions or confirm that his/her expectations have been met in the text is the writer's use of signaling. These signals reduce the inferential role of the reader to a certain extent, by making clause relations explicit.

The writer's use of signaling also helps the reader to perceive the text structures such as problem-solution, general-particular, hypothetical-real, etc. adopted in the text.

To illustrate the process of how the reader interacts with the text according to the perspective of interaction as a form of dialogue, let us examine the example presented on page 4, in which the writer uses explicit lexical signals to guide to perceive the relations between the clauses and sentences of the text and to identify the problem-solution structure. During the text comprehension process, the reader may ask broad questions such as: What is the problem? How have they solved the problem?, What are the results of the solution? and also narrow questions such as: Why did two factors hamper the search for other worlds?, What did the slight differences show?, etc. The answers for these questions can be easily found through the recognition of signals used by the writer, *hampered, problem, got round, using high-resolution spectroscopy, slight differences, showed*, etc. and through the interpretation of the relations between clauses. Thus this view of interaction brings written discourse closer to spoken interaction in which the writer is seen as person involved in a dialogue with his or her audience and the text is seen as a result of what the reader creates through a dialogue with the writer.

## CONCLUSION



I have attempted to show, through the approaches reviewed in this paper, that written texts are essentially interactive. These approaches attempt to respond to the question of how interaction is implemented and recognized in written discourse. Despite the different principles guiding each approach, there are interrelated aspects which include clause relations, predictions, signaling and repetition as comprising part of the interaction between clauses and groups of clauses which create meaning in the text.

An analysis of the approaches shows that interaction for some linguists is the combination of the interactive features of the text and also the mechanics by which a written text is produced, i.e., how the text is structured on the grounds of major categories and predictive signals (Hoey, Winter, Tadros). Interaction is also related to the process of how a text is converted into a dialogue between reader and writer (Hoey).

It is worth adding that, although these approaches emphasize different aspects of the text, they are not in any sense contradictory. Such approaches are complementary in that they help the reader to perceive the semantic relations that organize the discourse through linguistic signals.

This paper represents only a review of several approaches to how interaction is realized in written text. The discussion of this issue is still speculative and more research is needed to respond to how interaction is to be recognized in written text and how the writers orient their readers to perceive both the microstructure (clause relations, linguistic signals, etc.) and macrostructure (global organization) of texts.

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# Developing writing through self-awareness

Heloisa Maria Fiuza Boxwell  
Sidney Pratt  
Susan Harris de Melo

Every time I write I just panic! I get sick, really. The whole process of writing, from the choice of topic until the conclusion is a torture for me. I get so anxious in front of my paper that nothing seems to come to mind.

## INTRODUCTION

Our experience with the RSA/UCLES Certificate and Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE) and (DOTE) in the Northeast of Brazil, shows that many learners, even with a good command of oral English, find writing a scary, frightening and frustrating experience.

This paper reports on a series of initiatives taken to help participants of a COTE course overcome their writing blocks and improve their writing skills through a lot of practice, self-reflection on causes of difficulties and mainly through the acceptance of writing as a thinking and developmental process.

Our initiatives were based on the assumption that the difficulties our participants faced were not due lack of knowledge of English but rather to lack of experience in using writing as a medium of communication. This point was emphasized by most of the participants when reporting on their previous writing experiences both in English and in their mother tongue.

The same problem had also been observed on a previous course where participants had serious difficulties in coping with their course papers and written exams. This observation together with the clear needs expressed by the COTE course participants led us to decide for a heavier writing component on the syllabus.

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## THE INITIATIVES

### *Journal Writing*

Our main concern was to lead participants to reflect on their own learning difficulties. We did not want to be prescriptive in terms of telling them what to do. We wanted them to perceive their own difficulties and to find solutions for their writing problems. With this in mind, we introduced *journal writing*<sup>1</sup> as a key component in the course. These journals, in the form of "reflective summaries", were done regularly by the participants with three objectives in mind: a) to give participants the opportunity to learn to enjoy writing by doing it in a more spontaneous, relaxed and purposeful way; b) to encourage self-reflection on their learning experiences; c) to give us on-going feedback on the COTE course.

### *Process Writing*

Secondly, participants were introduced to the concept of *process writing*<sup>2</sup> and given plenty of opportunities to experience it through a series of activities and workshops designed to suit their needs.

One of the needs identified had to do with their difficulties in coping with coherence and logical organization of ideas. This was felt quite strongly when participants began to write their COTE assignments. Their problem was not so much related to WHAT to say, as they were quite well informed and experienced in their field, but to HOW to say WHAT they wanted in a coherent and clear way.

The use of diagrams, issue trees and mind maps proved to be particularly useful in this respect. One such activity was suggested by Flower (1985). By analyzing the differences between the reader's tree and the writer's intended tree (See Figure 1), our writers could perceive the importance of text organization and the need for logic and clarity.

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<sup>1</sup> By journal writing we mean the same thing as diary writing, that is, *an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal*. (Bailey & Ochsner (1983)

<sup>2</sup> *Process Writing engages students in the creative process as well as helping them to understand the conventions involved in written communication. This enabling' approach involves a collaborative effort between teacher and students, breaking down classroom barriers and engaging both parties as writers and critical readers* (White & Arndt, 1991).

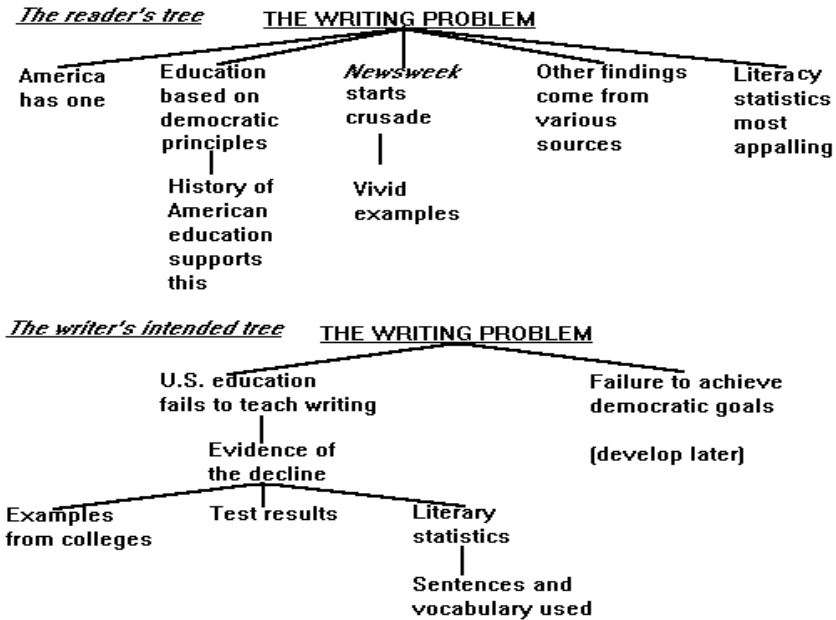


Figure 1 — The reader's tree<sup>3</sup>

*Problem identification, analysis and reformulation.*

As part of our endeavor to help participants become better writers, we used their own papers, i.e. the assignments they wrote for the COTE course, as a source for problem identification, analysis and reformulation. These analyses were done in class, with participants working in groups or in pairs, involved in activities such as the following:

**TEXT ONE**

"Pair and group work take an important role in the speaking development in the learning process. First of all, it gives the students opportunities to express themselves using those structures they have learned. When the teacher isn't the center of the lesson, students are more likely to speak, therefore, there will be a good interaction between them. In addition, it increases students talking time in class, consequently, more opportunities for them to acquire the language and use it creatively. The more they speak the more they feel secure and motivated to produce language. They shy ones are less likely to be inhibited because they will not be the center of the activity in front of the whole class. Normally, they don't like to be observed (by everybody) and be corrected by the teacher in front of the class. Moreover, the eye contact facilitates their involvement in the conversation maybe because it looks more realistic and natural."

**TASK 1 (in pairs)**

<sup>3</sup> The trees represent the opening paragraph of a text entitled "The Writing Problem". The writer had intended to focus on how American education was failing to teach writing. He wanted to use some facts to support the idea that skills had declined. All the reader saw, however, was the facts, which appeared as a list in the tree designed by the reader (Flower, 104).

- Identify advantages.
- Improve by dividing and sequencing the advantages more clearly.

## ONE ANSWER

Pair and group work take an important role in the speaking development in the learning process. There are many advantages connected with the use of pair and group work for speaking activities. First of all pair and group work activities give students opportunities to express themselves in a less artificial way. During these kind of activities the conversation becomes more realistic and natural, giving them opportunities to acquire the language and use it creatively. Therefore pair and group work activities increase students talking time. Finally, the students are close to their listeners and have eye contact with them so group and pair work help build up confidence, autonomy, independence, and socialization.

The emphasis on analysis and the constant concern for thinking things through gradually led participants to get used to introspection and self-reflection. This "thinking things through" was done not only through discussions with peers but also individually when they were asked to write their reflective summaries or to write about their teaching/learning experiences. The comments below illustrate the usefulness of this practice:

Last session we were given some extracts from students' assignments and our task was to underline the parts which were not very clear and try to rewrite it in a better way. I consider this exercise an excellent one, as it enables us to see the most common errors we make when writing a piece of work. The fact that it was actually extracted from our essays also gives room for more insight and deeper reflection.

To conclude, I believe that more activities as the one we had yesterday should be introduced in our course because if we understand what causes a mistake and how it ends up in our final draft we are a great step forward on the way to producing good pieces of writing.

### *Self-evaluation*

Another initiative dealing with analysis and reflection had to do with self-evaluation. The comments below were written in response to questions given to participants two weeks after they handed in the second written assignment on error analysis. They received the assignments back with no correction and answered the following questions (Cf. Leki, 1990):

- What did you like best (other than the topic) about what you have written?
- Was any part particularly easy or hard to write?
- What did you feel the least sure of in what you have written?

- What was the most important think that you wanted (your reader) to find out (or see) from reading your paper?
- What would you change in your paper if you had more time?

Here is one illustrative answer:

If I had more time I would probably change something, because every time I read my drafts I ask myself questions like these: Is it clear for the reader? What can I change for better understanding? What can I add and develop?

*The written and spoken modes*

Having noticed that participants tended to write very much as they spoke, and, in some cases used language that was not appropriate for an academic paper (or a COTE course assignment), a session was planned to help them see some of the differences between the written and spoken mode. Contrastive pairs of texts like the ones below<sup>4</sup> were used for analysis and discussion:

WRITTEN (TEXT A)	SPOKEN (TEXT B)
Every previous visit had left me with a sense of the futility of further action on my part.	Whenever I'd visited there before I'd ended up feeling that it would be futile if I tried to do anything more.

In these discussions particular attention was given to the appropriate use of syntax and to questions of lexical density.<sup>5</sup>

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main points observed as a result of the initiatives taken in the course were:

*Self-confidence*

The participants' attitude to writing changed from one of fear and anxiety to self-confidence. While at the beginning of the course they were reluctant to

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<sup>4</sup> Source: M.A.K. Halliday, *Spoken and Written Language*, OUP, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> According to Halliday (1989, p. 61), written language displays a much higher ratio of lexical items to total running words.

A piece of writing is an object (Hence *visit, sense, futility, action* in Text A). When you talk, you are doing; so when you represent by talking you say that something happened or something was done (Hence *had visited, had ended up feeling, tried to do*, in Text B)

expose themselves through their texts, and were very self-conscious about making mistakes, as the course progressed they became more relaxed and willing to accept risks as part of their learning process.

... I came to the conclusion that I have improved a lot: I'm not so afraid as I used to be; I gained more confidence; and although I have a lot to study and to practice, I know that I'm able to write...

...used to be very embarrassed of making mistakes and this ... hindered my development in this specific area, I used to avoid writing so that I would not be exposed to ridicule for not being able to write well...

This increase in self-confidence resulted both from practice and from the reflections they made through their journals. We think that this was a major factor which contributed to their writing development.

#### *Awareness*

Participants still have a long way to go in terms of their writing development but the fact that they are aware of their difficulties is definitely a necessary condition for further progress and growth.

I didn't get a good grade, but after the correction I could see what to do to improve my way of writing. I realized that first I had to organize my ideas and not simply jot down whatever came in my mind...

Learners became more aware of areas for improvement. Among other things, they have learned that writing requires more than minimal syntactic and lexical control of the language. They have also become aware of the need for organization and logical development of ideas.

#### *Need for instruction*

The combined feedback received from the participants and our own observations as tutors showed very clearly that there is an urgent need to put writing on the ELT learner's agenda even in situations where it is normally assumed to be unnecessary as in the case of these advanced learners. Perhaps the greatest lesson learned is that writing can not be taken for granted. It has to be taught. And when we say "taught" we do not mean this in a descriptive way but through critical and constructive interaction with our learners.

#### *Classroom effect*

The feedback received from participants suggest that "the learning to write" experience will have a highly beneficial backwash effect in their own



classrooms. They will certainly be better equipped to help their learners with their writing.

I'll be able to show [my students] that they can write in English and that they can improve their writing skills through enjoyable activities.

I am much more aware of what is happening in my teaching and in my students' learning, and I think I have better ways to overcome some difficulties in my teaching.

### *Educational development*

The skills and abilities participants developed through writing in English will also be useful when writing in Portuguese. Having had many opportunities to reflect on their knowledge and capabilities, they have become more confident and aware of what they can do not only to improve their writing but more importantly their learning abilities.

The authors of this paper hope that the initiatives reported in this paper can serve as a motivation for further investigation on the teaching and learning of writing. Our work is by no means conclusive.

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## Poem writing — Writing poems

(and being a story-writer, having a fling at choreography, enjoying life,  
having a nice time in class, sharing feelings)

Viviane Horbach

Poetry, as the representation and expression of feelings, may give the notion that only people who master a given language can really write poems. Not necessarily so. Teachers of languages have been doing some interesting activities and experiments concerning writing poems, mainly teachers of foreign languages. But we cannot enter the classroom and announce: "Folks, today we're gonna write some nice poems." This would frighten even the most courageous and daring student in class. (The notion that only true genius can accomplish poem writing is embedded in our psyche in such a way that we are scared to death when somebody comes up and says: "Let's write some poems today.") Definitely, we have to build the right atmosphere so that we can have our students write some poems. We have to seduce our students into doing something. Besides, the students' own feelings have to be dealt with, and the teacher should be able to bring them forth. And to use a metaphor, like a cat stalking on his velvet paws. But not on a frightening basis.

How can this be achieved?

There's nothing like using music to create the right kind of atmosphere so that students may feel relaxed.<sup>6</sup> What cannot be left aside is that a creative process such as poem writing is 90% based on expressing emotions. Emotions that have to be transmuted into words... which are going to have a rhythm of their own. Again, the teacher leads, smoothing the path, and just helps when asked. Most of the times, the teacher is a mere observer. But what observations can she make!

Since there is a limit of space, we have to limit ourselves just to transcribe some of the activities that were done at our workshop, activities that either used music as a starting point or the participants' own observations and feelings and sensations.

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<sup>6</sup>This idea derives from the suggestopedia approach. For further references, see Dianne Larsen-Freeman's *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1986.

Another vital point: after each activity is completed, some evaluation is in need. However, this evaluation does not presume evaluating what has been produced, individually or in group, but the activity in itself, how the participants felt while engaged in it. This procedure helps develop a feeling of wholeness and minimizes the anxiety level on the part of the students while using a second or foreign language.

The activities presented below are by no means original but have been borrowed from different sources and adapted to suit our own classroom needs. And without much ado, let's have them.

## EXPERIMENT # 1

**Materials:** a tape, a tape-recorder, paper, pens and pencils

**Level:** poem writing — from basic levels on (depending on the group, even by the middle of the basic course); creating a narrative — from intermediate on.

**Suggested kind of music:** without lyrics, or a very strange language (Gaelic sounds good). Enya, Kitaro, Philip Glass, Cocteau Twins (to mention a few) are composers whose instrumental music suits this activity perfectly well. Vivaldi's *The four seasons* can be used in case no teenager in class knows this piece. But it can be easily recognized as 'classical music.' This activity works best when the piece of music sounds different, unknown, eerie even.

**Language functions:** narrating; asking questions; asking for clarification; sharing information; describing feelings; editing; writing poetry and a narrative.

**Procedures:** (1) ask students to sit in a comfortable position. Encourage them to close their eyes. Tell them that they are going to listen to some music and, while listening, they have to imagine where they are, what they can see, feel. The music has to be like a movie unfolding in front of their inner eyes. (2) Play the musical piece for some time — one or two minutes at the most. (3) Lower the sound so that it almost fades in the background. Tell students — in a very calm voice — that now they are supposed to write down any words that come to their heads that are related to the emotions they have felt (poem writing) or the 'inner movie' they've seen (narrative writing) while the music is played again for some time, say some 20 minutes. (4) Students write their "poems" (they are not told yet what the activity surmounts to) or "stories."<sup>7</sup> (5) After finishing writing, they have to review their writing — check spelling vocabulary. They may ask each other questions, the teacher, whoever. (6) After individual work, they form small groups (not more than 4) and tell the others their inner visions and how they felt. Also, they have to imagine what kind of music they have heard, who composed it, when,

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<sup>7</sup>In case this is supposed to be a poem writing activity for mid-basic students tell them to write some ideas only. They can write disconnected sentences. Or just words.

a possible title. (7) Give them the musical reference. (8) Students discuss some more: the musical reference may alter their first impressions. (9) If there is time and willingness on the part of the students, they can copy their edited poems on a large piece of paper using different colors and display them on the classroom walls and read aloud their stories or each one takes a classmate's poem or story home to edit and correct. They have to bring an edited and corrected draft to class and hand it in with the original to the teacher. In case some evaluation might be done, the grade can be given on the correct draft. The original may receive comments like 'interesting idea,' or the like. (9) Students receive their original uncorrected drafts. (10) Evaluation of the activity either just after step 8 or step 9, but then it is a different day with different emotions...

## EXPERIMENT # 2 <sup>8</sup>

**Materials:** note pads, pens and pencils.

**Level:** from end of basic on.

**Situation:** one needs a sunny day to do this. It involves going outdoors.

**Language functions:** expressing emotions; describing; discussing feelings.

**Procedure:** (1) Students are just invited to go outside and take a walk for some 20 minutes observing the ground, shadows, forms, colors. Teacher does not have necessarily to go outside with students. (2) After the given time expires students have to return to class and, without talking too much, they have to set on paper their impressions of the shadows, what the shadows make them think and feel. (3) Teacher tells them that some editing might be in demand since they cannot express ideas in a paragraph form: their sentences can be nominal (not using verbs), each idea or word on a separate line. At this moment, students may realize they writing poems. (4) Either each student gives a title to a her/his poem, or poems are swapped around to be titled. (5) There follows the evaluation of the activity. (6) Some students may even try to write some poems afterwards. It is worth the experiment and experience.

## EXPERIMENT # 3

**Materials:** tape and a tape-recorder.

**Level:** From sheer beginners on

**Language functions:** non-verbal for beginners; expressing feelings, arguing; reaching a consensus; sharing information and feelings; planning a choreographical piece

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<sup>8</sup>This is something I learned with an American Teacher, James Martin, while I was an undergraduate student at UFRGS.

**Procedure:** (1) Tell students they will listen to some piece of music. Do not give them any information related to the musical piece. (2) Students listened to selected piece of music and, after some minutes (from 3 to 10), they should tell their classmates, in a small group, the feelings they felt while the musical piece was played on. (3) Tell the big group that they now have to create a choreography for this specific musical piece. They can use only body language or gestures (the native language should be allowed) but spoken language is expected from mid-basic students on. (4) They form different groups so that each one has to tell a different group (or partner) the ideas they had. Note that they have to discuss not only movements but colors, light, story-line as well. (5) If there are willing students, the group can put up a show/ perform the specific piece of music.

**Musical suggestions:** similar to experiment # 1.

#### EXPERIMENT # 4

**Materials:** board. (One can use a picture, a deformed projected slide — out of focus, whatever suits the teacher's imagination and resources available.) Pencils and pens.

**Level:** from end of basic on.

**Language functions:** expressing; describing; discussing feelings.

**Procedure:** (1) teacher starts with a semantic field. Let's say ROSE. What images students have of a ROSE. Colors linked to a rose. What ideas these colors connote (for example, red = passion, white = purity, innocence; pink = naiveté, etc.). When one gives and receives roses. Why. How people feel when takes place. (2) Students form small groups (not more than 5 per group) and discusses some more about a ROSE. (3) They have to write their ideas down but are told not to write in a paragraph form. Teacher can suggest writing the ideas down using the sheet in different angles. A title should be given. (4) A clean draft is made. (5) Teacher collects the drafts (if there are few groups, the teacher has somewhat corrected language programs; otherwise, drafts should be collected and corrected before the next step takes place). (6) Students make a bigger copy or draft using felt-tip pens and a large piece of paper. Different colors are encouraged. (7) The poster poems are displayed on the walls for appreciation. (8) Evaluation of the activity.

In case the teacher use a slide projector, the following steps can be followed: <sup>9</sup> (1) "Discuss with the class how words can express or describe emotions. Brainstorm vocabulary of emotions and feelings. (...) Tell the class that they will have "the opportunity to use some of these words." (2) Project a slide of a famous painting or just a landscape — but out of focus. Students take notes of

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<sup>9</sup> This is based on Marjorie Baudains' " Feelings and pictures", Recipes for tired teachers. SION, Christopher, ed. Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley, 1985.115p. p.14

their feelings and impressions. (3) Ask students to form small groups to share their impressions. They should also try to give a title to the painting or slide. (4) Show them the real slide (not out of focus now) and allow them try to modify their impressions and feelings (They have to take note of these). (5) They form different groups to share extra and new information. (6) Each student is going to write about one of her/ his classmate's emotions while looking at the projected slide. They can allow their imagination soar since they got some information verbally but it may prove insufficient. (7) Papers are collected and re-distributed for further correction at home in terms of coherence and cohesion. (8) Draft copies are submitted to teacher for further correction.

### EXPERIMENT # 5 <sup>10</sup>

**Materials:** a xeroxed story/ article/ news item; paper, pens.

**Level:** from intermediate on <sup>11</sup>

**Language functions:** narrating; answering questions; describing; inferring; persuading; reaching a consensus.

**Procedure:** (1) Before class, prepare a set of questions which can be asked orally, written on the board, mimeographed.

The questions should be typical comprehension questions students normally have to provide answers for. (2) In class, ask students the questions, one at a time. They have to write answers giving some details. Tell them that they may change opinions later, nothing is definite yet. It is just a note-taking process. (3) Ask them to form and compare their notes and ideas. Hand out the questions. (4) The group can create a group story or each one work on her/ his own text but sharing information. They may ask the teacher for eventual help. (5) They have to give a title to their story or stories. (6) Have them swap the stories so that they correct somebody else's text. (7) Evaluation of the activity. (8) Students submit their corrected draft, which may or not be evaluated by the teacher. Further correction may be in demand. (9) After collecting the students' stories, the original story or text is handed out. In case there are reading comprehension exercises, these can be done at home, and corrected in another class. Also, this provides more material for discussions.

In case questions are put on the board, have the students work in pairs or small groups (up to 4) to answer orally the questions. But they should take some notes to remember their ideas. Next class (this kind of discussion takes a lot of time!), they have to bring their written story (time compensation), read somebody

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<sup>10</sup> This is based upon Jean-Paul Creton's "Do-it-yourself comprehension". In Recipes for tired teachers. SION, Christopher, ed. Reading, Massachussets, Addison-Wesley, 1985. 115pp, p. 26-7. The selected story is the well-known story by O. Henry, "Hearts and Hands".

<sup>11</sup> Depending on the chosen text, even mid-basic students can do it.

else's, and take that one or a third one home for a clean and corrected draft. Follow the same procedures.

### QUESTIONS FOR EXPERIMENT # 5

1. Describe the woman who enters a train going to Boston. Her name is Miss Fairchild.

Are there other passengers in that specific coach? How many? Males? Females?

2. Who calls the woman's attention while she is looking for a seat? Why? Describe this passenger.

3. How does this passenger react when Miss Fairchild addresses him? Why do you have this impression?

4. Describe the other man sitting by Mr. Easton. How are these two men similar or different? What kind of professions do they have?

5. One of them wears handcuffs. Which one? Why? What had that man probably done?

6. What kind of relationship was between Mr. Easton and Miss Fairchild?

Why was it not pursued on Mr. Easton's part?

7. Would Miss Fairchild like moving west? Why?

8. How does the supposed criminal interrupt the conversation? Why?

9. In your opinion, Who was the criminal? Mr. Easton or the other man? Why?

### EXPERIMENT # 6

**Material:** xeroxed sheet of a paragraph.

**Level:** Intermediate (working with hyphenated modifiers).

**Language functions:** expressing opinions, planning a story; arguing; reaching a consensus; organizing a text.

**Procedure:** (1) teacher hands out a paragraph that might give some initial information. (2) Students form groups of 5 at the most to read and discuss ideas. (3) Students plan the continuation of the story and finish it, orally. (4) Individually (based on the former discussion) they write their texts. They should be encouraged to employ hyphenated modifiers whenever possible.<sup>12</sup> (5) Texts can be swapped around to be taken home and proofread, improved and corrected.

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<sup>12</sup>This structure presents some difficulties to our Brazilian students. It takes them time to use it. That is why any extra written activity may help.

Students should bring the proofread, improved and corrected text next class to be handed in. (6) Teacher corrects and evaluates the texts. <sup>13</sup>

### THE TEXT:

00-0 (Zero/ zero/ zero), an abominable mystery solving detective, decided to go to the movies to watch a bloody-curdling movie when he received a nicely written message from his pregnant girlfriend. Because of the letter, he began to think about the reasons that had led him to become a detective. Then he realized that his girlfriend wanted his help to solve a mindboggling problem, that is, how to get rid of an unwanted begotten child.

### EXPERIMENT # 7

**Material:** a xeroxed text

**Level:** intermediate (working with hyphenated modifiers)

**Language functions:** arguing; reaching a consensus; planning a text; writing a story.

**Procedure:** as in the previous experiment (# 6).

### TEXT:

Once upon a time, there was an old king who lived in an old castle badly built. (1) This king, who had sired eleven sons and one daughter, decided to take a walk in the woods near the castle. It was a sunny day. There, in the woods empty of large animals, (2) he met a woman, who looked really weird. This woman was a witch: she was not really ugly but her eyes were always squinting. (3) She had a peculiar habit of talking: she never looked at the other person's eyes and her toes never stopped digging the ground.

Anyway, the witch, whose name was Hazel, told the old king that if he did not take care of his castle, that looked like something out of a Dracula story, or control the waste that was being emptied in the small river near the castle, she would set a spell on the king's sons, who looked really fine and looked handsome. (4) Hearing this, the king asked the witch what she would do to his daughter, who was just 14 years old.

1. Why was the castle badly built?

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<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to grade the student who proofread/ improved/ corrected the text. In this case, the original draft should be handed in, too. It gives the weaker learners an opportunity to improve/ have their self-confidence in English built a bit more.



2. Why were the woods without large animals?
3. Was she always squinting because she was a bit myopic? Or because she was a bad woman? Or she thought the old king good-looking and was winking at him (but she had never learned how to wink properly)?
4. What kind of spell would she set on the boys? Why didn't the witch say she would set a spell on the king's daughter too? Does she hate boys? Is she partial to girls?

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PART FIVE  
THE READING PROCESS AND BEYOND



Shakespeare & Co, Paris  
(Original photo by Ubiratan Paiva de Oliveira)



# University students' comprehension and production of cohesive textual relations in reading English as L1 and EFL

Lilian Mary Huggins de Sá-Campos

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to compare the performance of samples of Brazilian and American university students in reading and in giving meaning to a text in the form of a cloze test from which every ninth word was deleted (see Method).

The comparison between the Brazilian and American samples of students is justified by the fact that EFL teachers and teachers-to-be (here considered ADVANCED students of EFL) are generally expected to have native-like command of the language they teach (Stevens, 1983).

The ability to recover functional words and lexical items in cloze texts is considered an indication of the readers' general capacity to deal with reduced-redundancy, and of the degree in which they can maintain or reestablish cohesion in incomplete written discourse (Bowen, Madsen & Hilferty, 1985). As Brown (1988) says, quoting Darnell (1968) and Oller (1972), the cloze procedure can be considered a measure of overall language proficiency, and that is why we decided to use this kind of test as a preliminary step for our studies, which are continued by the analysis of essays written by the same research subjects, as a second step which is not part of this paper.

If EFL teachers do not have the appropriate proficiency in dealing with text cohesion, they will not be able to handle their students' linguistic and conceptual difficulties in understanding or in establishing cohesive discourse. This problem has generated the questions for which, in this study, we seek to provide answers. The questions are the following:

- when compared with American university students, do Brazilian teachers and teachers-to-be, enrolled in university courses, demonstrate native-like

command of the English language regarding the recovery of grammatical and lexical items deleted in a text?;

- do the different cultural and linguistic 'schemata' of Brazilian and of American speakers have any influence upon their ability to recover specific elements deleted from texts?

This study relies on both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. It includes statistical tests to measure the performance of the samples and to establish the significance of the differences among the groups and sub-groups here examined. The qualitative analyses are based upon the interpretation of the linguistic findings and attempt to provide better understanding of the linguistic, conceptual, and contextual elements that contribute to the results. The final results are expressed according to the requirements of both approaches. In this paper we try to explain why some items in the cloze test have obtained a very low percentage of correct answers from both native and non-native speakers of English.

## METHOD

In order to answer the questions that constitute the focus of this research, a simple design has been adopted: cross-sectional study, intact groups, use of appropriate statistical tests to detect the significance of the differences between groups, and a qualitative linguistic analysis (meant to provide insights about the quantitative results).

### *Subjects*

- 24 Brazilian students enrolled in teacher preparation courses at the Fluminense Federal University, 11 of them at the graduate levels of Master and Specialization Programs, and 13 at the end of their undergraduate TTC course. In some measures, this sample constitutes one group, and in some other measures it is viewed as two groups;
- 24 American freshmen from different study areas enrolled in "Writing" courses at the Northern Arizona University.  
The samples were not randomly formed, thus constituting natural or 'intact' groups (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). The subjects were all willing to participate in the research work.

### *Variables*

The dependent variable is the construct *proficiency in reading*, operationalized as *answers to 47 items deleted in a cloze test*. The independent variables are 'nationality' (operationalized as LANG 1 and LANG 2 to express Portuguese and English languages respectively) and 'level of education' (operationalized as GR, for Master and Specialization courses, and UG for undergraduate TTC courses). Data related to potential moderator variables, like sex, age, years of study of English and of professional experience, were recorded in a questionnaire for further use in the global research, of which this paper is just a preliminary part.

### *Procedures*

As a basis for the investigation of the subjects' reading proficiency, a cloze test constituted of two texts of different genres (mystery story and article on sports) was devised. The two texts were arbitrarily chosen according to the criterion that they might represent themes normally read with ease by university students, both native and non-native speakers of English. Every ninth word was deleted from the texts, under the assumption that a sequence of eight words between two blanks is sufficient to permit an efficient recovery of meaning (Bowen, Madsen, Hilferty, 1985). The subjects did the test in normal and supposedly anxiety-free classroom conditions, as they knew that they would not be graded. The exercise was completed in 30 minutes.

### *Data analysis*

The quantitative aspect of the research was developed through the following steps after the correction of the cloze tests: (1) recording of results in the program QUATTRO PRO, which performed the item analysis by calculating the means and percentages of correct and wrong items filled by each subject and by the groups; (2) testing of the significance of the differences among the groups, by means of the Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance (which assumes that small, non-randomized groups are independent and that they can be considered random samples of their respective populations); (3) use of Ryans's statistical procedure to locate the groups that might be the source of significant differences detected by the Kruskal-Wallis test (as recommended by Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991).

The qualitative study is an interpretation of both American and Brazilian subjects' linguistic performance. A subdivision was made into grammatical and lexical items for comparisons. Although the answers to all the deleted items have been submitted to interpretation for the global research, in this paper we analyze only some of the items qualified as LOW CORRECT — that is, the ones that received 53% (or less) of correct answers — 53% represents the mean percentage of correct answers obtained by the group that had the lowest scores.

### *Results*

### *Quantitative analysis*

The item analysis shows the following percentages of correct answers:

LANG 2 UG (Am.) and LANG 1 UG+GR (Br.) : 68.28%

LANG 1 UG + GR (Braz.only) :61.715

LANG 2 UG (Am. only): 78.42%

LANG 1 (Braz. subdivided): UG = 53.0% and GR =66.07%.

As the percentages found in the comparison between Brazilian GR and UG deserved closer attention, the sample was subdivided for statistical studies. The Kruskal-Wallis test of variance was applied and the following result was obtained:

LANG 1 UG X LANG 1 GR X LANG 2 UG.

H= 11.30777 > 5.991 (df=2)

significant at p.05.

This result permitted the rejection of the null hypothesis. To locate the source of the difference, the Ryan statistical procedure was applied and presented a significant result just in the following case:

LANG 2 UG X LANG 1 UG

Z=-4.040 > 2.13 (df=1)

significant at p.05.

The above mentioned significant difference in performance, located in the group of the Brazilian teachers-to-be, enrolled in the final courses of their undergraduate TTC program, indicates that this sub-group still requires studies in order to improve reading and linguistic skills. This fact highlights the importance of the qualitative item analysis that follows.

### *Qualitative analysis*

The linguistic categories included in the items with the lowest percentages of correct answers are mentioned in the following list, together with word class and item number in the cloze test:

#### *LEXICAL ITEMS:*

Nouns: (20) result;(28) entertainment;(29) work;(33) quality; (39)  
tragedy);

Verbs: (17) given;(19) seen;(23) causes.

#### *GRAMMATICAL ITEMS:*

Prepositions:(44) on (=tennis court)

Conjunctions:(14) or ; (38) or

Adverbials:(10) somewhat; (37) more  
Personal pronoun:(13) he; (18) it;  
Verbal particle (tense indicator):(15) had.

From the list above, the following observations can be made: (1) there are as many lexical items as syntactical items included in the LOW CORRECT group of answers; (2) it is not possible to consider any specific grammatical category as the core of the LOW CORRECT group of answers; (3) to understand the importance of each item in the general performance of the Brazilian sample it is necessary to analyze each item in its textual and contextual setting. Some of the items qualified as LOW CORRECT in the performance of the Brazilian sample coincide as LOW CORRECT in the production of the American sample — these are items number 19, 20 and 23 (lexical items) and 13, 14, 15 and 37 (function words). As it can be observed, all the words, not only the ones that caused the low performance of both American and Brazilian subjects but also the ones mistaken just by the Brazilian sample, are supposedly part of the lexical and grammatical stored knowledge of foreign language students, even of the learners enrolled in intermediate level courses (i.e., below the TTC levels included in our study). The question that occurs to us is — why did native speakers and advanced EFL learners get mixed up in filling the blanks that required words as easy as the ones mentioned in the list above? The explanation can only be found at the level of the function of these words in the text. In this sense, it can be observed that, regarding the use of lexical verbs and nouns, both Americans and Brazilian subjects often recognized the category required in the blanks but made unacceptable options which showed understanding of the language structure but not of the subtleties of the meanings that the authors wanted to convey.

#### *Discussion and interpretation of the LOW CORRECT lexical items.*

- In the case of the noun ENTERTAINMENT (item 28 ...*bringing entertainment to the world of sports and sports to the world of entertainment*), the wrong options made by the Brazilians must have resulted from a clear intention of avoiding the use of a simple lexical repetition (see Hoey,1991); the respondents made efforts to retrieve from their stored lexicon a superordinate or a metaphorical element which might "contain" the word ENTERTAINMENT that they did not find proper to repeat. This might have been a good solution according to some conceptions of good style, but the options chosen to avoid repetition lacked accuracy (ex: GAMES, FUN, MEN, MILLIONS, NEWS, which were not accepted).
- Item 18, a second case of clear avoidance of repetition, was a challenge for both native and non-native speakers of English. The lexical item TRAGEDY (in *tragedy has followed tragedy*) used by just 2 Brazilian and 1 American respondents. However, the Americans in general were able to recover the

meaning of the sentence by using acceptable superordinate nouns, like SPORTS/ ATHLETES/CHAMPIONS, which covered most of the situations in the text, whereas many of the Brazilians found nonsensical solutions for this context by using unacceptable reference items and other prepositions, adverbs, and demonstratives (ex: tragedy has followed...on\ it\up\ his\too\us\him\down\ 0).

- It is interesting to mention that certain cultural aspects constitutive of the 'schemata' and of the stored lexicon of the American subjects must have influenced their choices, both of lexical items and of function words (see Carrell, 1988). In item 6, for example, the word used in the text was "patisserie". As this is a French word, several other English words could be accepted. Most of the Brazilians found just one acceptable substitute, SHOP, whereas the Americans, having internalized words specific of their own environment, used the substitutes BAKERY, DELICATESSEN, DELI, and CAFE, for they had a wider range of 'scenarios' and of words to retrieve from their stored lexicon. Another example of the influence of 'schemata' upon lexical usage is the somehow set expression TO GIVE HONOR WHERE IT IS DUE. The Americans properly filled the item in which GIVE should be used, whereas the Brazilians, ignoring this "chunk", had to look for a lexical verb to fit the idea (they chose unacceptable verbs like TAKE, EXPRESS, EMPHASIZE ). Also, as the second text is an essay on sports, the Americans were able to recognize references about the players well known in America, whereas the Brazilians could not make some guesses, as in the case of JUDICIAL\DIVORCE courts, which presupposes the knowledge of the fact that a famous tennis player had been "humiliated" in such courts. In this sentence(items 44 and 45, *champion ...ON the court...humiliated yet again in the divorce courts*), the lack of background knowledge led the Brazilians into a double failure related with the qualifiers DIVORCE\ JUDICIAL\ LEGAL, and the prepositions IN\ON when they preceded two different kinds of "courts").
- The lexical verb TO CAUSE (item 23 *...the virus that causes AIDS*), was mistaken both in meaning and in tense. It was mainly replaced by (IS)CALLED\ TRANSMITS\ HIDES\ IS \ HAS, all unacceptable answers, for these choices do not carry the precise meaning of cause\effect.
- In item 19, the expression *..seen the volume through the press* caused problems to both samples, for the verb to SEE is not used in this case to express its fundamental meaning. Except for the choices of TO RUN THROUGH and TO SEND THROUGH, almost 50% of the natives' options were not acceptable as well as most of the guesses made by the non-native speakers.

*Discussion of LOW CORRECT function words.*



- The pronoun HE, in item 13, which is one of the several anaphoric references in the text related with the subject of the first sentence, was frequently replaced by references to other antecedents by both Americans and Brazilians. The paragraph contains a sequence of six repetitions of anaphorical pro-forms and this must have caused in the readers included in our samples a feeling of unusual and monotonous repetition which they considered proper to avoid.
- The preposition ON (item 44 — *on the tennis court*) was mistaken for IN certainly because it was attracted by the next structure — *in the divorce courts*. The American sample established this difference with greater ease, but the Brazilians were misled by the use of IN + COURT in the same sentence.
- The conjunction OR (item 14 — *...method or order*) was not used by any native speaker and was used by just one Brazilian subject. The great majority of the respondents established coordination with AND, or else considered that the context required the preposition OF. The problem in this case is that the requirement of an alternative structure is not clear in the text. One can criticize 'method OR order', or one can criticize both. So, the percentage of correct answers in this item was very low (4.17%), but this performance, although influential in the quantitative analysis, does NOT represent, on the part of the Brazilian sample, a linguistic behavior typical of non-native speakers of English, for the American subjects also preferred to use coordination with AND.
- Item 15, LOW CORRECT in both samples, can be compared to the analysis of item 13 (anaphoric HE, in a long chain of references). The verbal particle HAD, as part of the past perfect tense in *...had lauded to the skies*, should fill a blank after the ellipsis of the pronoun HE. Most of the subjects filled the blank with the personal pronoun and forgot that the chain of verb tenses required HAD as part of the correct verb phrase. Again, the low percentage of correct answers provided in this item is not representative of a low understanding of the context - only three native speakers and four Brazilian subjects made the correct guess, but eleven natives and nine Brazilians used HE to replace the elliptical pronoun, which was unacceptable but made sense.

One interesting example can be found in *the reason for this lies...* (item 26), where the options "TELLING lies", "HIS lies", "THE lies", "PITY lies", "SORROW lies" show the misinterpretation of a verb form (from to lie) for a plural noun. In this item there was a balance of 66% and 62% of correct answers from Americans and Brazilians respectively. Although it is not a LOW CORRECT item, it is a good example of wrong guessing related simultaneously with syntactical and semantic aspects and with a quite unusual tendency (maybe specific of university students) to look for superordinate nouns.

#### *General observations.*

After deleting every ninth item in the selected texts, the researcher considered that the respondents would have a well balanced choice of word categories to fill the blanks with. However, it was observed during the first revision of the test that the mystery story was overcrowded with repetitions and chains of anaphoric references. This linguistic context seemed, then, easy enough for the respondents to understand, but the results show that this presupposition proved false, for the subjects kept trying to avoid producing so many repetitions, imagining that these would be an indication of poor style. The second text, on sports, was not considered easy by the researcher, for the recovery of several lexical items would depend on some kind of 'knowledge of the world'. In fact, the Brazilian sample missed the point in many items, maybe because this sample was constituted mostly of female subjects, who are not usually keen on sports. The American sample, which included several male subjects, reached 100% of correct answers in various items in this text, but, on the other hand, failed to answer properly several of the items in the first text that constituted anaphoric chains. The overall percentage of the native speakers' correct answers is higher than that of the non-natives because the former were able to offer a wider range of substitutes for several lexical items, which were acceptable and accepted (whereas the substitution of function words was not accepted). This fact demonstrates that the natives have greater ease to express concepts or facts in the native language by retrieving from their stored lexicon the element best suited for each situation whereas the non-natives, even when they seem to understand a situation, cannot find in their stored lexical knowledge the precise word to express a concept. However, on the whole, the sample of graduate Brazilian subjects, who are teachers already, did not lag behind the native speakers. The qualitative analysis of each item gives entire support to the quantitative results obtained in the statistical tests — our sample of Brazilian teachers enrolled in the graduate courses of English had almost the same problems as the native speakers in reestablishing cohesion in the chosen texts, mainly in the cases of long chains of anaphoric references or when the text presented some kind of ambiguity. On the other hand, the teachers-to-be, enrolled in the undergraduate courses, seem to be still somehow distant from native-like competence, at least in the reading of incomplete texts.

