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Editorial

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Autonomy has been of interest to scholars in the Colombian field of English language education over the last two decades. A constant work on understanding what it is, how to foster it in local language students by varied alternatives, or to examine it in homegrown language teachers has been paramount in published research reports and articles of reflection in Colombia. Different possibilities are at hand, possibilities that account for contextual factors as well as local teachers' and students' backgrounds and variables.

In this second issue of 2019, we present two research reports that contribute to the understanding of fostering autonomy in the field of English language education in Colombia. In the first, Luis Ignacio Herrera Bohórquez, José David Largo Rodríguez, and John Jairo Viáfara González present a qualitative study that examines how a group of tutees' exposure to an online-based peer-tutoring model shapes their autonomy. From questionnaires, a focus group interview, tutees' logs, and records of their engagement with the implemented model, they identified a change in participants' conceptualization of autonomous learning and an impact on their self-directed practices rooted in immediacy, accessibility, comfort and availability of resources that the online peer-tutoring model favors.

In the second research report, Imelda Zorro Rojas presents a research study on the promotion of self-regulation of instructors and students. Her research report looks into studying how eight instructors interact with 18 students of a Bachelor of Arts program in English language teaching in Bogotá. The pedagogical intervention of this study generated four principles that worked positively in the promotion of self-regulation of the participants: addressing needs, interests and beliefs; setting goals; scaffolding learning; and providing quality feedback.

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As relevant as autonomy, reflection on teaching practices has also been paramount in the field of English language education, both in Colombia and other countries of South America. Corresponding scholars interested in studying how this reflection occurs have highlighted aspects to consider in the manner in which this reflection occurs, what aspects of language teaching count for, and what implications it brings in English language teaching practices. Participants have been multiple i.e. school or university teachers, language academy instructors, teacher educators, and researchers. What becomes common in these studies is the fact that teaching practices, as similar as the understanding of autonomy, are context-situated and culturally created or adapted.

In this second issue of 2019, we also present two research reports and an article of revision of themes on the reflection on teaching practices in the field of English language education in Colombia and elsewhere in South America. In the first research report, Enrique Alejandro Basabe offers a reflective account on his own praxis when adopting a critical pedagogy to teach literature in the English language teacher education program at the National University of La Pampa in Argentina. He shows a constant questioning of his practice and a persistent wariness about the appropriateness of maintaining a critical position in his teaching context.

In the second research report on reflection on teaching practices, Nataly Telles Quezada, María Jesús Inostroza Araos, and Maritza Rosas Maldonado present an action research study that explores the contribution of the use of points of improvement as a reflective strategy to support eleven Chilean EFL pre-service teachers' ability to plan communicative-oriented lessons. The findings of this study show that the participants' perceptions towards the use of points of improvement display more awareness of communicative-oriented lessons in the classroom, narrowing the gap between their pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge.

As an article of reflection and revision of themes of teaching practices, Frank Giraldo looks to raise awareness of how poor design of language assessments may have detrimental effects in test design. His reflection and revision suggest a set of guidelines for three purposes: to illustrate the level of complexity in test design, to offer a point of reference to evaluate sample assessments, and to discuss how institutional school policies in Colombia can influence language assessment.

Reflection on teaching practices may not be possible if these are not shared with the community of English language education locally and worldwide. In this second issue of 2019, we present two articles for this purpose. In the first, Marco Sandro Antonio Ugarte Olea presents a set of reactions that the implementation of the Lingua Franca Core has prompted in scholars in the area of teaching English language pronunciation in Chile. He also discusses a series of issues that could facilitate the teacher's and learner's workload on pronunciation in terms of both time and teaching materials.

Equally, as a teaching practice, Sandra Cecilia Hernández Urrego describes in her article the influence of a Virtual Learning Object (VLO) in the promotion of reading strategies in a class of ESP for the majors of Social Communication and Journalism at a private institution of higher education in Bogota, Colombia. She demonstrates that the VLO proposed in the design of the course promotes the participants' appropriation of reading strategies and higher reading comprehension.