### *Conclusion and pedagogical suggestions*

It can be said that, in spite of the significant statistical difference between the groups LANG 2 UG, LANG 1 UG and LANG 1 GR, the interpretation of the answers to each item shows that the two Brazilian sub-groups of our sample often captured the essence of the messages and had a good feeling for the class of words required in the blanks of the cloze passages. Some of the wrong options made mainly by LANG 1 UG demonstrate a certain lack of richer 'schemata' in relation to foreign cultural patterns, and great variability in the errors caused by non-internalized lexical and syntactical elements to express certain concepts related

with foreign 'scenarios'. The variable 'level of (university) education' must have affected the results in this case. We can also hypothesize that the potential moderator variable 'sex', which was not controlled, might also have had some influence in the results obtained by the native speakers in text two.

In order to improve the performance of the EFL teachers-to-be included in our sample, and that of other groups that might be considered similar to our groups, it seems necessary that the university courses for the preparation of English language teachers include more specific kinds of practice for the expansion of lexical\cultural competence and more reflection upon certain interesting cases of reference, substitution, and ellipsis, which are important for the improvement of the studies on text cohesion and general text analysis. It is our belief that the efficiency of any syllabus depends on the degree that it includes multiple strategies aiming at the interaction of multiple skills (Sá-Campos, 1991). Formal linguistic studies can become part of the pleasure obtained in the process of reaching effectiveness in reading or in writing. Many researchers in the last decade (see Grabe, 1991; Devine, 1993; Eskey, 1991; Carrell, 1988; Leki, 1993) have developed theories that give support to our belief that linguistic practice (art of decoding), cognitive strategies, and activation of previous knowledge must interact if one wants to obtain the best results in a reading or a writing syllabus in the process of EFL teacher preparation .

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## APPENDIX

### *Cloze test*

Hercule Poirot was sitting at the breakfast table. At (HIS) right hand was a steaming cup of chocolate. ( HE) had always had a sweet tooth. To accompany (THE) chocolate was a brioche. It went agreeably (WITH) chocolate. He nodded his approval. This was from (THE) fourth shop he had tried. It was a Danish (PATISSERIE) but infinitely superior to the so-called French (ONE) nearby. That had been nothing less than (A) fraud. He was satisfied gastronomically. His stomach was (AT) peace. His mind was also at peace, perhaps (SOMEWHAT)too much So. He had finished his "magnum opus", (AN) analysis of great writers of detective fiction. He (HAD) dared to speak scathingly of Edgar Allan Poe, (HE) had complained of the lack of method (OR) order in the romantic outpourings of Wilkie Collins, (HAD) lauded to the skies two American authors who (WERE) practically unknown, and had in various other ways (GIVEN) honor where honor was due and sternly withheld (IT) where he considered it was not. He had (SEEN) the volume through the press, had looked upon the (RESULTS) and, apart from a really incredible number (OF) printer's errors, pronounced that it was good.

(Extracted from THE THIRD GIRL-Christie, A, Pocket Book, NY,1966)

When Magic Johnson told the world last year (THAT) he had tested positive for the virus that (CAUSES) AIDS, even those who could not tell (A) triple double from a Triple Crown felt a (SHARP) sense of loss. Much of the reason for (THIS) lies with Magic himself: bringing entertainment to the (WORLD) of sports and sports to the world of (ENTERTAINMENT),he had a rare gift for making hard (WORK) look like fun and miracles seem as easy (AS) a stroll down to the candy store. But (THERE) was something more to it than that. Magic, (IN) a sense, seemed to embody all the purest (QUALITIES) that attract us towards sports. Innocence. Enthusiasm. Joy. (THE) Olympic spirit at its best. If the world (OF) sports ever held those virtues, that time seems (A) distant memory. These days the sports news might (MORE) appropriately be found under Medicine, or Law, (OR) Business. In the past few months, tragedy has followed (TRAGEDY): the former heavyweight champion of the world (IS) serving six years in jail for rape; the most (FAMOUS) football player in the world is found to (BE) a cocaine addict; the five-time Wimbledon champion of (A) decade ago, a model of grace and poise (ON) the court, is humiliated yet again in the (DIVORCE) courts. Much of this is a reflection not (ON) the athletes themselves, but on those of us (WHO) would demand perfection of them.

(Adapted from TIME MAGAZINE — "The Magic of the Games", by P. Iyer, July, 27, 1992)



# Microetnografia da sala de aula de leitura em língua estrangeira

Márcia de Castro Fantini

## INTRODUÇÃO

Ao definir o nosso foco de pesquisa, optamos por observar dois pontos específicos, embora bastante relacionados. O primeiro refere-se a maneira como é feita a construção conjunta dos processos mentais desenvolvidos pelos leitores e professor, no contexto pedagógico do ensino da leitura em LE para fins acadêmicos, Inglês Instrumental. O segundo, focaliza especificamente, o treinamento da estratégia da metacognição no contexto citado.

## O CONTROLE DA METACOGNIÇÃO

O controle da metacognição, através do qual o leitor orienta conscientemente o seu processo de raciocínio, constitui-se em aspecto fundamental de um curso que pretende desenvolver a habilidade da leitura em LE, com ênfase no ensino de estratégias de leitura.

Neste contexto, entendemos metacognição como consistindo-se de dois tipos de conhecimento: o conhecimento das estratégias usadas para a aprendizagem através dos textos, e o controle que guia as ações do leitor, quando na leitura com propósitos diversos (Carrell, Pharis & Liberto, 1989 p. 650).

A habilidade de controlar, conscientemente, os processos mentais desenvolvidos durante a leitura permite que o leitor selecione e utilize no futuro, o mesmo raciocínio em situações semelhantes. Resultados de pesquisa demonstram que a instrução a respeito destes processos mentais não é suficiente para o desenvolvimento do controle da metacognição sendo necessário treinar a mesma como uma estratégia (Duffy, Roehler & Herrmann, 1988).

Carrell, Pharis & Liberto (op. cit) demonstraram ser este tipo de treinamento efetivo nos seus objetivos, embora variando em relação aos diferentes estilos individuais de aprendizagem e ao modo como a leitura é avaliada. Schmidt (1990) reforça esta linha de pensamento ao afirmar que o processamento consciente é uma condição necessária para um passo no processo da aprendizagem de línguas e é facilitativo em outros aspectos da aprendizagem, assumindo que tanto os processos conscientes como os inconscientes estejam envolvidos na aprendizagem de uma segunda língua.

## A INTERAÇÃO E A LEITURA EM SALA DE AULA.

A visão da leitura como sendo um processo solitário tem impedido que se dê à interação a importância que esta realmente tem na aprendizagem desta habilidade. Vygotsky (1978) defende que a aprendizagem de todas as habilidades que compõem a experiência humana é desenvolvida através do contato social com outras pessoas, sejam elas professores, colegas ou indivíduos mais experientes.

Tomando por base esta perspectiva vemos o desenvolvimento da aprendizagem e a evolução dos processos cognitivos superiores ocorrendo através de etapas sucessivas e recursivas. Na etapa inicial do desenvolvimento da habilidade da leitura, especificamente, o leitor orienta-se pelo objeto, "object regulation", quando ele é muito dependente do texto. Possuindo uma visão limitada e restrita desse material escrito, ele apoia-se muito na língua materna, decodifica palavra por palavra, sub-utiliza recursos extra-textuais, faz uso excessivo e inadequado do dicionário e apresenta uma postura passiva em relação ao processo da leitura.

Em uma segunda etapa, o leitor utiliza o apoio do instrutor ou colega, "other-regulation". Neste momento, ele já tem uma consciência parcial das estratégias facilitativas da leitura e já consegue atingir os objetivos com a ajuda do mediador. Nesta fase, ele se apropria conscientemente de novas estratégias.

Em uma terceira etapa, o leitor demonstra ser capaz de auto-regular-se, "self-regulation", durante a leitura. Ele já possui um bom conceito de si próprio como leitor, lê ativamente, faz uso de contextos variados para inferir significados e efetua uma leitura crítica.

## A PESQUISA

### *Sujeitos*

28 alunos de uma turma de Inglês Instrumental da Universidade de Brasília, cursando, em sua maioria, os primeiros semestres de diferentes cursos, tais como, Comunicação, Física, Estatística, Economia, Computação, Biologia,

Direito, etc. Com uma média de idade de 21 anos, e nível heterogêneo de conhecimento do Inglês, estes alunos pertencem a classe social que consegue ascender ao ensino superior público neste país.

### *Hipóteses Condutoras*

1. Os processos mentais (verbalizados) desenvolvidos durante a leitura serão demonstrados através de:

a) Questionamentos formais, elaborados ou estimulados pela professora, focalizando pontos específicos do texto.

b) Palavras de incentivo a colocações gerais sobre o tema da leitura ditas pela professora.

c) Intervenções de alunos no processo desenvolvido pela professora e/ou colega(s).

d) Questionamentos esclarecedores e diretos, formulados pelos alunos.

e) Retomadas, resumos e/ou conclusões elaboradas pelos alunos e/ou professora.

2. O interesse e a participação dos alunos nas discussões de sala de aula serão mais claramente observáveis quando:

a) A escolha do item ou ponto a ser focalizado for feita por um aluno, em contrapartida à escolha feita pela professora. Este fato se evidenciará através de um maior número de intervenções espontâneas.

### *Procedimentos de Coleta e Análise*

A observação das atividades de sala de aula foi feita durante cinco aulas, em um total de dez (10) horas de gravações em áudio e em vídeo. Utilizamos também anotações de campo, baseadas nas observações da pesquisadora, e informações coletadas através de entrevistas a alunos e professora e de comentários colocados nas sessões de visionamento.

As transcrições das falas seguiram o modelo utilizado por Bortoni & Lopes (1992) e a análise dos dados baseou-se nas propostas de Erickson, (1988, 1991), Erickson & Wilson (1982) e Hammersley & Atkinson (1983).

### *Anotações de Campo*

As atividades desenvolvidas na sala de aula são centradas, na maior parte do tempo, em material didático preparado pela equipe de professoras de Inglês Instrumental da UnB.

Para fins de análise, a unidade de trabalho foi delimitada em três grandes partes sequenciais - Introdução, Leitura do Texto e Finalização.

Na Introdução, o modo de interação segue basicamente os mesmos padrões. A professora atua como ativadora dos esquemas de conhecimento que

possam estar presentes na estrutura mental dos alunos. A participação segue o esquema Professor-Aluno(s)-Professor. A análise dos dados coletados nesta parte apresentou várias instâncias confirmatórias da hipótese 1, a maioria referindo-se ao item a), alguns ao item b) e poucos ao item e). Neste último caso, a retomada é sempre feita pela professora. A escolha do item a ser focalizado permanece com ela durante toda a sequência, demonstrando que nesta fase ela age como mediadora.

### *Transcrições das Gravações*

O exemplo a seguir foi retirado da Finalização. Nesta parte o objetivo dos exercícios é o de verificar a compreensão dos marcadores do discurso. O sinal (#) seguido de número e letra refere-se a instância confirmatória, número da hipótese e item assinalado, respectivamente.

Ex: 1 Sequência B - 18/02/92 (30.01)

P = Pesquisadora, A(s) = Aluno (s)  
(XXXX) = incompreensível

- P - Número 2 Malena. (lendo) He has **always** loved his wife.  
A1 - (lendo) Vandam had loved her then and he did now.  
P - OK acho que você fez uma pequena confusão (...) a entonação vai ser um pouquinho diferente. (lendo) Vandam had loved her **then** - (falando) esse then refere-se a que? (# 1a)  
A1 - Então  
P - Então, quando, naquela época, não é, ou seja, naquela época, quando ela estava/  
A1 - é eu pensei, eu fiquei em dúvida (XXX)  
P - **Não**, não, **now**, que quer dizer agora (XXX) é now, **agora**. He had loved her **then** when she was alive and he did **now** that she is dead, OK?  
A2 - (# 2a) Eu achei que no parágrafo aqui (...) Ela falou (todos voltam o olhar para a aluna) no parágrafo aqui (lendo) she said it was plebeian. He told her not to sound like a snob. She said she was a snob. (falando) so he loved her **then**, in that moment  
P - (# 1a) No momento em que ela disse que ela era uma snob?  
A2 - Não, apesar de ela ser uma snob/  
A3 - (# 1c) /Ele gostou da autenticidade dela, eu to falando assim XXX ele falou pra ela não ser tão snob e ela disse eu sou snob, ele achou aquilo honesto, sei lá  
P - Argumentos contra? (...) Renatinha  
A2 - Eu acho que ele amou ela então e também continuou amando até agora, sempre amou (XXX)  
A4 - Eu achei que ele tinha descoberto agora (...) amor que ele fala/  
P - e isso não no momento que ela era snob, ele descobriu que a



- amava quando (XXX)
- A4 - Não/  
 A5 - (# 1c) ele gostava na época (xxx) é como se não tivesse amado/  
 P - pode até ser, pode até ser, mas isso não é argumento nem  
 contra nem a favor do que a Renata diz o fato dele ter  
 descoberto, voce acha,(...) (# 1e) Ah, sim que ele só descobriu  
 tanto que nem no momento que ela disse que era snob, ele  
 descobriu
- A4 - (# 1e) Ah, ele sentiu, ele só agora que ele pensou e descobriu  
 (XXX)/
- .....
- A(s)- (# 2b) (falam todos ao mesmo tempo, há muito ruído XXXX)

O exemplo acima ilustra várias instâncias de padrões interacionais que refletem interesse e participação. Há várias ocorrências de padrões Aluno-Aluno-Professor e Aluno-Professor-Aluno, que demonstram participação espontânea e um pico de participação caracterizado pelo burburinho de falas sobrepostas que manifestam as divergências decorrentes das diferentes "schematas" apresentadas. A discussão foi bastante calorosa e envolveu pelo menos 10 alunos.

Vemos, no exemplo abaixo, que os processos mentais desenvolvidos colaborativamente pela professora e alunos no ato da leitura desenrolam-se de forma bastante equilibrada, seja na participação, seja nas conclusões.

De uma sequência retirada da parte denominada Leitura do Texto, não reproduzida aqui por questão de espaço, selecionamos um exemplo que parece caracterizar um ponto crítico neste processo. Após uma longa discussão sobre o significado de uma palavra "bribe", que pareceu esgotar quaisquer dúvidas, a professora encerra os questionamentos e prossegue na leitura, quando, para sua surpresa dá-se a seguinte intervenção:

- A - (# 1c) Então, ficou subornar?  
 As- (todos riem, inclusive a professora importantíssimo  
 P - está satisfeito André? Posso prosseguir?

### *Importantíssimo*

Esta instância foi destacada por ilustrar a dúvida que um aluno ainda sentia, mesmo depois de ter sido o assunto tão debatido pelo grupo. Acreditamos que a razão deste problema seja a maneira como a professora finalizou a discussão, e o estilo individual de aprendizagem deste leitor.

### *Entrevista a Alunos e Professora*

Com o objetivo de obter outros pontos de vista em relação à ecologia dos padrões sociais de interação em sala de aula, obtivemos o depoimento da professora e de uma amostra de 6 alunos.

Os alunos reconhecem a efetividade da proposta do curso de Inglês Instrumental e veem-se agora, ao término do mesmo, como leitores mais eficientes, e mais conscientes.

Em relação à interação em sala de aula, eles demonstram sentir-se bastante ajustados. Realçam que há alguns que não participam das interações com a mesma intensidade de outros. Como causas, citam a inibição, a timidez, a falta de interesse pelo tema da discussão e a ausência de pressão por parte da professora. Sugerem que um incentivo mais direto à participação de todos seja dado, literalmente, "cutucar os mais acomodados".

Não se observou nenhuma tendência a determinado tipo de interação, (ver tabela), com exceção do uso consciente do dicionário, apenas como recurso final, o que pode ser explicado por ser esta uma estratégia enfatizada pelo curso.

Tabela - Tipos de Interação Preferidos para Compreensão de Textos.

Discutir:	Mt Bom	Bom	Reg.	Fraco
Alto c/ prof.	-	2	2	2
Baixo c/ prof. *	1	1	2	1
Alto c/ prof. e col. *	2	1	1	1
Alto c/ colega	1	2	2	1
Baixo c/ colega	1	2	1	2
Dicionário	-	-	1	5

Total de alunos: 06.

\* Apenas cinco alunos marcaram este item.

## CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS

Em relação à construção dos processos mentais desenvolvidos em conjunto pelos leitores e professora observamos que na maior parte do tempo, a professora instiga o questionamento, principalmente às colocações corretas, com o objetivo de incentivar a segurança do aluno em seu raciocínio, de verificar se a idéia não lhes está sendo imposta por ela. Se por um lado esta atitude estimula um raciocínio mais independente que favorece a autonomia do leitor, por outro lado, e


em muitas ocasiões, esta atitude pode também provocar insegurança em alunos que possuam determinado estilo de aprendizagem que necessitam de uma palavra formal conclusiva, do tipo "a resposta certa é ..". Expressar claramente as conclusões ao final das interações pode se apresentar como uma medida simples e efetiva para se atingir um maior número de alunos, sem sacrificar a qualidade do processo desenvolvido.

Em relação ao treinamento da estratégia da metacognição observamos que este se dá através do incentivo à verbalização dos processos mentais pelos alunos, porém, não antes de submetê-los a um filtro, que privilegia os importantes e/ou corretos. Acreditamos, no entanto, que a retomada do raciocínio, após o reconhecimento da sua ineficiência seja parte essencial do controle da metacognição. Afinal, temos de aprender a lidar com os erros, tanto ou mais que com os acertos. Os dados colhidos não evidenciaram instâncias confirmatórias deste item. Sugestões tais como "accomodating" sendo cognato relacionado à comodidade, e "bitter", como derivado da palavra "bit", não mereceram realce.

Em relação à pesquisa microetnográfica, percebemos que as dificuldades de um mergulho profundo em um determinado foco de interesse podem ser compensadas pela riqueza dos detalhes que dele surge e que poderão esboçar, cumulativamente, uma visão mais fiel do que se deseja compreender.

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# Critical discourse analysis and the language learner's autonomy: possible ways to relate both areas of study

Desireé Motta Roth and Viviane Heberle

Since the past decade there has been an increasing interest in learner-centered approaches to language teaching, with special emphasis given to learners' autonomy along the learning process. This active view of the learner presupposes an autonomy which in turn must rely not only on individual linguistic awareness but mainly on his/her ability to perceive how language and social practice relate to each other in society. In that sense, it seems of vital importance that EFL learning/teaching comprehends a process inserted in a socio-political context, in which the learner knows why and how he/she is learning a foreign language. Having the individual's autonomy as one of its essential features, Critical Discourse Analysis can contribute to an EFL teaching/learning theory and practice that aims at the personal development of the individual as a whole. How these two educational areas can possibly relate is the focus of this paper.

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

### *Definition and aims*

Traditional language studies are regarded as having two levels within discourse: the language used (the text) and the processes of production and of interpretation of texts (the interaction processes between those that are using the language) (Brown & Yule 1983). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), on the other hand, presents an approach to discourse analysis which reflects upon the social causes of language variance or social dialects (Fairclough 1989, 1992). The opposition between traditional language studies and CDA can be roughly

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summarized in Table 1 below which shows the issues that each approach emphasizes:

Table 1 — Traditional vs. Critical Discourse Analysis

Traditional Discourse Analysis	Critical Discourse Analysis
Language X Society	Language & Society
Linguistic meaning and form are dissociated	Linguistic meaning and form are connected
Social meaning of language is secondary	Language as integral part of social processes
Innateness (U.G. parameters)	Social determination of linguistic skills
Normative : language variance as inadequacy	Interpretative: language variance as difference

Fowler and Kress (Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew 1979) criticize the traditional sociolinguistic analysis of language, which limits itself to the description of the language used by a given group without attempting to critically question why language is used differently in different social groups. According to them, traditional linguistic studies raise no discussion about the intrinsic link between social and linguistic processes.

CDA seems to have two practical objectives (Fairclough 1989:1): a) make people aware of the importance of language in helping produce, maintain, and change social relations of power; and b) foster people's awareness of the ways language can help increase differences in power relations, between two poles in a social continuum — e.g. developed/underdeveloped countries, men/women, adults/children. In both cases, consciousness is the mechanism to activate control over our own ideas, feelings, acts. It is a means to unveil ideology, the 'common-sense' assumptions that permeates all social practice(ibid:2).

Fairclough, with the aid of Halliday's functional grammar, analyses discourse and provides a systematization of how text, interaction, and social action interrelate. He writes (1989, 1992) about *difference*: in language, in culture, in ethic and aesthetic values; discussing the problems related to how society treats this difference.

In order to offer a systematized way to analyze language in its social context, Hallyday (1985, 1989), following Malinowsky's tradition, conceives language as a functional grammar, a set of social acts, in which the speaker has a complex system of several different choices to be made at a given time during a communicative event. These choices are not determined by language structure itself alone, but mainly by social relations that regulate speakers' social acts.

Halliday sees language as a socio-semiotic system that (1) realizes the context of situation in which discourse occurs and (2) from the context of situation, in turn, we can predict the kind of language used in a specific instance

of communication. The features of the context are realized by language functions (how language is used).

In social semiotics, language is seen as a social process, as one of the possible systems of meaning that constitute human culture, and it has to be interpreted in relation to its context of situation (Hodge & Kress 1988; Halliday and Hasan 1989). Language, text and context are intimately involved in the process of creating meaning, of organizing and building human experience. The three components of the context of situation (field, tenor and mode) are related to three basic functions of language, three components of meaning: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. These metafunctions of language are the basis of the organization of the entire linguistic system. The text is seen as an instant of language in use, playing a certain role in a certain context of situation. Due to this link between the situational context and the text, it is possible to predict one from the other. Consequently, the study of language needs to explore the linguistic patterns used in social ends (Halliday & Hasan 1989).

The main argument in favor of a critical linguistics is the need to get away from a sociological theory that reinforces conservative views, and whose categories correlate with society's official categories. A critical study of language is needed in order to analyze and contest official commonsensical standard views such as that of 'appropriateness of language'. Which values are associated with that concept? Who determines or demands appropriateness from whom? How does one acquire 'appropriate language'? Arising from a discussion of such issues, CDA seeks to unveil the ideology and the power relations which pertain to any instance of language use.

### *Basic categories of analysis*

The concepts of discourse and ideology are central to CDA. For Gee (1990: xv), *discourse* comprehends not only language but a combination of what to say in a certain adequate way, accompanied by adequate actions and interactions, appearing to think and feel the right way and have the right sort of values. Discourses are seen as social roles people play in society, which encompass a tacit theory of the world, a view about how the world should function, a theory about the 'appropriateness' of the whole world that varies according to the experiences of each group of people (ibid: xx). These particular views of how people and things are or ought to be organized in a socialized space and time comprehend *ideologies*.

Our ideologies constrain our social relations and, as a result, determine the linguistic choices we make in the course of communication. Gee conceives Discourse Analysis as a branch of linguistics that should aim at making people's ideology explicit, geared into unveiling concealed ideologies in social acts, especially if those affected by these social acts can be harmed.

Fairclough conceives three dimensions in discourse: (1) text, (2) interaction, and 3) social context. Discourse means a form of social action that

comprehends not only (1) and (2), as depicted in Figure 1, but also the social conditions that determine them. These three dimensions of discourse are represented by Fairclough's framework in Figure 2 below:

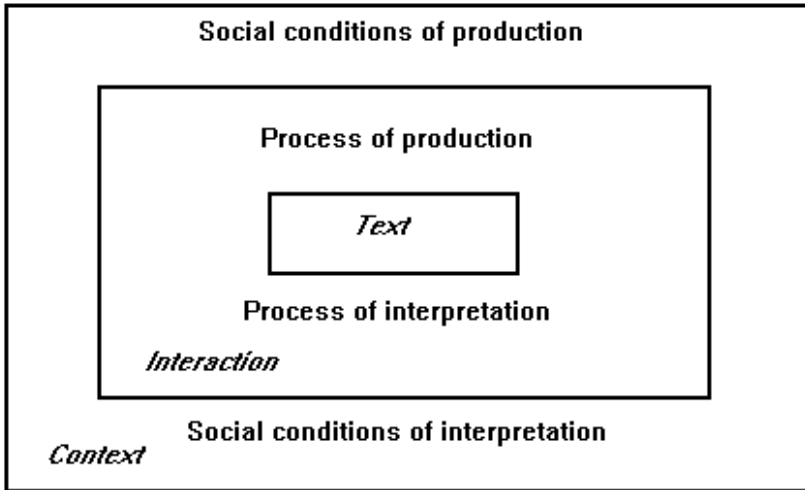


Fig. 2 - Discourse as a three-dimensional phenomena involving text, interaction and context (Fairclough 1989, p. 25)

Text is socially determined because people produce and interpret language through their cognitive systems. These systems or *Members Resources*, as Fairclough calls them (1989, p.11), are socially formed: they result from social life and are determined by the values shared by members of the same group.

As social practice, discourse is a process of production and interpretation, that operates within society (Ibid, p. 22) and cannot be analyzed in separate from the context that constrains it. These social conditions are organized in three different levels: the *immediate social context* in which discourse occurs; the *social institution* in which this discourse is embedded; and *society as a whole* (Fairclough 1989, p. 25). *Members' Resources* are shaped by these three levels of social conditions and people bring this stored knowledge to discursive actions.

Within this idea of social determination, 'difference' is seen as a category evidenced by discourses. For Gee (1989, p.xx), any discourse incorporates a usually taken-for-granted... 'theory' of what counts as a 'normal' person and the 'right' ways to think, feel and behave. These theories implicitly define the idea of what constitutes a normal person and a *normal discourse*. In Western capitalist societies like Great Britain or Brazil, such theories or discourses seem to be centralized around the distribution of social benefits and the 'appropriate' way to do it: who is entitled to having them and who is not. Most of the time, 'difference' in this case means 'less': less power, and less control result in fewer benefits.

## APPLICATIONS

### *Critical Reading and Sexist Discourse*

Several authors have adopted a CDA framework to approach different texts. Applications of Critical Discourse Analysis perspectives include studies of discourse and science (Swales 1990); ELT (Phillipson 1992); politics (Fowler et. al. 1979; Fairclough 1989 (Thatcherism); and racism (Teun van Dijk 1991), for example.

Poynton (1989), in her book *Language and Gender: making the difference*, points out that men and women tend to make different choices in different linguistic strata: on the discourse, lexico-grammatical and phonological strata (and not on the lexical level only). These choices, which are constrained by ideologies, manifest and reinforce the existing opposition between men and women. Poynton explains,

As long as individuals participate in the institutions of that society, they must perform act ideologically. Hence as long as the four key structures of women's situation — production, reproduction, sexuality, and the socialization of children (Mitchell, 1971) — remain substantially unchanged, the ideological meanings of man and woman will remain unchanged (ibid, p. 20).

Working with biased discourse from a different perspective, Caldas-Coulthard (1992) analyses sexist discourse in British newspapers. According to her, news is a version of the event reported and this report is culturally and socially determined (ibid, p. 26). She explores and uncovers the different status given to men and women in the press through *The examination of how people are given voice in text* (p.76). In her study, Caldas-Coulthard concludes that women integrate a portion of the social network whose voice is ignored, powerless or inexistent. The discourse of the media is sexist to the extent that it is geared towards a male audience and, as a result, *exclude women from the speaking position* (p.78). Only 14.4% of press texts examined by her considered women's voice (p.89). Such an imbalance between voices of both genders in the media seem to point out a correspondent imbalance in power relations between men and women.

### *Applications in EFL reading*



As a powerful tool in helping bring to the surface the discourses present in any text, CDA can offer the EFL learner the possibility of questioning the text from a different perspective. Besides the information about the foreign language, learners can bring to the reading act their resources in terms of their knowledge about how stereotypical discourses operate (sexist, religious, political, racist, etc.). Learners can also be more effective in reading an EFL text if they are aware of how to relate dialogically with the text, posing questions in relation to the topic that is being written about. Autonomy of learners is not only a linguistic issue, strictly speaking, but a matter of developing autonomy to think, reflect, judge, and decide about different topics everyday.

As a contribution to the studies that seek to analyze critically how discourses operate in everyday texts, in combination with learner-centered approaches to reading in EFL, the second part of this paper will comprehend a discussion of an issue in CDA which we will call *critical reading*. We will analyze an excerpt from a book by Germaine Greer (see Appendix), which can be used as an effective material in EFL reading classes.

Recent researches in reading suggest that students manipulate several different kinds of authentic texts and use different strategies to become skilled readers (Martin 1985; Nuttal 1982; Harmer 1985). Texts such as the one analyzed here may be a good option among the many different text types students should be exposed to. They can be used in EFL classes in Brazil for consciousness raising through oral discussions, and critical reading and writing. Furthermore, they may be effective in EFL classes, in terms of looking at language from a critical discourse analysis perspective. A possible alternative for secondary students is to compare these textual types in Portuguese and in English so that the teacher and students can discuss social and cultural views reflected in the texts.

Our analysis will be focused on a specific grammatical aspect of Hallyday's Functional Grammar (1985) called the transitivity system. Three main categories are taken into account when examining transitivity: the processes involved, the participants in these processes, and the circumstances related to them. We will concentrate our analysis on the kinds of processes described and the participants involved, which can lead to a better picture of the kind of discourse that is disclosed to the reader.

### *Critical text analysis*

Specifically for *critical reading*, CDA involves 'drawing inferences' about the implicit conditions for the existence of a text (Wallace 1992). In order to reconstruct the discourses within the text, 'naturalized' ideas (Fairclough 1989, Ch.1) must be examined critically, the 'common-sense' ought to be challenged. The image projected for the 'idealized reader' can then be perceived with a more accurate look.

Any text constructs an 'ideal reader' that occupies a reading position (Kress 1989, p. 17). The texts one produces or consumes are highly probable because they are socially determined by and help in determining one's place in society. In choosing the language to be used in the text, the writer determines a range of possible audiences in detriment of others. The discourse she intends to convey to the reader constructs this virtual reader, constructs reality. Thus critical analysis demands metalinguistic awareness of language as a formal system. It questions ideological assumptions and propositional content of written texts. It also involves critical awareness of the reading act itself in relation to who is the writer, who is the reader, what is in the text and why, and what is the surrounding context.

Therefore, in accordance with Fairclough's representation of the three discourse dimensions (Fig.2), we can say that text interpretation and production are socially determined, dependent on previous social experiences and on the social context in which we are reading/listening or writing/speaking. If we build upon the previously cited authors' definitions of discourse, we can state that discourse can be understood as socially determined ways of thinking and valuing, which are conveyed through language in systematic ways (Kress 1989; Gee 1989; Fairclough 1989). Although offering a unified view of reality, discourses build upon differences of power between social groups (Wallace 1992; Kress 1989; Fairclough 1992).

In line with the discussion presented above, in order to help raise awareness of the ideology of texts, Wallace suggests two questions that should help readers to become more aware of the underlying ideas of a text: (1) Who is writing to whom? and (2) What is the topic?

Kress (1989, p. 7) proposes other three basic questions: (3) Why is this topic being written about? (4) How is the topic being written about? and (5) What other ways of writing about the topic are there?

In relation to the kind of ideology underlying the discourse conveyed by the text, we would like to adopt Kress' account on sexist discourse as reference for our analysis. He states that

[a sexist discourse] attempt[s] to account not only for an area of immediate concern to an institution, but attempt[s] to account for increasingly wider areas of concern. It specifies what...women may be, how they are to think of themselves, how they are to think of and to interrelate with the other gender...specifies what families may be, and relations within the family: what it is to be...'a mother'. It reaches into all major areas of social life, specifying what work is suitable, possible even,...for women; how pleasure is to be seen... (Kress 1989, p. 7).

Kress (ibid, p. 12) believes that *every text arises out of a particular problematic*. Concerning the excerpt of *The Female Eunuch*, we could say that it is a manifestation against the way women are pictured in the sexist discourse of

advertisements. The author wants to convince the reader that the figure of a beautiful woman is commonly used as an advertising gimmick, and that this woman is fake, not real. In order to present her point of view, Greer makes use of several stereotypical "scenes" (examples) of advertisements in which the figure of a beautiful and young woman is used to attract men: "She may sit astride the mudguard of a new car, or step into it ablaze with jewels; she may lie at a man's feet stroking his new socks..." As she describes these scenes, Greer uses evaluative lexical items, such as "ablaze with jewels, glossy lips, flawless fingers, in a challenging pose, in the glory of a new shampoo, and extraordinary hair", just to mention some. By referring to these typical scenes used in advertisements, which reinforce or assert values such as beauty and youth (praised in sexist discourse), the author is criticizing the way women are regarded in advertisements.

The author criticizes the "female fetish" by referring to typical, commonsensical pictures of women in advertisements. For instance, she says "... she may dance through woodland glades in slow motion in all the glory of a new shampoo; Her dominion must not be thought to entail the rule of women, for she is not a woman...the inhuman triumph of cosmetics... false eyelashes...she is a 'doll'". In fact, she intends to make the reader aware of how obsessively people in our modern society are attracted by the two-fold image of female youth and beauty. The scenes described as well as the evaluative lexical items presented are ironically used to convey this unnaturalness of the woman commonly used in advertisements.

Concerning the participants of the text (in terms of transitivity, according to Halliday), we can say that the pronoun *she* appears as the actor in material processes, such as in "She may dance through woodland glades in slow motion in all the glory of a new shampoo" (our italics). This *she* refers to this false woman who acts in advertisements. Other participants are *Her image, her dominion, her expression, her paint, her features*, which are neither actors nor human participants. The reference to *man* is made only as circumstance: *at a man's feet*. Both the use of the third person singular pronoun *she*, present in six different clauses, and the passive voice in one sentence allow us to observe that Greer detaches herself from this stereotypical portrait of women and does not aver the idea of *gynolatry* the way it is commonly found in sexist discourse.

In relation to processes, the author makes use of three types: material (verbs of doing) verbal (verbs of saying — *has shown, must be thought, reveal*) and relational (verbs of being — *is, are*). Within the material processes, most verbs refer to body movements (*sit, step, lie, hold, dance, sells*), associated with circumstances which allude to a sexist view of women: *she may hold the petrol pump in a challenging pose*. The relational processes are present when Greer characterizes the woman in advertisements as being fake, e.g. *her expression is as tranquil and vacant and her paint as flawless as ever*.

Referring back to Kress' definition of sexist discourse, this text can be seen as critical of sexist discourse because it does not assert the 'classic' or commonsensical values of beauty and youth in a woman. Traditional ideology of sexism is reinforced by presentation of these values as truths, evidences. This is what Greer is against. To construct the reading position for her readers, Greer builds a feminine social role through the exaggeration of the female figure as a doll, instructing the reader to be critical of the role women commonly accept or assume in society. Therefore we argue that this text conveys an anti-sexist discourse.

## CONCLUSION

Critical Discourse Analysis can be applied to foster people's awareness in relation to which system of values is implicit in a given text, and to which reading position is being administered to them. This awareness entails free and conscious choice of the social roles to play.

Critical reading is essentially dependent upon the awareness of the three dimensions of discourse: text, interaction, and context. EFL readers need to develop and occupy critical reading positions in order to be able to understand what kind of discourses are present in texts. The analysis of processes, participants, and circumstances, such as the one carried out here can offer effective ways of relating language to social practices. Learners' autonomy can be developed by the principles that relate Halliday's functional grammar to CDA.

Halliday's strong argumentation in favor of a critical linguistics summarizes this view (Fowler & Kress 1979, p. 189): language is learned in contexts of interaction and the structure of language in use responds to communicative needs.

Thus, language structure should be seen as a response to the structure of the society that uses it: language serves to confirm and consolidate the institutions that shape it, and can be used to manipulate and maintain people playing (economically) convenient roles.

Much of social meanings is implicit in discourse and needs to be uncovered. In this sense, awareness of linguistic system is a strong opposing force against unequal power relations, favoring emancipation.

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## APPENDIX

*Every survey ever held has shown that the image of an attractive woman is the most effective advertising gimmick. She may sit astride the mudguard of a new car, or step into it ablaze with jewels; she may lie at a man's feet stroking his new socks; she may hold the petrol pump in a challenging pose, or dance through woodland glades in slow motion in all the glory of a new shampoo; whatever she does her image sells. The gynolatry of our civilization is written large upon its face, upon hoardings, cinema screens, television, newspapers, magazines, tins, packets, cartons, bottles, all consecrated to the reigning deity, the female fetish. Her dominion must not be thought to entail the rule of women, for she is not a woman. Her glossy lips and matt complexion, her unfocused eyes and flawless fingers, her extraordinary hair all floating and shining, curling and gleaming, reveal the inhuman triumph of cosmetics, lighting, focusing and printing, cropping and composition. She sleeps unruffled, her lips red and juicy and closed, her eyes as crisp and black as if new painted, and her false lashes immaculately curled. Even when she washes her face with a new and creamier toilet soap her expression is as tranquil and vacant and her paint as flawless as ever. If ever she should appear tousled and troubled, her features are miraculously smoothed to their proper veneer by a new washing powder or a bouillon cube. For she is a doll; weeping, pouting or smiling, running or reclining, she is a doll.*

(From *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer (Barr et al. 1981))



# Learning strategies in student approach to text comprehension

Conceição A. Absy

This paper focuses on two learning strategies used by EFL college students in their approach to text comprehension: resourcing and elaboration. Resourcing refers to the use of the dictionary for word meanings. Elaboration refers to the use of meaningful associations between textual material and previously acquired knowledge. The evidence in the data shows that resourcing was often ineffective whereas elaboration was a valuable strategy that promoted involvement with the target language.

New directions in education highlight the central role played by the learner in the learning process. Learners are seen as capable of altering learning outcomes through the choices they make. Therefore, they need to become aware of their ability to make choices and be encouraged to take control of their learning. Teaching practices should provide an environment conducive to the development of effective learning behaviors. Educational goals should include the development and refinement of an autonomous learning. Research on learning strategies has autonomous learning as one of its main targets. According to the literature in the field, learning strategies are conscious steps taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, and more effective. This paper focuses on two strategies: resourcing and elaboration (Chamot, Kupper, and Impink-Hernandez 1988). The two strategies are illustrated with excerpts of the recorded reports provided by college students (4th, 5th, and 6th semester — Letras Estrangeiras Modernas, UEL) as they attempted to understand texts from EFL textbooks.

Resourcing consists of referring to different types of materials to find out information needed for task completion. However, the occurrence of resourcing in

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the data referred almost exclusively to the use of the dictionary for word meanings. Overall students tended to overuse the strategy which was most often disruptive, time consuming and more importantly ineffective. This is especially true in the case of those learners with deficient vocabulary, for whom comprehension tends to break down frequently. The example below illustrates this point:

- St: I found `burglar' yes, right. A person who breaks into a building... in order to steal...
- Int: A person who enters into a building-who breaks into a building to, to what?
- St: There's an e-s-p here and a little dot and I don't know what this is; esp., a little dot, in order...
- Int: Especially.
- St: Ah, okay. Especially in order to steal. Ah, `steal' I don't know either. I'm going to look `steal' up. I know-I've already seen this word. I know it must be something simple but I don't... know. Ah, steal, stole, stolen, [laughing] I didn't know... take property dishonestly... property dishonestly. Wait a minute, but here `steal...' especially in order of `steal.'
- Int: To steal.
- St: To steal. Especially in order of dishonesty? Ah, I don't know! Something to do with a person who... who... break, already...

This example shows how ineffective the process was for some students who were unable to obtain the clarification they were looking for due to their difficulty to understand the explanations provided by the dictionary or to identify among the explanations offered, the meaning suitable to the context they were dealing with. Some of them showed a great deal of determinism in their attempts; a great deal of time and effort was expended on the decoding of the text at the word level. Unsuccessful attempts such as the example above often exhausted the students' processing capacity and certainly detracted them from focusing on integration of ideas in the text. The students' overreliance on the dictionary is illustrated by the following remark made by another student:

- St: Usually, when I find an unknown word it disturbs me. When I skip the word, it's... I feel guilty of not attempting to learn... I feel I'm missing out learning; [despite the fact that] the more I look for the meaning of the word and soon forget it but it seems as if I'm missing out learning...

This excerpt shows that the learner insists on the use of a strategy that she recognizes does not yield satisfactory results as it fails to ensure retention of the word meaning.

On the other hand, elaboration, was an effective process that promoted students' involvement with the target language. Instances of the process were infrequent in the data. Elaboration skills entail the ability to make meaningful

associations between textual material and previously acquired knowledge. The process, considered one of the most powerful learning strategies, is believed to enhance comprehension and promote retention of learning material (Cohen and Apek 1981).

The example that follows is an illustration of an elaboration produced by one of the students during the decoding of the text. This is what she says about the word 'slapped' soon after guessing its meaning from the context:

- St: And this... is a verb... onomatopoeic? Is this what it's called?  
Int: It may be. Yes.  
St: Because of its noise, right? They try to approximate as much as they can to the noise. I remember that once one of my teachers told me... that there are certain verbs that they try to approximate as much as they can to the sound that it makes, right?  
Int: You think that this one is similar to its noise.  
St: I think so, slap, right? Slap.

The student makes a sound association: she observes that 'slapped' must be one of those verbs that are spelled to sound as much as possible like the noise produced by the action the verb expresses, an information she remembers from previous classes.

Despite the scarcity of elaborations, the data contain a few examples that are noteworthy. They provide valuable insight into the potential use of elaboration to enhance learning outcomes. This is particularly true when a student can be seen using a cluster of strategies including elaboration, inferencing, and transfer and successfully deriving meaning from the text, based upon use of the strategies. Using such a cluster approach is often the distinguishing feature of the effective learner (Chamot, Küpper, and Impink-Hernandez 1988). When confronted with a comprehension problem, the effective learner deploys as many strategies as are necessary for solving the problem. For instance, the following example was produced by a student while trying to figure out the word 'tinkle' in the sentence: *I heard the tinkle of broken glass downstairs.*

- St: This I'm going... this word that I don't... know I'm supposing what it may mean.  
Int: What are you supposing?  
St: I think this is noise.  
Int: Very well. You reached that conclusion, how... ? That it is noise.  
St: Well, first, because... look, she heard something of glasses breaking, broken, downstairs; so... I... it would be sort of specific noise, like, when you... you are... making a toast you say tin tin; then this could be like the specific noise of the glasses.

The learner draws on the context to infer the meaning of 'tinkle'; she says that 'tinkle' must express the specific noise made when glass is broken; the



use of the expression 'specific noise' and not just noise reveals her assumption that the word is onomatopoeic. The inferential process becomes intertwined with elaboration when she associates 'tinkle' with 'tin tin' in Portuguese; the student explains that 'tinkle' must be the specific noise of broken glass as well as the colloquial expression in Brazilian Portuguese, *tin tin*, refers to the specific noise of glasses being hit in a toast. In addition to elaboration and inferencing, the process involves transfer as the student provides an illustration of a comparable expression in the native language.

The illustrations above show that while using elaboration the students got involved with the language reworking the material to reconstruct meaning. On the other hand, the use of the dictionary was often an inefficient technique. As a matter of fact, one student's observation that the use of the dictionary failed to ensure retention of learning material no matter how often she resorted to this strategy, raises a critical issue regarding strategies that involve merely receptive language use since retention seems to be achieved through manipulation of the target language (Cohen and Aphek 1981). Even when the strategy works, obtaining meaning through the use of the dictionary involves receptive language use as compared to reconstructing meaning through procedures such as drawing associations or generating hypotheses based on logical relationships. These techniques enhance the meaningfulness of the text making it more memorable.

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# A preliminary investigation of Brazilian EFL readers

Mauro B. Santos

## INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, research in the field of language acquisition has shifted. Researchers are becoming more interested in the study of the learning process — *how* students learn or acquire language — than the learning product — *what* students learn or acquire (Hosenfeld, 1976, 1977; O'Malley et al., 1985; Wenden, 1986). The study of learner strategies can be considered a result of this shift of focus as it reveals the ways language learners go about their learning tasks. Essentially, learner strategies refer to "specific behavior or actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

The importance of learner strategies has also gained prominence in a correlated research field: reading (Cavalcanti, 1989; Cohen, 1987a). The use of reading strategies was found to be effective in improving students' reading comprehension both in first language (L1) and second language (L2) (Duffy et al., 1985; Carrel, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989). However, although a considerable body of research has been conducted on reading in L1, the acquisition of reading in L2 has received little attention. Bohn (1979) noted that "there is very limited information on the strategies learners use when reading or learning to read a foreign language" (p. 8). The deficiency Bohn pointed out at that time has not been made good thus far. According to Taglieber (1985, 1988), few studies have examined the actual difficulties a reader encounters when reading text in L2 and the strategies s/he uses to achieve comprehension. Since reading and language are closely linked (Block, 1986), the difficulties bilinguals encounter in reading texts in their L2 may differ from those experienced by monolinguals. Connor (1984) and Vornaus (1984), for example, found that there were differences in the way students process material written in L2.

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In this paper I report a study of reading in English as a foreign language (EFL). I address the following questions: what comprehension difficulties do Brazilian EFL students encounter when reading in English? How do they overcome these difficulties?

## METHOD

### *Subjects*

The sample of subjects consisted of 4 beginning EFL students in Level 2 (second semester) of a community education course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil. Subjects were undergraduate students; 3 were male, 1 was female. Their ages: 18, 23, 28, and 18.

### *Materials*

The reading passage was selected from a periodical magazine.<sup>1</sup> The magazine was selected as good source of reports about current events and people. Specifically, the passage: discussed current events and people which students had general cultural background knowledge about; contained no technical vocabulary that might require knowledge beyond the background of the lay public; presented some degree of language complexity to these beginning level students; and was a self-contained, 317-word long report.

### *Data Collecting*

Two research methods were used to collect the data: direct student observation and verbal report (self-observation). Verbal report, in particular, proved to be an informative approach for learning about what happens in the learners' mind during comprehension. However, a combination of all three forms of verbal report (Cohen, 1987b) should yield richer insights into learner strategies.

### *Procedures*

The passage was presented to each student in individual sessions with the examiner. Students read, recalled, and then talked about their difficulties and strategies. Students were first asked to read the passage for comprehension and, immediately following, write down, in their native language, as much as they could remember about the passage. They were allowed to take as much time as

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<sup>1</sup> Newsweek, Nov. 1991.

they felt they needed for both tasks. They were also instructed, in case they had comprehension difficulties, to do what they usually do to solve such difficulties in written English texts. Students were observed during their reading to see whether they used the dictionary and/or asked the examiner questions. Their written recall protocol was then analyzed so that their comprehension difficulties could be spotted and talked about during the interview. The final portion of the study consisted of an interview in which the students, with the passage in front of them, pointed out what comprehension difficulties they encountered when reading and how they solved (or not) those problems. After this explanation, the examiner asked questions pertinent to textual comprehension (based on students' recall) and strategies they used to solve their problems. The interviews were recorded on audio tape and later transcribed.

## RESULTS

To answer the first research question, that is, what comprehension difficulties Brazilian students encounter when reading in English, each interview was analyzed. The analysis of the interviews reveals that these students experienced difficulty in comprehending a L2 text due to (i) vocabulary-related and (ii) syntax-based problems. In relation to lack of vocabulary (or lexical) knowledge, students reported three sources that particularly posed difficulties: (a) two-word verbs such as *turn into*, *set apart*, *come up with*; (b) expressions such as *lay bare*; and (c) false cognate words such as *minute* and *drugs*.

In addition to lexical problems, comprehension difficulty was also caused by syntactic problems, that is, difficulty in working out the relationship holding between constituents of the sentence. This was the case particularly in long, compound and complex sentences. One student, for instance, reported she felt lost while reading one of these 'weird' sentences. Yet another student failed to identify lexical *and* syntactic relationships that held two clauses together and make the sentence coherent, as shown (1) below:

1. They have come up with drugs to slow the growth of the virus in the body and delay the onset of symptoms, and drugs to treat the complications of AIDS that actually kill(box).

While trying to explain the source of his comprehension difficulty, this student reported, "I missed the relationship between the verb *slow* and *delay*, a temporal relationship. I can replace *slow* for *delay* in that sentence and vice-versa, because both verbs have nearly the same meaning."

The second research question, how students overcome comprehension difficulties when reading in L2, was addressed through analyses of the following data: (1) observation of the students' behavior; (2) marks students made on their passage sheet; and, (3) students' interviews. The range of strategies identified in

the three analyses came to a total of 18 strategies. In the following section of this paper, I analyze the types of data mentioned above.

*Analysis of Students' behavior while reading*

While all four students used the dictionary as a means of solving their problems, one student made use of it only two times. The same student asked no question during the reading in contrast to the nine requests for clarification made by the others. Although students read the whole text silently, two students reread aloud the sentences they considered problematic (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency of Reading Strategies Used.

Source: Examiner's direct observation.

subject	1	2	3	4
strategy				
using the dictionary	22	2	17	21
asking for clarification	1	0	4	4
rereading aloud problematic sentences	0	0	2	4

*Analysis of Marks students made on their passage sheet*

Results presented in Table 2 reveal that these beginning students tended chiefly to underline words, with a total of 72 underlinings. Furthermore, students (two) wrote the meaning of new words next to them, which occurred in 33 instances. One student, however, also opted for translating parts of (and whole) sentences (8 chunks).

Table 2: Frequency of Reading Strategies Used.

Source: Students' marks on passage sheet.

subject	1	2	3	4
strategy				
Underlining (words)	23	11	17	21
Writing meaning of new words	0	0	11	12
Translating in writing (sentences)	0	0	0	8

### *Analysis of Students' interviews*

The list of reading strategies identified in the interviews is shown in Table 3. The use of three strategies — stopping at unknown words, translating, and rereading — was reported by all four students. They nearly always stopped at unknown words, and then looked them up in the dictionary so that they could translate words in the sentence. Further, to make sure that they had actually understood an unfamiliar word, they chose to reread the whole sentence at least once more. In contrast to the strategy of stopping at unfamiliar words, two students in particular skipped such words, but for different purposes/reasons. By skipping unknown words, student 2 reported he tolerated a certain degree of vagueness in order to emphasize global meaning. On the other hand, student 4 proceeded so only when she felt that those words were not key elements for the understanding of a specific sentence, that is, student 4 skipped unfamiliar words as long as she could still make sense of the sentence (or chunk) without those words.

Further, Table 3 shows another strategy students cited: guessing a word from context, that is, using adjoining words to ascribe meaning to a word and/or sentence. However, this was only occasionally the case. On facing a comprehension problem, two students also reported that they usually read (and reread) the sentence more slowly and carefully (changing speed).

Table 3 also shows three other strategies students reported using: relating the passage to background knowledge, self-generated questions, and identifying key words. The use of such strategies suggests that a more interactive process was going on between reader and text. In such cases, students brought something to their reading in order to gain coherence out of the passage.

Students who decided not to write the meaning of unknown words reported that they tended to memorize it. Finally, Table 3 shows that as far as language awareness is concerned student 4 can be set apart from the others. This student used linguistic cues such as the grammatical function of words, as well as broke up words into their component parts, as in *help-less*, to overcome difficulties in understanding.

Table 3: Frequency of Reading Strategies Used.

Source: Students' interview.

F= Frequently S= Sometimes N= Not Used

student	1	2	3	4
strategy				
1 Stopping at unknown words	F	F	F	F
2 Skipping unknown words	N	S	N	S

3 Translating	F	F	F	F
4 Rereading	F	F	F	F
5 Guessing from context	N	S	F	F
6 Changing speed	N	N	S	S
7 Relating passage to background knowledge	S	S	N	N
8 Self-generated questions	N	N	N	S
9 Identifying key word	N	N	N	S
10 Memorizing	S	N	N	S
11 Using linguistic cues	N	N	N	S
12 Breaking words into parts	N	N	N	S
13 Skimming, then reading	N	F	F	N
14 Reading, then skimming	F	N	N	F

## DISCUSSION

In this paper I addressed two aspects related to the issue of reading strategies in foreign language: (1) what comprehension difficulties Brazilian EFL students encounter when reading in English; and, (2) how they overcome these difficulties. In relation to the difficulties, it was found that vocabulary-related and syntax-based factors hindered these EFL learners' reading comprehension. Lack of lexical knowledge also seems to have interfered with comprehension as students tended to stop at unknown words, thus making their reading slower and less enjoyable. It was found that two-word verbs/phrases, for instance, were sources of lexical problems. Since students did not recognize a two-word verb/phrase as a whole, they tended to attack it word-by-word, thereby missing the true meaning of the phrase. Interestingly, although students reported making use of cognate words consciously (as a general reading strategy), three of them failed to recognize nearly false or false cognate words. They came up with *minuto* for *minute*, *ordinario* for *ordinary*, *dividido* for *devised*, and *drogados/drogas* for *drugs*.

While it was found that limited lexical knowledge affected reading comprehension of this sample of learners, comprehension difficulties were also due to syntax-based problems. Berman (1984, p. 139) argues, "lexical items and syntactic decoding go together when the learner is trying to get the gist of a sentence." Thus, successful EFL readers must both understand the meaning of lexical items *and* work out the relationships holding between these lexical items to get at sentence meaning.

Additionally, two possible sources of syntactic problems were identified (Berman, 1984, p. 140). One possible source may be shifts in the basic ordering (SVO) of sentence structure, as illustrated below:

2. *neither does anyone else.*

When interviewed, one student reported, "...but I could not understand the sentence. I knew the meaning of the words, I knew that this meant so and so." In other words, despite knowing the meaning of all lexical items, this student did not see how these items interrelated in the sentence. Therefore, this student did not manage to get the gist of the sentence in (2).

The other possible source of syntactic difficulty may be what Berman (1984, p. 142) calls 'heaviness', which refers to "constructions which extend the basic NV(N) structure so that one or more of the sentence constituents is 'heavy', containing many sub-parts of embedding or modification", as illustrated in (3) below:

3. There are, according to estimates by the Centers for Disease Control, between 1 million and 1.5 million people like Johnson in America, and roughly 10 million in the world — people whose blood conceals a minute speck of nucleic acid with the power to lay bare their immune defenses and leave them helpless in the face of the most ordinary infections.

All four students had trouble with this sentence. By reading it, two students managed to achieve comprehension. "I had to read and reread two or three sentences more than once...You know...especially long sentences and very long sentences such as" sentence (3) above, reported subject 3. Summing up, vocabulary-related and syntax-based difficulties seem to have been a major obstacle to reading comprehension for this sample of EFL students.

In relation to the learner strategies, three analyses were carried out. Firstly, the analysis of students' behavior indicates that these learners are heavy dictionary users. Their major response to unfamiliar words is to turn to the dictionary. In this respect, the results of this study corroborate Hosenfeld's (1984, p. 238) case-study findings. Perhaps such a treatment on unfamiliar words contributes to students' overdependency on the knowledge in the dictionary. Consequently, students do not seem to rely on (con)textual cues which will help them solve/overcome some of their reading comprehension difficulties. One student, however, reports that she turns to the dictionary to confirm her hypothesis of the meaning of new words in opposition to other students who use the dictionary as a primary resource to generate meaning. The strategy of asking for clarification apparently is never used before students check words in the dictionary. By rereading aloud problematic sentences, students focus their attention on what they understand and what they do not. By so doing, they



become aware of what or where the difficulty is. Awareness seemed useful in solving problems partially or totally.

Secondly, the analysis of marks students made on their passage sheet indicates that these EFL readers are avid text markers. They tend to heavily mark sites of difficulties especially by underlining. It became evident that such a strategy serves at least two functions: (1) to make sure students look up the underlined (unknown) words in the dictionary in their second reading of the passage, for those students who skim the passage in their first reading; and, (2) to remind students of lexical and/or syntactic problems when they reread the sentence/passage, for those who skim the passage in their second reading.

Thirdly, the analysis of students' interviews reveal that these beginning-level EFL learners are basically bottom-up processors as they engage in a detailed, word-by-word decoding of sentences. Such an approach to reading has a number of disadvantages. For instance, by constantly stopping at isolated words, students slow the speed of their reading process. This slowing down, in turn, disrupts comprehension since students' short-term memory (STM) loses the earlier part of the sentence before they get to the end (Cohen et al., 1986). Another disadvantage is that students employ inappropriate strategies to try to overcome comprehension difficulties, that is, they tend to overuse less effective strategies, such as stopping at unknown words and using the dictionary, to the detriment of more effective strategies like guessing from context, identifying key words, and skipping unknown words.

The interview data also suggest that the larger the repertoire of strategies students use, the higher their chances of overcoming comprehension difficulties. Subject 4, for example, used 18 types of strategies (and also shows a higher frequency of strategy use) and apparently solved most of her comprehension difficulties during the reading. Although no comprehension measure was used, I verified that subject 4 was the only one who recalled not only the main idea but also all secondary ideas, and included supporting details in her written recall. On the other hand, student 2, who used the fewest strategies, did not solve a number of his problems, and produced a poor written recall protocol.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, I have attempted to explore the relationship between actual comprehension difficulties Brazilian beginning EFL learners encounter while reading in English and the strategies they use to overcome these difficulties. This study suggested that limited lexical knowledge and difficulty in working out the relationships between the constituents of the sentence are two factors which interfere with comprehension. It also suggested that these EFL learners tended towards only one type of processing the information from the text — bottom-up. They engaged in a detailed, word-by-word decoding of sentences rather than

getting the overall meaning of the text at first and then using textual clues to arrive at the meaning of individual words and sentences. The findings of this exploratory study indicate that more effective beginning EFL readers use a larger repertoire of strategies than do less effective readers. The present findings, therefore, suggest that less successful readers need awareness of reading strategies to better cope with the difficulties they face in English texts.

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# Critical reading of scientific texts<sup>2</sup>

Célia Assunção Figueiredo

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to consider some ESP students' reading habits as well as their attitudes towards reading in English; some suggestions or ways of coping with these ideas are also given.

The data which provided the basis for this investigation came mainly from a diagnostic test given to students enrolled in an optional ESP course.

This kind of course has been given since 1977 and our ESP team has tried to improve the teaching results concentrating on specific topics: **1)** materials adaptation and preparation have certainly been the initial concern when different courses are taught; **2)** the need for teacher training comes next: some re-orientation is necessary to balance materials production and exploitation with effective ways of teaching; **3)** as evaluation reflects teaching, the evaluation process has to be re-considered in the light of the changes made, and **4)** students 'conscientização' (Scott, 1986) ends up being one of our great concerns.

This paper is closely related to this last item: it is essential to get more specific information about the students' reading conceptions — or misconceptions!, the way(s) they consider the reading process and also some of the ways they read.

## THE STUDY

The data discussed here came mainly from the diagnostic test (Scott, 1983) which consists of three main parts: **1)** students' personal information; **2)**

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<sup>2</sup> This paper was originally presented in the III Latin American ESP Colloquium at UNAM, Mexico City, 1993, with the title *Students' (Mis)conceptions about Reading: What can be done?*

students' ways of reading, and 3) students' reading comprehension. The discussion proposed in this paper will concentrate chiefly on part n. 2.

What are the implications of getting all this information from our students?

First of all, besides dealing with reading comprehension as such (answering questions, finding information in a text, etc.), we also want to consider reading as a process, a set of strategies the students can use to improve their reading (Figueiredo, 1984).

Another aspect is the way this information can affect our ESP courses, that is, our materials preparation, our own teaching, and so on.

Little will be achieved if we, teachers, 'attack' only our students' reading performance as an effect and forget its causes. In other words, we cannot forget that if students read the way they do, it may be due to their L### reading habits, their ideas about reading strategies, and also their attitude towards reading in English.

Many of the students' answers (such as 'I read the way I was accustomed to') show that they will not change their reading behavior unless they are given the chance and are also motivated to change.

Commenting on this issue, Smith (1978) argues that the solution to 'reading problems' cannot lie in the application of a particular methodology or a set of reading materials. Instead, he says that the more the teacher knows about the reading process, the more he will be able to make the right choice when teaching or when preparing his materials.

It means the more the teacher knows about the ways his own students read, the more he will be able to help them improve their reading.

In our courses, then, we have been trying to understand the way or at least, some of the ways our students read in English in order to teach them in a coherent way. We will not be successful if our students finish the course with the same ideas they had before ("I translate everything while reading" or "Scientific texts cannot be criticized").

## RESULTS

Some of these answers have worried me in a particular way; they are related to students' conceptions — sometimes misconceptions — about scientific information present in textbooks and journals. To illustrate such answers, four of them are shown below:

Well, an Engineering textbook is an Engineering textbook! How can I criticize it? I'm only a student.

There are established truths and facts in science and they don't change.

In 'Exact' Sciences, things are a little bit different. You can't just criticize things before studying very much.

Well, in some areas there are experts whose credibility you can't question: they are accepted by all scientists and researchers.

To make it short, it seems students find it possible to be critical when reading a magazine, a newspaper or even a social science publication. But when it comes to their field, reactions such as the ones listed above are frequent.

## DISCUSSION

The data mentioned may reflect some extreme cases, that is, those students who kept repeating these dogmas as if they belonged to some kind of religion. The problem is that these cases are not isolated ones. How to cope with this situation? What can be done?

After analyzing data from students' reactions in class and their answers to the diagnostic test, I decided to use aspects related to scientific discourse itself as a means of getting to this "infallibility" of science: reports from journals, newspapers and magazines contradicting the students' beliefs were discussed in class. The first texts were in Portuguese in an attempt to deal with students' preconceived ideas and also to make them concentrate on divergent facts without worrying about possible linguistic barriers in English.

The purpose of the discussions was to get to some possible implications concerning information present in scientific discourse and the way(s) it is regarded by university students.

Some of the texts used are briefly mentioned below:

- The first text — whose objective was to raise some initial reaction — dealt with the impact of the media in reporting scientific investigation. Its title *Newspapers also influence science (Folha de São Paulo, Set/92)*<sup>3</sup> caused suspicious looks and reactions: the article also brought a facsimile page of *The New York Times* (Jan./90) which, in turn, reproduced part of a section of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

What was special about it? The article reported a research that demonstrated the influence of important newspapers on scientists' quotations of their colleagues' publications: these scientists read *The New York Times*, relied on its quality and choice of what to publish in the scientific area, and often referred to these publications. Coincidence? It does not seem to be the case. During a twelve-week strike of the newspaper employees, this influence ceased.

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<sup>3</sup> Despite all effort made to find the complete references of the texts used, some of them still lack important items. I would appreciate any help in this aspect.

- A text on doctors' prejudice (*Veja*, Dec./91) taken from a research published in *The American Medical Association Journal* (no date) revealed, for instance, that 50% of the doctors would not treat HIV carriers; 55% do not like to treat addicted patients; 35% consider homosexuality a threaten to society . . . to mention some of the topics cited by the 2,000 doctors interviewed.
- In proposing an alternative solution to a very technical aspect of a text on Civil Engineering (*Concrete/1974*), the author (a specialist!) concludes the text with *Would it be . . . ?*
- An investigation published in *Nature* (no date), and reported by *Veja* (April/1992), on certain animals' origin, brings words such as "evidence" and "end of the mystery" in the middle of the article. However, the conclusive part of the publication reads "the researchers *speculate . . .*" (italics added).
- Other scientific texts or reports of scientific investigation showed some frequency of "modals" and evasive words like "argue", "claim", "suggest" in their conclusions.

As my aim was to develop students' awareness towards reading and not to analyze scientific discourse in detail, the data found was discussed and some tentative implications were drawn each time. The students were encouraged to verbalize and then write their opinions, trying to reach some kind of "general implications" derived from their critical reading. Nothing was imposed or considered as a "wrong" idea; on the contrary, the students themselves were their own judges.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some of these "general implications" at the end of the course include:

1. Scientists also make mistakes when carrying out an experiment and/or when reporting it.
2. Scientists can change their minds.
3. Scientific knowledge can be misused or misinterpreted.
4. Interests, other than scientific, can lead to some distortions in scientific publications.
5. As future scientists/researchers/teachers, students should be aware of their responsibility in avoiding the spread or production of scientific knowledge as something infallible.
6. Scientific texts can be criticized as any other text.

It must be said that some students still find it difficult to be critical while reading a scientific text. But if our teaching helped them reconsider their attitude

and ideas, some change has occurred, and, after all, change is the ultimate aim in education. If, besides having the students answer questions 'correctly', we teachers, can provide them with more effective tools to help them become critical, active readers, I can say that, at least, something can be done.

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# Students as ESP teachers: an investigation of successful students' assumptions on reading and methodology

Vilson J. Leffa

## INTRODUCTION

The procedures used in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes are based on certain assumptions about reading theory and reading instruction. Traditional examples of these assumptions, in terms of reading theory, are the notions that readers have to contribute to the text with their previous knowledge of the world, that readers do not need all the information provided by the text to get its meaning, and that language deficiency can be compensated by other knowledge sources. In terms of reading instruction, certain strategies for dealing with the written text are selected and taught to the students. Typical examples of these strategies include practical advice such as using typographical clues from the printed page, predict from the title, use information from illustrations — and more abstract procedures such as reading for meaning, recognizing rhetorical cues and using context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.

While most of these strategies can be regarded as standard procedure in ESP classes, they have sometimes received harsh criticism from both students taking ESP courses and teachers who are advised to use these techniques with their students. Some teachers, for example, may feel uncomfortable with the idea that they should encourage their students to read by skipping unknown words, mainly when it entails bypassing the syntactical processing of a sentence. They believe that the higher semantic and discourse elements of the text can only be realized if the lower-level components of reading are carefully taken care of. Reading comprehension is viewed as the culmination of a long and arduous process of language learning with no place for any kind of shortcut.

Unsuccessful L2 readers, on the other hand, also seem to feel frustrated when they are advised to look beyond unknown words for meaning. They view the unknown word not only as a reminder of their ignorance but as a potential source of confusion and insecurity, a trap that is set to betray them in a thousand



unsuspected ways. The advice that L2 readers should guess from context may sound as insult to them, especially those who have done nothing else when forced to approach a foreign language text. They feel they have the right to receive something more substantial in their ESP classes.

In terms of ESP traditional procedures, we seem to know the perceptions of those who defend these procedures as ESP teachers and those who criticize them, both as non-ESP teachers and unsuccessful students. Little is known, however, about the perceptions of those who can contribute most to an assessment of ESP procedures: the successful L2 students. This is the main concern of this investigation.

## THE EXPERIMENT

Current investigations on the issue of student's perception of ESP methodology (e.g. Celani et al., 1988) usually focus on students' reactions to a given ESP course, using data that have been collected after the students have been exposed to ESP classes. This investigation takes a different approach; it uses as subjects students who are proficient L2 readers, but have never attended a course taught by an ESP teacher, although some of them had been exposed to ESP materials.

The hypothesis is that, since they are proficient readers, their perception of reading comprehension and reading instruction should be similar to what is regarded as sound theory in terms of ESP. Many of the procedures used in ESP are based on assumptions that have not been adequately tested yet. If these students, who were not familiar with the ESP terminology, could produce data that matched those assumptions, they would help validate some of the procedures used in ESP. Otherwise, if a mismatch were found, the procedures might need some revising; those who criticize ESP methodology might be right after all.

The subjects were 22 undergraduate students taking an ESP course in Computer Sciences. They were selected from an original group of 68 students through a reading comprehension test and classified into two separate subgroups: 1) the proficient group, made up of readers who scored higher than 90%, and 2) the non-proficient group, comprising those readers who scored lower than 40%.

The students in the proficient group had considerable experience with the language, either by having taken courses in language centers or by reading magazines in their areas of interest; two of them had lived in English-speaking countries. The students in the non-proficient group usually justified their lack of competence in the language by not having a good language course at school and not being able to go to private foreign language centers.

The reading comprehension test, which was used to classify the subjects, had four different types of comprehension questions, categorized as: 1) scanning (e.g. "How old was Penrose when the article was published?"); 2) skimming (e.g.

"Which paragraph describes computer limitation to rules?"); 3) detailed reading (e.g. "Why does the physicist attack artificial-intelligence researchers?"); critical reading (e.g. "What is the article trying to prove?").

The results of the reading comprehension test showed a wide variation in scores, suggesting that while the best students could be compared to native speakers in terms of reading proficiency, the weak students were well below the intermediate level.

## PROCEDURES

The eleven proficient readers were paired with the non-proficient ones. The task for the non-proficient student was to select a foreign language article and write a review of the article in Portuguese. The proficient student should act as an adviser, helping the other students, the advisee, select the article and solve comprehension problems.

The main task of the adviser was to write a diary, which should be as complete as possible, describing everything that happened in each encounter with the non-proficient student. It should include a detailed account of how each magazine was examined, why some articles were rejected and which criteria were used for the final selection of the article.

In terms of the difficulties found by the advisee in trying to understand the selected article, the adviser should 1) make a complete inventory of these difficulties; 2) specify their nature (vocabulary, sentence structure, topic, etc.); 3) describe the process used in trying to solve each difficulty, giving as many details as possible.

It was explained to the students that their assignments — either the review written by the advisee or the diary written by the adviser — would be graded individually. It was negotiated with the student advisers that the main criterion for the diary would be completeness; the diaries that provided more details would be given higher grades. The students were also informed that these details were important data for a research project and agreed to produce at least ten typed pages of text for each diary.

The 11 diaries written by the advisers (8 boys and 3 girls) amounted to 115 pages of double-spaced text. In spite of their commitment to write at least 10 pages, two students produced only 3 and 6 pages each. The most productive student was a boy who wrote 17 pages.

## RESULTS

The purpose in analyzing the data provided by the diaries is to find out how the adviser helped the advisee. A first look at the data showed that assistance from the adviser occurred in two phases. Initially, both adviser and advisee were

involved with selecting the article, which, although a preliminary phase, seemed to have taken a considerable amount of the time allotted for the task, including visits to the library and browsing through different publications until a decision was taken. In the final phase, they concentrated on the selected text, trying to solve the comprehension problems raised by the passage.

For the first phase, the students seemed to have difficulty in selecting the article. Data from the diaries show that the eleven pairs skimmed through more than 200 articles. An inventory of the reasons why the articles were rejected show that the main grounds were excessive length, lack of interest in the topic, language difficulty, lack of knowledge about the topic, and use of technical jargon. Excessive length seemed to scare the students because they had to perform a detailed reading of the text; which would probably demand more time than they had planned for the task. Language difficulty was felt as a problem both in terms of vocabulary (*many words were not even found in the dictionary*) and syntax (*the sentences were too complex*).

The criteria which weighted most on the selection of the article were reader's interest in the topic ("We were curious to find out how the device worked, I chose the article on scanners because I wanted to buy one") and use of accessible language by the author ("The vocabulary was easy, There were few idioms"). Some students were also sensitive to the graphic presentation of the text ("The article had charts and boxes, which helped comprehension").

The students browsed different sources, including textbooks, academic journals and popular science magazines. Textbooks were all rejected, mainly on the grounds that they were either too long or outdated. Academic journals were found to be too technical, presenting topics the students were not familiar with. The eleven articles eventually selected, were taken from popular science magazines, with one possible exception (*Datamation*); all the other periodicals are easily found on large newsstands. The main choice was *Byte Magazine*, which was selected by 8 pairs (Other choices were *Amiga Magazine* and *Time Magazine*).

The most important data from the diaries refer to the second phase, when adviser and advisee read the selected articles in detail. These data show that they read from two different perspectives. For the advisee, the passages presented language problems, mainly vocabulary; all they expected from the adviser was help for clarifying the meaning of the unknown words. The advisers, on the other hand, when trying to solve the problems presented by the advisees, did not seem willing to concentrate solely on the language problems but also on the strategies that readers should use to overcome these difficulties with the text. What follows is an inventory of what these proficient students advised for the non-proficient readers, both in terms of reading strategies and language development.

In terms of reading strategies, the most frequent advice was that advisees should ignore the words they do not know (all quotes are literally translated from the Portuguese):

My advice was that he should not stop at the unknown word, that he should put them on the background, trying to use the ones he knew, considering that it would be tiresome and useless to translate all the words of the text, since he could understand the whole passage if he got the main ideas (Vinicius).

We found out that not knowing some words in a paragraph does not affect its comprehension (Anne).

The best thing to do is to read the passage and try to get the idea without worrying about the words printed on the page (Klaus).

Our methodology was the following; first we looked at the text in its totality, without dictionaries or annotations. We read each paragraph quickly and then discussed the basic issues (Ruth).

I explained to my advisee that when we meet an unknown word and we see that it is not important in the sentence, we can ignore it. This helps to understand the passage, because there is no interruption for looking up the word in the dictionary, so that reading goes on smoothly (Julian).

I suggested that he stopped looking up words in the dictionary (...) and always tried to read the whole sentence leaving to the end little doubts about vocabulary (Roger).

A related advice was that readers should use context to guess the meaning of unknown words. Context was used at different levels, from the syntactic information to the broader discourse level:

I also tried to show that when we do not know the meaning of a word we can guess it by finding out the original word and then the meaning of the prefix or suffix that was added to it (Vinicius).

We deduced from the sentence that "dot" meant "ponto" (Ruth).

We guessed that "garner" meant "store" (Julian).

Whenever there was a problem, we tried to build comprehension of a word or structure by reading on or rereading what came immediately before the problem (Gabriel).

The use of context to guess meaning left some of the students unsure of the results:

"Coated paper" could mean both "thick paper" and "paper covered with something." We have to check it in the dictionary (Ruth).

Using general context is all right, but there are some exceptions. When a word or phrase is repeated several times in the passage, this is a sign that it is important and it is recommend that we find out its precise meaning (Anne).

In terms of language development the advisers were mainly concerned with three areas: word formation, vocabulary and noun phrases. In terms of word formation:

Try to understand the parts that make up a word, because then we can associate the word with others we already know (Julian).

I tried to show the meaning of the parts of a word so that he could arrive at the total meaning (...). The different meanings of *\_ing* was one of the problems (Gabriel).

I told him that often we could know the meaning of a word by looking at its ending such as *ly, ing, ment* (Gustav).

Vocabulary, which was the most serious problem from the perspective of the advisee, was also regarded as an important issue by the advisers:

Total comprehension of the passage depended almost exclusively on knowledge of vocabulary (Ruth).

Most of the difficulties were related to vocabulary (Anne).

When not treated indirectly through word analysis or guessing from context, vocabulary problems were dealt with in four different ways: 1) translation, 2) dictionary use, 3) explanation, and 4) exemplification.

In the case of translation, the word was simply translated by the adviser. When the word was looked up in the dictionary, two criteria were mentioned: 1) importance (e.g., the term was felt to be a keyword) and 2) frequency of occurrence.

Some words were not found in the dictionary (e.g., *superpipeline*); others were found but the meaning did not match the context (e.g., *dithering*). In such cases, depending on the competence of the adviser, an explanation was offered:

I told him that "flatbed" was like a xerox machine, where the whole page is scanned by the device (Roger).

There were also some cases of exemplification, where the adviser tried to make meaning vivid for the advisee, sometimes including visualization:

Tiny holes: that insect was so tiny that it was almost invisible. There was a hole in the middle of the road and the boy fell into it. This hole was big; but the ones in the passage are tiny (Ruth).

Noun phrases were also listed as a serious problem by the advisers. The inventory included examples such as:

Intel's double-fast CUP's  
Tightly-packed light sensors  
Standard database management system interface

Some of the advisers were admitted unable to solve some of the examples found in the passages:

The phrase above was one I could not solve. I believe that only a lot of reading and knowledge of the topic can solve it. This case is beyond my proficiency level in English (Vinicius).

I told him I could not give an exact translation of the phrase but only a general idea (Gustav).

Other advisers, however, tried to offer some help in terms of strategies:

This is the opposite of Portuguese. In English the main word [meaning headword] comes at the end. Treat the rest as adjectives and adverbs (Roger).

My advice on this point was to show that the general rule is to regard the last word as a substantive and the ones before it as adjectives. For these adjectives, the best sequence is the one that makes sense. It is common, however, to have different meanings for the same phrase, so that we don't really know what the author meant when he wrote it (Julian).

These quotes reflect the views of the majority of the proficient students but it should be pointed that they are not unanimous. Out of the eleven students there was at least one who demonstrated a very conservative view of reading, and concentrated solely on vocabulary study:

As we worked, it became clear that almost all the advisee's doubts dealt with the meaning of words (Christian).

Christian's diary was just a long list of the unknown words with their meanings in Portuguese. Apparently he only tried to infer meaning when the word was not in the dictionary:

Clunkier: not in the dictionary. From what follows in the text, we can see that it is not a word with a positive meaning. Maybe something bureaucratic, painful, boring.

One student was very succinct in his diary to provide valid data. Apparently he did not have time to meet with his advisee.

## CONCLUSION

The eleven proficient readers in this study were asked to help other non-proficient readers select an article, help them read the article in detail and write a diary of the experience. The purpose was to find out which views these proficient

readers had of reading and reading instruction. The data were obtained indirectly from the diary entries.

There are two factors in the study which should contribute to the reliability of the results. One is that the subjects were not asked to teach a course in reading; but just to make a single text comprehensible for another student. Long term objectives such as developing reading skills to be used with different texts were not involved. The other factor was that the students were not directly asked to expose their views on reading and methodology; they were asked to write a diary of their experience. Whatever they express in their diaries was not induced by the investigator and should be regarded as spontaneous output. If they chose to voice their opinions on reading and methodology the views they expressed are probably more authentic than through an instrument such as a questionnaire.

These opinions, which should be genuine, suggest that proficient readers view reading as made up of two components: strategy and language. In terms of reading strategy, they emphasized the importance of unobstructed reading; viewing a process that should flow smoothly. Unknown words should be inferred from context or even ignored if not essential to meaning. In terms of language development, the proficient students demonstrated a diversified approach to attack the problem, including instruction in word formation and noun phrases.

These views are not very different from what is regarded as standard procedures in ESP. In terms of practice, there is a match between what proficient readers think of reading instruction and what experienced ESP teachers do in class. In terms of theory, the idea suggested by the students that readers process the text selectively is not very different from Goodman's (1972) concept of redundancy and Stanovich's (1980) compensatory hypothesis — two basic principles behind many ESP procedures. The main conclusion of this study, then, is that what ESP teachers do in class is supported not only by its own theoretical background but also by the beliefs of proficient L2 readers. It seems that whenever we question the theoretical background of ESP, we have also to question what proficient readers think of reading, which is a much more difficult task, considering that what they think is what probably made them successful readers.

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# Conhecimento e metaconhecimento na formação do leitor

Myriam Brito Correa Nunes

## INTRODUÇÃO

Ensinar leitura de textos acadêmicos escritos em inglês para alunos adultos de diferentes áreas de graduação da UFRJ, levando-os a interagir com os textos de modo a se tornarem leitores proficientes e independentes, é meu objetivo como professor. Minha proposta, portanto, é além de torná-los bons leitores, auxiliá-los a desenvolver uma autonomia que lhes possibilite administrar e controlar sua aprendizagem. Conforme Wenden (1991) "...alunos adultos se vêem como tendo um papel crucial em sua aprendizagem."

Entretanto, embora planeje e procure direcionar o curso para o aluno, repito muitas das vezes o modelo em que o professor é o ator principal, o agente da aprendizagem por ser o detentor do conhecimento.

Com o intuito de inverter esta situação, optei por uma mudança na prática de ensino que permitisse ao aluno leitor possuir maior conhecimento de aspectos teóricos básicos sobre leitura e aprendizagem.

Kohonen V. (in Nunan 1992) afirma que "um aluno adulto totalmente autônomo é completamente responsável por: tomar decisões, implementar e avaliar a aprendizagem sem qualquer envolvimento do professor", para isto é preciso que possua conhecimento teórico a fim de não ser apenas adestrado pelo professor.

É possível na prática o professor dividir com o aluno seu conhecimento teórico? Que técnicas pedagógicas levam o aluno a uma reflexão consciente sobre seu próprio conhecimento diminuindo a distância entre seu saber possibilitando-lhe ter maior autonomia?

Esta pesquisa procura responder a estas perguntas.

*Método de investigação*

O trabalho de investigação desenvolveu-se em etapas. Primeiro observou-se criticamente como o leitor fazia opções, isto é, como era usado o material de leitura pelo aluno em sala de aula. Nosso interesse era identificar, pelo



uso do material, os obstáculos que os alunos enfrentam para tomar decisões e administrar seu conhecimento.

Numa segunda etapa, procurou-se identificar as atitudes do professor que modificam o comportamento do leitor levando-o a questionar-se sobre o que lhe é proposto em sala de aula e a identificar os objetivos das atividades o que lhe levaria a uma conscientização do conhecimento e metachecimento necessários para ler o texto.

Os dados coletados levaram-me a uma mudança de comportamento em sala de aula tornando-me mais consciente do papel do professor na transferência e negociação de metachecimento com o aluno.

### *Material Utilizado*

Durante a pesquisa foi utilizado material especialmente preparado para ensino de leitura na UFRJ em que atividades são graduadas em três níveis de dificuldade A — B — C e propostas aos leitores para que estes escolham as que melhor se adaptem ao conhecimento que possuem de língua inglesa.

Foram, também, utilizadas, para coleta de dados, notas de campo elaboradas por mim e por dois auxiliares de pesquisa. Ainda foram aplicados questionários aos alunos em etapas diferentes do curso assim como uma entrevista gravada com duas alunas ouvintes. Estas se preparavam para a prova de Língua Instrumental da pós-graduação em letras na UFRJ.

### *Coleta de Dados*

Os meus planejamentos de aulas de leitura são feitos de tal modo que o professor tenha uma atividade mais passiva em sala de aula, enquanto os alunos têm uma participação mais ativa. Para isto, as atividades a serem realizadas a partir da leitura e compreensão do texto são propostas e não impostas. Os leitores têm autonomia na escolha das atividades.

Os dados para análise foram selecionados levando-se em consideração a escolha feita pelos alunos e as suas respostas às perguntas: "por que você fez esta opção?/que tipo de conhecimento você utilizou?/como utilizou seu conhecimento para resolver o problema proposto?"

O objetivo era identificar que estratégias cognitivas são usadas conscientemente.

Nunan (1992, p. 11) afirma ser necessário "fortalecer e enriquecer o aluno a identificar os caminhos que seguem para ler e aprender a ler, ajudando-os assim a monitorar sua própria aprendizagem" (tradução minha). Assim sendo, neste segundo momento, procuramos em sala de aula focalizar a atenção dos leitores para seus processos de aprendizagem questionando e comentando o porquê de suas opções.

Os dados desta fase foram colhidos a partir das mudanças realizadas no material de leitura e no meu comportamento em sala de aula. Foram então levadas em consideração as respostas dos alunos aos questionários e às entrevistas assim como os comentários dos auxiliares de pesquisa que sem ter de início conhecimento teórico sobre leitura e aprendizagem mudaram sua visão e conhecimento sobre o que é aprender a ler.

### *Análise e Resultado dos Dados*

Ao responder a pergunta: *Qual sua opinião sobre as atividades A-B-C ?*, muitos mostraram ter consciência do propósito de oferecer-lhes diferentes opções. Palavras dos alunos: "é uma forma sutil e elaborada de conduzir o aluno a avaliar seu conhecimento; leva a crescer do mais fácil ao mais difícil; estimula a liberdade de escolhas."

Comparando-se com os dados obtidos na primeira fase da investigação, nem sempre ao escolher as atividades os alunos conscientemente se questionavam quanto ao objetivo das atividades, ao tipo de conhecimento que necessitavam para realizá-las ou quanto às estratégias de conhecimento que seguiam para crescerem de A para C.

A maioria iniciava conforme aconselhado pelo professor, pela atividade B e depois seguiam para A ou C sem indagar-se do porquê ou em que uma era mais difícil que a outra.

De acordo com Ruben e Thompson (in Wenden, 1991, p. 46) "os falantes nativos se comunicam sem pensar no processo, mas para acelerar a aprendizagem de uma outra língua é útil tornar-se mais consciente do conhecimento e estratégias usados no processo de comunicação para mais eficientemente guiar a aprendizagem (tradução minha).

Nossa investigação confirma que os leitores usam as estratégias de aprendizagem e de leitura mecânicamente sem observar se precisam adaptá-las ou mudá-las. Fica, portanto, uma lacuna que o professor pode usar para despertar no leitor consciência de seu conhecimento para que possa dominá-lo, modificá-lo e avaliá-lo.