We hope that these seven articles continue contributing to the promotion and sharing of local and global insights of educational and research experiences. Let these seven articles also pose another opportunity for the dissemination and understanding of knowledge resulting from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching issues in our contexts

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From the President of ASOCOPI

Dr. Carlo Granados-Beltrán

I want to take this opportunity that the editor of *HOW Journal* has offered me to update the readership about the initiatives ASOCOPI has taken to widen its influence and to strengthen its recognition nationally and internationally. Before doing this, though, the Board of Directors (BoD) wants to extend its gratitude to the former president, Dr. Harold Castañeda-Peña, who worked hard for the consolidation of a network involving all stakeholders interested in ELT in Colombia, and who also hosted two successful ASOCOPI Annual Congresses: *ELT classroom practices and the construction of peace and social justice* at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali, 2017, and *Exploring social and cultural diversities in ELT* at Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar in Cartagena, 2018. To put it mildly, Dr. Castañeda-Peña left me some very big shoes to fill!

ASOCOPI is recognized as the meeting place for Colombian English language teachers to share experiences, build networks, and construct community; nonetheless, there are still challenges to face for the Association to become more solid day after day thus responding to Colombian teachers' diverse needs, international networking, and attracting more members. To cater for regional teachers' needs, Dr. José Aldemar Álvarez-Valencia, our treasurer, obtained, on behalf of the Association, a Hornby Trust Grant which will support two workshops on Teaching English to Children. These workshops will be offered in Cali, supported by Dr. Álvarez-Valencia; and in Neiva, supported by Prof. Jairo Castañeda Trujillo, our spokesperson, on September 20th and 27th, respectively. Prof. Claudia María Uribe and Prof. Evelyn Quiceno, facilitators and members of the SIG (Special Interest Groups) on Children's Language Learning, will lead these workshops.

For the development of international networks, Dr. Álvarez-Valencia and I attended the regional workshop '*Developing your teachers' association*', in Lima, Perú, sponsored by the British Council. The participation in this event produced many results. First, the formulation of a development plan for the Association. Second, the possibility of turning the ASOCOPI Annual Congress for 2020 into an international event. Third, the initiation of a volunteer scheme to attract more members to the Association. Prof. Clara Onatra Chavarro, the secretary of the BoD, is coordinating this volunteer scheme. Fourth, to attract more members, we developed a satisfaction survey to determine services that we can offer the Colombian ELT

community. This survey will be shared with our current and future members in due time. Fifth, in order to favor the construction of teacher communities, Prof. Jair Ayala Alzate is supporting the dissemination of the work carried out by the SIGs through the development of workshops in the Congress. He is also promoting the creation of new SIGs. This year, for example, Prof. Astrid Núñez Pardo will lead a SIG about Materials Development. All these tasks are underway, of course, with the unconditional support of our office manager, Prof. Myrian Cristina Vera.

To close, the ASOCOPI BoD cordially invites you to participate in our Annual Congress, whose topic this year is *Bilingual and Multilingual Processes: Educational Accomplishments and Challenges in Colombia and Latin America.* This will take place at Universidad Santo Tomás, Dr. Angelico Building, this coming October 10th to 12th. See you there!

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Online Peer-Tutoring: A Renewed Impetus for Autonomous English Learning

Tutoría virtual entre pares: un ímpetu renovado para el aprendizaje autónomo del inglés

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Viáfara González, John Jairo[3]

Abstract

Challenges to an existing face-to-face peer-tutoring model grew into an opportunity to integrate online technologies as a support for English autonomous learning in two undergraduate teacher education programs at a Colombian public university. This qualitative study examines how a group of tutees' exposure to an online-based peer-tutoring model shapes their autonomy. Informed by data from questionnaires, a focus group interview, tutees' logs, and records of their engagement with the model's internet resources, researchers identified a change in participants' conceptualization of autonomous learning and an impact on their self-directed practices rooted in the immediacy, accessibility, comfort and availability of resources that the online peer-tutoring model favors.

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Keywords: autonomy, online environments, peer-tutoring, online implementation, online English learning.

Resumen

Los desafíos que enfrentaba un modelo de tutoría presencial entre pares se convirtieron en una oportunidad para integrar la virtualidad al aprendizaje autónomo del inglés en dos programas de licenciatura en una universidad pública colombiana. Este estudio cualitativo examina cómo la exposición a un ambiente de aprendizaje virtual moldea la autonomía de un grupo de tutoriados. A partir de cuestionarios, una entrevista de grupo focal, registros de reflexiones y de uso de recursos de internet, los investigadores identificaron un cambio en la conceptualización de aprendizaje autónomo y un impacto en las prácticas autodirigidas de los participantes como resultado de la inmediatez, accesibilidad, comodidad y disponibilidad de los recursos que el modelo tutoría virtual favorece.

Palabras claves: autonomía; ambientes de aprendizaje en línea; tutoría entre pares; implementación virtual, aprendizaje en línea del inglés

Introduction

In the last two decades, RETELE research group set out to examine the connection between peer-tutoring and autonomous learning in the context of EFL pre-service teachers. Their work focused on designing a face-to-face peer-tutoring model to support these prospective teachers' education (Viáfara & Ariza, 2018). Although the model has proven to be beneficial in guiding Colombian EFL pre-service teachers' efforts to work autonomously when learning English (Ariza & Viáfara, 2009; Viáfara, 2014), a recent diagnosis survey administered to examine debut students' profiles, needs, and interests signaled the emergence of new challenges for the existing face-to-face model. Firstly, the growing demand for tutoring has rendered existing human and logistic resources, provided through the face-to-face model, limited. Secondly, the survey also showed that 71% of first- and second-semester students seem to invest less than one or two hours a week in their autonomous work for their four-credit language course. Consequently, their investment in autonomous work falls behind the university's official requirements (five hours weekly for a three-credit course). Thus, there is a substantial gap between the time that surveyed first- and second-semester students devote to autonomous work practices and the university's expectations in this regard. Thirdly, although the participating students were enthusiastic about engaging in online peer-tutoring and had awareness of the internet resources for autonomous English language learning, our pre-assessment of the target population made apparent that they did not understand how to take full advantage of these tools.

Despite the fact that online peer-tutoring is believed to foster autonomous learning (Dekhinet, Topping, Duran, & Blanch, 2008; Jones, Garralda, Li, & Lock, 2006; Liu, 2014), studies focusing on the nuances of participants' cognitive engagement, practices, and

assessment regarding independent learning[1] in these collaborative models are scant. In Colombia, although scholars such as Viáfara & Ariza (2008) along with Cardozo (2011), and Tolosa, Ordóñez, and Alfonso (2015) have designed peer tutoring models to support English language learning, they have not yet involved virtually-mediated sources. The diagnosis survey led us to consider the ubiquitous presence of online technologies and the strong affiliation that university students manifested towards these environments as a plausible option to solve the aforementioned limitations. In this vein, this article examines how a group of tutees shaped their autonomy by being involved in an emerging peer-tutoring virtual model.

Peer-tutoring and English Learning: Basic Concepts

The collaborative nature of peer-tutoring is rooted in Vygotsky's socio-cultural and constructivist ideas about learning (Clarkson & Luca, 2002; Verba, 1998). Scaffolding, the "process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 90) is also a conceptual foundation for peer-tutoring. Accordingly, peer-tutoring involves a more knowledgeable or skillful peer (a tutor) who works hand-in-hand with a tutee to potentiate their learning opportunities.