Em sala de aula, algumas estratégias cognitivas de aprendizagem — segundo Wenden (1991) operações e etapas mentais usadas pelos alunos para aprender — são facilmente observadas e monitoradas pelo professor; outras são automatizadas pelos alunos sem que estes tomem consciência; enquanto outras só através de situações criadas pelo professor foi possível de algum modo julgar-se que os leitores realmente a utilizaram.

Eis algumas das estratégias do primeiro grupo, isto é, usadas pelos alunos conscientemente, observadas e monitoradas pelo professor inclusive como tarefa do material de leitura.

Os leitores sabem como e por que realizam estas atividades e de algum modo sabem até o propósito delas. São elas: tradução; anotação (apontamento e seleção de tópicos); agrupamento (agrupar ou reclassificar o material apreendido).

São automatizadas pelos leitores mas sem que tomem conhecimento de sua utilização ou validade como recurso de aprendizagem: constextualização, dedução (aplicação consciente de regras para entender o que desconhecem); recombinação (combinação de elementos conhecidos usados de maneira nova); palavras-chave.

Alguns comentários feitos pelos alunos em sala de aula servem de exemplo para o uso destas estratégias. Uma aluna diz: "facilmente consegui chegar ao sentido de ODDLY por que me lembrei do fato da professora ter comentado que existe o sabão ODD, isto é, ímpar." Ao ser perguntado como chegou à conclusão de que WORD significava palavra e não promessa, um aluno respondeu "eu li a frase e vi que promessa não tinha sentido ali." Também, ao tentar descobrir o sentido de DUE TO um aluno deduz: "ah, deve ser a causa porque vem entre television, automobile and social mobility."

Embora não mostrassem ter consciência do que estavam fazendo, nos exemplo acima, o professor teve oportunidade de chamar a atenção do leitor para o recurso que estavam usando. Com a expressão "é mesmo" de um aluno, notou-se que tomaram consciência.

Finalmente, há o terceiro grupo de estratégias usadas pelo leitor mais difíceis de serem observadas e seu uso verbalizado dificultando assim ao professor criar situações que mostrem ou levem ao aluno a observá-las: inferência; transferência (transferir o conhecimento linguístico ou conceitual para uma nova situação) e elaboração (relacionar uma informação nova a outros conceitos na memória).

Aparentemente os alunos podem estar inferindo mas na realidade estão usando "pistas" ou recombinação o que já sabem, podem também estar transferindo o conhecimento linguístico sem estar consciente e o professor tem que estar ciente do que é transferido. Por exemplo, uma aluna afirma: "estava adivinhando o sentido de DEAL só que não conseguia porque estava associando a IDEAL agora que a senhora explicou o sentido de DEAL é que notei a minha dificuldade de adivinhar o sentido houve uma transferência errada e não uma inferência."

Além de colher dados sobre as estratégias de conhecimento que os leitores usam, o objetivo da pesquisa é também, criar e investigar situações que levem os alunos a refletir sobre seus próprios processos cognitivos possibilitando-lhes aperfeiçoar seu metac conhecimento.

Para isso, ao final de algumas unidades do material de leitura foram incluídas perguntas que levariam pelas respostas a despertar no leitor o conhecimento do porquê ou da natureza das atividades de leitura propostas. Eis algumas destas perguntas: — que atividades tiveram os seguintes objetivos: levar o leitor a antecipar o assunto do texto; desenvolver uma leitura rápida; ampliar o vocabulário; ativar o conhecimento de mundo; ler o texto com coesão; explorar as idéias principais do texto — que exercícios foram feitos para: chamar atenção para pistas tipográficas, qual a vantagem para o leitor de observar estas

pistas; levá-lo a antecipar o assunto; levá-lo a transferir os conhecimentos de português para o inglês; identificar palavras-chaves, em que isto lhe ajuda como leitor.

Não só no preparo de material didático, mas também em diferentes momentos em sala de aula, no meu agir houve uma mudança planejada de postura em que procurei levar o leitor à meta consciência e a desenvolver sua capacidade de meta cognição.

Eis algumas mudanças que foram objeto de observação:

- Inclusão de tarefas e comentários no material didático que levem o leitor a observar seu comportamento, a se questionar. Esta é a observação de uma auxiliar de pesquisa sobre uma desta notas: "a professora ao apresentar a atividade tentou prever as possíveis dúvidas, dar pistas de como e por que fazer o exercício."
- Uso de explicações, descrições, comentários orais em aula sobre o processo de aprendizagem. Este comentário feito por uma aluna no final do curso, anotado pelo monitor ou auxiliar de pesquisa, que mostra uma preocupação com o meta conhecimento: "parênteses e aspas ajudam o leitor a deduzir o que o autor marca: uma explicação, um exemplo ou um detalhe. O monitor ainda anota, os alunos desenvolveram sua capacidade de saber o porquê do que lhes é proposto, estão aprendendo a pescar, além de ganhar peixes."
- Uso de respostas às perguntas dos alunos que levem a ver-se não como consumidor de fórmulas, e o professor como única fonte de saber, como aquele que toma todas as decisões. Apontamento do auxiliar de pesquisa: "antes de responder a quem fez a pergunta, foi dada a outros a oportunidade de darem a resposta."
- Uso do self-report como atividade de sala de aula, isto é, convidar o leitor a descrever como realizaram as atividades. Nota de uma monitora: "a professora ouviu de vários alunos como chegaram ao título e ressaltou o fato de que cada um seguiu por caminho diferente, por fim aceitou dois títulos diferentes."
- Ênfase aos comentários feitos pelos alunos sobre os processos de aprendizagem. Anotação de uma monitora: "Foi valorizado pela professora o comentário feito por um aluno que um bom leitor faz automaticamente isto(selecionar o que é essencial para ser lido), aquele que lê palavra por palavra se perde sem saber no final o que é importante."
- Uso de justificativas para certas atitudes pedagógicas. Nota do monitor: "comentário da professora — primeiro vocês tentem adivinhar, façam de contas que eu não estou aqui, eu faço isto para que vocês mesmos procurem pistas no texto, reflitam sobre os caminhos que podem seguir."

No final do curso, três perguntas foram feitas procurando identificar como o aluno via o professor no processo de leitura:

- O que você espera de um professor de leitura, que seja um tradutor, por exemplo?

- Até que ponto o professor de leitura foi importante e em que influenciou seu comportamento como leitor?

## CONSIDERAÇÕES SOBRE O PAPEL DO PROFESSOR

Os dados colhidos nesta pesquisa levaram-me a me policiar e a me conscientizar do papel que tem o professor como agente no processo de aprendizagem do aluno.

Sem esta certeza e sem auto controle teriam sido desperdiçadas oportunidades preciosas de despertar ou oferecer ao aluno-leitor informações que ele tem e que pode necessitar para se tornar um leitor independente e capaz de se aperfeiçoar à medida que novas situações lhe forem apresentadas.

Convém lembrar que a maioria dos alunos enfrentam, fora da sala de aula, inúmeras situações em que como leitores podem exercitar ou aprimorar o que foi apreendido em sala de aula. Alguns declararam que transferem seus conhecimentos até para o português quando lêem sozinhos. Palavras de uma aluna: "eu já devia saber mas nunca tinha notado que uma palavra conhecida pode me ajudar a descobrir o sentido de outra; tenho observado o que faço em português: resumo o que já li, para conferir o que já entendi, antes de ir adiante."

## CONCLUSÃO

Concluimos que é possível tornar os alunos mais conscientes e conhecedores dos processos que envolvem a aprendizagem e a leitura. Para isso, há necessidade de um propósito do professor e de um preparo psicológico e pedagógico de ambos aluno e professor.

Há atitudes do professor que afetam claramente o comportamento cognitivo e de aprendizagem dos alunos-leitores. Cabe ao professor, oferecendo-lhes as ferramentas do conhecimento e metachecimento, prepará-los para que venham a monitorar seu comportamento dentro e fora de sala de aula, tornando-os mais responsáveis por sua aprendizagem.

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# Literature, theatre, cinema: an attempt to bridge the cultural gap

Ubiratan Paiva de Oliveira

*The relationships between Literature and The Other Arts — Phase 1: Literature, Theatre, and Cinema* is the theme to be investigated in a research project through comparative analyses of several theories which examined the contacts involving literature, the theatre or the cinema, especially concerning *adaptation procedures* from one genre to another.

The aim of the project is not only to study the different theories but examine them through concrete cases of adaptations. The comparative examination of similarities or divergences found in the theories involved will make it possible to verify the way in which the conjoined activity of the various forms of artistic expression have contributed to their respective developments.

These studies aim to intensify the intellectual investigation concerning the subject and to be used as the basis for the proposition of a programme for an experimental graduation course on the theme, in the English sector as an attempt to broaden the cultural formation of the future teacher of language or literature. Therefore, the project presents not only a theoretical aim but also the practical characteristic of concrete application of the research done.

It is a well known fact that the cinema gradually developed from a dramatic aesthetics to a narrative aesthetics. In the midst of such evolution the film developed the kind of expressiveness which Christian Metz and Roland Barthes call *écriture*. The cinema would not only be comparable to literature as *écriture du mouvement*, but also it has been especially through the adaptation of literary texts to cinematic language that it has matured as a narrative art. Therefore, the study of the adaptations contribute to define the limits of each medium and will, possibly, broaden the understanding of the nature of the narrative itself. The project also aims to relate literature to the theatre and to the cinema, a fact which increases the possible kinds of combinations. The idea is to try and examine all kinds of combination involving the three forms of expression.

The starting point will be the study of the theory presented by the French comparatist Alain Garcia, who identifies six techniques of adaptation from novel into film: the adaptation with illustration or amplification; the free adaptation with digression or comment; the transposition with analogy, or that

which he calls "écranisation", expression which, adapted to English would come up as "screenization":

Il y a allusion au contenu, transcodage des procédés de narration et réincarnation de la même oeuvre. L'écranisation ne veut pas dire que le roman a un "petit frère" qui s'appelle le film. L'écranisation signifie simplement qu'il y a eu un acte unique en soi du point de vue de la création, une sorte de réincarnation, de seconde naissance du récit initial.<sup>4</sup>

Garcia does not go beyond the adaptation of novel into film. For this reason, other authors will be studied: André Bazin, Susan Sontag, Francis Vanoye, Jonathan Miller and Martin Esslin. Sontag states that there are greater possibilities of establishing the analogy between cinema and novel than cinema and theatre. Miller tries to show the difficulties of adapting — especially a novel into play — coming to the point of questioning its validity. Esslin presents a very personal system in which he establishes the relationship between cinema and theatre. Theoretical support will also be searched in studies of Comparative Literature concerning the interrelationship of arts, such as Étienne Souriau's *La correspondance des Arts* and Ulrich Weisstein's *The Mutual Illumination of the Arts*.

The different theories acknowledge the fact that a creative novelist, playwright, or filmmaker can revive the spirit of the original work through another medium and at a different time and produce a work with a life of its own, which will even be able to rate the former. As Alain Garcia points out: *On le voit, cinéma et littérature en travaillant main dans la main, ont tout à gagner et rien à perdre.*<sup>5</sup>

Examples of adaptations, especially from novels or short stories into film, are very easy to find. An interesting case is that of the epistolary novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Choderlos de Laclos. Written in the 18th century, it was adapted to the cinema by Roger Vadim in 1959 and has recently become a play by Christopher Hampton — *Dangerous Liaisons* — which served as the starting point for a new film version by Stephen Frears. Simultaneously with Frears, Milos Forman shot *Valmont*, also based on Laclos's novel. Andrew Lloyd Webber as well used material from it in his musical play *Aspects of Love*. Consequently, the existence of so many versions of one original work offers by itself a great deal of material for a comparative study.

Adaptations are not the only way in which cinema, literature and theatre come into close contact though. Examples of intertextuality can also be found very easily. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has had several movie versions, the most famous of them probably being Lawrence Olivier's. *Hamlet* has recently

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<sup>4</sup> Alain Garcia, *L'adaptation du roman au film*, (Paris: IF Diffusion, 1990), p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> Garcia, p. 264.

been shot again by Franco Zeffirelli with Mel Gibson in the title role and *L. A. Story*, directed by Mick Jackson, presents several scenes which simply reproduce whole passages of the Shakespearean play. The spectator's ignorance of such fact will drastically diminish his enjoyment of the film.

Tom Stoppard, the author of the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, recently wrote the screenplay and directed its movie version. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are minor characters in *Hamlet*, and the action in Stoppard's play and film revolves around Shakespeare's work. Failure in recognizing the connection will prevent not only the enjoyment of the play or film but also the understanding of the work.

Another way in which literature, theatre, and cinema work together can be found in the field of quotations. Poetry is often used in plays or films, a fact which usually ends up by enriching such works. A fairly recent film, *Dead Poets' Society*, in which quotations of poems by Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, and William Shakespeare, among others, play an important role in the development of the action, serves as a good example of this use of poetry. Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* departs from a passage of William Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*; and Francis F. Coppola's *The Outsiders* makes very fruitful use of a Robert Frost's poem. Also, those who are able to recognize fragments of Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* repeated several times throughout *Telefon*, will see this Don Siegel's spy-adventure starring Charles Bronson in a new light.

The insufficient amount of reading which many students reveal, something inadmissible at university level, as well as their reluctance in accepting reading assignments is a serious problems which challenges the faculty. This fact becomes more serious in the teaching of a foreign language or literature as the students generally present a poor level of understanding of books, articles, plays or films, due to their lack of knowledge concerning cultural aspects of other countries. Even though many times being able to achieve a good linguistic level, the students end up by presenting a rather poor expressive performance because of their ignorance of cultural facts and consequent inability to trace relations.

In order to make this point clear, it would be interesting to examine some examples. In Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, the characters Alvy and Annie discuss Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, a picture about a French town during the Nazi occupation which they had seen earlier that day:

ALVY (offscreen) — Boy, those guys in the French Resistance were really brave, you know? Got to listen to Maurice Chevalier sing so much.

ANNIE — M'm, I don't know, sometimes I ask myself how I'd stand up under torture.



ALVY (offscreen) — You? You kiddin'? (He moves into the frame, lying across the bed to touch Annie, who makes a face) If the Gestapo would take away your Bloomingdale's charge card, you'd tell'em everything.<sup>6</sup>

It may happen that someone might ignore what the French Resistance was or who Maurice Chevalier happened to be. In that case, perfect understanding of the passage would not be possible. One could exaggerate a little and say that someone else does not know what the word *Gestapo* refers to, in which case the whole scene will be totally useless (the sad thing is that this last fact really took place in a class fairly recently).

This would be an extreme case, but what is essential for the perfect understanding of the joke is that the spectator be aware of what Bloomingdale is. If somebody does not know that it is a fashionable department store in New York, also known for its not very low prices, the joke will be completely lost and the whole scene will result useless for the development of the characters and the enjoyment of the film.

For those who see or read Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, it is essential to establish the relationship between the 17th century witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts with the phenomenon which became known as *McCarthyism* in the 1950s. A *witch hunt* took place then, in a search for people who could be blamed for supposed threats to the United States. Miller himself was accused and tried, having had to face a number of serious problems in consequence of this fact.

More recently, John Moffitt shot the comedy *Love at Stake*, which makes fun entirely on the 17th century Salem trials. Again, if one is ignorant of the historical facts, much of the meaning and fun will be lost, not to mention details such as the name of the Salem confectionery in the film and its owner: Sarah Lee.

One concrete example of the problems caused by the ignorance of cultural aspects happens in the recent movie version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, worsened by the fact that the mistakes spotted have been committed supposedly by a professional: the translator.

The Portuguese captions present, among others, one mistake which perfectly illustrates our point. It is a sequence in which the two main characters start playing at words or questions. As they happen to be in a room used for the practice of *jeu de paume*, an ancestor of today's tennis, they simulate the movement of this sport while their verbal competition continues:

ROS: Practice!  
GUIL: Statement! One-love.  
ROS: Cheating!  
GUIL: How?  
ROS: I hadn't started yet.

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<sup>6</sup> Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman, "Annie Hall", in *Four Films by Woody Allen*, (New York: Random House, 1982), p. 17.

GUIL: Statement. Two-love.  
ROS: Are you counting that?  
GUIL: What?  
ROS: Are you counting that?  
GUIL: Foul! No repetitions. Three-love. First game to ...<sup>7</sup>

Anyone acquainted with the vocabulary used for tennis knows that the word *love* stands for *zero*, whereas the captions in Portuguese presented it translated into the noun *amor* or the verb *amar*, the dialogue consequently resulting totally nonsensical.

The methodology to be used in the development of this project will be a *contrastive analysis* of theoretical texts which also come to propitiate an analysis of the same kind of literary, theatrical, or cinematographic works produced in the English language. According to its development and in the light of the several mentioned theories, the present project will perform comparative studies of a number of works which will firstly form the curriculum of the experimental course. This, on the other hand, will consist of the reading of the novel, story, poem, play or screenplay, or attendance to a film or theatrical performance which will be the basis for subsequent discussions. These will be oriented to guarantee, above all, a good comprehension of the works read or seen so that, subsequently, a discussion based on the comparative theories may succeed.

In order to make the kind of work to be done clear, here follows a brief example of comparison between the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles and its excellent movie version.

The novel presents the oscillation between a love affair and the comments by a writer with a modern perspective about Victorian England and its literature. It is this distancing which not only gives the love story all its strength by contrast but also equally allows a debate with the reader about the evolution of the characters and social habits, as well as the relationships between men and women. The book is thus clearly a 20th century novel with a 19th century theme. Much more than a period piece, Fowles's work is a reflection on inner fiction and the way with which it incarnates the moral of the time.

The film has to face the problem of finding equivalents in cinematographic terms for the authorial intrusions, the several endings and for the narrative voice in the novel. It does this with great originality and audacity. The solution found by Pinter and Reisz was to place the love story of Charles and Sarah inside another, that of Mike and Anna the two actors who play their roles. In this way, the modern couple works as an amplifier of the Victorian relationship, sometimes ironizing some of its meanings. The result is brilliant even though demanding certain sacrifices: the suppression of some characters and scenes and the drama presented by the writer's comments in the book. Part of the historical documentation is furnished by the contemporary lovers, who, for

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<sup>7</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 32.

example, discuss the statistics about prostitution in Victorian London. The intertwining of fiction and history has thus been maintained and it provides a solution for the different endings which the novel has by presenting each love story separately, but gradually converging. John Fowles made the following comment about the film:

... The greatest gift a good screenwriter can give a director is not so much a version "faithful" to the book as a version faithful to the very different production capability (and relation with audience) of the cinema. I do not think of the present script as a mere "version" of my novel; but as the blueprint of a brilliant metaphor for it. I approve entirely of this approach, and not only because I believe original authors have no right to interfere once they have got the scenarist and director they want, but even more because I am sure that viable transitions from the one medium to the other need just such an imaginative leap.<sup>8</sup>

The adaptation written by Harold Pinter and directed by Karel Reisz is an example of the best which can be achieved in transposing a literary work to the cinema: what Alain Garcia defined through the use of the neologism *écranisation*, the expression which best represents this passage from book to film and whose meaning coincides with Fowles's words quoted above. *Écraniser* a novel means making a transposition by exploring to the limits the possibilities which this method contains:

L'analogie renvoyait au concept suivant: fidélité à la lettre et à l'esprit. L'écranisation va, paradoxalement, aller encore plus loin en utilisant le chemin inverse: fidélité à l'esprit et à la lettre. Ce changement dans l'ordre de mots revêt pour nous une importance cruciale dans la démarche de l'adaptateur. Ce n'est pas la lettre, le contenu qui l'intéresse au premier chef mais bel et bien l'esprit, le sens, le sentiment, le ton, le genre de l'oeuvre originale.<sup>9</sup>

It is as if there were only one narrative, although the product of two independent minds at different moments. The theme is rethought, revisited by the filmmaker.

The task of examining the inter-relationship involving literature, theatre, and cinema, be it through the study of different kinds of adaptation, the use of intertextuality, or the use of quotations will result in a work which, by investigating diverse domains of artistic expression will end by expanding not only the researcher's cultural context but also that of the students of the future

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<sup>8</sup> John Fowles, Foreword, *The Screenplay of The French Lieutenant's Woman*, by Harold Pinter (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. xii.

<sup>9</sup> Garcia, p. 264.

course. The conversion of literature, theatre, and cinema into the object of simultaneous study, because of the interest it may provoke and the updatedness of the subject, will stimulate the student to the use of the English language in several and varied situations.

The project here exposed, in its application, tries to find a way to solve the problem caused by the lack of knowledge which students generally present in relation to cultural aspects of other countries. It aims to achieve a better formation of the students through the enrichment of their cultural knowledge and all the advantages resulting from this fact. By trying to make the habit of reading more attractive, it is expected that greater student motivation will be felt, as well as the interest for other kinds of artistic manifestation, a fact which will result in a better linguistic and expressive performance. Bringing literature, theatre, and cinema closer to one another may be one of the ways of achieving such an aim. As the title of the project suggests, this is not the end of the road for the investigation will be extended to the relationship of literature with all the other arts, thus offering more and more chances for the broadening of the cultural context of the learner.

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## Language and culture as elements of transgression: A reading of *The playboy of the Western World* .

Vera Lucia Lenz Vianna

*The playboy of the Western World* was written by the Irish playwright John Millington Synge in 1907. The play was based on a true story the author once heard among Irish country people. Breaking through the elaborate rhetorics and the pallid realism commonly found in the literature of his days, Synge subverts the traditional use of the English language to portray the culture of an Irish community of peasants whose moral values are also reversed. As result, the text offers a mixture of a spicy dialect and a wild reality.

Although the language used in the play has an odd effect upon the ear, it becomes an effective tool through which the reader can perceive the way a particular speech community transgresses the seriousness of normative life and turns certain universal moral codes upside down.

The plot of this three-act play is relatively simple and can be summarized as follows: Christy Mahon, after being on the run for eleven days, arrives at the tavern of a far distant Irish village and announces that he has killed his father. He is immediately praised for what he has done and offered a post by the tavern owner. The whole community of peasants is literally taken as they hear the outsider's story. Out of much bragging, exaggeration and lies, Christy becomes the center of attraction for those rude people. Soon, a romance between Pegeen — a local girl who is actually engaged to another man — and the so-called hero starts. Quickly, Christy's status among the villagers grows and he becomes not only the brave man who got rid of an undesired father, but also a sort of "poet" as the country women fall in love with his speech. Finally, Christy's victory in a sports contest makes him achieve the supreme title of champion within the community. In the last act, however, a turnabout occurs, and Christy's newly acquired position is suddenly destroyed. The father he has supposedly killed appears, putting an end not only to his image but also to the villager's fantasy. Ironically, the same people who had transformed Christy into a marvel, go against him as they realize that their "hero" had committed no crime at all. On the other hand, Christy's father, who had never respected the son, ends up by admiring the

position Christy had won in the village. Reconciled, father and son leave the peasants and Peegen — the bride-to-be — laments the loss of her playboy.

As it can be observed, the story displays from the starting point a rupture in terms of certain universal moral values: the protagonist's crime gains immediate approval among the villagers who see a murder with sympathetic eyes. Instead of punishment, a murderer receives here glories for "Bravery is a treasure in a lonesome place" as it is voiced by one of the villagers (p. 19). Such a violation of the generally accepted norms of behavior points to an inversion of the rational conduct.

In fact, the culture which the play examines, is "one where the values of the big world have been tragi-comically reversed" as Terence Hawkes states (1965, p. 991). Being so, the main protagonist not only confesses he has killed his father, but also, asserts that he has done it "with the help of God" and, remorselessly, invokes *The Holy Immaculate Mother* to intercede for his soul (p. 17). Actually, the people depicted here are harsh folks who swear all the time, invoke holy names irreverently and salute those who, like Christy, have committed transgressions:

Well, God bless you Christy, and a good rest till we meet again when the sun'll be rising to the noon of the day (p.20).

Drink a health to the wonders of the Western World, the pirates, preachers, pooteen-makers, with the jobbing jockies ... (p. 35).

Thus, everyone wants to *set the eyes on a man killed his father* (p. 30) and the local girls, impressed by the stranger's deed, all run up to meet the "marvel" and to treat him nicely:

...Then my thousand welcomes to you, and I've run up with a brace of duck's eggs for your food today. Peegen's ducks is no use, but these are the real rich sort. Hold out your hand and you'll see it's no lie I'm telling you (p.32).

How to account for such an eccentric morality? The text informs us that the peasants portrayed in the play live isolated, caught up in the struggle for existence in a hostile soil. The arrival of an outsider not only stirs their imagination but also breaks the monotony of their harsh lives. Thus, profane attitudes become part of the villagers' daily routine as a means of minimizing the raw reality they are obliged to face. As a result, they are ready to accept Christy's story and to make a hero out of illusion. It is then the peasant's eagerness to escape their reality, to alter their barren existence, that an impostor is transformed into a symbol of heroism. In fact, the play depicts a community of people who not only subverts the official ideology but also develops another type of consciousness to think the man and the world.

As to the language used here — an Anglo-Irish dialect — one realizes that it "becomes congruent with the culture and reflects it with precision" as Hawkes puts it (1965, p. 992).

Right from the opening scene, we are introduced to unconventional grammatical constructions, such as:

- The use of the pleonastic infinitive form "for to" as in:

...If you didn't commit murder, nor a bad, nasty thing or robbery, or the like of them, there isn't anything that would be worth the troubling for to run from now (p. 7).

Aid me for to win Pegeen. It's herself only that I'm seeking now. Aid me for to win her, and I'll be asking God to stretch a hand to you in the hour of need... (p. 50).

- The use of the expression "in it" in the place of here as in:

There would be no harm staying now, I'm thinking, and himself in it too (p. 30).

I'm thinking Shawn Keogh was making game of us and there's no such man in it at all (p.30)

- The presence of syntactic inversions, odd constructions, such as in:

*I'm thinking it's a queer daughter you are... (p. 11)*

*When it's your own the fault is, not paying a penny pot-boy to stand along with me (p. 13)*

*It's well you know what call I have (p. 38)*

*Isn't it long the nights are now, Shawn Keogh to be leaving a poor girl with her own self counting the hours to the dawn of day? (p. 8).*

Such a peculiar language could be mistakenly considered as linguistic shortcomings if analyzed in isolation, in its pure formal aspect. But form and content cannot be severed one from the other if we are to preserve meaning. Language does not exist in a "vacuum". It is embedded in the culture of a people and it reflects the totality of beliefs and sentiments of the speech community.

With the development of sociolinguistics, the study of language, as it is well known, has taken new trends. No longer isolated from external environment, it has been examined along with the study of the culture and the society in which it functions. Thus, *The playboy of the Western World* dramatizes the way language and culture shape one another as language, in the play, becomes the very core of the culture it conveys and vice-versa. After all, culture can be perceived in the "very grammar we use, the very vocabulary we choose, the very metaphors we live by" (Halliday 1990, cited in Kramsch 1993, p. 8). Thus, by deliberately using an articular dialect, which transgresses the official structure of the English

language, Synge enables the reader to feel the way a special community of people orders and experiences reality. It is then through language, that some cultural aspects are brought into light and made more emphatic. Had Synge used the conventional English syntax, the reader would not have been exposed to the particular context or to the particular consciousness of the community of peasants the play depicts with such an intensity.

Because language and culture in this play come together and reflect one another in an interrelated, dialogic way, *The playboy of the Western World* also promotes a crosscultural awareness and a crosscultural exchange as well. Face to face with another culture, the reader not only gains new socio-cultural insights, but also revises, even if unconsciously, the values and traditions of his/her own culture. As Kramsch has stated, "Culture is difference, variability, and always a potential source of conflict when one culture enters into contact with another." (Kramsch 1993, p. 1).

In concluding this brief analysis, we reiterate the relevant role played by language in the *Playboy of the Western World*. Through Synge's use of the English spoken in his days by the Irish peasantry, unorthodox views of life are highlighted and the play gains in originality and impact. Finally, we point to the fact that, as a literary text, *The playboy of the Western World* fosters reflection upon the way language and culture are inseparable, and as such, should be taught concomitantly. This text also helps to emphasize the idea that the study of literature cannot be severed from the study of language and culture if we are to maintain an effective, wholesome approach to literary studies in our classes.

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PART SIX  
FROM THE LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE



Gotham Book Mart, New York  
(Original photo by Ubiratan Paiva de Oliveira)



## Os processos de aprender na sala de aula de língua estrangeira

João Bôsko Cabral dos Santos

Os processos de aprender na sala de aula de Língua Estrangeira (LE daqui por diante), em geral, estão vinculados à tradição de aprendizagem dos educandos na Língua Materna (LM daqui por diante). Esses aprendizes, tentam transferir para a L-alvo em aquisição, todos os procedimentos adquiridos na sua trajetória de aprendizagem, em nível institucional. Para sustentar essa afirmação, é fundamental recorrer-se ao argumento de Bourdieu (1987:208), quando ele se refere aos sistemas de ensino e aos sistemas de pensamento, associados à aquisição de um habitus. Para esse autor:

... pode-se supor que cada sujeito deve ao tipo de aprendizagem escolar que recebeu um conjunto de esquemas fundamentais, profundamente interiorizados, que servem de princípio de seleção, no tocante às aquisições ulteriores de esquemas, de modo que do sistema dos esquemas segundo os quais organiza-se o pensamento desse sujeito deriva sua especificidade e não apenas da natureza dos esquemas constitutivos e do nível de consciência com que estes são utilizados e do nível de consciência em que operam. (Bourdieu, 1987, pp 209-10)

Dentre esses esquemas fundamentais, profundamente interiorizados, herdados e adquiridos no processo de aquisição de um conhecimento institucional na LM, destacam-se: a Repetição/Imitação de Modelos Pré-estabelecidos, a Associação Comparativa de Conhecimentos, a Dedução Lógica de Sentidos e a Inferência Intravisional de Novos Insumos na L-alvo.

Esses processos de aprender, de uma maneira geral, são demonstrados na trajetória de aquisição de uma Segunda Língua (L2 daqui por diante) ou LE, e quase sempre, constituem os bastidores das atividades propostas nos livros didáticos (LD daqui por diante).

A Repetição/Imitação de Modelos, é o primeiro processo de aprender, com que geralmente os aprendizes têm contato na escola, para aquisição de um conhecimento institucionalizado, na formação de um habitus de aprender<sup>1</sup>.

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Entendam-se por 'modelos', aqui, padrões de linguagem pré-estabelecidos, que serão tomados como norma, no processo de aquisição-aprendizagem de um determinado insumo. Da mesma maneira, esse processo, é o dispositivo inicial do habitus de ensinar<sup>2</sup> do professor de língua, que tem por premissa, introduzir uma sistematização dos elementos da linguagem, que vão dar origem ao processo de letramento do educando. A esse respeito, é pertinente tomar-se mais uma vez, o ponto de vista de Bourdieu (op. cit.: 210 ), ao afirmar que:

... enquanto força formadora de hábitos, a escola propicia aos que se encontram direta ou indiretamente submetidos à sua influência, não tanto esquemas de pensamento particulares e particularizados, mas uma disposição geral geradora de esquemas particulares capazes de serem aplicados em campos diferentes do pensamento e da ação, aos quais pode-se dar o nome de habitus cultivado.

A Repetição/Imitação, enquanto processo de aprender, não só se constitui como ponto de partida, para a aquisição do habitus de aprender, durante a trajetória de letramento, como também para o contato com o conhecimento institucionalizado, nas áreas de Estudos Sociais, Ciências da Natureza, e, principalmente, na Matemática.

É importante discutir a relevância desse processo, não apenas no âmbito educacional, mas também no âmbito filosófico/ideológico/cultural, uma vez que a inculcação desse processo, pelos educandos, repercutirá na formação do perfil psicológico desses educandos, no que tange ao desempenho de aprendizagem dos mesmos, ao longo de toda a trajetória de escolarização. Não se quer dizer com isso, que não seja possível haver mudanças, evoluções, e até transformações, dessas atitudes inculcadas. Ao contrário, o desafio acadêmico que se persegue, é no sentido de reverter esse habitus, para que os aprendizes se tornem capazes de construir os sentidos, sem uma interferência prévia de modelos estabelecidos. O que não se pode negar, é que este processo, de bases essencialmente controladoras e limitadas, ainda se constitui, como um obstáculo no processo de aquisição aprendizagem de uma L2 ou LE.

A necessidade dessa discussão se justifica, no sentido de se ter uma maior clareza das limitações de aprendizagem, demonstradas pelos educandos, ao iniciarem seus estudos em uma L2 ou LE. Essas limitações, são decorrentes, na maioria dos casos, do habitus de aprender que os alunos trazem consigo, no momento de iniciar um contato formal de estudos com uma LE.

É possível definir o processo de Repetição/Imitação, como o ato de aprender, decorrente da reprodução integral ou parcial de um modelo lingüístico (sons, estruturas gramaticais, padrões de fala, expoentes de formulação em funções comunicativas, textos, entre outros). Os educandos efetivam sua aprendizagem, a partir de uma prática de substituição, normatização e transformação.

Na prática de ensino-aprendizagem de uma L2 ou LE, a Repetição/Imitação, geralmente, se manifesta no uso de exercícios de mecanização — uma técnica comumente empregada no ensino de línguas, para praticar sons ou sentenças-padrão da L-alvo (cf. Richards et alii, 1985: 87-8). Este tipo de exercício é dividido em duas partes: o professor fornece uma palavra ou sentença como estímulo, e, em seguida, os aprendizes produzem vários tipos de respostas, reproduzindo o mesmo padrão, apenas trocando alguns elementos desse padrão, ou fazendo pequenas variações, a partir de um mesmo padrão, por exemplo:

a) Exercício de mecanização com substituição:

Let's play tennis. (volleyball)

Let's play volleyball

(o professor introduz a primeira estrutura e sugere a próxima palavra que o aluno deverá substituir).

b) Exercício de mecanização com repetição

Sure! That's a good idea.

Sure! That's a good idea.

(o professor produz o som ou a estrutura que quer treinar e o aluno reproduz na íntegra).

c) Exercício de mecanização com transformação

I brought my collection of lipsticks.

Did you bring your collection of lipsticks?

What did you bring?

(o professor sugere o som ou a estrutura que quer treinar e o aluno faz variações em torno dela).

Este processo, reflete bem as bases referenciais teóricas do método da Gramática-Tradução e do método Audiolingual, embora alguns aprendizes que iniciaram seus estudos de L<sub>2</sub> ou LE via Método Comunicativo, ainda exibam esse processo, como legado de seu habitus de aprender.

O método da Gramática-Tradução, amplamente utilizado para o aprendizado de L<sub>2</sub> e LE, consiste do uso constante da tradução e do estudo de regras gramaticais, com ênfase em listas de vocabulário e exercícios de tradução.

Já o Método Audiolingual, enfatiza o ensino da fala e da compreensão oral antes da leitura e da escrita. Este método, usa diálogos e exercícios de mecanização, e desencoraja a utilização da LM na sala de aula. Além disso, emprega com muita frequência, a Análise Contrastiva (a comparação de sistemas lingüísticos entre duas línguas).

Verifica-se, pois, que o processo de Repetição/Imitação, tem o seu respaldo epistemológico no comportamentalismo, uma vez que a sua operacionalização está ligada a aquisição de hábito, a partir de um treinamento. Embora tenha sua origem epistemológica no comportamentalismo, este processo tem sido amplamente usado, mesmo em salas de aula onde o foco metodológico está ligado ao movimento comunicativista.

No processo de Repetição/Imitação, a aula de L<sub>2</sub> ou LE, geralmente, se modula em três estágios distintos (cf. Richards et alii, op. cit.: 270):

a) o estágio de apresentação, onde novos itens são introduzidos, explicados, demonstrados e novas informações são introduzidas;

b) o estágio de prática, onde esses itens são praticados individualmente ou em grupo, geralmente, oscilando entre práticas essencialmente controladas, até práticas menos controladas;

c) o estágio de produção, onde os aprendizes usam os novos itens, mais livremente, com um mínimo de controle da parte do professor.

Nos LDs, o processo de Repetição/Imitação, em geral, aparece em forma de exercícios de mecanização orais, exercícios estruturais com orações-padrão em forma de exemplo, ou exercícios de expressar-se por escrito, oferecendo modelos de textos previamente apresentados.

A Repetição/Imitação, ainda é o processo de aprender, mais demonstrado por educandos de L<sub>2</sub> ou LE. Portanto, necessário se faz, que mais pesquisas sejam realizadas nessa área, no sentido de se viabilizar uma trajetória de aprendizagem, que seja capaz de interferir, em uma mudança de habitus do aprendiz.

A Associação Comparativa de Conhecimentos, é um processo de aprender, resultante do estabelecimento de conexões entre dois ou mais conhecimentos, que o aprendiz compara, para adquirir um novo conhecimento, ou para esclarecer a validade de um conhecimento com que esteja tendo contato.

Para Richards et alii (op. cit.: 19), essas conexões podem ocorrer de três maneiras: associação por contigüidade, associação por similaridade e associação por contraste. Na associação por contigüidade, o aprendiz ouve uma palavra, e imediatamente a associa com algum fato ligado ao universo de sentidos dessa palavra, por exemplo, ao ouvir a palavra "school", o aprendiz pode imediatamente associá-la à palavra "test", porque a segunda palavra tem uma relação de proximidade de sentidos com a primeira.

Já na associação por similaridade, a conexão que se estabelece entre as palavras, advem, na maioria dos casos, da familiaridade de sentidos entre elas, exemplificando, quando o aprendiz ouve a palavra "delicate", ele pode associá-la, à palavra "fragile", uma vez que ambas, possuem uma convergência de sentidos.

Finalmente, na associação por contraste, o aprendiz reconhece o sentido dado a uma palavra, a partir de uma relação de oposição de sentidos com outra palavra conhecida, por exemplo, quando o aprendiz ouve a palavra "quick", e tem conhecimento do sentido da palavra "slow", ao analisar o contexto em que a primeira palavra foi usada, ele pode estabelecer uma relação de oposição, e reconhecer o sentido da segunda palavra.

Observa-se, pela descrição deste processo, que a associação comparativa, é essencialmente um mecanismo cognitivo, reconhecido, na

maioria dos casos, através de auto relato dos aprendizes, sobre como chegaram ao sentido de uma determinada palavra ou informação.

O aparecimento desse processo, traduzido em atividades nos LDs, torna-se mais raro, devido à subjetividade de sua manifestação na prática. No entanto, os LDs que trazem atividades associativas-comparativas, geralmente o fazem, em atividades de compreensão de texto ou aquisição de vocabulário. Na aquisição de estruturas gramaticais, algumas vezes, as atividades chegam a ter um caráter híbrido, combinando os dois processos: o de repetição/imitação e o de associação/comparação, ou seja, o exercício propõe a associação de estruturas, mas fornece um quadro de exemplos, que orienta os aprendizes a fazerem as associações.

Vê-se, então, que o processo de associação comparativa, configura-se como mais um processo de aprender, que compõe o habitus de aprender do aprendiz de L<sub>2</sub> ou LE. Interpretá-lo, e entender suas especificidades, certamente trará mais clareza ao professor de línguas, ao aprendiz e ao pesquisador, que buscam soluções mais eficazes, no encaminhamento de insumos para aquisição de uma L-alvo em estudo.

A Dedução Lógica de Sentidos, é o resultado de um encadeamento de experiências anteriores que, se relacionam entre si, através de procedimentos lógicos. Essas idéias, estabelecem uma seqüência coerente de elementos, que, quando confrontados com outras informações, podem levar à descoberta de novos conhecimentos.

Esse processo, se diferencia do processo de associação comparativa porque, na dedução lógica, a conclusão acerca do novo conhecimento, se dá por um processo de analogias, enquanto que, na associação comparativa, o conhecimento novo é percebido através de uma correlação entre dois ou mais conhecimentos.

Entenda-se o termo analogia, aqui, na perspectiva filosófica, que a define, como a identidade de relações entre os termos de dois ou mais pares.

Na dedução lógica de sentidos, as analogias ocorrem, quando o aprendiz estabelece pontos de semelhança entre diferentes elementos de um determinado conhecimento, submetendo esses pontos, a uma avaliação analítica e explicativa, da função dos mesmos, em relação à totalidade dos sentidos, que compõem o conhecimento que está sendo examinado. Esses pontos de semelhança, são comparados entre si, com as semelhanças de outros conhecimentos, também avaliados de forma analítica e explicativa, em relação à totalidade de sentidos que envolvem esses conhecimentos.

Para melhor exemplificar o processo de dedução lógica de sentidos, analise-se a seguinte situação empírica: um aprendiz está lendo um texto onde aparece a expressão "cave dwellers". Sem consultar um dicionário, o aprendiz tenta deduzir logicamente o sentido dessa expressão no texto. Para fazer isso, o aprendiz começa a estabelecer analogias entre essa expressão e o contexto da frase em que essa expressão está inserida. A sentença é: "Tobacco smoking is an ancient habit of man. Crude cigarettes have been found among

the artifacts left by cave dwellers in Arizona... ". Da primeira analogia, feita em relação ao contexto da sentença em que a expressão está inserida, o aprendiz pode inferir: " Cigarros crus foram encontrados entre as coisas de alguém no Arizona ". O próximo passo, na dedução lógica dos sentidos, é descobrir quem é esse alguém.

Ao observar a palavra "cave", o aprendiz lança mão de novas analogias, para hipotetizar o sentido que a ela possa ser atribuído. Em uma primeira analogia, o aprendiz tenta transpor o sentido da palavra "cave", como se fosse em sua Língua Materna. Feito isso, ele hipotetiza que a palavra "cave" poderia significar "cavidade". A partir daí, o aprendiz retoma a inferência inicial que agora evolui para: " Cigarros crus foram encontrados entre as coisas de alguém que está em uma cavidade no Arizona ".

Tomando essa inferência e aplicando mais uma analogia ao conhecimento anteriormente interpretado, o aprendiz conclui que o sentido da palavra "cave", no contexto dessa sentença, pode ser "caverna". Dando prosseguimento ao seu processo de dedução lógica de sentidos, o aprendiz demonstra nova evolução em sua inferência do contexto da sentença em análise. Da nova evolução inferida resulta: " Cigarros crus foram encontrados entre as coisas de alguém que estava nas cavernas no Arizona ". O próximo passo, é a palavra "dwellers". O aprendiz aplica mais uma analogia, dessa vez para tentar deduzir quem é esse alguém que estava na caverna.

Para isso, esse aprendiz recorre aos seus conhecimentos lingüísticos anteriores sobre a L-alvo em aquisição, e percebe que a sufixação "er" e a marca de plural "s" denotam que são várias pessoas, além de se tratarem de pessoas específicas que habitam as cavernas. Dessa reflexão analítica, o aprendiz, então, hipotetiza que a palavra "dwellers" possa ter o sentido de "habitantes", no contexto dessa sentença. Feito isso, a inferência desse aprendiz evolui para: " Cigarros crus foram encontrados entre os pertences dos habitantes das cavernas no Arizona ".

A exemplo do processo de associação comparativa de conhecimentos, a dedução lógica de sentidos, também se configura como um estilo cognitivo geralmente evidenciado em auto relatos e raramente presente em atividades propostas pelos LDs. Enquanto componente do habitus de aprender dos educandos, esse processo quase sempre, é utilizado de forma intuitiva, e na maioria dos casos, relatados por aprendizes que exibem um bom desempenho na aquisição da L-alvo em estudo.

A dedução lógica de sentidos, apesar de ocorrer no âmbito cognitivo do aprendiz, resguarda sua eficácia, no nível de interação que o aprendiz revelar com a amostra de linguagem em análise. Esse nível de interação, se revelará mais intenso à medida que o envolvimento do educando com o insumo ocorra enquanto atitude positiva para a aprendizagem. Para se envolver com o insumo, é fundamental que o aprendiz tenha uma atitude positiva com relação à L<sub>2</sub> ou LE, esteja motivado para interagir com o novo conhecimento,

e, sem tanta ansiedade diante das dificuldades que surgem no decorrer da interação.

Entre as abordagens de ensino de uma L<sub>2</sub> ou LE, a abordagem comunicativa, é a que mais se ajusta à prática do processo de dedução lógica de sentidos, uma vez que os níveis de interação são mais intensos, devido a uma maior aproximação dos insumos em contato, com o contexto sócio-histórico e cultural dos aprendizes.

Como se pode observar, a dedução lógica de sentidos, se constitui em um fator relevante no processo de ensino-aprendizagem de uma L<sub>2</sub> ou LE, por dar margem a um contato mais pleno dos educandos, com os insumos em aquisição, e por conseguinte, oferecer chances de proporcionar uma aprendizagem mais ativa e eficaz.

A Inferência Intravisional de Novos Insumos na L-alvo, é um processo de aprender, pouco referenciado na literatura da subárea de Ensino-Aprendizagem de uma L<sub>2</sub> ou LE. O termo "intravisional", vem do inglês "insight", que ficou conhecido na literatura da área como "intravisão". Por se tratar de um tópico extremamente polêmico entre os pesquisadores da área, a definição desse processo de aprender se delinea de forma abrangente, portanto, ainda passível de ajustes teóricos, que possam melhor delinear seu alcance epistemológico.

De uma maneira abrangente, pode-se definir a inferência intravisional de novos insumos, como um processo de compreensão repentina, em geral intuitiva, de um novo insumo na L-alvo, na maioria das vezes decorrente de reflexões hipotéticas, geradas a partir do contato com outros insumos, muitas vezes até de uma maneira aleatória, e manifestadas de forma inesperada, isto é, o educando não tem qualquer expectativa em inferir tal conhecimento, que o surpreende em determinado momento de sua trajetória de aprendizagem.

O que diferencia a inferência intravisional de novos insumos, da dedução lógica de sentidos, é que neste último, as analogias ocorrem de forma seqüencial, fazendo com que o aprendiz relacione os pontos de semelhança de cada conhecimento em análise, até concluir sobre uma hipótese em cima do conhecimento novo em aquisição. Já na inferência intravisional de novos insumos, essas analogias ocorrem de uma forma aleatória, considerando toda experiência de aprendizagem do educando, em um processo elucidativo de maturação do conhecimento intravisional.

A observação desse processo em interações com insumos, no processo de aquisição de uma L<sub>2</sub> ou LE, também só ocorre, a partir da interpretação de auto relato dos aprendizes, ou em raros momentos da interação na sala de aula, quando o educando explicita sua intravisão de um determinado elemento do insumo em estudo, apesar de também se poder considerar, a inclusão desse processo, no legado do habitus de aprender, trazido por alguns educandos, ao iniciarem suas trajetórias de aquisição-aprendizagem de uma L<sub>2</sub> ou LE.

Da mesma forma que no processo de dedução lógica de sentidos, a abordagem comunicativa proporciona mais oportunidades, para o aprendiz



desenvolver inferências intravisionais, devido a um aproveitamento exploratório mais intenso dos insumos, permeado pelo fator interação.

Urge que estudos específicos sobre esse processo, sejam desenvolvidos, para melhor se aproveitar seu potencial cognitivo, na trajetória de aprendizagem de uma L<sub>2</sub> ou LE.

É importante lembrar que a ocorrência desses processos de aprender, por ocasião das interações nas aulas de L<sub>2</sub> ou LE, não se dá de forma isolada. Ao interagir com o insumo, o educando pode simultaneamente, de acordo com o contexto em que o insumo esteja sendo apresentado, estar usando um ou outro processo de aprender, ou até mesmo, estar combinando esses processos em sua trajetória, para melhor compreender os insumos a que estão sendo expostos.

Neste trabalho, consideraram-se apenas os processos de aprender, mais ligados a uma interpretação dos estilos cognitivos, demonstrados pelos aprendizes, em interações com o LD, na sala de aula de inglês como LE.


## NOTAS

1. cf. Santos & Almeida Filho (1993: 70) "conjunto de disposições adquiridas pelos aprendizes, mediadas ou não pelos seus professores, desenvolvidas a partir das experiências educacionais, e construídas de forma idiossincrática, que determinam o estilo e a prática de sistematizar novos conhecimentos por parte dos alunos."

2. cf. Santos & Almeida Filho (1993: 68) "atitudes sistemáticas incorporadas pelo professor, tomando como pressupostos: a experiência de aprender do mesmo enquanto aluno; as concepções teóricas que adota como tendo valor de verdade, adquiridas ao longo de sua formação acadêmica; e uma adaptação às exigências institucionais atribuídas a ele ou ela no exercício do magistério."

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# Avaliação de um programa de atendimento de alunos das escolas da comunidade, através de aulas de reforço e recuperação

**Maria** Elisa Ehrhardt Carbonari

## INTRODUÇÃO

Considerando, que a Universidade deve colaborar no equacionamento e na proposição de soluções dos problemas do ensino de 1º grau, e na formação de professores mais ajustados à realidade brasileira; o trabalho de *Avaliação de um programa de atendimento de alunos das escolas da comunidade, através de aulas de reforço e recuperação*, vem propor uma alternativa para auxiliar a concretização destas metas. Tal experiência objetiva buscar um aprimoramento no estágio supervisionado nas disciplinas de Prática de Ensino, colocando os estagiários diretamente em contato com a realidade em que mais tarde irão exercer sua profissão; e melhorar o rendimento escolar do alunado de 1º grau, a fim de que a repetência e a evasão escolar não se acentuem.

De início, foi observado pela avaliação, que os estagiários não só tiveram a oportunidade de aproveitar a experiência, como também as aulas dadas, as quais foram de grande utilidade para os alunos da rede.

Essa experiência mostrou a necessidade de ser aprimorada, constituindo-se, assim, no embrião do presente projeto, ampliando dessa forma, o que precariamente já era realizado.

Contando, efetivamente, com a colaboração de alguns professores das escolas de 1º grau, diretores, e principalmente com os alunos estagiários, foi colocado em prática esta experiência que serviu como referencial para a elaboração deste projeto mais abrangente.

Este trabalho possibilitou a regência de aulas aos estagiários, sob a supervisão dos professores das disciplinas de Prática de Ensino, bem como uma melhoria de aproveitamento e organização na vida escolar dos alunos envolvidos na experiência.

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A experiência adquirida no início do trabalho, realizada em 1984, junto aos alunos do 1º grau, permitiu o efetivo enriquecimento em termos de definição do conteúdo e da metodologia de ensino utilizado pelo grupo de trabalho e uma resposta real aos anseios e necessidades de complementação ao trabalho do professor em sala de aula.

Essa experiência, possibilitou-nos encontrar alternativa na integração teoria/prática docente, recuperando, a nível de reflexão, num primeiro momento, a unicidade do fazer e o pensar a atividade educativa, e, num segundo momento, viabilizar numa nova trajetória aos programas de Prática de Ensino, constituindo-se assim, num avanço em relação ao ciclo tradicional dos estágios: observação e regência.

Tal projeto, procura estender seu campo de atuação ao preenchimento de três atividades principais:

- aulas de reforço e recuperação de Inglês e o respectivo acompanhamento aos alunos das escolas de 1º grau da comunidade, com dificuldades de aprendizagem, que por razão sócio-econômicas não tem dentro do lar, condições para uma vida escolar organizada, que possibilite sucessos nos estudos, levando assim à evasão escolar e a repetência;
- troca de idéias sobre metodologia de ensino, adequação da teoria/prática visando o aprimoramento do Ensino entre os professores envolvidos no projeto, professores desta Faculdade, alunos de 1º grau e principalmente os alunos estagiários, futuros professores de nossas escolas;
- proporcionar a oportunidade de realização do estágio de REGÊNCIA em situações reais de sala de aula, observando-se o desenvolvimento das habilidades necessárias à docência, complementando o sentido educacional do projeto. Através de palestras sobre metodologia de ensino, atividades práticas de observação, painéis, aulas planejadas e material didático-pedagógico confeccionado pelos alunos, estagiários e professores pretende-se elaborar um trabalho que atenda aos interesses da comunidade, formando, informando, e despertando potencialidades.

A grande vantagem das aulas de reforço e recuperação, através das "classes especiais" ministradas pelos estagiários na própria Faculdade, proporciona ao supervisor um acompanhamento de perto "in loco", do desempenho das atividades dos seus alunos. Isso vem colaborar com o trabalho do professor, pois seria quase que impossível acompanhar todos os estagiários nas escolas da comunidade, considerando que o nosso alunado é procedente de várias cidades da região.

## METODOLOGIA

A partir da proposta geral do projeto que valoriza especialmente a relação do ensino-aprendizagem no contexto da comunidade, a disciplina de Prática de Ensino juntamente com os Estágios, tem se empenhado no atendimento ao aluno universitário enquanto estagiário, colocando-o no âmago dos problemas educacionais dos nossos tempos, através desse trabalho em contato com a comunidade escolar.

Esse projeto foi dividido em 04 etapas cada uma correspondendo a um bimestre escolar.

### *1ª etapa*

- divulgação do projeto junto aos estagiários;
- esclarecimento e orientação aos estagiários participantes;
- inscrição dos estagiários;
- divisão em grupos;
- confecção dos relatórios e material de divulgação;
- entrevista com os professores e diretores;
- levantamento do material didático;
- orientação no preparo das aulas.

### *2ª etapa*

- acompanhamento dos estagiários nas aulas de reforço e recuperação;
- organização do material de apoio;
- controle e registro de frequência;
- observação do desempenho do estagiário em sala de aula;
- avaliação das atividades parciais no final de cada etapa.

### *3ª e 4ª etapas*

As mesmas atividades descritas nas anteriores, já que a cada bimestre mudam os estagiários para dar oportunidade a novos grupos. Dessa maneira todos os alunos têm oportunidade de participar.

## TABELAS

### Avaliação 1992 (alunos estagiários)

I —

Razão que levou o aluno a procurar o projeto	alunos %
notas baixas	57%
Reforço	38%
aluno transferido de outra escola	11%
dific. P/ entender a explicação do professor	46%
Orientação p/ realizar as tarefas, exercícios	19%

II —

Dificuldade apresentada pelos alunos	alunos %
alunos inibidos	19%
falta motivação	30%
vocabulário, pronúncia	38%
Verbo to be - afirm. interrog., negativa	23%
interpretação de textos	50%
decora a regra e não sabe aplicar	30%

III — Como se sentiu durante as aulas no projeto?

*Emocionada, o respeito é muito grande.*

*Muito bem, conheci o relacionamento professor/aluno*

*Orgulhoso e útil por poder ajudá-los.*

*Facilitou os estágios, pois não tinha tempo para ir às escolas.*

*Uma experiência gratificante.*

*Muito proveitoso, ouvimos vários depoimentos dos alunos sobre as aulas na escola.*

*Realizei um sonho de dar aula de inglês.*

*Muito a vontade, em perfeita harmonia.*

*Como uma professora auxiliando os alunos necessitados.*

*Me fez muito bem a nível pessoal e profissional.*

*Experiência interessante e compensadora.*

IV — Opinião sobre as atividades no projeto:

*Oportunidade de criar um clima muito bom de diálogo onde o aluno se sente a vontade e o professor também.*

*Oportunidade de conhecer a realidade escolar, de ter uma noção do que é ser professor e lecionar.*

*Importante para quem não tem tempo para fazer o estágio nas escolas.*

*Interessante porque os alunos não vêm a toa, buscam reforço e melhora da nota, motivando o professor.*

*Bom, às vezes precisamos pesquisar alguns assuntos para poder atender as dificuldades dos alunos.*

*Interessante, deve continuar, boa oportunidade tanto para os alunos que vêm procurar ajuda como para os estagiários que ensinam.*

*É ótimo para desinibir o futuro professor.*

*É muito válida, pois dá oportunidade ao aluno de esclarecer suas dúvidas e aos futuros professores de vivenciar a profissão.*

*Trabalho dessa natureza devem ser desenvolvidos sempre e em todas as universidades, porque essa é uma de suas funções, prestar serviço à comunidade.*

*Considero inovador e admirável, pois contribui para o desenvolvimento do ensino.*

*Excelente, pois nos dá noção sobre como se portar em sala de aula e como se sobressair em situações difíceis.*

*Ajuda os alunos que não têm condições de pagar aulas particulares.*

*Chance de entrar em contato com a realidade escolar.*

*Excelente, pois as aulas eram motivadoras e diversificadas, a cada dia a dificuldade era diferente.*

## TABELAS

### Avaliação — 1993

#### I — Pré-teste Língua Inglesa

Personal Identification Questions	alunos	%
acertaram tudo	62%	
acertaram metade	25%	
erraram tudo	12%	

Indefinite Article	alunos	%
acertaram tudo	62%	
acertaram metade	25%	
erraram tudo	12%	

Numbers	alunos	%
acertaram tudo	75%	
acertaram metade	25%	
erraram tudo	0%	

Question With Verb To be	alunos	%
acertaram tudo	37%	
acertaram metade	12%	
erraram tudo	50%	

Vocabulary	alunos	%
acertaram tudo	37%	
acertaram metade	25%	
erraram tudo	37%	

## II — Questionário de avaliação feita pelos alunos das

Melhorar desempenho na escola	alunos %
muito	66%
razoável	33%

Dificuldade em Língua Inglesa	alunos %
vocabulário	17%
escrita	50%
pronúncia	33%

Como são as aulas na escola	alunos
boas	83%
interessantes	17%

Como deveriam ser as aulas	alunos %
música	50%
texto	33
livro didático	17%

Relacionamento professor/alunos na escola	alunos %
bom	33%
razoável	17%
amigável	33%
variável	17%

Como considera a Língua Inglesa	alunos %
gosto	33%
dificuldades de entender	66%

Aprender inglês para:	alunos %
ajudar nos estudos/profissão	80%
entender músicas, filmes, programas	20%

Curso Particular	alunos %
não freqüentam	100%

Como é o professor no projeto	alunos %
explica bem as lições	100%

Opinião sobre as aulas	alunos %
Boa porque ajudou melhorar a nota na escola	100%

## III — Questionário de Avaliação dos alunos

Razão da procura do projeto	alunos %
dificuldade em gramática	38%
alunos supletivo/transférico	12%
não entendia a explicação do professor	53%

Dificuldades na Língua Inglesa	alunos %
vocab, pronúncia, não gosta, porque não entende nada	42%
interpretação	53%
Verbo to be, possessive, pronouns	39%
horas, números	10%
afirmativa/negativa/interrogativa	33%

### *Depoimentos*

Como se sentiu durante as

*Como queria me sentir, uma Útil porque o aluno tirou nota melhor na A vontade — não tive dificuldade para atender os alunos. Gostei muito, consegui atender todos os alunos. Deslocada porque é a primeira experiência. Uma experiência boa, proveitosa porque o contato com os alunos proporcionou amizade e clima favorável ao ensino/aprendizagem. No começo senti certa insegurança, mas depois consegui me descontrair e ajudar os alunos nas suas dificuldades. Super válida, pois permitiu que eu buscasse mais explicações junto aos monitores do 3º ano e adquirir um conhecimento mais apurado das dúvidas que surgiam.*

Opinião

*Essas atividades são ótimas porque esses alunos que a procuram têm mais oportunidade de aprender e uma atenção voltada só para eles. Essencialmente importante para o nosso curso, permite ao universitário praticar aulas através de um trabalho monitorado. Foi significativo e acredito, uma experiência que irá me ajudar futuramente. Gostei, é uma experiência a mais no currículo. Os alunos deveriam ser distribuídos em outras salas para evitar muito barulho durante as aulas. Acho muito interessante e instrutivo para nós alunas do curso de letras e de muita ajuda aos alunos que nos procuram.*

Sua participação contribuiu para o campo profissional?

*Aprendi a me portar diante de uma sala de aula, onde há todo tipo de aluno. Pronúncia, muitas palavras eu não sabia a pronúncia correta. Tenho dificuldade em Inglês e foi ótimo porque estou revendo a matéria. Pude analisar as estratégias, isto é tipos de motivação para fazer o aluno a se interessar pela matéria.*



Qual a sua maior dificuldade para dar as aulas?

*Pronúncia, vocabulário.*

Relacionamento professor/aluno nas escolas.

*Me parece que pelo fato das salas de aulas estarem sempre cheias, alguns não conseguem se manifestar e conseqüentemente não tiram suas dúvidas com o professor.*

*Muitos alunos são tímidos e não têm coragem de perguntar para o professor quando têm dúvidas. Eles têm medo dos colegas rirem das perguntas.*

*Achei que os alunos tinham muita dificuldade de se relacionar com o professor.*

*Percebi um certo desinteresse por parte do professor, talvez devido ao acúmulo de alunos na sala.*

## RESULTADOS

Quanto aos resultados dos trabalhos realizados no ano de 1992, pudemos verificar através das avaliações e dos depoimentos do pessoal envolvido que de modo geral, foi uma experiência de grande valia, dado o interesse e a dedicação com que realizaram o trabalho.

Essa experiência, possibilitou-nos encontrar alternativa na integração teoria/prática docente, recuperando a nível de reflexão, num primeiro momento, a unicidade do fazer e do pensar a atividade educativa, e, num segundo momento, viabilizar uma nova trajetória aos programas de Prática de Ensino, constituindo-se assim, num avanço em relação ao ciclo tradicional dos estágios-PARTICIPAÇÃO, OBSERVAÇÃO E REGÊNCIA.

Os resultados do ano de 1993 são parciais, considerando que tivemos tempo hábil apenas para aplicar questionários com os participantes da 1ª e 2ª etapas. Apesar disso, verificou-se que todos os dados apresentados no ano anterior continuaram a se evidenciar reforçando ainda mais a razão do seu processamento.

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## CONCLUSÕES

As aulas de reforço e recuperação de Inglês ministradas pelos alunos estagiários do Curso de letras, aos alunos das escolas de 1º grau de Itatiba durante o ano letivo de 1992, demonstrou e vem demonstrando tanto a sua validade e utilidade quanto sua premência de continuação com base nos seguintes fatores:

### *Psicológicos*

1. O atendimento muitas vezes individualizado ou em pequenos grupos, levou à superação em grande parte daquele sentimento de pânico e insegurança por parte do aluno estagiário ao deparar-se com os alunos em sala de aula, e por parte dos alunos das escolas por se sentirem mais a vontade para perguntar e poder esclarecer suas dúvidas.

2. As atividades desenvolvidas, bem como a maneira como foram organizadas, propiciaram uma maior interação professor/aluno, aluno/aluno, gerando um alto nível de motivação e comprometimento com as aulas no projeto.

3. A perda gradual da inibição do aluno estagiário de cometer erros ao falar ou ao explicar a matéria, razão do clima informal estabelecido em sala de aula.

### *Linguísticos*

1. Com base nas respostas dos alunos estagiários constatou-se que as principais dificuldades apresentadas pelos alunos são as seguintes:

- Verbo to be (afirmativa, interrogativa e negativa).
- vocabulário/interpretação de textos.
- pronúncia

2. Com base na comparação das notas, as atividades no projeto levaram à um melhor desempenho nas atividades regulares em sala de aula e nas avaliações.

### *Afetivos*

No que diz respeito à afetividade, houve um grande entrosamento entre os alunos estagiários e os alunos das escolas, dado ao clima de diálogo proporcionando um resultado muito bom para ambos.

## *Profissional*

As aulas no projeto foram importantes no campo profissional, porque puderam esclarecer as dúvidas quanto a vocação, principalmente, para aqueles estagiários que nunca tiveram oportunidade de lecionar. Esses alunos têm receio de "enfrentar" uma classe para dar aula de inglês por insegurança e medo, porém após as aulas no projeto pudemos constatar através dos depoimentos que esse medo foi superado, e o mais interessante é que muitos deles se surpreenderam ao final do projeto dizendo que descobriram uma nova vocação — "dar aula de Inglês".

### AVALIAÇÃO PARCIAL DO PROJETO — 1993

#### CONCLUSÕES

##### *Pré-teste*

Logo no início das aulas de reforço e recuperação, os alunos foram submetidos a um teste diagnóstico (pré-teste) elaborado pelos alunos monitores do 3º ano de Letras. Esse teste tem um nível básico inicial, e tem por objetivo fazer uma comparação com pós-teste, que será aplicado no final do projeto para avaliação dos trabalhos realizados no ano letivo de 1993.

Através da análise dos resultados pode-se constatar que, a maioria dos alunos soube responder as questões relativas à "Numbers", o mesmo se deu em relação a "Indefinite Article" e "Personal Identification Question". No entanto, as questões que se referiam à "Vocabulary" e "Questions With verb to be", verificou-se que 50% dos alunos não acertaram nada, e apenas 15% acertaram metade. Esse resultado foi confirmado através da avaliação feita pelos alunos estagiários, quando relacionaram as dificuldades apresentadas pelos alunos durante as aulas, indicando a dificuldade com "vocabulary" e "verb to be", como sendo uma das mais destacadas pelos alunos.

##### *Avaliação feita pelos alunos das escolas*

Ao final da segunda etapa, ou seja após 2 (dois) meses de aulas os alunos das escolas responderam um questionário com o intuito de avaliar o desempenho do estagiário, o relacionamento aluno/professor, e uma série de itens relacionados ao processo ensino aprendizagem da Língua Inglesa que passaremos a analisar a seguir.

Quanto ao desempenho dos alunos na escola após as aulas no projeto, verificou-se que 80% dos participantes conseguiram um bom resultado, constatando-se uma sensível melhora nas atividades escolares e nas avaliações.

Em relação às dificuldades foram apontados os problemas com a escrita das palavras, com o vocabulário e com a pronúncia. As aulas tanto na escola como no projeto foram consideradas boas, interessantes, com destaque para o desempenho dos estagiários, que explicavam bem as lições.

A música foi o meio preferido para se aprender a Língua Inglesa, e seu aprendizado está voltado para os estudos no futuro e para a profissão. É considerada difícil de entender pela grande maioria, e nenhum dos participantes faz curso particular.

O relacionamento professor/aluno, tanto na escola quanto no projeto, foi considerado bom e amigável. A opinião de 100% dos alunos sobre o projeto é de as aulas foram boas, porque ajudou nas atividades escolares e porque melhorou a nota do 2º bimestre.

### *Avaliação realizada pelos alunos estagiários*

Em relação à avaliação realizada pelos alunos do ano anterior, pudemos verificar que a grande maioria dos itens apontados foram reforçados. Quanto aos fatores psicológicos foram ressaltados os fatos da insegurança, da inibição, do medo no início das aulas, e da mudança desses aspectos no final do projeto.

Quanto aos fatores linguísticos, mais uma vez, ficou evidenciado que o aluno tem dificuldade com a gramática, quando tem que aprender regras e aplicar nos exercícios, vocabulário e pronúncia das palavras.

O relacionamento professor/aluno continua em alta, proporcionando um clima amigável de confiança entre ambos, colaborando com o aluno que se sente a vontade para perguntar e o estagiário seguro para responder.

A participação no projeto dos alunos que nunca tiveram oportunidade para lecionar, é muito importante para desfazer a imagem de que dar aula de Inglês é um desafio, um trauma para muitos. Após as aulas do projeto, alguns alunos acabam por descobrir novas vocações e aquele que dizia que jamais seria professor de Inglês, se surpreende ao gostar da matéria e dos alunos, despertando o interesse e descobrindo novos caminhos profissionais.

O fato dos colegas, alunos do 3º ano serem os monitores e estarem ao lado para dar apoio logístico e didático, auxiliando, orientando por já terem participado no ano anterior, faz com que eles se sintam a vontade para procurá-los sempre que necessário, e ao mesmo tempo seguros para enfrentar qualquer situação porque sabem que podem contar com um apoio que funciona paralelamente as aulas.

Apesar de serem orientados e preparados com antecedência, os estagiários, no início das aulas, estão temerosos considerando que irão se deparar com crianças de várias escolas, com vários problemas, mas após as primeiras semanas vão se descontraído e muitos resolvem continuar participando das etapas subsequentes por considerarem uma experiência útil, gratificante e facilitadora para a realização do estágio, principalmente para aqueles que trabalham e não têm tempo para se dirigir às escolas.



## Input organization

Vera Lúcia Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva

The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security. Carl Rogers

Input<sup>1</sup> plays the most important role in foreign language learning. If we examine the history of second language teaching, we will see that input has been progressively changing from lists of words to sophisticated video-taped materials. Without input, in natural context or in formal instruction, it would be impossible to learn any language.

Although most studies in language teaching do not make any distinction between second and foreign language acquisition, the latter does present many more difficulties due to the limited amount of time the students are exposed to the target language. In a foreign language learning context, students have few opportunities to initiate conversation with native speakers or attend events where they can practice the language. Moreover, we fear that most of the teaching is still concentrated on the formal practice of the language code since learning a language, for a lot of teachers, is still a synonym for doing lots of exercises on grammar.

According to Krashen (1985, p. 2), "the Input Hypothesis claims that humans acquire language in only one way — by understanding messages, or by receiving comprehensible input." Krashen's hypothesis has two corollaries:

(a) Speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught but "emerges" on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Ellis (1990, p. 298) *The input constitutes the language to which the learner is exposed. It can be spoken or written. Input serves as the data which the learner must use to determine the rules of the target language.*

(b) If input is understood and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order — it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

Krashen does not take into account the importance of *comprehensible output*. In his language acquisition model, production has no role at all. Other models, however, offer a different view of the phenomenon. Halliday (1975, pp. 5-6) says that mother tongue learning is "a process of interaction between the child and other human beings." A similar approach to second language acquisition is attempted by Hatch (1987) who sees discourse as the source of acquisition. According to Hatch (1987, p. 404), "language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on conversations." Hatch's model takes learning as the result of interaction where the learner negotiates meaning and at the same time develops the syntactic structures as a result of the adjustment of the received input.

Different acquisition models acknowledge the role of input. We could sum up the principal ones in three models: behaviorist, mentalist and interactionist.

In the behaviorist model, "input comprises the language made available to the learner in the form of stimuli and also that which occurs as feedback." (Ellis, 1990, p. 128). The student is presented a pre-established amount of graded structures and vocabulary which must be internalized by means of imitation. Controlled input is thus responsible for the learner's progress.

The mentalist model minimizes the role of input and emphasizes learner's innate mental capacities for acquiring a language. According to Ellis (1990, p. 128), "input is seen merely as a trigger which activates the internal mechanisms."

The interactionist model, however, sees both learner's mental ability and input as equal important factors affecting acquisition. Ellis (1990, p. 129) says that

the learner's processing mechanisms both determine and are determined by the nature of input. Similarly, the quality of the input affects and is affected by the nature of the internal mechanisms.

Interaction becomes a big problem in a foreign language context as there are few opportunities for learners to interact with native speakers. But foreign language students, along the centuries, have been developing adequate learning strategies to overcome learning problems.

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in studies concerning learning strategies, which according to Oxford (1993, p. 175), "are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students employ — often consciously

— to improve their own progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving, and using the L2."

Research at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais tried to reveal the individual strategies employed by students in order to learn the English language. Two groups of about 30 students, in two consecutive semesters in 1992, were asked to write about their learning strategies. The total number of informants amounted to 57 students. The instruction they received was:

Describe in approximately 200 words, your learning strategies, saying what you did or do in order to learn new vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, writing, reading and oral skills. Give suggestions to those who want to succeed in learning English.

The students were chosen because they had all studied English before taking up a course at the university and had applied for a placement test in order to skip some semesters in the English course. The students did not know that we were really interested in learning what their strategies were as the composition was part of the placement test.

After analyzing the compositions, we realized that students seemed to be aware of the limitations of the foreign language acquisition process. Reports<sup>2</sup> such as the ones below show that students sense that language learning comes out of conversational interplay as they emphasize the lack of opportunities for interaction:

(1) ... if I want to improve my English and my accent I can't be afraid of speaking. That's perhaps the most important point for the ones who want to know another language. Although I have not many opportunities to speak with a native of the language, I always speak to myself or with a friend who studies English. So you can call me crazy or even tell me that it's impossible to improve my English speaking alone. It's up to you. But I'm really succeed with this way of studing.

(2) I would like to talk to another persons, but it's so difficult to find persons that want to talk that I talk to myself and many times in front of the mirror. It's funny, but I think it's good to me.

(3) Some times I talk English alone, for example when I am taking a shower.

(4) In the beginning, was so hard to find a way to learn outside class, because it's so difficult to find somebody that wants to keep a English conversation, and there wasn't places in the city that you can find this. After two years of studing English in school, I get a job in the airport, and so I start to speak English all the time with tourists. After one year working in the airport, in my first holiday I went to the USA to spend my free time, and there, I had the greatest surprise in my life. I was able to speak English, even with a few knowledge.

The reports above are validated by the following one:

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<sup>2</sup> All the reports were transcribed without editing.

(5) To be honest, I didn't have to use any strategies to learn English because it sort of came to me naturally. As long as I lived there, I had to speak their language.

It seems that the students above take for granted that the best way of learning a language is through interaction. But due to the difficulty of finding natives to interact with, Brazilian students draw on other sources of input in order to acquire the language. The table below will show the strategies found to be most useful by our informants. It should be emphasized that forms of exposure to the language were considered as the main learning strategies, which reinforces the hypothesis that comprehensible input is an important factor in language acquisition.

STRATEGIES	STUDENTS	%
Reading	42	73.68
Watching films	29	50.87
Talking	25	43.85
Listening to songs	24	42.10
Attending classes	19	33.33
Listening to tapes	15	22.80
Grammar study	13	22.80
Traveling abroad	11	19.29
Having a pen-friend	07	12.28
Using a dictionary	07	12.28
Asking for the teacher's help	05	8.77
Writing	05	8.77
Doing exercises	05	8.77

The results of the data analysis show that the strategy which appeared in the majority of the compositions was *reading*. 73.68% of the students said that this is a good way of acquiring language. In fact reading is the main source of input in a foreign country because of its availability. One of the informants said that she used to read children's books because the pictures would help her understand the text. Other students, such as the one below, talked specifically about reading strategies such as inferring the meaning of the words from the context:

(6) I try to understand the word with the history (story). But when the word is very difficult I look at the dictionary and write it in my book.

The second most indicated strategy was *watching films*. Fifty per cent of the students said that going to the movies or watching films on TV, and also watching TV programs was a good way to learn a language. Let us analyze some reports:

(7) When I got in U.S.A., it was impossible for me doing any talking at all, and what could I do to learn english, my God?! I almost gave up, but knew I had to



keep on trying. So I sat there and watched T.V. the whole day long, for a long time, keeping my attention at everybody's face, what they say, how they act, and that was about it.

(8) Frequently I go to the cinema and when I like the movie, I watch it many times and, after the second time, I almost don't read the legends, just listen and try to understand the meaning by the words, expressions I know and the images.

(9) A good listening exercise is to watch the same film twice. The first time, I pay attention to the "sub-title". The second time, I cover the bottom of the screen with a paper, so I will not read anything, and just pay attention to what they say.

In spite of the difficulties concerning opportunities for real communication, students do think that *talking* is a good strategy to learn a language and it was ranked third in our list. The statements below will reveal students' attitudes towards speaking, the strategies they use to develop this ability and also how they manage to provide themselves with opportunities to practice the language.

(10) I always used the speaking, or the listening as a manner of learning English, rather than pay attention on phrases structures, grammar, or reading material.

(11) I decided to "explode my English" even though for that I have to speak wrong words which is important for me now is to talk, to talk, talk...in English.

(12) We are always afraid of making mistakes so we close our mouth with a padlock. I think I need to talk first, we were not born with pen, paper and dictionary, were we?

(13) First of all, I decided to talk only in English. I can't speak everything, but when it happen I try to used another word with the same meaning.

(14) Some times I talk English alone, for example when I am taking a shower.

(15) The next Saturday my friends and I will have a meeting and there, we will talk only in English, it's important for us.

(16) In the Universitas (a language school) there is a pub every friday, where I meet my friends and we speaking English and listening music. It is a good strategie.

The next strategy was *listening to songs*. It was said to be a good way to learn language structures and vocabulary. Let us see some of the reports:

(17) It's easy to memorize songs and you can always use its phrases in daily conversations.

(18) I think the best form to learn is listening musics. Every time you hear the melody you remember the letter and the words' meaning.

(19) I learned a lot of English trying to translate musics from English to portuguese. It's a funny way to learn but it works out, not really the grammar but the vocabulary I improved a lot.

Only 33.33 % of the students said that *attending classes* can be a good strategy to learn English, but no relevant report was found. The next strategy was

*listening to tapes*. Some students said they used to listen to tapes from *SPEAK UP*<sup>3</sup> and from didactic materials. One of the students described his personal strategy for improving pronunciation by saying:

(20) For pronunciation improving, I listen to the tape and I repeat to looking for, each time better.

Another student talked about the artificiality of the voices in the didactic tapes:

(21) Well, the thing I don't like is to listen to the tape. That voices tires me, but I know if I want to learn English I have to learn principally listen.

**Grammar studies** came in the seventh place. 22,80% of the informants think it is a strategy for learning a language. But their opinions as to the degree of importance of such a strategy are not uniform as we can see from their statements:

(22) The basic grammar is the most important point in the study of any language.

(22) What we must not do is think that we can solve all our problems in the grammar. It's a great mistake. What is the most important is practice the English language a lot, reading books, and talking with other people.

(23) Studying of the grammar can be made without pleasure, but it's necessary.

(24) You have to study grammar a lot because it's the basic for all how in another languages. The English grammar is easy if you study with care and making many exercises.

*Traveling abroad* was mentioned by 19.29 % who had had such an opportunity, although others expressed their desire to go to a foreign country in order to improve their English. *Having a pen-friend* came in the 9th place and so did *using a dictionary*. One of the reports about having a pen friend is interesting because it reveals that the student realizes that making mistakes can be a strategy to learn. Let us see it:

(25) ... *I started a penfriendship in English with a German girl. Then I had to deal with the language, making so many mistakes but improving my knowledge.*

In the last place came *Writing* (messages, diary), *doing exercises* and *asking for the teacher's help*, with five indications each. Other strategies were

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<sup>3</sup> SPEAK UP is an audio-magazine published in Brazil which aims at stimulating readers to improve their knowledge of the English language. Some of the articles or interviews are recorded and all of them are followed by a glossary in Portuguese.

mentioned such as *think in English*, *look at billboards* and *deal with computer software and manuals*<sup>4</sup>.

Although only 33.33 of the students have indicated attending classes as a learning strategy, for most Brazilian students, they are still the only places where "comprehensible input" is available. It is worth noticing that Krashen (1985, p. 13) says that "language classes help when they are the primary source of comprehensible input and adds that language classes are less helpful when (1) the students are already advanced enough to understand some input from the outside world, and (2) this input is available to them." If this is true, it poses a problem for students in a foreign language context as the outside world does not provide all the required comprehensible input. Carioni (1988, p. 63) suggests teachers should increase the amount of input in the classroom in order to solve learning problems related to heterogeneity. But we believe that the solution lies in the development of learner autonomy in the search for input outside the classroom as the usual four hours in the classroom per week do not provide enough exposure to the language. As Bialystok (1981, p. 25) points out:

functional practice occurs when the language learner increases his opportunity to use the language for communication such as going to the movies, reading books, or talking to native speakers.

Brazilian people are surrounded by English language signs. As Paiva (1992, p. 84) points out

in Brazil, English language signs can be found everywhere: advertisements, billboards, brands and labels, shop names, foreign and national songs, T-shirts, movies, soap-operas, bumper stickers, cartoons, comic books, newspapers and magazines

but students seldom take advantage of this material. Most people do not pay attention to the meaning of these texts. Research carried out by Paiva (1991) showed, for instance, that some stylists responsible for the print on T-shirts, in Brazil, think that the meaning of the words does not matter because the English language code is used just as an aesthetic sign. In fact, it is rare to find people who know what is written on their T-shirts, even when those persons are able to read English. They usually do not pay any attention to the messages themselves.

In order to help students organize input and profit more from the language they are exposed to, we have prepared some pattern exercises for them to work with outside the classroom (see appendix). The assumption underlying such activities is that

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<sup>4</sup> Nobody talked about using software to learn English as it is not an available resource in the majority of Brazilian schools.

linguistic rules are internalized by extensive exposure to authentic texts and particularly to comprehensible input that provides an appropriate level of challenge to the listener. (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p. 129)

The exercises were thus intended to make input more comprehensible through interaction with different kinds of discourse, which means real communication. The preparation of the material was guided by the learning strategies described in the compositions. Twelve per cent of the students, for instance, said that they used the dictionary in order to increase their vocabulary. The reports below illustrate this.

(26) A student talks about his experience living in Israel in contact with some British people: "I would write down every single new word I would come across. (...) after having taken a long and relaxing shower I would then look all those words up and have my doubts checked with my English roommate.

(27) I always look at the dictionary words that I don't know and it is always in the english-english dictionary. I pay attention to the pronunciation when I'm watching some movie...

In some of the pattern exercises the students are asked to write down the meaning of words. They can do this either by inferring the meaning from the context or by consulting dictionaries for meaning and their pronunciation, which are strategies they have reported. The exercises aim to help students increase vocabulary, develop pronunciation, pay attention to the word classes and the features of discourse. The film pattern exercise, for instance, asks students to write down an adjacency pair<sup>5</sup>. The pattern exercise for advertisements is also meant to develop critical reading. Students are encouraged to analyze the persuasive devices employed in that kind of discourse. The exercises on newspaper articles also ask students to distinguish between informative and persuasive texts. The pattern-exercise for T-shirts calls the students' attention to possible spelling, syntactic and pragmatic deviations.

These exercises have been offered to the students at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais for one year now and they are intended to be an enjoyable activity. Some marks are given for the work done in order to motivate students to work by themselves. The students, however, are not required to fill in all the blank spaces, but only the ones they are able to do or feel like doing. They are also free to suggest changes in the form of the exercises and some of their suggestions have already been incorporated. Nothing is imposed on learners because we are trying to develop learner's autonomy and we believe that "the preparation of learners for self-direction is achieved, to a large extent, through

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<sup>5</sup> An adjacency pair, according to *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* is a sequence of two related utterances by two different speakers. The second utterance is always a response to the first.

giving them explicit opportunities to regain responsibility for their own learning (Dickinson, 1991, p. 15)."

Although we have not measured the effects of the pattern exercises, some students have already given us positive feedback. One of them told us that after the pattern exercises she has learned to pay attention to the lyrics of the songs; another said that whenever he goes to the cinema he takes a note pad and takes note of new words and expressions. The great majority of the students say it has added something positive to our course.

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## APPENDIX

### Film

- NAME OF THE FILM:.....
- TRANSLATION:.....
- AN ADJACENCY PAIR: (ex. question/answer; offer/acceptance or refusal; invitation/acceptance or refusal; complaint/apology; etc.)
- A:.....
- B:.....
- A SENTENCE WITH A PHRASAL VERB.....
- PHRASAL VERB:..... MEANING.....
- VOCABULARY ACQUISITION:
- A
- WORD:.....MEANING.....

A  
SLANG.....MEANING.....  
I LEARNED TO PRONOUNCE THE WORD.....  
PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION.....

### SONG

NAME OF THE SONG.....  
MOOD (ex. sad, vibrant).....  
RHYMES (away\stay).....  
THE VERSE I LIKE MOST:.....  
MESSAGE OF THE SONG: .....  
VOCABULARY ACQUISITION:  
A WORD..... MEANING.....  
I LEARNED TO PRONOUNCE THE WORD.....  
PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION.....  
TRY TO COPY THE LYRICS, SOME VERSES OR, AT LEAST SOME  
WORDS. USE THE BACK OF THE PAPER.

### LECTURE

TITLE.....  
LECTURER.....  
PLACE.....DATE.....  
FOUR STATEMENTS  
1.....  
2.....  
3.....  
4.....  
WORD(S) I LEARNED TO PRONOUNCE WITH THEIR CORRESPONDING  
PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION:  
.....  
QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

### ADVERTISEMENT (enclose the ad if possible)

PRODUCT ADVERTISED.....  
AUDIENCE ADDRESSED.....  
HUMAN NEEDS THE AD APPEAL TO.....  
WHAT KIND OF AD IS IT?     ( ) INFORMATIVE  
  ( ) PERSUASIVE  
  ( ) PERSUASIVE AND INFORMATIVE

WHAT DOES THE AD PROMISE? IS IT SOMETHING POSSIBLE?

WRITE DOWN THE ADJECTIVES YOU HAVE FOUND IN THE AD.

BRAZILIAN ADS WITH SENTENCES OR WORDS IN ENGLISH  
(enclose the ad if possible)

COPY TWO SENTENCES AND TRANSLATE THEM INTO PORTUGUESE.

- 1.....
- 2.....

SELECT FOUR ENGLISH WORDS AND TRANSLATE THEM.

- WORD.....TRANSLATION.....
- WORD.....TRANSLATION.....
- WORD.....TRANSLATION.....
- WORD.....TRANSLATION.....

SELECT TWO WORDS AND COMPLETE THE CHART. SEE THE EXAMPLE.

NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB
REMOVER  removal	remove	removable	—

A MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER.....

TITLE OF THE ARTICLE.....

AUTHOR:.....

PREDICTION: Read the title and then write down some topics and words which you think will appear in the text.

NOW READ THE TEXT.

WRITE DOWN THREE NEW WORDS WITH THEIR CORRESPONDING MEANINGS. TRY TO INFER THE MEANING USING CONTEXTUAL CLUES.

- WORD.....MEANING.....
- WORD.....MEANING.....
- WORD.....MEANING.....

SELECT TWO PARAGRAPHS YOU CONSIDER IMPORTANT AND WRITE DOWN THEIR MAIN IDEAS.

- 1.....

2.....  
IS THERE ANY MISSING INFORMATION?

.....  
IS THE TEXT PERSUASIVE OR INFORMATIVE?.....  
WRITE A SUMMARY OF THE TEXT IN NO MORE THAN 5 LINES.

A SHORT STORY

TITLE.....  
AUTHOR.....  
KIND ( ) PSYCHOLOGICAL ( ) REGIONAL ( ) SURREALISTIC  
( ) DOCUMENTARY ( ) IMPRESSIONIST ( ) DETECTIVE  
( ) MYTHICAL ( ) SCIENCE-FICTION  
CHARACTERS.....  
TIME.....  
SETTING.....  
PLOT.....  
MESSAGE.....  
EFFECT ON THE READER.....

T-SHIRTS

Manufacturer:.....  
Translation:.....  
Color/colors:.....  
Description of the image.....  
Message:.....  
Translation:.....  
Spelling mistake:.....  
Syntactic mistake:.....  
Contextual mistake:.....





# The voices of non-verbal communication

Felix Augusto Rodrigues da Silva

## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at highlighting the relevance of non-verbal elements for the communicative process in a foreign language. No one can deny that one of the most complex and ever changing phenomena which involves human-beings concerns the voices of non-verbal communication. In spite of its importance in conveying meaning, hardly ever do we notice the wide use we make of the many non-verbal elements in our daily interactions. For the foreign learners, in particular, these elements, when dealt with appropriately and accurately, may help them in their search for meaning. But this is only possible if the learners make conscious use of such elements to fill in the gaps which they may come across during the process of communication in the target language.

## THE RELEVANCE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION FOR THE FOREIGN LEARNER OF ENGLISH

Even when speaking our mother tongue most of us are not aware of the uncountable number of non-verbal phenomena which accompany speech. All of them, to a greater or lesser extent, may be used to give emphasis, support, and even meaning to what is being said. This does not mean that linguistic and paralinguistic features do not stand for themselves separately - they do indeed; but when put together these features facilitate the exchange of information. In other words, linguistic and paralinguistic features are, to a certain extent, interdependent, since speech is, most of the times, accompanied by an unconscious number of non-verbal elements of many sorts.

Non-verbal elements of communication — paralinguistic phenomena — concerns the non-linguistic acts which are used by human-beings to pass on any sort of message without using the organs of speech, during a conversational event or not. Each culture has its own system of non-verbal communication. Some

components of these systems may well be universal, while others, in different communities may have distinct connotations. So, drawing the foreign learner's attention to such differences and similarities is of paramount importance for the process of learning the target language.

As with all the other paralinguistic features gestures can be performed consciously or unconsciously. Some gestures possess a universal connotation, i.e. they transmit the same message everywhere without causing misunderstanding. Others, however, are only understood by a speech community, having different meanings in other parts of the world. When gestures go together with speech, they have the function of emphasizing what is being said, but in this case speech superimposes gestures. On the other hand, when they occur alone they tend to convey much more information than when they occur in parallel with speech.

A great deal of information is also conveyed by facial movements. Someone may show feelings of happiness, sadness, doubt, surprise, fear, etc., by just using the face. Changes as regards meaning may be observed in different cultures. Similarly to gestures, facial movements can also be done consciously or unconsciously and they may or may not be accompanied by speech or any other sort of human sound. They interact very closely with the social context in which they occur. The mouth, the eyes, the eyebrows, the eyelid, the forehead, and the teeth are all widely used to convey meaning. A few facial expressions may stand by themselves, but the great majority depends not only on each other, but also on gestures and other non-verbal elements to be able to convey meaning.

The distance between individuals when interacting — proximity — plays a very relevant role in social relationship, but it varies greatly depending on the culture, and most of the times it is unconsciously established. Members of some communities tend to keep a certain distance from each other when they are engaged in a conversation, except in intimate situations. But there are some cultures in which very close proximity is always expected. So, these social norms should be observed by the foreign learners as a way of avoiding misinterpretations and embarrassment.

Body movements are also used to communicate. They are quite common in religious and official occasions where members of the same community recognize the conventional norms. But the same message can be conveyed with different movements of the body depending on the culture. It is, therefore, very important for foreign students to learn the meaning of the body movements in order to avoid wrong interpretations.

Features such as clothes, hair-styles, make-ups, ornaments, etc., differ greatly from culture to culture. Within the same culture, however, there are norms which establish the ordinary and accepted way of making use of these features. Breaking the norms means that an individual rejects the pre-established conventions.

So, how could foreign learners, especially those who live far away from the target-language speaking countries, be aware of such subtleties?

They could read or be told about the relevance of such elements of communication, but they would not understand them to the point of using them confidently for they have not experienced nor been exposed to them. It is only through activities which arise the learners' attention to these elements that they will have a chance to be aware of their importance.

## NON-VERBAL BASED ACTIVITIES

The activities suggested below proved to be effective in terms of both motivation and improvement on the part of the students. Easy to be understood by the students and having a high degree of teachability, these activities provide the teacher with the basic tools to allow students to infer from their own experience an awareness of the importance of the non-verbal elements of communication. They were all carried out with intermediate students of English, but they can be adapted to the needs of any particular group of students of any level.

### *What's going on ?*

In groups, the students are asked to perform a short sketch before the class. Verbal communication is not allowed. Later on, the rest of the class tries to retell in detail what and how the group acted out.

### *Miming a story*

A student — the storyteller — tells a story while a group of classmates — the actors — perform the story in front of the class making use of non-verbal elements, only.

### *Out-of-school observation*

The students are asked to search for instances of non-verbal communication which are present in everyone's everyday conversations. They are given some time, say, a fortnight, for data collecting. Then they report to the class what sorts of non-verbal features they were able to register.

### *Film observation*

The students are shown a film in the target language. While or after watching it, they draw a list of the non-verbal features they are able to pinpoint. Back to school, each student explains to the class how and why the features he has selected were performed in the film.

### *The TV ad*

Individually or in groups the students are asked to produce and draw up a non-verbal script for a brand new product. The TV ad will be broadcast through a national TV network. The ad must convey the message clearly so as to persuade the market to buy the product advertised.

### *Peer observation*

Each student secretly chooses a classmate to observe for a time, say, a fortnight. The students are advised to pay close attention to their classmates' gestures, facial expressions, etc. After the observation period, each student tries to reproduce his chosen classmate's most frequent non-verbal features before the class while the others try to find out who he is.

## CONCLUSION

It is rewarding to observe that the students I have worked with, have undergone a process of consciousness and that they have attained the knowledge pertaining the paralinguistic features of communication, and used them along their course. It was, in fact, the result of simple, yet effective, activities which enabled the students to use their imagination to produce creative instances of non-verbal communication.

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# Awareness raising: some implications for teachers and learners

Célia Assunção Figueiredo

## INTRODUCTION

Language awareness is an emerging area. It may be associated with a large number of questions we ask as teachers about the teaching and learning process. Recent publications, such as James & Garrett (eds., 1991) *Language Awareness in the Classroom* and Sinclair, J. (ed., 1992) *Language Awareness Journal*, conferences, such as the one held in Wales in 1992, besides M. A. dissertations and other kinds of research in this field, provide some evidence of researchers' and teachers' concern for some change in language teaching.

All of us want our teaching to be effective and gratifying, but little can be done without the learner's motivation and participation. How can we obtain the learner's commitment to and cooperation in the learning experience? After all, people learn with teachers, without teachers, and — unfortunately — in spite of them. What can we do to ensure lasting results, learning for life, not for the moment or for the next exam?

In this paper, I will focus on certain awareness raising aspects in an attempt to reflect on these questions.

## THE STUDY AND ITS METHODOLOGY

For the past sixteen years, students from different areas have enrolled in reading courses offered by the Letras Department (now Foreign Languages) of the Federal University of Uberlândia. Recently, teachers have also joined the classes. As it was done with the students, these teachers were asked to take a diagnostic test in order to check if teachers' reading behavior and conceptions differed from students'.

The test consisted of three parts:

- students' personal information: some of their background knowledge, academic and/or professional experiences, and needs to study English.
- students' reading habits and strategies: this part aimed at collecting information about some of the ways the students read in English and how they considered some aspects related to the reading process (Scott, 1983).
- students' reading comprehension: this part consisted of a text and reading comprehension questions, and the focus was on the way(s) the students dealt with the text.

Some reference will be made to Parts *a* and *c*, but in this paper only Part *b* (students' reading habits and strategies) will be examined in more detail.

Besides regular classes, there was negotiation regarding attendance at individual interviews: each student, then, had more time and freedom to discuss his reading problems. In these interviews, I tried to elicit, as much as possible, the same kind of information provided by the diagnostic test. The purpose was to obtain cross-references and more spontaneous data.

## RESULTS

Sometimes it is very difficult to know the students' conception(s) of reading, of reading comprehension, of what they do when they read. Many students tend to say that they "have translated the text" when, in fact, they have read and understood it without a careful translation.

Despite being university teachers, the subjects of this study were not very different from other students (Figueiredo, 1986).

More than half of the subjects said they translated the text into Portuguese to "understand it", "because they were accustomed to it", or "because it was easier". Others said they read only with the help of a dictionary or through the application of the same "method" when reading in Portuguese. Most of them thought it was important and even essential to understand every idea in a text. Few agreed that they read critically. And some subjects thought their reading strategies were not "the correct ones".

## DISCUSSION

If we teachers want our students to change their reading behavior, it is important to have them reflect on what they do before, during and after reading. This aspect was discussed in practical terms along the whole reading course with the purpose of making students more confident and independent, and also of

showing them, among other things, that one's reading performance may vary according to his objectives, participation and also to the text (some are badly written!).

During the interviews, it was evident that reading difficulties in L1 also influenced students' way(s) of reading and their attitude towards reading ("it is boring", "reading doesn't interest me", "I don't want to read in English, I just have to"). Similar results were obtained in Ribeiro's research (1990): "... the student does not read well in foreign language because he does not apply reading strategies in L1 efficiently."

Besides answering comprehension questions, the students were encouraged to think about the strategies they used so that they could improve their general approach to a text. They were asked, for instance, to explain how they got to their answers and even when the answers were right, they were asked to talk about or evaluate their reading strategies or why they had decided to work in a certain way.

At this point, a question could be put forward: couldn't the learner do this by himself at some point of his reading experience? Holmes and Ramos (1991) state that

learners do not spontaneously analyze their learning strategies in depth. They need explicit help in order to be able to name the strategies they are using and compare them with possible alternatives.

Many answers and reactions from this particular group of subjects seem to confirm such statement:

- "I have never thought about my way of learning before".
- "Isn't the teacher, instead of the student, supposed to ask the questions in class?"
- "Oh, let me see if I have understood it: do you mean I should decide what is best for me?"
- "I always thought my reading difficulties were my fault!"
- "I realize I could be doing something similar in my classes" (referring to awareness raising aspects of the reading course).
- "I sometimes present papers in conferences and knowledge of text organization could have helped me before".

In a previous research (Figueiredo, 1986), it was found that "... just by verbalizing... or organizing their thoughts, students are able to solve their problems... this also avoids teacher's interference." Furthermore, in her study Freitas (1992) reports that

... these results suggest that formal systematic teaching of the use of learning strategies in the acquisition of a new language is not only feasible but also

necessary since, besides improving the student's linguistic performance, it also encourages his/her autonomy and broadens the teacher's role in a relevant way, making the teacher become an active element in the learning process of his/her student.

Critical reading was a polemic aspect in this group. All of them came from the field of Engineering and Computer Science and showed a narrow critical view of scientific production. This was partially solved (Figueiredo, 1993) by analyzing contradictory elements found in scientific texts, reports and also in general publications concerning scientists' and newspapermen's reactions towards the so-called infallibility of science.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A lot can be learned from responses to a course based on "conscientização" (Scott, 1986) or awareness raising. A lot of reflection is required from these responses if we want our teaching to be effective.

In Vygotsky's words (1979), consciousness is co-knowledge, a product of social life. It is, therefore, something that takes time to produce any result.

This applies to the subjects of this study. University teachers, who were presumably taught without deliberate awareness raising concern, will perhaps teach their students in the same way. As van Lier (1992) puts it, "the vast majority of teachers have not themselves received an adequate language education as part of their teacher development". This group of teachers (my students!) exemplifies this statement.

An immediate implication for this situation is seen by James & Garrett (1991) in this way: "If the classroom is where LA has to be nurtured, then the first requirement is for teachers to develop their own LA : LA begins with teacher awareness".

If recent events and publications in the field suggest researchers' and teachers' concern for some change in language teaching, then maybe awareness raising could provide help in this direction. However, a different sort of questions could also be put forward (Candlin, 1991):

*How can one relate being aware about language to improvements in language performance?*

*How can one relate the teaching about language awareness (if ... teaching is what one does) to learning?*

*What is the role of learning strategy to awareness gains?*



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# The effect of pedagogic discourse on the pragmatics of interlanguage

Nelson Mitrano-Neto

The aim of this paper is to report on some of the findings of a study that aimed at examining the well-established hypothesis that many of the features of interlanguage behavior can be traced back to the nature of classroom discourse. The present re-examination of such a hypothesis focuses on pragmatic aspects of interlanguage production, specifically the extent to which pedagogic discourse (PD) can foster interlanguage-specific behavior with respect to the use of mitigating strategies in the production of requesting strategies by Brazilian advanced EFL learners. While it seems plausible to accept the hypothesis above, I argue that unambiguous direct effect of classroom discourse with respect to such mitigating strategies can only be determined (a) if the study considers L1 and TL behavior in addition to learner and classroom language behavior and (b) if precise comparative procedures are employed. It does not seem to be entirely appropriate to speak of classroom discourse effect unless such other possible causes as transfer and avoidance behavior are systematically ruled out. On the whole, no direct effect of classroom discourse could be determined with respect to the pragmatic features examined, partly because it is really non-existent and partly because avoidance behavior as well as influence from L1 and/or TL makes it impossible to determine it or doubtful to accept it. The procedures used in this study could only determine the various effects upon learner pragmatic behavior to some extent. More and specifically-g geared research is still necessary so that a fuller and more accurate picture can be obtained.

In what follows I shall try to illustrate such conclusions by reporting on the findings related to the use of upgraders and downgraders as well as three different modifiers commonly employed in requesting strategies. However, before that I must provide some background information both on the project this paper is based on and the actual pragmatic analysis I carried out.

The literature seems to associate interlanguage behavior with the kind of language learners are exposed to in the classroom. Edmondson & House (1981, p. 20) say that "the type of English spoken in the classroom is clearly a major factor determining the type of English that is learnt there...in the process of teaching English, we teach English of a particular kind, which we may call pedagogic discourse". Classroom language is full of directives which are often expressed in a direct way (Holmes, 1983, p. 98) — *cf.* Politzer (1980). House & Kasper (1987, p. 1254) state that the little use of modification found in the interlanguage production they examined<sup>6</sup> may be "an effect of the classroom discourse in which learners had participated". Analyzing classroom discourse was one of the aims of the Bochum Project (Edmondson *et al.*, 1984, p. 115). They attempted to analyze classroom discourse "in order to seek supportive evidence (supportive or otherwise) for some of [their] analytic interpretations". They were following the hypothesis that "many of the features of learners language behavior in conversational settings may be traced back to the peculiar nature of classroom discourse". Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986, p. 175Ð6) suggest that pedagogic discourse may be the cause of over-informativeness in interlanguage production. The authors found out that non-native speakers might resort to verbosity in situations which call for brevity. Moreover, they differ in that non-native speakers sometimes go into lengthy introductions and rhetorical questions which hardly reveal the direct request that follows. The authors claim that teachers' insistence on complete sentences might be the reason for pragmatic failure (*cf.* Thomas, 1983) brought about by excessive verbosity.

Although present-day pedagogic practices have enormously improved in the sense that target discourse is now regularly brought into the classroom through audio and video tapes, learners' exposure is on the whole passive; naturally-occurring interaction is still practically non-existent, however sophisticated the teaching method and techniques used might be.

Edmondson *et al.* (Op. cit, p. 115) state that the hypothesis that PD is a determinant of interlanguage behavior is now well established. In order to test such a hypothesis with respect to interlanguage pragmatic behavior, I have compared requests produced by learners with requests collected from teaching sessions. In addition, the ensuing comparison also considers L1 and TL production. It is felt that PD effect can only be unambiguously determined if these four groups are compared. Moreover, specific comparison procedures must be devised: the fact that learner and PD behavior are similar does not necessarily rule out transfer, for instance. If L1 behavior is not different from PD, it seems to me one cannot speak of PD effect proper; learners could well be transferring from their mother tongue rather than being influenced by what goes on in the classroom.

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<sup>6</sup> Here, they refer to German learners of English.

Twelve and a half hours of instruction at the Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Inglesa — Rio de Janeiro (SBCI-Rio) have been observed by my sitting in on several lessons with a view to obtaining a sample of the "language of requesting" used throughout learners' course of instruction. All levels have been covered, from Young Basic to Advanced. Eight teachers, whose ages ranged from 20 to 35, participated in the experiment. Neither the teachers nor the students were told before the lessons what I was interested in. Six of the teachers were female and two male. All teachers were native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese. All of them were fully-qualified EFL teachers.

All requests made by teachers and learners alike were registered: 347 requests altogether. My initial attempt to separate out learners' requests from teachers' requests was dropped because (a) the total number of requests collected was less than I expected and (b) the proportion of learners' requests was very small — 22 requests (6.3%). Therefore, I have operated on the basis of teachers' requests only — 325 altogether. The type of head act was registered together with the type of modifier used with it, if any.

The requests collected in the SBCI classrooms have been compared with 356 requests collected from native speakers of British English (TL), 395 from native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese (L1) and 813 from 128 Brazilian learners of English (IL). The learners were advanced EFL students who had been studying at the SBCI-Rio for at least 6 years and were at a stage between having passed the FCE level and heading towards the CPE. The L1 group was composed of 66 Brazilian university students (Universidade Federal Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro) and the TL group of 58 students of the Reading College of Technology, Berkshire. All subjects were within the same age range: between 19 and 22 years of age. The requests were collected by means of an elicitation procedure.

In order to compare these four groups and try to verify whether classroom discourse was in fact a determinant of learner behavior, it was felt that precise analytical procedures would have to be established. Therefore, I have resorted to chi square tests as well as the analysis of their standardized residuals and marginal contingency tables. By using these statistical procedures, we are able to determine whether group and pragmatic behavior observed constitute *interdependent* or *independent* characteristics (Fasold, 1984; Robson, 1987 [1973]; Woods *et al.*, 1986).

In analyzing the language collected, I have mainly resorted to the *CCSARP*<sup>7</sup> coding scheme (Blum-Kulka *et al.*, 1989) which has been adapted and enlarged to attend to the somewhat different needs of this investigation<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Cross-cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns*. Project — cf. Blum-Kulka *et al.* 1989.

<sup>8</sup> For a full presentation of the coding scheme refer to Mitrano-Neto (1991, Chapter 4).

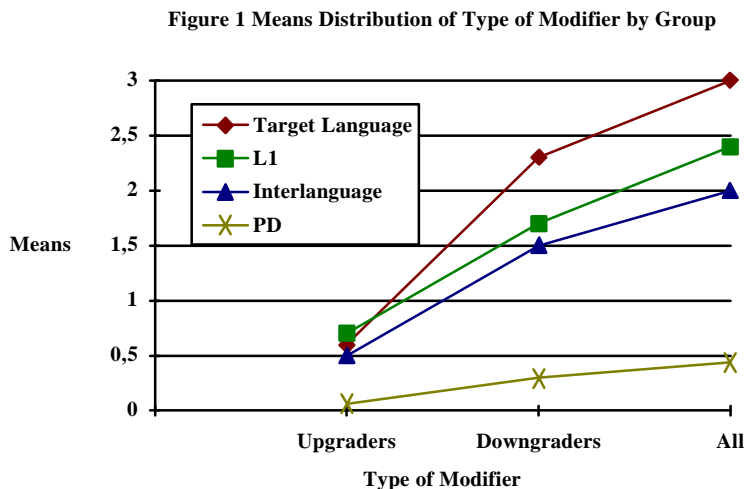
Requests will be here considered as comprising two main parts: head acts and modifiers. The head act is "that part of the sequence which might serve to realize the act independently of other elements" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 17). Head acts present three broad levels of indirectness. Modifiers can be divided into two broad categories: upgraders and downgraders. They constitute an extra means the speaker can rely upon to aggravate or minimize the degree of imposition requests place upon the hearer. Compare the requests below produced by the target language group:

- (1) Look mate, do you think you could possibly get your bloody filthy feet off the table...
- (2) I don't suppose I could borrow your umbrella please...
- (3) Get your fucking arse round the shop and get some bread or I won't make you any tea.
- (4) Get the key for us
- (5) Excuse me, do you think you could move along so that my friend can sit here. I'd be ever so grateful. (=thanking)
- (6) There is no entry without a ticket. You can purchase one from the ticket office.

In example (1) the head act is "*you could get*", a conventionally indirect strategy. "*Do you think*" and "*possibly*" are modifiers used to minimize the imposition of the requestive sequence; they are downgraders. "*Filthy feet*", on the other hand, is a modifier which aggravates the imposition, it is an upgrader. These are then the two general types of modifiers to the head act. Following this same procedure, we can identify the following modifiers and head acts with respect to the other examples: in (2) "*please*" and "*I don't suppose*" are downgraders; "*I could borrow*" is also a conventionally indirect head act. "*Please*" is what will be referred to here as "*a pragmatic formative downgrader*" (PFD). In (3) the explicitly direct head act 'get' is only modified by upgraders: "*fucking arse*" and "*or I won't make you any tea*", a threat, actually. Example (4) has no modifiers and the head act 'get' is another instance of explicit directness. What I would like to point out about (5) is that the request sequence "*Excuse me...sit here*" is followed by a downgrader which is actually the uttering of another softening act "*I'd be ever so grateful*", here referred to as SHA ("*softening by other head acts*"). Example (6) displays an instance of modification (here referred to as "*upgrader/affirmative*") which alters the expected form of conventionally indirect head acts, the interrogative form, and thus imparts a higher level of directness to the utterance.

We should not fail to mention that the utterances above exemplify the four possible types of requestive tokens in terms of co-occurrence of modifiers: tokens containing only downgraders (examples 2 and 5); only upgraders (examples 3 and 6); tokens containing both upgraders and downgraders (example 1); tokens containing no modification — ###-modification (example 4).

Turning to the results<sup>9</sup> now, Figure 1 below shows that, with respect to the means distribution of type of modifier, IL is behaving differently from TL, especially regarding downgraders.

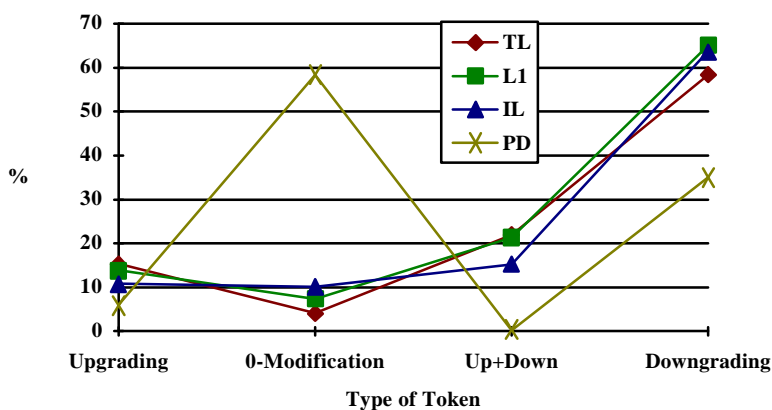


However, such a divergence could not be associated with PD. Whilst it is clear that PD is stripped of practically any downgrading modification (as expected), the use of less of such modification by learners could be a result of transfer since L1 also uses less of it. Another plausible explanation is that learners' interlanguage could be in fact moving towards TL and not away from it.

As for type of token (*cf.* Fig. 2 below), once again PD displays a pattern of behavior of its own and IL is on the whole not very different from TL.

<sup>9</sup> In this paper I shall only present a sample of the results discussed in Mitrano-Neto (1991).

Figure 2 Percentage Distribution of Type of Token by Group



(### $\chi^2=494.906/df=3/p=0.0001$ )

However, a closer look, by means of an analysis of the standardized residuals of the chi square and marginal contingency table,<sup>10</sup> shows us that regarding ###-modification, although there is no PD effect learners seem to be transferring from L1. This corroborates other findings with respect to the absence of modification (*cf.* Mitrano-Neto, 1991). But even that is open to debate since learners could only be resorting to avoidance behavior and not actually shaping their strategies after their L1.

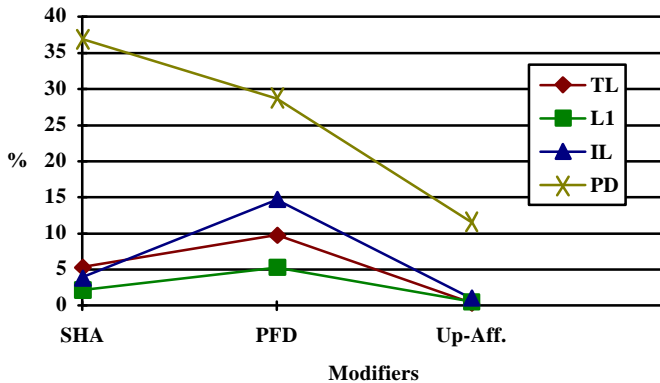
It is with PFD that we shall find some indication that there might be an influence from PD. Figure 3 plots the three modifiers under investigation in a line chart and we can clearly see that IL is closer to PD in relation to PFD. However, in spite of the fact that the standardized residuals for IL and PD are the only ones with positive polarity, they are not close enough to display significantly independent behavior<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, we can speak of a *tendency* towards PD here and not actually of PD effect. The overuse of 'please' by learners can be a result of overgeneralisation of the apparently usual procedure of pragmalinguistically marking conventionally indirect requests as such and not as questions about someone's ability (*cf.* Mitrano-Neto, 1991 and 1993). This does not seem to be a case of transfer since L1 uses very little of it and as discussed by Mitrano-Neto & Bargiela (1993) Portuguese does not seem to rely on such a pragmalinguistic procedure at all. It is also interesting to point out that whilst PD uses much less

<sup>10</sup> Standardised residuals for ###-modification: TL: -5.79/L1: -4.58/IL: -4.57/PD: 18.30. Marginal contingency table (IL vs TL): ### $\chi^2=10.82$  (with continuity correction),  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.001$ .

<sup>11</sup> Standardised residuals for PFD: TL: -1.68/L1: -5.70/IL: 3.86/PD: 6.12. Marginal contingency table (IL vs PD): ### $\chi^2=18.553$  (with continuity correction),  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.0001$ .

modification than the other groups, with respect to these three modifiers PD seems to be using much more, especially SHA. Finding out why this is so would be an interesting follow-up to this study.

Figure 3 Percentage Distribution of SHA, PFD & Up-Aff. by Group



(###2= 605.916/df=9/p=0.0001)

All in all, the only case that seems to be under some influence of PD is the use of the pragmatic formative. Even so, we can only speak of a tendency here, not of direct effect. These findings in a way lead us to reject the hypothesis put forward in the introduction to this paper. However, it can only be rejected in the restricted shape it has assumed in this study, namely, PD does not seem to influence the choice of the pragmatic features we have looked at. It might be the case that PD effect can be established with respect to syntactic, morphological, phonological and, indeed, other pragmatic features than the ones in this study. What seems to be necessary then is more studies that compare interlanguage behavior in the same way as we did here with respect to other source and target languages. That will give us a precise measure of the true role that classroom discourse plays in interlanguage behavior.

In addition, a comprehensive analysis of PD effect should also consider how the language under investigation (in our case, requests) has been formally taught. In this study I limited the scope of the investigation to classroom speech alone. In other words, I only looked at the exposure learners have to the pragmatic behavior in question. Naturally, how the intricacies of such behavior are dealt with in terms of formal instruction will certainly affect learners' output — *cf.* "transfer of training" (Odlin, 1989).

Furthermore, specifically-gearred projects to tackle avoidance behavior are certainly welcome. Here, we were able to rule out PD as the direct cause of



learners' use of ###-modification. It seems to be more a result of negative transfer. However, what we could not rule out was avoidance behavior. Are learners resorting to ###-modification on a par with their L1 or are they simply unsure about what modification to use and thus avoiding it? Any conclusions to be drawn in relation to *absence* of features, of whatever linguistic or pragmatic nature, must seriously consider avoidance as a very probable cause. Such a consideration must be reflected in the design of the project as a whole, from the instrument design stage to the analytical procedures employed. I would like to put forward the following recommendation at this point: unlike the procedure used in this paper, avoidance might be better identified if the data collection is carried out by means of observation rather than elicitation. Of course, this will bring about other problems, such as perhaps the difficulty in or even the impossibility of getting hold of enough data collected under similar or identical circumstances to be rendered representative.

Another point that deserves consideration is that of the adequacy of the language behavior observed. In this paper I have only considered pragmatic features in terms of their presence and absence. No provision was made to determine whether learners were in fact using (or, for that matter, not using) a certain feature appropriately. It might be the case that learners and TL are using similar amounts of indirectness but that learners choose to use the various levels in sociopragmatic contexts in which TL speakers would not! Furthermore, instances of pragmatic interlanguage-specific behavior could be different from the TL norm but, nonetheless, also acceptable. After all, we still know very little about the pragmatics of languages to be able to draw definitive lines between what constitutes the norm and what does not. In this paper, I have considered the TL data as the norm but I feel that more data collected from different social layers<sup>12</sup> are necessary in order that a precise identification of the pragmatic norm can be carried out, assuming, of course, that there is one.

These two research questions (how to rule out avoidance and the question of appropriateness) are of vital importance if we aim at research that will have some use to foreign language teaching. The findings of future research in this area might well provide the guide-lines for pedagogic decisions to be made as how best to tackle not only the 'negative' effect of PD but also the issue of pragmatic avoidance and appropriateness of the pragmatics of interlanguage production.

In concluding this paper, I should like to propose an explanation for the absence of PD effect in the present study that has nothing to do with methodological procedures. Foreign language learners bring into the language classroom a repertoire of learning experience which is often overlooked by researchers. It might be the case that learners, at least to some degree, are capable of identifying quite a lot of the features of pedagogic discourse and avoid them.

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<sup>12</sup> In this study, subjects were controlled for social class (*cf.* Mitrano-Neto, 1991: Chapters 2 & 3).

After all, their formal L1 learning experience should not be any different. Perhaps it is only when these features are reinforced by negative transfer from L1 and indeed transfer of training that they are in fact incorporated into the pragmatics of interlanguage.

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## Motivating learners: using songs in the classroom

Maria Beatriz Dias e Souza and Regina Lúcia R. de Medeiros

The work described herein has emerged from two findings. The first has to do with the unquestionable interest students of all age groups have in music. The second concerns the inadequate use of music while an interesting, truly communicative teaching aid of low cost and easy access.

The investigation of alternatives aiming at analyzing the possible use of music in the classroom put forward in the present work is based upon the notion of "negotiation of meaning" proposed by Savignon (1983). According to the author, "communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept that depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share knowledge of the language." This implies the appraisal of the individual's thinking capacity leading him to take heed of the linguistic environment, to formulate his hypothesis in an attempt to grasp the meaning of the new information, and to test the hypothesis within the context suitable to such information, i.e., "meaningful learning" as proposed by Ausubel: "(...) learning must involve active mental processes and be related to existing knowledge the learner already possesses. The mind, when involved in meaningful learning, will organize the new material into meaningful chunks and relate them to existing cognitive structure in a way that they will become attached" (1968). This point of view is backed up by the idea of equilibrium proposed by Piaget. (Wright, 1969).

Starting from such premises and considering the learner's communicative needs where communicative competence is seen not only as an oral phenomenon but as applicable to written and oral language as well, (Savignon, 1983) one assumes that materials production must appeal to the development of communicative competence in the four basic skills, considering that music offers a wide range of understandable material for the learner. According to Ausubel (1968), "for material to be meaningful, it must be clearly related to existing knowledge the learner already possesses." (Ausubel, apud Omaggio, 1986).

Likewise, the FL structure teaching must always be contextualized prompting the learner to internalize the structural "rules" by means of context observation and analysis. Under such view, knowledge of the MT structure

becomes extremely important, the learner being then encouraged not only to recognize and understand such similarity but to use it as an effective strategy to the understanding of the information in the FL as well.

Thus, in vocabulary development there should be emphasis on contextualization so that the learner can activate the three types of "background knowledge" proposed in Omaggio (1986), i.e., "linguistic information", "knowledge of the world", "knowledge of discourse structure".

With such principles in view, a survey of the experiences carried out using songs in the classroom has been made.

Experiences reported by Konstantinovic (1973), confirm, for example, the use of music leading to the development of the FL, vocabulary enrichment, access to cultural and spiritual aspects of the people whose language is being studied, while it renders learning/teaching more pleasant prompting, furthermore, familiarity with the FL and the accomplishment of the main objective of linguistic learning, i.e., the actual use of language.

According to Klein (1993), "children respond enthusiastically to songs and welcome them as a warm-up activity. Music, furthermore, (...) has an additional function: when singing the song, the learners are using the new tense form subconsciously, thus, it breaks the ice of introducing difficult and strange grammar."

In accordance with the experience of Prof. Ostojic, of the University of Sarajevo (1987), "classic music not only accompanies teaching/learning but is one of its essential elements. Likewise, folkloric music is enriching in FL teaching/learning for the study of vocabulary, social environment, national characteristics, customs, and preferences of the people whose language is being studied." Ostojic reports, further still, the use of music as musical background for reading classes, functioning as stimulus to arouse feelings and sentiments, thus preparing the students for classes in writing — "creative writing". It also supplies material for students and teachers so that they may be able to express, in conversation sessions how the music made them feel and what images, feelings and thoughts have come to their minds.

In an experiment carried out by Prof. Roy Pearce (1981), at the University of Barcelona, the use of pop music is being investigated based on the principle that "whatever we may think of current English and American pop songs, they are undoubtedly of great interest to vast numbers of young people all over the world. They are a legitimate function of English, and ought not to be ignored.. Moreover, first, the majority of students of English around the world are young and are likely to be interested in pop music (...). Secondly, there is usually no difficulty in getting young people to sing pop songs." Thus, music has been introduced in the classroom as an authentic teaching aid which makes feasible motivation for sessions in reading, listening comprehension, vocabulary study, singing — oral production aiming at pronunciation, intonation — , finally, as a valuable counterpart for textbook lessons.

The use of songs as a teaching aid in foreign language teaching has doubtless been the theme of several investigations with satisfactory results. Experiences have been distinct: as discussed by Ostojic in the essay *Music Can Help* (1987) music can be used as a means to prompt the students to text production. In the essay *Rock as Literature: Springsteen's "The River"*, McLean (1983) emphasizes the importance of music to the understanding, on the student's part, of the socio-cultural aspects of the idiom. McDonald (1984), on the other hand, suggests that music may function as an interaction device for beginners. According to Santos (1990)

in addition to being pleasant for both student and teacher, well-chosen songs can provide excellent pronunciation, speed, rhythm and intonation practice, along with structure patterns and vocabulary review.

As a teaching aid music provides, therefore, a variety of possibilities, depending on the teacher the insight to use it in the manner most adequate to his objectives and needs.

In a survey carried out among teachers of English in Primary and Secondary Schools in Natal-RN — PIMEI, about the possibility of using songs in the language classroom, it has been observed that music is considered as motivation element in the teaching/learning process, reference point for cultural/historical aspects, teaching aid and material for text study.

As it can be seen, almost intuitively, teachers know of the utter relevance and potential of music as teaching aid.

Nevertheless, as far as practice is concerned, due to the lack of familiarity with techniques and approaches within a communicative teaching policy, they confine the use of music to grammar topics and translations into the mother tongue.

Such inconsistency between intuitive knowledge and use gave rise to the research which is now being undertaken. As a result, teaching units have been planned based on pop songs aiming at two objectives: first, the improvement of the classes in the undergraduate course of Letters and, second, to facilitate the access for the Primary and Secondary school teacher to ideas on teaching procedures with songs within the communicative approach.

The prevailing communicative approach proposed to the "trainees", although arousing interest, clashes sharply with the traditional language teaching education to which such "trainees" have always been submitted as students. Within such traditional educational context the foreign language is taught aiming at the fulfillment of curriculum requirements overlooking the learner's actual interests and needs. Thus, learning becomes a passive process where the "negotiation of meaning" (Savignon, 1983) will be needless and the "meaningful learning" proposed by Ausubel (1968) will not take place through such material, the learner's participation being, then, ascribed a second place.

However, it is not to be said that the use of a certain authentic teaching aid alone — music — within the communicative approach, will suffice to efficient and effective FL teaching. Before anything, there is a need for changes in attitude, for deep reflection about what language is while a communicative tool.

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# An EFL student-generated syllabus

Cláudia Estima Sardo

## INTRODUCTION

In the study of foreign and second language acquisition, issues like teacher and students' roles, their discourses and conversational interaction are often points of interest. Teaching materials, their organization, application, type of material, and their efficacy are also of researchers' interest. Regardless of the approach or methodology, research has been dealing with input generated by the teacher or by other external sources.

The aim of this study is to analyze a situation in order to see how the three classical elements of the classroom — teachers, students and materials — interact when following a nontraditional method/approach.

## LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

The question why some learners are higher achievers and why some situations are better suited than others for language development has been a crucial issue of debate in second and foreign language learning and teaching. Scholars in the area of language teaching have tried to point out the causative variables involved in the acquisition process and according to these scholars, these variables explain the variance in learners' achievements.

For Krashen (1982), comprehensible input is the primary causative variable in second language acquisition. He states that the quality of input is an essential part of the answer. Only comprehensible input can be processed by learner's internal mechanisms, transformed into intake, and eventually utilized in the generation of output. However, Krashen claims that the input transformed into intake will develop linguistic competence in a second language through two processes: learning and acquisition. Learning, as Krashen puts it, is a conscious process. Learning is knowing the rules of language, developing an awareness of the structures of the language. Acquisition, on the other hand, is an unconscious process and only develops a feel for accuracy. Learning is typically a development of classroom, guided learning, while acquisition is the result of language exposure in naturalistic environments, informal and natural learning. Krashen believes that

the only way to develop conversationally competent learners is through acquisition, and that acquisition is the basis for fluency.

Several researchers have proposed that learners follow a natural order in the development of a foreign language. More recently, Pienemann (1984) claims that second language acquisition follows the learner's internal agenda. He hypothesizes that learner's internal agenda is the variable that determines the route students tend to take when learning a second language. Pienemann (1984) introduces the 'teachability hypothesis,' which states that there is an optimal order of presenting input in language instruction. Because of the internal agenda, input provided by instruction may affect learners differently. The same input, for instance, in Pienemann's view, may be effective for one learner but not for another. This process occurs because one learner may already have acquired the pre-requisites for the corresponding learning process while the other one has not. From this conceptualization stems the notion of a state of readiness to the acquisition of structures. The assumption underlying this hypothesis is that learners acquire only what they are ready to process in regard to their natural acquisitional order.

Returning to the initial question in the search for the causative variables for SLA, one can notice from the studies here presented that input plays an important role. Having in mind the importance of input, in the extent of its quality and quantity, this research aims at a better understanding of input in SLA.

## LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: WHAT DOES THIS STUDY AIM AT?

Having in mind these problematic issues, this study proposes to verify what happens when input for learning is left in the learner's "hands". In other words, the idea of developing this study emerges from the need to research a situation in which students would not be constrained by a traditional syllabus or an imposed methodology. Rather, it explores a situation in which students can generate their own linguistic input, according to their own needs and expectations, as determined by their own agendas or internal syllabi. It is assumed that students would be in contact with what Krashen and the pertinent literature has defined as "*comprehensible input*."

## AN EFL STUDENT GENERATED COURSE: HOW WAS IT DONE?

In order to address this question I decided to organize a group of Brazilian students and teach them a 38 - hour course in the extracurricular of the Federal University of Santa Catarina applying the CLL approach. It was a group of ten false beginners adults learning English as a foreign language. I taught them for two months, twice a week for two hours in the second semester of 1991. An



assistant teacher transcribed the data of the conversations produced in class, as the CLL approach requires.

### *Subjects*

The group of students participating in the experiment consisted of four men and six women. The majority of them were undergraduate students, the average age of 22.

### *The methodology*

The Community Language Learning (CLL) approach, as described by Curran (Stevick 1976), has the student as the center of interest and this can be highlighted in two respects. In the first respect, the teacher sees students as a "whole-person." That is, the teacher considers not only the student's intellect, but also he/she tries to understand their feelings, their physical and instinctive reactions of protection, and their desire to learn. Moreover, the teacher plays the role of a "counselor" rather than of a "Knower," according to Curran's words. Instead of playing the role of the one who dominates the situation because he/she knows about the language, the teacher takes into account the personality, motivational, and emotional factors that lead learners to the process of acquisition. The second respect refers to the fact that learners generate their own input by communicating with one another in the target language. Through this procedure students have in every class a conversation in the target language which emerges from the interaction within the group. After they have had this conversation, students identify the component parts of the conversation which are of special interest to them. A central feature is that students have a reflection phase to comment about their feelings concerning the experience they have just had.

### *Procedures*

Students form a circle in the beginning of the class. They initiate a conversation by speaking in their first language to any of their classmates. Then, the teacher who is standing outside the circle gives the message to the student in the target language next to the students ear. The student repeats the target language message to his/her addressee. After students have had some conversation, they ask the teacher to write on the board the sentences they produced in the conversations. Afterwards, students are encouraged to ask any questions that might have triggered their curiosity. Subsequently, students have a reflection period to surface what they have learned and feelings they have had during the class.