In order to characterize the type of peer-tutoring being conducted in this study, we first needed to underline the asymmetrical nature of this collaborative practice. Tutors and tutees, who can function in one-tutor-to-one-tutee or one-tutor-to-a-group-of-tutees arrangements, exhibit differences in relation to ages, experience, and knowledge (Duran & Monereo, 2005). Secondly, although the aim of tutoring in this research project was English language learning, a broader view has been embraced, which is not solely linked to the academic realm. This view is that the tutor is not only expected to provide tutees with sources to build their disciplinary knowledge, solve doubts, and increase their metacognitive awareness, but also to encourage tutees' cognitive, emotional-affective, social, and professional growth (Álvarez, 2002; Ariza & Viáfara, 2009).

Peer-tutoring and online technologies. Educational practices keep being redefined by the advent of new technologies. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), including Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), can contribute to understanding new possibilities for peer-tutoring in virtual environments. Peer-tutoring can benefit from the overarching learning conditions that Hubbard (2008) has established in CALL environments, namely learning efficiency, learning effectiveness, access to more resources and interaction, time and location convenience, and motivation.

[1] As a result of their interconnectedness, autonomous learning and independent learning are used interchangeably throughout this document.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is also associated with online peer-tutoring inasmuch as it seeks "to provide alternative contexts for social interaction; to facilitate access to existing discourse communities and the creation of new ones" (Kern & Warschauer, 2000, p. 13). This purpose of CMC is critical for the collaborative nature of peer-tutoring which enhances not only relationships between tutor and tutee, but also among tutees. CMC capitalizes on the vast array of internet technologies (e.g., messaging, social networking, and online forums). It also differentiates between 'asynchronous' (interaction in which participants are not simultaneously interacting online) and 'synchronous' (real time interaction) (Simpson, 2002).

Published studies on foreign language learning through online peer-tutoring have yielded results on various topics. Wong and Fauverge (1999) found that a collaboration-enhancing context, as well as permanent support, suitable activities, and broadband computer network hypermedia environments fostered learning. Concerning tutees' gains, Jones et al. (2006) determined that more balanced interaction between them emerged in online peer-tutoring rather than in face-to-face peer-tutoring; this could have happened due to tutees' higher empowerment and increase in participation when communicating online. Dekhinet et al. (2008) complementarily showed how internet technology increased tutees' motivation and engagement in learning. Thurston, Duran, Cunningham, Blanch, and Topping (2009) found that tutees' self-regulation, self-confidence, and movement towards autonomy comprised a product of the motivating and comfortable context influenced by the anonymity that online peer-tutoring generated.

In the context of online peer-tutoring, Jones et al. (2006) found that online tutoring may emphasize more on the content, process of writing, and higher order writing skills whereas face-to-face tutoring lacked formal aspects of language use in the participants' exchanges. Dekhinet et al. (2008) reported gains in L2 learners' processing time when negotiating feedback for their writing and in their awareness of limitations through the integration of various communicative skills. Thurston et al. (2009) found that online peer-tutoring enhanced writing practice and fluency in relation to tutors' provision of an invariable type of feedback, which favored tutees' engagement and change in problematic writing features. Finally, Topping, Dehkinet, Blanch, Corcelles, and Duran (2013) established that despite asynchronous interaction comprising a limitation for the quality of feedback in peer-tutoring, the real-life nature of online interactions increased the quality of texts produced due to more feedback for error correction.

Autonomous learning and online environments. Being an autonomous learner has been related to having certain skills; for instance, Holec (1981, p. 3), asserts that autonomy is "the *ability* to take charge of one's own learning" in order to define the aims, contents, sequence, strategies, and assessment to organize one's own learning. Benson (as cited in Nunan, 2003, p. 194) concurs with Holec and summarizes that autonomous learners'

capacities are "the most important abilities […] that allow learners to plan their own learning activities, monitor their progress, and evaluate their outcomes." In a broader pedagogical sense, autonomy leads individuals into processes of critical reflection, taking decisions and acting independently (Little, 1991). In the context of this online peer-tutoring study, autonomy entails more than tutees making free selection of activities and contents; it also refers to the critical and analytical capacity of tutors and tutees to play an active and responsible role in designing learning agendas rooted in learners' needs.