## DISCUSSION

Several issues relevant to SLA teaching/learning came up during the experiment. They are related to students directing their learning, working with students feelings and experimenting with the language as a whole.

Having students saying what they wanted to learn was a unique experience for both the teacher and the students.

From the teacher's perspective, I question myself to what extent we teachers allow space for students to direct their learning. As far as I am concerned, very little. We rather prefer to adopt a paradigm and then tell students how to use it.

From the student's perspective, it seems they do not know what their needs are. Students do not know they have the right to choose what to learn, and how they can improve their learning if they participate more in terms of "what" and "how" to learn. In the CLL approach students learn to find out what they need to know/what they want to know in order to express their ideas in a language. Students are encouraged and expected to ask questions. As a matter of fact, this initiative is the opposite of what happens in traditional classes. As Ellis (1987) has noted the "*question (T) — answer (S) — evaluation (T)*" conversational pattern traditionally used in class by teachers is reversed in the CLL. This is so because students are expected to ask questions and teachers are not expected to evaluate students responses. Also, the experience of having students directing their learning shows that interests and learning routes may be different from the ones received or imposed by the teacher.

Allowing students to say how they feel in each class regarding the activities, also showed me that there is so much "feeling" involved in the learning process. Our everyday classroom shows that we, teachers, care so little about student's feelings or entirely ignore them. CLL creates a totally different environment. At the end of every class, for instance, I used to listen to students comments. In the following classes, I used to work with their feelings, like keeping up with activities they liked, going slower with difficult tasks, and learning from their metalearning.

This type of attitude created an atmosphere of mutual trust in which I, as a teacher, was constantly reminded that, for example, students get embarrassed, they can overcome shyness, and they can and will question the learning process all the time. With this open-mindedness it is a lot easier to understand why in some classes students can produce more, in others they will produce less, what their difficulties are, why they do not want to participate, etc. Very often, student's difficulties were only perceive by me after they had commented on them.

In a CLL conversation students have a chance to have a whole picture of what they can do with the language. In other words, the starting point of the learning process encompasses the final one: to learn a language to communicate.

Through the CLL experience students are indirectly reminded that they can use the language functionally, because they are using it in actual

communication. Students can search for factual information, emotional and moral attitudes, and they can and should be motivated to use a large variety of functions of the language. Instead of having a compartmentalized set of language to learn, students initiate by experimenting a bit of everything. Once the learner has somehow formed a frame about the language, the teacher then can be in charge of enlarging the frames students have built.

## CONCLUSION

Summing up, a CLL experience at early stages is of great value. It sets boundaries and objectives. It also situates teachers with respect to the type of group of students they have in a more explicit way.

For the time being, I suggest that teachers make use of the CLL process as an activity to be used once in a while during a course.

For the near future, I propose that formal learning should provide opportunities for students to trace their own route of learning applied to new tasks and roles. As a consequence, the focus of teachers' attention should turn from the ending result to the "in between" process. Teachers should learn from their students' choices.

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## Towards learner autonomy: research in postgraduate studies in Brazil

Letícia Niederauer Tavares Cavalcanti

Holec (1985) defines the neologism "autonomization" as a "tendency"... "a dynamic process with a future" ..."something which develops", and he considers it from three different points of view:

- from the point of view of the learner
- from the point of view of the teacher
- from the institutional point of view. (Holec, 1985, p. 180)

What seems to be a modern tendency early developed by the *Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues* (C.R.A.P.E.L.) at Nancy University, France, in the seventies, has, as a historical counterpart in Brazil, the institution of Postgraduate programs, in particular the M.A. Program in Letters-Portuguese and Brazilian Literature (1975) and English Language and Anglo-American Literature (1977) at UFPb.

Other Brazilian Universities already had postgraduate programs in English, depending on foreign staff as Visiting Professors, or on the few natives who returned after getting their degrees either in UK or else in the US.

Those early days were both laborious and fruitful. Brazilian Universities were then poorly equipped in library facilities of foreign material; both teachers and students depended on generous donations from abroad, or else, on the professor's own private library; the long and short of it is that such adverse circumstances really contributed for the "autonomization" of postgraduate studies in Brazil, for, in the first place, it set a friendly and cooperative tone between teacher and learners, while courses were offered depending on the material available, besides the personal interest of teachers and students on the subject.

The fact is that, quite unawares, "autonomization" was put into practice, developed fully, and has, indeed, become "a dynamic process with a future"; the future has come into being and has turned into the present state of prosperity of

postgraduate studies in English in Brazil. Such "autonomy" of postgraduate studies in Brazil has been the best reply ever given to the system prevailing in undergraduate studies; as a matter of fact, Brazil once had, in the forties, a unified program, to be taught nationwide, including particular methodological instructions of the subject to be compulsively absorbed by students at large. They were part and parcel of the whole educational system then, in every subject taught, including English.

If undergraduate studies tended to uniformity, postgraduate programs appealed to the unexpected. The product of shared experience of Visiting Professors and natives turned scholars abroad, postgraduate programs were additionally benefited by the "communicative" approach developed then. Candidates were selected in small groups to start with; they had to meet linguistic standards and were free to choose the future field of studies, either language or literature.

Then they had to take an introductory course of research and methodology, that set the tone for what was to come later.

From the first, they became acquainted with the last: the thesis as a project and the viva as a performance. By listening to teachers, they trained the ability to understand; by reading intensely, they became aware of themes and trends, and translated them into moods and modes leading to the ultimate choice of thesis topic.

Through oral reports, M.A. candidates had to communicate to fellow students and teachers what was mostly in their minds — the matter of foremost interest that would eventually lead them on to personal investigation and research. The ability to ask questions, to share information, to present the material logically and concisely in seminars, was, to a certain extent, the best training students could ever have to lead them on to their individual fields of interest, namely, *Applied Linguistics and Contrastive Analysis in Language*, or *British and American studies in Literature*.

But the process has not been quite successful to all and sundry candidates. Some students failed to see that self-directed studies were required from them; or else, they failed to see teachers as mere "facilitators" of the process, and relied too heavily on teacher's help and advice. The net product of their misdirected activities was a loss of direction, confusion, and an overwhelming sense of solitude that never went beyond the first draft of the project, or still worse, led to periodical postponements that eventually ended up with withdrawal from the course and cancellation of degree prospects.

But to the few that resisted, the process has been only too rewarding. In the development of coursework there has been no doubt, a sudden awareness of a topic worthwhile pursuing; there has been, in addition, an awareness of teacher-learner interest in specific topics, conducive to exhilarating meetings that have transformed a mere project into a highly rewarding process of research and a final thesis. The question-and-answer process duly followed and equally shared by adviser and advisee has disclosed a peculiar reality: the more answers the latter

has found in research, the fewer suggestions will have to be formulated by the former. In the long run, the student will know more about the subject than the adviser ever will.

And the viva exercises have become, in a sense, the best evaluation of the four-year process. To write a thesis in a foreign language, to argue about it, and to discuss it with the examining committee are all points in favor of candidates, who, more often than not, have not been "on the spot", to use STERN's well-known reference to exchange programs. (Stern, 1991, p. 513)

An M.A. student has achieved autonomy that will either secure him a University teaching position, or else, will increase his thirst for more knowledge to be attained through a Ph.D. degree, either at home, or else abroad, "on the spot."

A foreign Ph.D. is, in most cases, an alias for "autonomy", and it is even more valuable if he returns home. Here in Brazil, with little or no library facilities, and yet geographically halfway to both the US and UK, I see the best field to work: it is both huge and crowded; it is huge in extension and crowded with those who would like "to learn to learn", and only wait for their chances to do so. Besides, Brazilians are very creative, and what they lack in teaching materials they abound in individual ideas; modern technology also helps with cassettes, videos, and computers to mention just a few of the most recent aural/visual aids developed.

In an overall view of autonomy, or self-directed learning, I only see a problem for the teacher. There is a contemporary tendency to minimize his role altogether, as if a student, with the proper gadgets, would be able to attain the mastery of *all* skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

People in general fail to see that the teacher, besides being a facilitator, is, in fact, the natural interlocutor of the student. I believe that a lot has changed; the teacher is no longer the center of the learning process, but he is, in HOLEC's own words, "technical and psycho-social support". (Holec, 1985, p. 184). The technical support will be all too evident in at least three personal areas: helping the student *to analyze* the decision first, helping him *to take* the decision next, and finally, helping him *to evaluate* the personal progress made last, through an accurate evaluation of the end-product.

HOLEC also defines such help at the psycho-social level, when the teacher lends support to the learner in moments of uncertainty. This help requires the best of abilities on the teacher's part, not to create an undue sense of dependence; the teacher should be very experienced, to cultivate the advisee's sense of autonomy, while he provides an adequate support on the precise moment of the learner's need.

HOLEC presses this point further: "Finally the teacher, like the learner, has to modify his conception of the teacher's role, which means that he too is susceptible to the psycho-social problems which such a change brings about: just as the learner has to learn to learn, so the teacher has to learn to help the learner

to learn, and this brings us to the institutional problem of teacher training." (Holec, 1985, p. 186)

But good teaching knows all that, intuitively, or else, we would not be honoring Professora Nora Ther Thilen (UFRGS) in this *Twelfth Encounter of University Professors of English*. In her we honor all Professors who, having achieved that autonomy themselves, generously passed it on to their students — the supreme and most worthwhile donation on any teacher's part.

And a good teaching staff is the final argument to promote autonomy as the guiding principle of postgraduate studies of English in Brazil ever since the seventies. By setting the staff free to look for professional qualifications elsewhere and abroad, since no Brazilian institution at the time had a regular postgraduate program, Brazilian Universities welcomed both Visiting Professors and qualified staff to promote postgraduate studies in Brazil according to the golden principle of Autonomy. Scarcity of material at home contributed to strengthen the spirit of solidarity, understanding, and mutual respect of advisor and advisees; a common goal became to promote freedom of research as well as respect for individual achievements that have, no doubt, strengthened scholarly ties reinforced by the foundation of *ABRAPUI* still in the early seventies.

Finally, defining requirements for self-directed studies in institutions, HOLEC mentions at least three: self-directed learning with support, evening classes, "*and one-off systems*" or "*ad-hoc systems*". (Holec, 1985, p. 186)

In the first case, recent retirements have led Universities to promote an extensive program of public contests, leading to renewal of teaching staff. The process has been welcomed, because it has given a chance to the qualified yet not engaged in official postgraduate programs. Evening classes have also become one of the official claims to expand schedules and teaching facilities; and the nationwide adoption of *ESP* programs to enable learners of distinct faculties to qualify abroad have certainly helped to promote both interest in and adoption of small groups with the greatest concern for "learning to learn".

It is my firm belief that, due to a number of causes previously mentioned here, the study of the English language in Brazil at the postgraduate level has been extremely favored by an innate sense of autonomy that has, in most cases, been a trademark of and a basic foundation for the qualified personnel that is gradually assuming teaching positions all over Brazil. They may be of Robinson Crusoe's mind after the shipwreck: gold is, after all, unnecessary on a lone island; but everything else is certainly handy to recreate civilization — and culture — in totally unexpected surroundings.

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# A survey of the components of the Letras/EFL students' profile

Sylvia Nagem Frota and Maria Isabel Azevedo Cunha

## INTRODUCTION

Analysis of problems in Letras courses in the state of Rio de Janeiro was the springboard for this paper. Clear to all those working in this area is the decrease in the number of students willing to study Portuguese or foreign languages, the reduced social status attributed to those who graduate in these courses, the small number of teachers still active and a decreased interest in devising as policy to develop this area. However, how can we explain the presence of some students, in drastically reduced numbers, still worried with their course work and able to confront the challenges of this career? Who are these students? What is their method of work and how proficient are they? These questions reveal the need for an analysis of students in Letras courses — with a focus on their motivation, their involvement in their courses, the organization of their work and their foreign language proficiency.

Most studies on motivation in the field of second language acquisition consider two aspects in analyzing the problem: the instrumental and the integrative aspects (somewhat similar to the extrinsic-intrinsic distinction). Recently, Schmidt, in his paper *Current trends in the study of motivation for foreign language learning* (1992), summarizes Gardner's theory (Au 1988) and lists five hypotheses related to motivation for foreign language learning: 1. the integrative motive hypothesis; 2. the cultural belief hypothesis; 3. the active learner hypothesis; 4. the casuality hypothesis; and 5. the two process hypothesis. Another major trend in the study of second and foreign language motivation incorporates current psychological models and educational theory. Among others, a theoretical model relating motivational factors, cognitive factors, and learning results for academic subjects has been developed by Pintrich (1989), specifying three aspects that are crucial for educational success: cognitive, metacognitive and

resource management strategies. A third tendency tries to establish connections between motivational constructs and instructional design.

The purpose of this study is to survey the components of a profile of both the psychological and the socio-cultural aspects of the Letras students in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The psychological profile takes into account motivational factors and strategies for learning in an English as a foreign language context. The socio-cultural picture includes academic and financial backgrounds of both the students and their families. In addition, an attempt is made to establish a relationship between the two aspects cited above and the level of proficiency has been found to be vital and thus is included in this study.

The results of this research will hopefully influence and contribute to the teaching/learning process of a foreign language with the objective of stimulating a more critical, motivated, involved, and autonomous role on the part of the students in their own process of learning. As pointed out by Pintrich (1989), much has been discussed about teaching technology and teaching methods with the main purpose of enhancing the institutional contents. However, "motivation constructs are usually not discussed in these models of student cognition and thinking, or at best, given only passing and superficial attention. Motivational constructs such as goals and values are assumed to guide students' approach to a task and, therefore, may influence their cognition."

To address these issues, the following five general research questions were posed:

1. How reliable are the measures?
2. To what degree is motivation related to proficiency?
3. Are there significant differences in motivation between public and private students when controlling for differences in overall proficiency? If so, what subcategories of motivation are significantly different?
4. Is there a relationship between social status and students' linguistic performance?
5. Is there a relationship between social status and level of motivation?

This study concludes with an analysis of some preliminary empirical results from an on-going research project on Brazilian university students on motivation, cognition and proficiency in English as a foreign language.

## METHOD

### *Subjects*

The participants in this study were 89 undergraduate students of English at two universities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Of these, 45 were attending a private institution (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro) and 44 were

attending a public institution (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro). They were all university students aged — 18 to 25 years old. The great majority were female adults (89,9%) since language studies are traditionally taken up by women, in this country. The subjects were volunteers from similar levels at the two universities. All participants were native speakers of Portuguese enrolled in the "Letras" program with English as their major.

### *Materials*

Three different instruments were used for data collection. The first was an eighty-five item questionnaire designed by the National Center for Research to Improve Post-Secondary Teaching and Learning, of the University of Michigan and developed by Paul R. Pintrich, David A. F. Smith and Wilbert J. McKeachie (1989). This questionnaire was divided in two sections: Part A — Motivation and Part B — Learning Strategies. Part A (35 items) included three different components: values, expectancies and affective factors. Part B (50 items) was further subdivided into two scales cognitive and resource management scales. The model of motivation used in this questionnaire was essentially cognitive in orientation because it reflects its authors' view of the issue. Motivation is then assumed to be a multiple function of values, expectancies and affective factors.

The second instrument was a socio-cultural questionnaire developed by a Brazilian institution responsible for producing entrance examinations to private universities in Rio de Janeiro. The basic purpose of this questionnaire is to design a social, cultural and economical profile of students applying for university programs.

The third instrument was a cloze test which was used to measure overall English language proficiency. "The reliability of cloze tests when administered to ESL students has been demonstrated in numerous studies. The reliability coefficients have ranged from .61 to .95 for various scoring methods, which indicates that cloze tests are generally reliable." (Brown, 1980).

### *Procedures*

The instruments were administered in 75 minutes. The time limits were as follows: 30 minutes were allowed for the motivation questionnaire; 20 minutes for the socio-cultural measure and 25 minutes for the cloze test. They were all administered in quite, well-lit classroom settings by the researchers.

### *Analyses*

The data were arranged using the QUATTRO PRO spreadsheet and analyzed using an SPSS/PC software, version 4.0 on an IBM compatible computer. Cronbach alpha was used to estimate the reliability of various measures. Mean comparisons were accomplished using one-way multivariate

analysis of variance procedures with type of school (with two levels: private or public) as the independent variable and the subtest scores on all measures as dependent variables. Descriptive statistics including means and percentages were also used.

### *Results*

The results section was organized into several general parts that describe: (A) the reliability of the measures, (B) the private and public students' profile, (C) the relationship between motivation and proficiency, (D) the relationship between socio-cultural status, motivation and proficiency

#### *Reliability of the measures*

Section	Original	This study
Overall	.91	.79
Intrinsic motivation	.71	.55
Extrinsic motivation	NA	.59
Task value	.91	.78
Control beliefs	NA	.38
Self efficacy	.89	.81
Test anxiety	.82	.43
Rehearsal strategies	.65	.60
Elaboration strategies	.75	.67
Organization strategies	.73	.65
Critical thinking	.83	.78
Metacognitive strategies	.83	.71
Time and study environment	.82	.22
Effort management	.70	.29
Peer learning	NA	.60
Help-seeking behavior	.70	.08
Cloze	.88	.79

Brown 1980, p. 314

Table 1 — Reliability of the

Table 1 shows the reliability estimates of the original published version of the motivation scale (1989) along with the ones obtained in this study. Reliability for all of the sections of the questionnaires on motivation and the cloze test were calculated.

#### *Public and private student's profile*

The socio-cultural questionnaire was used as an instrument to draw an overall profile of the Brazilian students of "Letras" and, as such, was used as means of comparison for the two groups of subjects (private and public university students) with the purpose of observing whether or not there are interesting differences between them, concerning their social status.

## *Public*

When asked about their educational background, 63% answered that they had studied in private high schools and 23% in public ones. The vast majority, 91% had gone to high school during the day while only 9% during the night. Before entering the university, 73% had attended language courses for more than two years, but 90% of the students had never lived abroad in a English speaking country.

There were also several questions designed to create a profile of their family backgrounds, based both on economical and cultural characteristics. Forty-one point four percent of them had fathers who carried a university degree while 20% of the fathers had only finished high school, 7% finished only junior high and 12% only elementary school. The question about their fathers' occupations was subdivided into 11 categories attempting to include the great majority of professions. Categories 1,2,3,4,5,7 and 8 were considered of a high social level while 6,9,10 and 11 of a low social level. The first group consisted of professions like: banker (1), farmer, businessman (2), executive, business manager (3), medical doctor, engineer, architect, lawyer, economist, university professor — professions that require university degrees (4), army, navy and air force officer (5), policeman, fireman (6), businessman with less than 100 employers (7), manager of a small business (8), cashier, secretary, elementary school teacher, typist (professions that only require a high school level) (9), butcher, taxi driver, newsstand owner, baker (10), doorman, waiter, carpenter (11). Although the above list is not complete as it is in the questionnaire, it is quite a good sample of the original one.

The students' fathers were grouped in two major categories: 62% had professions considered to be of a high middle class (1,2,3,4,5 and 7) and 38% of a low middle class (6,9,10 and 11).

On the other hand, 42% of their mothers are housewives; only 17,4% of the mothers led a professional life that requires university degree and 19,8% had a profession that only required a high school degree. This was not considered to be a determining factor to the students' social status since it appears that in Brazil the women's social role is predominantly associated with household chores.

Their family income question had several options where the basis was the Brazilian minimum wage. From 1 to 10 minimum wages a month (49,5%) is seen as having a not satisfactory economical condition. From 10 up to 50 minimum wages or more (49,5%) was understood to be satisfactory.

Another "economical" question asked the students whether they worked or not, and it was not surprising to see that 54% of them did not work. Among those who worked, 28,7% had part-time jobs, only 6,9% worked full-time and 10,3% were free lancers. The ones who did not work had families that paid for all their expenses. Among the ones that worked, 33,7% neither participated in the family expenses nor paid their own. More than 8,1% made their own living but

did not participate in their family budget and only 4.7% contributed in their own expenses.

*Private*

The students from the private university have graduated from private schools (83%) and taken their courses during the day (95%). They have learned, or are still learning foreign languages in many other private courses for more than two years, while 14% of these have lived in a foreign country for some time and 3 individuals studied in an American or British school. Out of 45 participants, 16 have already traveled abroad more than once and 6 just once. Their fathers are either still active workers (54%) or retired (29%) and 63% hold undergraduate diplomas. None of these participants informed that their fathers had no schooling or less than four years of primary school courses. They are mostly (46%) economists, engineers, doctors, teachers and professors, sociologists and lawyers, 16% are military officers and (11%) own their own medium sized farms, industries or commercial business. Their mothers are generally housewives (43%) while 21% of the women have a professional career and are mainly doctors, engineers, architects, sociologists, accountants, lawyers, professors and teachers.

The monthly family budget of 70% of the participants ranges from US\$ 1,000.00. The participants generally don't have a job and all their expenses are paid by their parents. Only 22% work in part-time jobs and 14% is responsible for his own living expenses or his family's. A few families own a summer house (30%) but only a small percentage (11%) doesn't own a car (39% owns two cars and 21% more than two cars).

The students from the private university either read one newspaper everyday (44%) or occasionally (39%). Thirty-nine percent take foreign language courses and 26% other courses, as gym, ballet or sports. Their leisure time is mainly filled with movies, theaters and dancing (60%).

Tests	Sign of F
Pillais	0.0
Hotelling	0.026
Wilks	0.026

p<.03

Table 2 — Multivariate tests

*Relationship between motivation and proficiency*

There is another table that shows the overall multivariate analysis was significant (p<.03). We were therefore justified in conducting further univariate (F) tests of mean differences between private and public universities on each of the dependent variables. These comparisons are shown in the first 15 rows of Table

3. Notice that only Rehearsal Strategies and Organization are significant at  $p < .05$ .

Variable	Public	Private	Overall	F value	P value
Intrin	5.54	5.52	5.39	.22	.63
Extrin	4.31	4.52	4.42	1.94	.16
Task	6.16	6.13	6.16	2.20	.14
Control	3.65	3.74	3.69	2.49	.11
Selfeff	5.55	5.59	5.57	2.52	.11
Testanx	3.24	3.28	3.26	.74	.39
Rehears	5.24	4.65	4.94	4.22	.04*
Elabor	5.84	5.39	5.61	.14	.70
Orgstrat	5.90	5.02	5.45	7.81	.06*
Crithnk	4.82	4.10	4.46	3.23	.07
Metacogn	4.78	4.33	4.55	1.31	.25
Timestud	4.92	4.79	4.86	.12	.72
Effort	3.55	3.35	3.45	3.36	.07
Peerltn	3.07	2.89	2.98	1.06	.30
Helpseek	5.05	4.82	4.39	1.45	.23
Mot (total)	71.68	67.91	69.78	2.01	.02
Cloze	19.82	12.88	16.31	NA	NA

$p < .05$

Table 3 — Overall mean differences in motivation

*Relationship between socio-cultural status, motivation and proficiency*

The mean of motivation level among students from the public university was higher (71%) than of the private university students (68%). Considering that the students from the public university were mainly originated from public schools (54%) and this factor was generally considered relevant, we could conclude that there is no relationship between motivation and high economic level or even a better academic background. This conclusion was made even more evident when confronted with the results among the students from the private university who had lower level of motivation but had been through a private high school. This result (83%) contradicted the belief that better academic background and high social levels could originate highly motivated students.

The question related to the period of the day students attended high-schools did not prove to reveal a significant difference between the two groups of students since the great majority of them (86% public and 95% private) went to school during the day.

The majority of the students who have taken private English courses for more than two years showed high motivation scores and obtained the second best results in the cloze tests.

Among all the students, there are only two cases of individuals who stated that they had lived in a foreign country while the majority has never had such experience. As we would expect, those two students were highly motivated and were also the ones with the best cloze results.

Table 4 Students' cultural/social life (%)

	N	Ss who lived abroad	Ss who did not live abroad
Mot.	8	71.92	69.60
Prof.	86	18.50	16.41

It seems that students studying for Letras have not been able to travel abroad much (30 students out of 89) and only a small number (7) of the entire population had the opportunity to live in a foreign country. However, this does not tend to affect their overall language performance.

There were no students from the public university who did not read the newspaper daily while there are two at the private university (2 sts). There were 18 students from the public university who did not take any previous English language courses but 18 out of 67 had taken courses in another foreign language.

*Students' financial status*

	Unemployed		Employed	
	Public univ.	Private univ.	Public univ.	Private univ.
Mot.	71.93	68.81	73.77	65.76
Prof.	20.91	13.00	19.77	12.80
N.	23	24	21	19

Table 5

In both universities the same number of students had no job but this does not seem to contribute to an increase in their motivation and proficiency. The students who have jobs (full-time, part-time or occasional) also show similar scores in motivation and proficiency. The only interesting aspect observed here is that the highest scores were obtained by those students who studied at the public university. (see Table 5)

*Family financial status*

	Fathers'		Mothers'	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
Mot.	73.19	72.22	70.83	62.78
Prof.	20.72	11.68	19.85	12.74

Table 6 — Parents' high social status

	Fathers'		Mothers	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
Mot.	72.50	58.50	71.04	67.71
Prof.	20.52	10.12	17.85	13.0

Table 7 — Parents' low social status



Questions 5, 6, 7 and 20 are basically concerned with the subjects' family financial status. Although question 5 and 6 are about the kind of high school attended by the students, we believe they also reveal their family economic status, since in Brazil, attending a public school is one of the possible indications of belonging to a lower social level. However, the results found here are contradictory if we compare the two groups of subjects. Among the ones from the public university, the highest level of motivation appeared among the students who had attended public high school and, therefore, the ones with a lower economic status. The mean scores for motivation were 71.5 (the ones originating from public high schools) and 70.0 (the ones originating from private high schools). On the other hand, among the students from the private university, the most motivated ones had gone to private high schools and belonged, consequently, to families with a better financial status (68.8 for motivation was the mean score of students from private high schools and 65.4 for the ones from public high schools).

According to the percentages above, it is not possible to state whether or not there is a relationship between socio-economic status and level of motivation. Besides the contradictory results, the mean scores may not be significantly different.

In reference to level of proficiency, similar percentages occur. In the public university, the students who had attended public high schools were the most proficient (20.0 mean score) in comparison to the ones from private schools (19.1 mean score). While in the private ones, the highest level of proficiency is found among the students who had attended private schools (12.6 mean score) in comparison to the ones from public schools (12.3 mean score). Again, the score differences may not be significantly different.

Question 6, which is concerned with the time of the day in which they attended high school, proved to be inconsistent in determining the family financial-social status since we had only one subject from each institution who had attended school during the night.

In question 7, the subjects were asked whether or not they had attended private English courses for a fair amount of time. The students who had taken these kinds of courses for more than 2 years were the most motivated ones in both the public (72.17) and the private (68.53) universities. The ones who answered that they had not taken private English courses scored lower (71.63). Since attending these kinds of courses is seen as an indication of high economic status, we may conclude that, according to this question, the most motivated students have a high economic status.

In relation to level of proficiency, the results for this question were very surprising: in both institutions the students who had higher proficiency scores were precisely the ones who had not attended any private English courses - (22.33 at the public university as compared to the ones who had attended these kinds of courses for more than two years — 19.80 and 13.0 respectively), and we can only

conclude that the lower their economic status is, the higher their level of proficiency.

Question 20 is about their family income. On our study, students who had 1 to 10 in terms of Brazilian minimum wages would be considered of a low economic status and those who were from 10 to 50 or more, would be considered of a middle or high economic status. At the public university, the highest level of motivation appeared among the students who had a higher economic level (74.49 mean score at the Federal University as compared to 72.49 of the ones of a lower economic standard).

At the private university, the results were exactly the opposite: the highest level of motivation occurred among the students of a lower economic status (69.50) while the ones of a higher status scored lower (68.69).

If we examine the results concerning the level of proficiency, we see that they are the same at the private university, i.e., the most proficient ones had a higher economic status while at the public university the figures were just the opposite: this time, the most proficient ones had a higher economic status (20.65) as compared to the less proficient ones with a lower economic status (19.44).

Comparing the results obtained in the analysis of questions 7 and 20, these slight divergences could be attributed to chance variations and not be statistically significant.

## FATHERS' ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

This is investigated in question 15 which can be divided into two categories: low academic background including no education at all to only a high school degree and high academic background which means a better socio-cultural level including university degrees complete or incomplete.

The results are consistent in the two universities in relation to motivation and proficiency. The most motivated and most proficient students in the two universities were the two who belonged to families with a better socio-cultural level (76.55 and 21.41 at the public university) and 73.85 and 13.12 at the private one.

## PARENTS' SOCIAL STATUS

This feature was investigated in questions 18 and 19, which asked about the participants' fathers' and mothers' occupations/professions. The results confirm the statistics found in an earlier question (15). Again, the students with a higher level of motivation and proficiency were, in both institution, the students whose parents (both father and mother) had professions considered to be an indication of high social status. (see Tables 6,7)

## CONCLUSIONS

After conducting a careful and detailed analysis of the data reported here, we should consider again the five basic research questions posed as the goals of this study and attempt to draw some conclusions about them.

In general terms, the means for motivation and proficiency for the two universities indicate that the public institution is higher. Therefore, our results appear to support the notion that the most motivated students are also the most proficient ones.

The socio-cultural results did not support the generally held belief that students with a lower socio-economical status would rank social status would be more proficient. In terms of the socio-cultural profiles we do not have sufficient consistency in our results to draw firm conclusions about the two groups. Thus, we are not able to establish the existence of a strong relationship between social status, and both proficiency and motivation.

This study was a preliminary attempt to raise awareness of some of the components ("higher order" thinking skills, according to Pintrich, 1989) essential to the learning process. As Pintrich (1989) points out, we should improve our efforts to teach students *not only content but also 'process' 'critical thinking' skills*. We believe that once those involved in pedagogical activities are conscious of these facts, we may be able to foster more effectively and efficiently the entire process of learning.

However, it is clear that a study like this should be carried out not only in a foreign language learning context but also in other teaching fields. In addition, we believe that the scope of our investigation should be expanded to other universities aiming at both increasing the number of participants and studying different kinds of post-secondary institutions that may present peculiarities not characteristic of the two universities used for this study. Such continued studies should give us a more accurate view of these essential educational processes.

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## The conflict of voices in the classroom

Lynn Mario T. Menezes de Souza

The aim of this paper is to discuss some aspects of M. M. Bakhtin's theories of language and their implications for the teaching and learning of foreign languages and classroom research.

The bakhtinian view of language is well known for its opposition to the saussurean view; whereas Saussure considers speech as an individual phenomenon and the linguistic system as a social phenomenon, as if they are two opposing poles, Bakhtin refuses to divorce the individual from the social.

For Bakhtin, Saussure's a-social and abstract stance postulates language as if it were a stable and immutable system of self-identical linguistic elements which pre-exist the individual speaker for whom there is no other alternative but to simply reproduce them. These linguistic elements, besides being seen as immutable and abstract, are also held to be objective in the saussurean view, and therefore are seen as being beyond any form of ideological involvement, having as their preferred unit of analysis the sentence.

For Bakhtin, on the other hand, language is a profoundly social and historical and — for this very reason — an ideological phenomenon. The basic unit of linguistic analysis in this view is the *utterance*, which may be defined as a set of linguistic elements produced in real and concrete social contexts participating in a dynamic act of communication. The mutability which is here attributed to language consists in the inexhaustible possibility of allocating new meanings to the same linguistic elements in new social and temporal contexts: "the task of understanding is not limited to a mere recognition of the element used, but on the contrary, it is a question of understanding it in relation to a specific and concrete context, it is a question of understanding its meaning in terms of a specific utterance, or rather, a question of understanding the element in terms of its newness and not only recognizing its sameness." (1973).

Besides the social, historical and ideological abstraction of the saussurean view, Bakhtin also points out that this view of language emphasizes the fragment in detriment to the totality of language. This kind of eminently sentence

linguistics generally ends up ignoring the complexity of language in all its social and historical splendor.

Bakhtin's social view of language has a direct connection with the ideological construction of the subject; for Bakhtin, the subject constitutes itself hearing and assimilating the words and the discourses of the other (its parents, its companions, its community etc.), resulting in the processing of these words and discourses as half one's own words and half the words of an other. All discourse, according to Bakhtin, constitutes itself in this way on the frontier between that which is its own and that which is someone else's: "language is not something neutral that can be can pass easily and freely into the private property of the speaker's intentions ... To appropriate it, force it to submit itself to our own intentions and inflections is difficult and complicated" (1981:284). This principle, called *dialogism*, postulates the production and comprehension of any utterance in the context of the utterances which precede it and in the context of the utterances which will follow it; thus it is that each utterance or word is born in response to a preceding utterance, and expects in its turn, a response to itself: "each utterance is directed towards a response and cannot escape the profound influence of the utterance which it anticipates as a response" (Op. cit., 280).

In this sense, the bakhtinian subject is seen as imbricated in its social milieu, being permeated and constituted by the discourse which surround it. Each subject is thus seen as being hybrid, an arena of conflict and confrontation of the various discourses which constitute it, where each of these discourses, in its confrontation with the others aims at imposing itself hegemonically over them. This vision of a hybrid and conflicting subject contrasts with the abstract saussurean view, which, due to its idealization, gives language a false appearance of harmony, neutrality and objectivity.

For Bakhtin, language, seen in this way as an arena of conflicts, is inseparable from the question of power; for him each sign, more than a mere reflection or substitute of reality, is materially constituted in the sense that it is dialogically produced in the context of all the other socially and ideologically constituted signs, and for this very reason, each sign forms an objective part of reality. From this standpoint, even consciousness, constituted by linguistic signs, becomes an objective fact, a socially constituted force.

What happens to the individual as a social being also happens to the community; that is, like the individual, the community is also constituted as an arena of conflicts of competing discourses — a phenomenon which Bakhtin calls *polyphony* or *heteroglossia*. According to these concepts, each language, like each individual, consists of conflicting variants — social, geographical, historical, professional, etc. — all of which are subject to the question of power, where, at a particular moment of its history, each language is formed by a specific verticalized and hierarchic stratification of those variants which constitute it. Thus, the hegemonic role of the dominant is always filled, even though at different moments it may be filled by different variants. The concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia permit power to be relativized and conceived as something

contingent and constructed, and not as something self-identical and essentialistic, inherent to determined elements. Once it is seen as constructed, the dominant may now also be seen as a function, a space to be filled, unstable and mutable, under constant threat from the other elements which constitute polyphony and heteroglossia which wish to dislodge the element which is at present occupying the space of the dominant.

This characterization of power as something fragile and vulnerable points to the necessity of negotiation, both, for that which is occupying the dominant (in order to diminish the threats to its hegemony and thus guarantee the continuation of this very hegemony) and for those who remain distant from the dominant (in order to guarantee the possibility of eventually taking the place of the dominant, seeing themselves as a real threat to the dominant whose power is relativized by their very presence).

### A BAKHTINIAN CLASSROOM

Based on these concepts and the social view of language which they portray, we shall now attempt to discuss the relevance of Bakhtin for the foreign language classroom. In the traditional classroom of a saussurean bent both content and methodology are seen as immutable, fixed and stable. Content — generally grammar, be it traditional or communicative — is pre-established unilaterally by the teacher or the institution, independent of any specific group of learners. The methodology is also seen as fixed, immutable and unilaterally defined, in order to guarantee the naturalness of the authority of the teacher; the learner is here seen as a voiceless abstract being devoid of social characteristics and expectations. This standpoint sees the classroom as a neutral place, objective and harmonious.

From the bakhtinian perspective, on the contrary, the classroom is seen as a socially and ideologically constituted space, an arena of conflicting and changing voices and values. This perspective of the classroom as heteroglossia, consisting of a dynamic hierarchically organized stratification of differing voices and values vying to occupy the hegemonic position of the dominant, entails the need for negotiation in the classroom. In this case the heteroglossic perspective consists of all the elements which constitute the classroom: the teacher, the learners, the methodology and the course content.

The role of the teacher in this perspective is generally to occupy the dominant, although in learner-centered teaching, this role is acceptably negotiated with the learner. The social constitution of power as a force which originates in a social function (that of the dominant), and therefore not one which inheres in any biological being, contributes towards the acceptability of negotiating the successive occupation of the function of the dominant. However, bearing in mind that for Bakhtin no negotiation is harmonious and pacific, even in this case conflicts of interests may be expected to arise.

Still on the topic of the teacher, taking into account the dialogic principle in which each utterance acquires its meaning in the context of what precedes and succeeds it, the teacher's classroom posture will also depend on his/her previous and current experiences. It is difficult to determine beforehand what the teacher's role in a particular methodology should be, as if all teachers will be indiscriminately capable of playing the same role unconflictively. From the bakhtinian perspective, even specifically trained teachers may play the 'same' role in a given methodology in different unforeseen ways bearing in mind that heteroglossia affects not only a speech community but also each individual member of that community, one arrives at the bakhtinian concept of the hybrid subject constituted by conflicting hierarchically organized discourses. At the level of the individual these conflicts appear as in the case of classroom observation, where a teacher who says he/she is going to act in a certain way in the classroom is then observed to act in radically different way. Woods (1989) mentions the curious findings of his research in which teachers who are considered to be personally 'organized' were observed as being disorganized in the classroom, whereas those who were held to be generally disorganized were observed to teach in an organized manner.

In the case of the learner, the same aspects of heteroglossia also apply. The learner is of course a social being hybridly formed by dialogically conflicting discourses, and this is what leads him/her to encounter difficulties in adapting directly to pre-established, univocal, homogeneous methodologies. This has been widely felt by teachers of special purpose courses who often suffer under the unceasing demands of their students to be taught items which were not foreseen by the pre-course needs analysis.

It is worth emphasizing that Bakhtin's concept of the hybrid subject in no way entails the absolute discursive individuality of each subject. As socially constituted beings, each subject is permeated and formed by social and collective discourses. The subject becomes hybrid only in the sense that the set of social discourses or variants that form a particular individual X may differ from the set of discourses which form individual Y; however, this does not eliminate the possibility of subjects X and Y having certain discourses or variants in common. This fact is of special interest in the case of certain learner-centered methodologies which tend to emphasize the differences between learners and not the similarities; this tends to result in a socially fragmented view of language behavior, and in the illusion that this is the most harmonious learning method for the learner because it eliminates the moments of conflict inherent in other methodologies. Bearing in mind that in language itself meaning is attributed to the sign in a conflictual manner, depending on who is the attributer and what is the context of the attribution, then any attempt to eliminate conflicts, substituting them with harmony, ends up merely postponing the moment of conflict. This is similar to the way in which traditional foreign language methodologies postponed the conflict by exposing learners to carefully doctored minimal units of the foreign language, whose apparent simplicity and accessibility to the learner ended up



emphasizing accuracy (where the learner was given the impression of being harmoniously in control of the communication) to the detriment of fluency (where the learner would have to be prepared to face the unpredictable, the potentially conflictual in an act of communication).

In terms of methodology and course content, the same principles apply. Means should be sought to accommodate (and not eliminate) conflicts originating in the heteroglossia of learners, teachers and the community, such that these may be minimized and ameliorated through mechanisms of negotiation.

There are several implications for classroom research within the bakhtinian perspective, and the connection with ethnographic and interpretive methodologies (see Erickson 1984, Clifford 1986, Geertz 1973, Rosaldo 1989) is more than fortuitous. The most interesting implications are those based on the concept of the classroom as heteroglossia — an arena of conflicting ideologically overdetermined voices. Research methodologies which are not qualitative or interpretive — valuing the social subjectivity of the researcher and the researched, and rejecting a postulated objectivity and neutrality — will not do justice to the bakhtinian perspective.

## HETEROGLOSSIA IN ACTION

An example of how the traditional saussurean foreign language classroom has ventured through bakhtinian territory is the well known case of the "music lesson"; the term is used by Brazilian primary and secondary school English teachers to refer to a class whose highlight is a popular song in English.

Frustrated by the platitudinous effects of univocal traditional teaching and its consequences — uninteresting lessons and uninterested learners, the English teacher begins to perceive the need to negotiate with the learners. This perception is itself the consequence of another previous perception: that of the existence of heteroglossia and polyphony in the classroom represented by the conflicts between 'what the learners want' and 'what the course requires them to learn'. The 'music lesson' appears as a long-lost panacea in the guise of an instrument of negotiation. "If I give them a song — something that they like — then they may permit me to do something I like i.e. teach English", reasons the teacher.

However, as is the case with any negotiation, this one is also unequal, and the teacher makes use, however disguisedly, of his present occupation of the hegemonic space of the dominant. The opportunity for this appears with the dilemma of selecting the song to be taught. The teacher, naturally, selects a song that he/she likes, or one that rings some nostalgic note in his memory (a Beatles song perhaps?). The learners, meanwhile, are happy nonetheless, in having their wish to have a 'music lesson' come true. Once more, however, the teacher's hegemony comes to the fore; this time, in the form of learning tasks based on the

words of the chosen song — the didactic counterpart to the pleasurable side of the 'music lesson'. In this way the teacher uses the lyrics to teach new or revised vocabulary, pronunciation and/or grammar.

The bakhtinian climax of the 'music lesson', though, comes rapidly to a head at the most awaited moment of the lesson — the moment of the general sing-along; and it is in the splendor of this cacophonous event — the loud and vociferous conflict of voices — that the pure dialogic heteroglossia of the classroom may best be felt !

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# Towards autonomy in teacher education : bridging the gap between the University and the Secondary State School

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Marisa Grigoletto

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a project on classroom research which is being carried out in the "Letras" English course at the University of São Paulo.

The project has two objectives: to promote an interface between secondary level education and the university, and, at the same time, to contribute to the attainment of the two main goals of our "Letras" course, namely, to form teachers and researchers.

Departing from the presupposition that there is some truth in the widespread criticism that foreign language (henceforth F.L.) teachers are generally ill prepared for their job, we took it upon us to intervene in this problem beginning with the "Letras" course in which we work. The kind of intervention we defined as being of greatest benefit to our "Letras" students is to make them aware of the importance of working towards becoming researchers of their own professional practices as teachers. We concluded that the best way to achieve this was to prepare these students to be able to investigate their future practice as teachers with a certain degree of autonomy.

Cavalcanti and Moita Lopes (1991) point out what they consider to be a major flaw in teacher education in "Letras" courses in this country, which is the lack of disciplines dedicated to the preparation of critical future teachers who would be capable of acting as researchers of their own practice. This lack is felt even in the Discipline of Teaching Practice, with some rare exceptions. Cavalcanti and Moita Lopes recommend that a reflection on classroom practices and an initiation in classroom research be developed throughout the "Letras" courses as a means towards educating future teachers to be reflexive and critical of

their own professional practices ; this reflexive and critical capacity, in our view, is an important step towards making future teachers increasingly autonomous in their professional roles.

In what seems at first sight to run counter to this argument, Richards and Nunan (1990: xii) remind us that an effective education of future teachers should involve abstract cognitive processes which are difficult to teach directly in courses. The development of these processes may, however, be stimulated if the student teacher if led to adopt the role of researcher into his/her own teaching practices.

This reasoning has guided us in our attempt to engage students of our "Letras" course as research assistants from the outset of the project. Our project has been granted two "*Iniciação Científica*" grants for undergraduate students, which have been allocated to two third-year students. As we believe that only the experience acquired from participating in all phases of the project will help our student teachers in developing greater future professional autonomy, we have insisted that they take an active part in carrying out all the tasks of the project. This initiative has proved to be of direct benefit to them, and they have spontaneously stated that the research experience they have been gaining is enabling them to improve their reflection not only on the data we have analyzed so far, but also on the texts they read during their courses as well as on their present practice as teachers (both of them have been teaching for a couple of years already).

However, our objective of contributing towards improvements in teacher education within the "Letras" course would be impaired if the transformations we seek to provoke were restricted to just these two students who are directly involved in the project. Conscious of this, our aim is to transform the final results of our research into support material to be used in some of the disciplines we teach in order to reach a larger group of student teachers. Naturally, the benefits for these other students will be qualitatively different since they will not have been directly exposed to this kind of classroom research; however, we are only too aware of this limitation in the scope of our project.

Returning to the first objective of our project, to promote an interface between secondary level education and the university, we had initially set ourselves the aim of intervening in, and trying to transform, the classroom reality of F.L. teaching in State Schools, notwithstanding the limitations in the scope of our project. We had initially envisaged attaining this objective by developing the future professional autonomy of our student teachers in their role as teacher-researchers. However, as the research developed, it became increasingly clear that to attain our aim of intervention and transformation, we would have to widen the scope of the participation of our teacher-informants in the project (In section 3 of this paper we describe how this intervention transformed the roles of these teacher-informants).

As a result of this change in scope, our objectives at the present phase of the project are now: 1) to reflect upon the discourse/text of the F.L. (English) classroom in secondary-level State Schools, which is to be observed and analyzed

(our intention is to critically and consciously intervene in this discourse/text, aiming at improving the quality of the teaching in this context by stimulating the professional autonomy of teachers, transforming them into teacher-researchers, seekers of solutions to problems in their own classroom practice); 2) to gain the cooperation of the teacher-informants — the subjects of our research — in these reflections/interventions, as a means towards improving their practice; 3) to help the teacher-informants develop the concept of teaching as learning, that is, as a unique opportunity to reflect retrospectively upon their practice, and thus effect changes in it. This of course also entails the concept of autonomous learning as taking on the responsibility for one's own learning; 4) to promote a mutually beneficial interaction between researchers and research subjects/informants, as we believe that in the process of negotiating meanings and interpreting results, all parties involved may benefit equally, undergoing a process of positive modification.

Objectives 2, 3 and 4 above are essential to achieve the desired secondary-level/university interface. This may be one way of reverting the knowledge developed at the university into real benefits for secondary-level education.

## METHODOLOGY

The research methodology we opted for is ethnographic and interpretative, and therefore, qualitative.

Ethnographic classroom research (see, for instance, Erickson, 1984; Erickson and Wilson, 1982; Cavalcanti and Moita Lopes, 1991), which has its origins in anthropology, has as its main characteristic an exploratory perspective in the sense that its point of departure is not an elaborate hypothesis to be verified. However, this does not mean that the researcher does not start off with questions or intuitions in mind. What may happen, and frequently does, in ethnographic research, is an ongoing redefinition of aspects to be explored during the course of the research as a result of modifications originating in the observation and analysis of the data. Depending on the design of the project, these modifications may occur in the researcher, in the subjects researched, or both.

In ethnographic research applied to the classroom the researcher's main concern is to observe what happens in the classroom; to do this he collects data using instruments such as field notes and recordings of lessons, interviews, questionnaires and diaries written by the participants in the setting under study.

This type of research and the data it collects are explicitly and unabashedly subjective. However, acknowledging the criticism it receives from defenders of positivist research methods, and in response to it, ethnographic research seeks to diminish the risks of subjectivity through data triangulation. This may be accomplished either through the use of several data collecting instruments or through the confrontation of standpoints and interpretations of the

various participants. Either method confers an inter subjective character on the research in which a variety of subjectivities come to play.

On the other hand, quantitative methods restrict themselves to the collection of statistically measurable data, trapped in the illusion that such data is objective given that it does not involve the subjectivity of the observer.

Our research is based on the presupposition that the researcher can never be a mere neutral observer. Any observation is necessarily interpretative, since the way any object is observed is always already filled with knowledge, beliefs and value judgments and never simply void. These elements lead the researcher to interfere in the observation and thus turn into an interpreter of data, countering the positivist illusion of the possibility of pure, innocent description.

We are thus aware that our data analysis will always be interpretive, at all stages of our research, and this interpretation will never be preceded by a phase of pure description. Such beliefs are in accordance with the principle of dialogical textual production discussed by Clifford (1986) as a current trend in ethnographic research in the social sciences in a move to validate the subjective construction — or writing — of the data collected by the ethnographer. For Clifford, this construction is dialogical because it is the result of interpersonal confrontations between the discourse of the ethnographer and that of his informants.

The design of our research (see Fig.1) takes into account this dialogic principle when we envisage stages which may be subsequently altered by our findings at the preceding stage. All of these stages will be composed of the subjectivities of ourselves as researchers and of our subjects/informants, who, in this way will contribute directly to the construction of interpretations and findings.

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|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Analysis of the relevant literature.</li><li>2. Interviews with teacher informants (recordings, transcriptions and analysis).</li><li>3. Meetings with teacher informants (for discussion of topics selected by researchers).</li><li>4. Observation of classes (recordings, transcriptions and analysis).</li><li>5. Interviews with teacher informants about classes observed (recordings, transcripts and analysis).</li><li>6. Meetings with teacher informants (to discuss issues which arise from class observations).</li><li>7. Global analysis of data.</li><li>8. Final meeting with teacher informants.</li><li>9. Transformation of data into support material for 'Letras' courses.</li></ol> |
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*Fig.1 Stages of the Project (Stages 1- 3 accomplished so far)*

## DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, the original design of the project allowed for the collection of data at two subsequent stages through the use of two instruments — an individual interview with the teacher informants and a subsequent observation of their classes. From our ethnographic research perspective, we had initially

imagined that our most valuable contribution towards an improvement in the quality of F.L.T. in State Schools would be in the form of promoting autonomous learning among our university students — future F.L. teachers in the State School system. Our intervention in this context of F.L.T. in this case referred to the valuable experience which our students would acquire in their contacts with the State School teacher informants, in the course of carrying out the interviews and observing the classes taught. This interaction with the teacher informants was thus envisaged as contributing not only towards the later data analyses, but as also contributing towards the effective design of teaching materials for our university 'Letras' pre-service teacher education courses.

However, our analysis of the interviews at stage 2 changed the course of our research as it then stood. In these interviews, it became almost unanimously evident that our teacher-informants were keen to know in what way our research would benefit them directly, in terms of their routine teaching behavior which was widely recognized as being deficient by all the parties involved. Up to this point our research aimed to benefit the secondary State School system through a more critical and autonomous form of educating future F.L. teachers as teacher-researchers. The teacher informants' need to know what immediate benefit they would derive through our research led us to the following reflection: up till then, our research aimed at analyzing the F.L. State School class as a discourse-text whose readers, for our purposes were firstly, ourselves — university teachers and *educators of future teachers*, and secondly, our students — *future teachers*. Although we had taken into consideration our in-service teacher-informants in their role as *co-authors* of this discourse-text, until this point they figured in our research only as informants — objects of analysis.

The desire that these teacher informants expressed in their interviews — to receive our help as 'experts' and teacher-educators to help them transform their teaching practices led us to perceive that these same teacher-informants, co-authors of the discourse-text which was the object of our research, could greatly benefit from becoming themselves *readers* of this same discourse-text which they produce. In this way the possibility of a triangulation arose, one which could benefit not only our research but, more significantly, all those involved in it. From this point on, we saw ourselves as dealing with a *text* — the discourse of the F.L. classroom in State Schools — and *three groups of readers*: ourselves, educators of future teachers; our students of our 'Letras' course who are future teachers; and our teacher-informants, who are also co-authors of the text under study.

From our chosen interpretive perspective, the *subject* (reader) and the *object* (text under study) are seen as being dialogically constructed and not as separable entities. This of course means that a reading is seen as the fruit of the dialogic relationship between text and reader. Thus our three groups of readers could be seen as producing three different readings of what at first sight seems to be the 'same' text. We believe that the triangulation which may be obtained from

confronting these three different readings will be of great benefit to all those concerned. Based on this observation we inserted new stages in our project design, stages 3, 6 and 8 (see Fig. 1). These new stages would permit us to present our findings obtained at the previous stage (stages 2, 5, and 7) to our teacher-informants so as to provoke a confrontation of different readings of the findings.

Even though the insertion of these additional stages in the original project design permit us to contribute more directly towards changes in F.L.T. in State Schools, our ethnographic perspective (Clifford op.cit.; Erickson op.cit.; Rosaldo 1989) made us self-consciously wary of dictating norms and patterns of behavior to the teacher-informants, in spite of their insistence to the contrary. Departing from the dialogic concept of reading, it would be unjustifiable to lead these teacher-informants to simply substitute one reading of the discourse-text (our reading, supposedly more informed) for another (their reading of the 'same' text of which they are co-authors with their students). As our aim was to transform these teacher-informants' reading of the discourse text which they themselves produced, this would not come about through their simple acceptance of our reading of their text. We would have to lead these teacher-informants to confront this discourse-text from two different standpoints: as co-authors and as readers of the 'same' text. Each of these standpoints in effect represent two different readings of the 'same' text. It was with this in mind that we developed tasks for the meetings in stage 3 with the objective of leading our teacher-informants to confront their readings of the discourse-text with ours.

The tasks for the meetings at stage three were based on our findings at stage 2. Our analysis of the interviews with the teacher-informants revealed that one of the major problems in their practices was the lack of clarity in their perception of the objectives of F.L.T. at secondary level State Schools. Although all the informants identified the English language as «an important language of international communication», and emphasized the importance of a «communicative» knowledge of the language for their students, their descriptions of their classroom practices revealed deficiencies in their capacity to transform these beliefs into teaching-learning objectives. This was the principal finding to be presented at the meeting of stage 3.

Still wary of telling the teachers outright how they should teach, and trying to stimulate them to research into their own classroom practices, seeking out their own problems and possible solutions, but still aiming at guaranteeing that changes took place, we developed two kinds of activities which were carried out at stage 3. The first activity lead them to perceive the role and importance of having clear teaching-learning objectives and the implications of this for content and methodology. We still avoided saying which methodology we preferred. The second activity consisted of descriptions of common classroom practices based on the information from the interviews; here we asked the teacher-informants to analyze critically the classes described. The general tendency in this activity was to find nothing wrong with the classes described, as they reflected the daily practices of almost all the teacher-informants. We then asked them to identify the



objectives of the activities carried out in the descriptions, in order to say a) if these activities were the most efficient way of leading the learners to attain the perceived objectives, and b) to say if these objectives were pertinent in relation to the general objectives for F.L.T. that they had identified in the first task.

The outcome of stage 3 was the perception of these teacher-informants that serious discrepancies existed between what they believed to be the general objectives of F.L.T. and the objectives of the activities they were accustomed to carrying out in their classrooms. This perception, resulting from a raising of their awareness of their own problems and their capacity to analyze these critically, represented for us a first step in the direction towards improvements in F.L.T. at this level, without having to supply them with ready-made solutions.

It is perhaps necessary to add that our reluctance in supplying outright answers and solutions to these teacher-informants does not at all represent an attempt to maintain a supposed 'neutrality' or 'objectivity' on our part as researchers. On the contrary, we have well-defined preferences in relation to methodologies, objectives and contents for F.L.T.. Our only purpose was to lead these teacher-informants to confront their own readings of the F.L. classroom discourse-text with our readings of it, thus transforming them from co-authors of the text into readers of it. In this dialogic confrontation of readings what occurred was a qualitative approximation/juxtaposition/confrontation of their reading with ours, and not a mere substitution of one by another, nor a simple accumulative accretion of different readings.

The changes which resulted from these confrontations affected all those involved in the research. For us, they have helped to set our tracks for the subsequent stage of the project, which is the observation of classes (see Fig.1); our observation protocols will emphasize evidence of discrepancies between general teaching-learning objectives and the objectives of specific classroom activities. As for our students, future teachers, the confrontation between their readings of the F.L. classroom discourse-text, ours and those of the in-service teacher-informants, besides the research experience they have acquired, change the concept of professional difficulties from a vague fear of the distant future into real possibilities which have solutions in which they themselves can participate. It is in this that we hope to contribute not only to easing the burden of difficulties of F.L.T. at secondary level, but also to promote a worthwhile interface between F.L. education at secondary and university levels.

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## Autonomous learner and authentic language

H. G. Widdowson

*[Text transcribed from his lecture]*

I am going to talk, this morning, about autonomy (at least I am going to touch upon autonomy), and I'm going to talk a little bit about authenticity; and I want to suggest that, if we are concerned with an appropriate language for learning — appropriate English for developing the learners' autonomy — I am going to argue that that requirement is not entirely consistent with the use of authentic language data in the classroom.

I shall seek to be provocative and I hope that you will be provoked into, maybe, raising a few questions.

There is a handout, a handout which contains mysterious texts which I will refer to in the course of my talk. One advantage of having a handout, particularly a handout with mysterious texts, is that you always have something to read if the lecture becomes tedious.

I want to start with very simple questions and generally what I want to do is to look at certain ideas that have been taken as self-evidently true and question them. I want to do a little troubleshooting. I want to make things problematic.

First, a simple question I want to ask is what do English teachers teach; English, it's obvious. But what kind of English? The language that is particularly English because of its spread, its enormous range of use is available in varieties of all sorts. It's adopted in all kinds of community and it's used for all kinds of communication.

So, what kind of English is appropriate for pedagogy, for teaching and learning? Which model should serve to define the objective of learning? That's one question. And another question is: which features of the language are appropriate for teaching and learning?

Like any other language, English can be described in the abstract, in terms of its formal symbolic properties and relations. It can be described, therefore, in terms of its phonology, its grammar, its lexis and these features can be demonstrated by the invention of sentences.

Or the language can be described not in the abstract but, to coin a phrase, in the actual, so to speak. That's to say, in terms of the indexical functions which are realized in contexts of use. So, which aspect the encoded forms or the contextualized functions, are more appropriately focused in the classroom to activate the language learning process, and indeed, to develop the learners' own responsibility for learning, the learners' own freedom of will to learn, so to speak, the learners' own autonomy in the process. Which aspects of language are going to activate that most effectively?

Now, there's one answer which, on the face of it, would seem to cover both of these questions. And the answer is — it's quite a popular one — the real English, that is the kind used in native speaker communication, the communicative features of language. So, that is to say, one answer to the question that what we teach is language — English — which is authentic in kind and functional in feature.

The argument is — and I think it's one you are familiar with — that since students are seeking to cope with real communication, enacted by native speakers of the language, that is, those communicative features in that kind of English that need to be taught; furthermore, the argument goes, engagement in real communication makes the language a reality for students as well, and so provides them with the necessary motivation for learning; if you like, real communication activates autonomy.

I want, on this occasion, to examine this proposition. I want, I suppose more appropriately, to present a case for prosecution against this proposition. This proposition that real English, which occurs in authentic native speaker context of use, is indeed the appropriate English for non-native speaker context of learning. That's what I want to question.

So, as I said, I want to make this proposition problematic, not in any negative spirit, but raise a number of issues which I think we need to be clear about before deciding whether such a proposition is valid or not.

So, is the real English in use the appropriate English for learning, ladies and gentlemen of the jury?

Perhaps, the first point that might be made is that a good deal, perhaps most of the English which is attested as authentic text, is actually incomprehensible. If you look at your handout, exhibit A... Here are a number of pieces of authentic English, overheard on the London Underground:

1. When I do it, I tend to catch my fingernails on the floorboards.
2. Have you tried doing it under water with a pair of scissors?
3. I always hide mine in the greenhouse and my wife never finds them.

Real English! Doing what under water, you might ask. Hiding what in the greenhouse? What are these people talking about? I don't know. I didn't know at the time. I will never know. Perhaps I wouldn't want to know; it might be too embarrassing, who knows?

There's a scene in an old film, an old Laurel and Hardy film in which Hardy, the fat one, is complaining, as usual, because of the behavior of the little one, Laurel. And he says: "Look," he says, "you heard what the man said," and Laurel replies: "I heard what the man says but I didn't hear what he meant."

Now, this is exactly the point. You can hear these people on the Underground, you hear what they say but you can't hear what they meant.

Now, this reveals no inadequacy in your knowledge of English. I don't understand these expressions. I think I can claim to be reasonably proficient in English and if I am not proficient in English, I am not proficient in any language. So, I know English when I draw on this knowledge. On this occasion, I draw a blank. Why?

Well, the answer, of course, you will say, is obvious. The utterances are taken out of context. "I always hide mine in the greenhouse". "My wife never finds them". I know what the expression means; I don't know what is meant by the expression.

So, I may know what the linguistic signs signify as symbols of the language but I don't know their indexical significance. I don't know what *reference*, *force* and *effect* they are meant to have in this particular occasion. I don't know the *reference*, that is to say, I don't know what the proposition or meaning is. I don't know what this man is talking about when he is referring to it in the greenhouse, so, reference fails.

*Force*, I don't know what kind of communicative act he is performing when saying this. I don't know whether he is trying to explain something, whether he is confessing or advising or what. I don't know.

And *effect*, the third kind of meaning if you like. Is he trying to be funny? Is he serious? Does he expect his addressee to be amused or shocked or sympathetic? What effect is he trying to achieve? I do not know. I don't know because I am not the *ratified* hearer, I overhear. So, I have no idea what is meant in this case.

The sentences, you'll notice if you look at these expressions, are sentences. They are complete, they are correct. We can decide for them as sentence data but what we can't do is to interpret them as utterances. For, what we need is a context, world which is shared between the interlocutors and, in this case, we do not have one.

Now, all this is obvious, and you may say, it is also trivial, a trivial matter. Snatches of conversation overheard in the train. What do you expect? Scraps of language. Of course, they're incomprehensible. They are exceptions, you may say. They are extreme cases.

But are they extreme cases? Consider, for example, the case of newspapers and magazines. These are the favorite source of texts for language teaching. Authentic language, real English, extracted from magazines and newspapers, real English. But real for whom?

In common, I imagine, with most people, I read newspapers selectively. Most of what appears in print I completely ignore. The business pages, for

instance, the fashion pages, articles on property prices, motoring, gardening, knitting, travel, the small ads, the court gazette, which tells you what the royal family is officially doing.

Now, these parts of the newspaper mean nothing to me. Not only in the sense that they don't engage my interest but if I do stop to read them in many cases, I often find them to be incomprehensible at anything but a very superficial level. This is because they are couched in specialist terms about finance, or fertilizer, or cosmetics, or computers, and so on. Specialist terms which are not part of my vocabulary. I am lexically incompetent to deal with these texts.

But it is not simply a problem of individual items of vocabulary either, which recourse to a dictionary would resolve. And how rarely one actually has recourse to a dictionary when reading one's own language. You don't bother.

And when you look at the word you say: "Oh, yes, that's what it means" and you read on and come upon the word again two pages further on and you've forgotten. In my experience anyway.

These terms are not just isolated words but they are like features in an unknown schematic landscape. The words trace out unfamiliar worlds. Here for example, Exhibit B, on your sheet, is a piece of real English from the business pages:

Leading industrials recorded a majority of falls in the 2p to 8p range. Gilts also kept a low profile, with conventionals down a quarter index-linked three-eighths lower. Quiet builders provided a firm spot in Ward Holdings, up 17p to 177p following a 63 per cent upsurge in pre-tax profits. Golds relinquished 50 cents to a dollar.

Now I know what *gilt* is — (G-I-L-T) — the mass non count noun. I am also familiar with its effect but gilts. What are they? *Gilts*? The word also in this text indicates, whatever they are, they're different from leading industrials whatever they may be. But do they include *conventionals* and *index-linked*? Are there also *gilts* or *not gilts*? The text does not tell me and you can study the text till kingdom come and you'll never discover.

I have to be in the know to know. And who or what are these *quiet builders*? In my experience builders are never quiet. And what is this *firm spot*? Not *damned spot* but *firm spot*. I don't know.

Or, Exhibit C:

Turnover was modest. Trading was squeezey, with the market often short of stock. Once again, there are considerable futures influence.

*Futures influence*. What does it mean? *Turnover*, *stock*, *squeezey*, *trading*, *futures*? These words, for those in the know, are indexically effective. They invoke a whole world of financial dealing which is unknown to me. Indeed, for me, is a foreign culture. And there are scores of foreign cultures within my own daily newspaper.

Or look at the next. Exhibit D:

Wharf, another of Adbullah's talented squadron of colts, and the immaculately Kingmambo can hardly describe as scavengers, though. Despite Zafonia's omission, this prize should still be nailed into a crate with 'Chantilly' burned on the exterior.

Authentic! This is authentic, real English, but it's not real to me, because it does not engage my reality. It points me indexically into a void. Texts, like these which deal with stock market, horse-racing, are designed for shareholders and hunters and not for me. And of course, I wouldn't normally pay attention to such text, but turn selectively to those which I suppose are designed to me, those texts with which I am culturally in accord.

To put the matter in another way, there are innumerable attested instances of English, probably most of the content that my daily newspaper, for example, which make up genuine texts which are indexically ineffective for me, and that I can't relate to my schematic world. I cannot make them real. I cannot, in other words, ratify or authenticate these texts as discourses.

At the moment, there is a series of lectures being given by a well-known literary theorist called Edward Said. He is giving the BBC Rieth Lectures at the moment. And in the first of these lectures he makes something of the same point, though, in rather different terms. Listen to what he said. This is Edward Said:

Each intellectual, book editor and author, military strategist, international lawyer speaks and deals in a language that has become specialized and usable by other members of the same field — specialist experts addressing other specialist experts in a 'lingua franca' largely and intelligible to unespecialized people.

Now, what Said is referring to here, you might say, you might object indeed, what he is talking about, and the examples I have given you may say, have to do with exceptional uses of language, specialized or specific English. This is surely ESP you might say. Well, these extracts may indeed be specific but they are not, I think, exceptional.

I would argue that all naturally occurring language is like this. It has to be like this, quite simply because it only occurs naturally where it is used to service the shared interests and needs of particular groups of people who share the world the words refer to, communities of varying size of like-minded people.

So, all text presupposes a sharing, a communal sharing. If people do not share the world that words refer to, then the words do not refer. Without like-minded people at each end of communication process, we have text without discourse. Text, that is to say, which is indexically inactive. And I don't think that it is only a matter of what the language refers to.

I mentioned earlier, when talking about these utterances overheard on the train, I spoke of three kinds of indexical values, three aspects of pragmatic

meaning: *reference, force, effect*. That is to say, you may hear what he said but not what he's meant in all three respects.

You may know what an expression refers to but not recognize its elocutionary force. You may recognize the force but fail to appreciate the effect. For example, you may follow the propositional content of what somebody is saying on the particular occasion. You may recognize that the force of what is being said is a joke, but you may not find it funny. It fails in this effect. If you do find it funny, notice, you establish a kind of togetherness or rapport with the teller. Your laughter is a sign of commenting of common values. You share a joke, a joke is a communal act.

But effect is not confined to jokes and it doesn't have to be comic. I would suggest that it is a feature of all discourse and it comes about when you key into the communal values, the values of the community, of the shared reality expressed in a particular text. You recognize that you are both members, as it were, of the same group. You are in the know. Another people or not in the know. You establish a kind of bond with the other person, with the writer. This is a world you share, a world which includes you, and by the same token, excludes others.

It's interesting that some time ago in Britain there was an advertising campaign for the financial times — the FT — and the advertisement figured a business man looking extremely miserable and clearly ill at ease and out of things while his colleagues were chatting animatedly, obviously in very high spirits and very well informed, and he was sort of excluded. And the caption significantly ran "No FT, no comment." Without the FT, our unfortunate friend was excluded from the business community that the FT represented.

The point that I am getting at then is that in getting the sense of a text in terms of its effect you get a sense of belonging, you ratify the position of insider that the writer has placed you in. In identifying the world the writer refers to, you identify *with* the people whose world it is. Consider again for example the horse-racing text, Exhibit D.

Some of the terms here are no doubt technical ones, standard conventional parlance for the race-going fraternity or sorority. And have therefore a straightforward referential value.

But what about the expression "This prize should still be nailed into a crate?" Is this a technical term of normal occurrence in the horse-racing world? Do all of these horse-racing people talk about nailing things into a crate? Or is it, as I suspect, a kind of idiosyncratic quirk of style? Is it meant to be marked as imaginative, unusual, designed to have a humorous effect to bring about a shared grin or chuckle, to establish a kind of affective bond with the reader?

Or consider this text, the next one in fact, Exhibit E:

A chap in his late thirties has moved into my block. He works in an estate agents. I watch him sometimes of an early morning jogging up the road, bouncy, bushy-tailed and full of the joys. Within the hour, he is staggering back to his Alpen with the gait of a late-night drunk. He has to have three stabs at getting



his key in the door. His tracksuit is a darker red and his eyes have a *agatey gaze*. He is a squash junkie.

It is indeed difficult to come to grips with this text. Part of the difficulty is making referential sense of it. *Three stabs*. What does it mean? Or *agatey gaze*. What is a *agatey gaze*? But it isn't just the referential problem. There's also the problem of getting the feel of the text, of recognizing its allusions to aspects of British life, some of which, of course, are shared in other parts of the world, but some are an usual word but some — and I use the word advisedly — are peculiar to the British.

So, jogging, and squash, and the tracksuit, and the house agent, and Alpen for breakfast, and health freakiness and yuppie scene. And all of this is sort of invoked by this text. And notice its elliptical idiom: *bushy-tailed, full of the joys*. And the assumption is that a like-minded reader would fill it all in.

The writer is establishing a rapport with a community of like-minded readers. He or she is surely sharing a joke. It seems, in effect, to be saying, we are all the same mind, we share the same communal values, do we not? You know what I mean? *Tracksuit, Alpen, full of the joys*, you know what I mean? It's a kind of conspiratorial commenting is established. A lot of writing has this conspiracy feeling to it because it's being addressed to like-minded people and those who are in the know recognize the effect; those who are not in the know are naturally excluded.

And the exclusion has nothing to do with knowledge of English. It has to do with knowledge of *the* English and despite of what people might suggest, the two are quite different. You could know English without knowing anything about the English and vice-versa, I assume.

And it's not just a matter of knowledge either. You may, if you're interested, find out about the English and their traditions, and their institutions, and their customs and so on. And, there is many a compendium of cultural facts now available, but knowing these cultural facts is not the same as a culture.

And you may know all of these cultural facts and have large dictionaries at your elbow with all this information but it will not therefore initiate you into membership of the community. It will help you, of course, in some degree, to know what the text of this community are referring to, but it will not of itself enable you to catch the allusive and illusive effect that I've been talking about.

The point is then that communication and community are interdependent. To the extent the texts of communicatively effective they relate to particular discourse communities and so create conditions of communal access, inclusive for some, exclusive for others. So, the specific language used for business, or horse-racing, or cricket, or computer science, or international law, or military strategy, or whatever is justified by the communities which use it as legitimate terminology needed to express the way they conceive of their world. If you are an insider, all of this is legitimate terminology which you need in your community to talk about the reality which is yours.

If you are an outsider, this terminology seems obscure, perhaps even a deliberate obfuscation which sets out to make things impressively mysterious. From an outsider's point of view, this is not legitimate terminology, but jargon. Oscar Wilde once defined the vulgarity as other people's manners: jargon might be said to be other people's language.

So — to return to the question, a simple question that I posed at the beginning and indeed to return to the whole notion of the authentic and the autonomous — are authentic native speaker texts, real English, appropriate for learning? Do they activate the autonomous process of language learning?

The point that I've been making is that the language is communicative to the extent that is communal. It is real to the extent that it engages the reality of its users. The texts are not in themselves authentic but are authenticated by appropriate response. In other words, authenticity and reality are features of the discourses which texts activate and are not inherent in the texts themselves.

So when you are confronted by an extract from a newspaper, or a magazine, or textbook, or any other source of linguistic data, if you cannot adopt the second person position at the receiving end, which the first person addresser has designed the text for, if you cannot *ratify* the text, it is in effect not real for you. On the contrary, you are likely to feel excluded, alienated. You cannot make the language your own. And if we cannot make the language your own, you cannot learn from it.

But now if we cannot count on real, actually attested language use as self-evident source of appropriate data for learning, what can we do? What are the criteria for appropriateness?

First, I think, we need to distinguish between ends and means. We need to recognize there is a distinction between the language of the learning objective and the language of the learning process. We are preparing learners to be independent, to ultimately cope with the reality of language use, but it does not follow that the process of preparation must seek to replicate that reality. Indeed my argument is that it follows but it should not seek to replicate that reality as a matter of fixed principle, since to do so would presuppose the very capability for ratifying text as a discourse that the learners are in the process of learning.

We have then two kinds of criteria for appropriateness: one relates to the ends or the objectives of learning, the destination; where the learners are going, the degrees of independence they are achieving towards the ability to learn for themselves. So, one relates to the objective. The question here is whether a particular text or other sort which the learner will subsequently need to cope with, at the end, as it were, of the process. And this criterion has to do with relevance. It concerns what the learner is learning the language for.

The second criterion relates to the means or process of learning. The question here is whether particular texts are of a sort which will engage the learning process, which will set the whole autonomy process in action. This criterion has crucially to do with activation. Part of which, concerns the extent to which the learner is motivated to learn.

So, the objective is one kind of criterion. The process the learner has go through to arrive at that objective is a different one. And the first kind of criterion relates to relevance and the second, more commonly, to motivation. And they are not the same thing.

Anyone who has taught ESP will know that relevant texts are not always those that engage the interest of students. So, you have your group of mechanical engineers and you arrive with your text from some scientific journal or textbook in mechanical engineering and it turns them off. And they say: "Oh, God, we don't want anymore mechanical engineering. Give us something interesting, give us something else. You say "it's relevant." And they will say: "We don't care whether it is relevant or not. It is boring."

Now, in respect to the first criterion then we need clearly to select texts which are relevant to the learning objective. In the case of English for Specific Purposes, this would seem to pose no problem. The learners, here in ESP, are learning the language in order to get into communicative contact with like-minded people. That is to say, they are learning the language to become members, if they are not members already, of particular discourse communities which have their own subcultural communal conventions of thought and practice.

So, you are preparing the students to enact a particular role. It happens that they need English to do so. You are preparing them to enter, you are giving them, if you like, the required qualifications for entering into communities, communities of accountants, computer programmers, or biochemists, or international lawyers, or whatever.

And the task of learning here is to make English real as the expression of the conventions which define these communities.

So, if you have a group of students, who were indeed learning the language expressly, that to be initiated into the mysteries of the stock exchange, then the text we considered earlier about gilts and golds and quiet builders would obviously be relevant and so, appropriate to their purpose. It would clearly assist them in developing their autonomy as learners of a language.

But we don't always know. Indeed, we don't usually know in such precise terms what our students are going to do with their language. What specific kinds of communication they will be dealing with? And therefore, we don't know what specific kinds of community, of all of those that constitute the vast English-using world, what kind of community they want to join as associate members, because all we do is to provide our students with qualifications for associate membership of the English using world, of some kind of entry into a community, but we don't know which community, of all those which are possible.

Since the purposes are so indeterminate we obviously cannot be very definite about which real world texts would be appropriate. One might propose, in this case, where general English is the objective, that the relevance criterion might be met by the selection of texts which are relatively neutral, not associated very specifically with any particular discourse community — culturally non-aligned texts. But the difficulty is, as I have suggested already, that relatively

neutral texts of this sort are not easy to find. Complete non-alignment is impossible since all texts, as actual instances of communication, have communal connections. They belong to community.

What you need to look for in this case, I suppose, are texts which are maximally non-specific, those which express widely shared assumptions and values, common cultural factors which are associated with some more comprehensive and loosely-knit community.

But, even if we could determinate what kinds of English use it would be appropriate for our students to aim for as relevant to their purposes in learning the language, it does not follow that it would be appropriate to the process of actual learning. We come to the second criterion: the question of activation of the learning process. How to develop the autonomy we have been speaking about?

The point that I've stressed about actual occurrences of English in real texts is that you can only engage with them to the extent that you can assume the position of the projected addressee, the presupposed second person party in the discourse — the reader — which the addresser, the first person party — the writer — has enacted on your behalf. If you cannot ratify the text in this way, you are a non-participant observer, an outsider looking in but denied access.

But participation — as we've already heard — involvement, engagement are crucial to learning. And indeed it has become axiomatic in current thinking about language teaching, and indeed in pedagogy in general.

Teaching, it is said, is not a matter of transmission. It is not a matter of one way traffic of ideas, information from teacher to learner. It's more a matter of discovery with learners allowed the initiative, within limits, of course, to explore their own experience. In this respect, teachers adjust to learners and not the other way around.

Now, in this view, of course, it's essential that learners should be in a position to relate to the language in some way and make it their own. They have to ratify whatever texts they are presented with, so that they can indeed derive a discourse from them which keys in with their reality. If, as I've suggested, the real texts of actual communication, enacted by native speakers, are so communally marked that is difficult in effect, particularly in effect, to relate to them, in this way, then it looks as if we need to think of texts which the learners can relate to. And these texts would naturally be more closely associated with the culture of the learners' first hand, first language experience than with a second hand, second language culture of some remote objectives.

In brief, you cannot encourage learners to take the initiative by presenting them with texts that discourage their engagement, texts which they cannot key into and authenticate. The principles of autonomy and authenticity, so frequently adduced, are in principle at loggerheads. For autonomy is a matter of engaging the reality of second language learners. Authenticity refers to the entirely different reality of first language users.

For language to be appropriated for learning then it has to have point for the learners, they have to be motivated to engage with it, to make it their own, as something relevant to their reality rather than to somebody else's.

But this is not the only requirement. For, if it is to be appropriate, the language must also induce learning. And for this to happen, it has to be made problematic in some way so that it is noticed.

Now, in first language acquisition, these conditions come together and are mutually reinforcing, in that the child is made aware of language in the gradual construction of its reality. So the language is noticed in the same way as it has point. Having point and being noticed are the same thing for the child learning its own language.

But this first language acquisition process cannot be replicated in second language instruction. Here, the two conditions do not naturally combine. They have to be brought together. And we come here, I think, to a fundamental pedagogic dilemma in language teaching and learning. When we were considering real English texts earlier, we noticed certain peculiarities of language. Gilt which kept a low profile; quiet builders which provided a firm spot, and so on.

But these peculiarities would not be peculiar for those for whom the texts were intended. They would notice anything odd. They would not ponder on these words but they would make an immediate indexical connection. The normal process of making sense involves using language to key us into a familiar reality. And we only take note of it to the extent we need to, for it to discharge this pragmatic function. We only pay attention to language to the extent we need to do so, and normally we don't.

So if you're having a conversation with somebody and you begin to suspect that they are paying attention to your language then you can be fairly sure that they are not paying attention to what you are actually meaning. Nothing is more irritating: you are engaged to what you think is a meaningful conversation and someone draws attention to your pronunciation, for instance.

So, generally speaking, in normal pragmatic uses of language we play fast and loose, we are cavalier with the language. And this is what enables me as a reader of my newspaper, to flick rapidly through those parts which relate to the world I know. I only stop and pay attention to the language as such to semantics of the code itself when I have a problem in making this indexical connection. And once I've made this connection, I shift back into the normal pragmatic mode. In other words, the effective communicative functioning of the language depends on not focusing attention on its formal grammatical and lexical properties. If the language has point, I tend not to notice it. If I notice it, it's likely to be because I do not see its point.

But learning a language, as opposed to using a language, means learning from language. It involves analyzing generalities out of the actual occurrence of seeing the data as instances so that the code is internalized as an abstract communicative resource ready for use, as and when required. In teaching a

language, we have in some way to draw attention to the semantic meanings encoded in the forms of language. This provides the necessary investment in competence, if you like, which learners can subsequently realize as performance, as and when needed.

So normal uses of language realize actual meanings, actual meanings which are associated with particular contextual conditions. In learning a language, you have to dissociate it from the actual context to infer generalities of virtual meaning in the code.

So, the pragmatic principle of language use, authentic language use, would appear to be inconsistent with the pedagogic principle of language instruction. And one principle holds that language is appropriate to the extent that it has point; the other that is appropriate to the extent that it is pointed out.

So, here, it seems to me, we have really a fundamental dilemma which we need to resolve in language teaching. How do we reconcile these apparently opposing principles? We do not do so by the simple invocation of ideas like real English, or authentic language, or autonomous learning, or comprehensible input, or whatever. On the contrary, too ready an acceptance of these ideas prevents us from coming to grips with this problem. So might we proceed? What conditions need to be created in classrooms so that the language does indeed relate to the learners' reality? So that they engage with it? And at the same time they direct their attention to its salient features, so that they can learn from it?

I think that the first move is to recognize that these conditions do indeed have to be created that the context of instruction have to be contrived to meet them, and can't just be an attempted replication of some vaguely modified version of context of use. This is because, as we've seen, the normal process of using language does not meet the conditions for learning it. In general terms, we can say, that in using language we refer what we know in the abstract to actual occurrences. In learning a language, we infer abstract knowledge from actual occurrences. As I suggested earlier, in first language acquisition, the inferencing and the referencing processes work in natural harmony together, in a kind of natural dialectic.

But in the second language situation, they can only be brought together, I believe, by setting up context of instruction designed for that purpose. Indeed, we might say that it is precisely this which gives a context of instruction its distinctive character. It is the domain in which a particular community (teachers and learners) works together, shares certain ideas and values which define its own reality, not somebody else's, which engages in a particular kind of communication, which has a particular kind of purpose and effect.

There is a culture of classrooms and every classroom, in a sense, has its own, just as there is a culture of other domains of human activity. So, why should the classroom, that is the case, not have its own conditions of membership of that community and its own particular custom-made texts designed to express its distinctive identity and to further its own specific purposes?

The English of the classroom, it seems to me, can be seen as the most obvious example of ESP. What I'm suggesting then is that rather than seek to replicate the context of actually-occurring language and trying to make the classroom a different reality from what it is by making it authentic, what we might do is to construct contexts which are appropriate for learning in such a way as to meet the conditions we've identified.

These conditions are, on the one hand, getting learners to engage with language which has some actual point and communicative purpose for them — language which for them carries conviction — while, on the other hand, drawing their attention to the abstract, structural and semantic features of their language.

It's this combination which constitutes reality for them, the reality of specific conventions of the classroom community they belong to. The reality of the roles that they adopt, the games they play. That's their reality.

To have point for the learners, these conditions would have to engage them in activities which carried conviction for them, which were culturally appropriate to them, the learners, as learners, not necessarily because of the content of the lessons, but because of their appeal. Because whatever the activities were, they keyed in with the tenor of the learners' minds, with their interests, their conceptions, with the way they think of the world. These would be contexts that learners could make real for themselves, and an attempt to incorporate the reality of authentic language, only confuses the issue.

But they would have also to be designed so as to draw attention to the language. That's the second condition. Because no matter how engaging such activities may be, if they don't activate language learning, they fail in their purpose.

This means that the activities must involve problem solving in the form of tasks of one kind or another. Such tasks are essentially incomplete contexts which require learners to pay attention to the language in order to complete them.

Task-based learning is, of course, currently in vogue. But it is not enough simply to fall in with fashion. The point that I've been trying to make is that the design of tasks is essentially the creation of contextual conditions in the classroom which are specifically appropriate to develop learning autonomy, a gradual acceptance of the responsibility for learning. And such conditions, I'm arguing, are in principle different from conditions which are appropriate for normal language use. They are essentially abnormal conditions, they are a matter of pedagogic artifice. In this respect, the principle of task-based learning is incompatible with an insistence of authenticity.

Now, this doesn't mean, however, that actually attested texts, genuine texts from newspapers, magazines and other native speaker sources, cannot be exploited, but they have *to be* exploited. They have to be made relevant to this purpose so that learners are engaged in the process of gradual authentication of such texts, which is the same as the process of gradual autonomy.

Now, this can be done in a number of ways. It's possible, for example, to exploit texts of the kind we considered by devising tasks which allowed variable

access to meaning so that learners were not alienated by them. They were encouraged to engage with them at some level of partial understanding for some purpose. In this way, we might control the learning process by regulating *intake by task* rather than by regulating *input by text*. But, again, appropriateness is a function of the *task*, not of the *text*. And, of course, as learning proceeds into advanced stages with increased autonomy and learners, at the same time, extend their ability to authenticate texts so that the texts themselves can approximate more closely to the natural pragmatic processes of native speaker use as the learners home in on their objectives and develop the process of authentication and develop their own autonomy. So, of course, the criteria for the appropriateness of the means comes in the correspondence with those of the ends — and relevance and activation come together.

But this coming together has to be induced by pedagogic contrivance. It doesn't just happen. Teaching is an art precisely because it deals with artifice.

At the beginning of the paper I made the unwise remark that a good deal of the English which is attested as authentic text is actually incomprehensible. Over the last 45 minutes, or so, I have been producing an authentic text. I hope it has not been incomprehensible. But my hope is supported by the fact that the conditions for comprehensibility actually obtain because we are members of a community of English teachers. We therefore share a good deal of the same set of assumptions, and ideas, and purposes. To some degree we share, as professionals, the same reality.

It is not as if you are overhearing what I am saying, as you might overhear remarks on the London Underground. So that in reference to the Laurel and Hardy film that I've spoken earlier, I hope that you have not only heard what I *said* but also heard a little of what I *meant*. And, finally, if I may offer one last word of advice, do not try doing it under water with a pair of scissors. Thank you.

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