Online technology has been regarded as a robust means to motivate the autonomous learning of foreign and second languages (Warschauer & Liaw, 2011; Brooke, 2013; Liu, 2014). For instance, Liu (2014) stresses that: "a good combination of modern technologies and learner autonomy is a perfect way to learn English" (p. 25). Brooke (2013) introduces three stand-out perspectives in using technology to nurture autonomous language learning: (1) organizing, self-monitoring, and assessing learning; (2) exercising cognitive skills through involvement in online social interaction and reflection upon language practice; and (3) employing online facilitators by developing communities, discovering learning, and offering feedback.

Research examining online resources and language-skill and knowledge development in autonomous frameworks includes Miyakoda, Kaneko, Ishikawa, Shinagawa's (2010) study which found that visual and aural data coupled with text data led participants to higher retention of vocabulary meaning in contrast to pen-and-paper strategies. Wong (2011) concluded that showing awareness of their needs and choosing learning methods and materials were characteristics in students who developed a more concrete approach to learning autonomously. Furthermore, willingness to develop autonomous work led participants to their development of better writing skills. Cheng's (2017) study integrated autonomous English language learning and a project-based learning platform to determine that this environment seemed to encourage participants' enthusiasm, interest, leadership, and thinking skills.

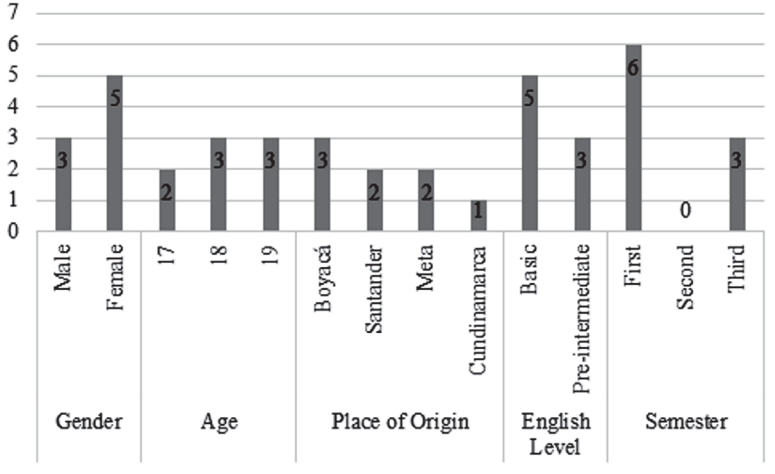
The Study

This study aligns with a qualitative approach to research. It focuses on understanding a target phenomenon from the different perspectives of those involved in the study by contextualizing issues in their socio-cultural-political milieu (Glesne, 2006) as well as impacting learning conditions. Considering that this study sought to improve learning practices by means of an online peer-tutoring model, which guided instructors into collecting, organizing, and analyzing data to examine autonomous practices, it is defined as an action research study (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, & Razavieh, 2008).

Participants. The final group of participants was composed of five females and three males, who were enrolled in two English teacher education undergraduate programs at a public university. They came from Boyacá, Santander, Meta, and Cundinamarca departments. Their ages ranged from 17 to 19 years and their English levels ranged from basic to pre-intermediate, according to the English course they were taking. Graphic 1. Summarizes their characteristics.

These eight tutees and no others were selected randomly to assemble the final group of participants considering the enormous amount of data that this study collected from a larger group of 26 users who employed the online peer-tutoring model.

Instruments and procedures for data collection. Researchers employed two questionnaires, one prior and one subsequent to their involvement in the peer-tutoring model. These questionnaires were piloted with former tutees who had previously partaken in the face-to-face model and whose profile characteristics and previous experience would align with the characteristics of the targeted users of the online model in order to test the questionnaires and make necessary adjustments to their design. These two questionnaires had the aim of gathering the participants' perceptions and descriptions of autonomous English language learning practices prior to and after the implementation. The first questionnaire was divided into four sections related to the participants' learning profile, namely, their learning preferences and factors that influenced their learning, their use of the internet for language purposes, their autonomous work and their perceptions about a possible online



Graphic 1. Participants' characteristics and profile.

implementation of the face-to-face model. The second questionnaire was divided into 3 sections: development of language skills, autonomous learning within the online peer-tutoring model, and their work with the internet resources of the model. Both questionnaires were administered through an internet application.

The second data collection instrument was a focus-group interview. This 90-minute focus group allowed researchers to flesh out data elicited through the questionnaires concerning the participants' autonomous English language learning as they employed the online peer-tutoring model. The participants' contributions were audio-recorded by means of a cell phone application.

The participants' learning logs became the third data collection technique. The participants kept records of the activities they were developing throughout their involvement in the experience. In the records, they reflected upon their views about their autonomous learning, use of the online resources, and personal development of English language abilities. Logs were sent to the researchers via email every two weeks. Valuable data were also collected from the participants' interaction in the online applications of the model. Those applications were the WhatsApp chats, Skype video calls (tutoring), Facebook chat, and the peer-tutoring web page. More information about these online tools is provided in the next section about the online peer-tutoring model. Table 1 below depicts the number of logs, chats, video calls, and online-Skype tutoring sessions obtained from each participant.

The online peer-tutoring model. Peer-tutoring in this study was based on a face-to-face model originally designed by Viáfara & Ariza (2008) to buttress the autonomous learning of English. Figure 1 below illustrates how the model was adapted to integrate Internet resources in each of its stages.

The cycle starts when tutees join a tutorial session with the purpose of addressing either (1) immediate needs or (2) working on a personal improvement plan (PIP[2]). WhatsApp and Facebook chats support tutor and tutees encounters granting immediate and permanent access to online feedback concerning difficulties and doubts about the target language. The second stage comprises the development of Skype-based tutorial sessions. Through video conferencing, the participants could join tutors and other tutees with the purpose of working on language practice, reflection, and learning how-to-learn activities. Sessions involve one to six participants in video conferencing. The research group's website integrated links for self-access language practice and information regarding English language use and form, so tutees could have several options to resolve language learning doubts. There were also guidelines to learn how to learn. Finally, reflection chats were held through Facebook to serve peer- and

2 PIP: Personal Improvement Plan is an autonomous practice developed by the students at the University where the study took place. Students are to plan and engage in autonomous practices to buttress their communicative abilities in the foreign language.

Table 1. Record of Participants' Involvement in Online Peer-Tutoring Model Spaces.

Participant[3] Space	WhatsApp Practice-Doubts Chats	Facebook Practice chats	Facebook Reflection Chats	Skype Tutoring Sessions	Logs
P1	5	4	0	6	3
P2	4	0	1	5	4
P3	3	3	1	5	3
P4	3	1	0	5	3
P5	4	1	0	6	4
P6	2	1	0	6	3
P7	6	2	1	6	3
P8	3	0	0	6	3

[3] Participants' names have been codified using the letter P, which stands for Participant, followed by the number that labels each participant.

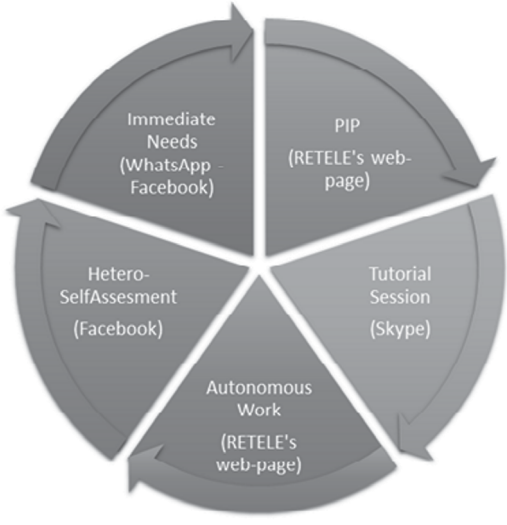


Figure 1. Online peer-tutoring model (Adapted from Viáfara & Ariza, 2008).

self-assessment purposes. In this space, the tutors proposed common topics to reflect on language learning or autonomous work. A new cycle started after another tutee went back to a new tutorial session with newer perspectives.

Data analysis. Grounded Theory principles (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) were followed to analyze data. Accordingly, data were analyzed using coding techniques, namely reading the data several times and making comparisons among codes. This allowed the researchers to establish significant patterns and relationships among data. Subsequently, the researchers used recurrent patterns to build the categories that would answer the research question of the study. Findings were corroborated by doing both researcher and methodological triangulations (Patton, 2001).

A Renewed Impetus towards Autonomy in English Learning

The next section illustrates how the online peer-tutoring model seemed to have influenced the participants' way of thinking and acting at different levels concerning autonomous learning.

Self-discipline, collaboration and motivation as pillars to a new conceptualization of autonomy. By the end of the peer-tutoring experience, participants seemed to have updated their concept of autonomy. When asked in the final questionnaire, if after participating in online peer-tutoring, they had transformed what they understood as autonomy, seven of them said they had. They explained that their self-perceived change was related to clarifying the concept, moving from theory to practice, acting more consistently with what autonomous learning implied and connecting the concept with their expansion of opportunities and spaces to facilitate self-directed learning. The only student who reported no change in his understanding of what autonomous learning encompassed explained that he had always conceived autonomous learning as building a self-improvement plan, but he had not practiced it.

Consequently, the participants showed a more complex and nuanced notion of what autonomous learning embraces. For instance, whereas before this implementation, Participant 4 characterized autonomy as "…. *the work that each person does on his own initiative with the aim of improving in some aspect of his life*" (P.4- Q1), at the end of this study, she indicated that "*autonomous work involves a lot of dedication, persistence and perseverance, is to work with discipline, seeking to grow up day by day*" (P.4-Q2). Participant 4 refined her notion of autonomous learning by incorporating elements such as discipline, dedication, persistence and perseverance, which can be related to learners' psychological need to feel comfortable when working autonomously. Ryan, Kuhl, and Deci (1997) posit that meeting learners' psychological needs

may facilitate precisely student's persistence, performance, and learning, having a positive effect on the growth and well-being of the individual.

Similarly, prior to this implementation, Participant 7 defined autonomy as "*... a method of individual study that is performed overtime*" (P.7-Q1). Nonetheless, within the second questionnaire, Participant 7 remarked that "*to learn autonomously is to create that self-discipline that will help us later when finding a job or continue studying*" (P.7-Q2). The two excerpts illustrate Participant 7's move to conceptualizing autonomy; his new understanding did not allude to the term "method" and is rooted in his perseverance and self-control over learning, leaving aside the expectation of external support to achieve that autonomy. This concept modification aligned with Little (2007) and Taylor's (2006) explanation of autonomy as an ability encompassing responsibility, persistence, and self-discipline towards one's own learning and goal-oriented action plans. Similarly, Participant 7's emphasis on the advantage es that working autonomously may have concerning long-term goal-achievement concurred with Deci and Ryan's (1995) discussion of how learners are intrinsically motivated to learn autonomously. Participant 7's more robust conceptualization of autonomous learning seemed to be articulated with his actual self-directed practice. Data show that this student voluntarily participated in the majority of Skype sessions (6 out of 7) as well as in two out of three practice chats.

Collaboration emerged as another prominent notion that the participants integrated into their updated understanding of autonomous work. A general tendency in the participants' answers in the initial questionnaire was to define autonomous learning as a companionless endeavor; however, after their involvement in virtual peer-tutoring, some of them apparently set aside the idea of individual work as a primary condition for autonomy:

> *I believed that autonomy is what I used to do alone without nobody's help...Now I think that it would be better to develop a personal improvement plan and develop it day by day, from the activities that I like and to relate it to what I want to learn. (P.1-L.2)*

At the end of the experience, Participant 1 expressed that there were more relevant aspects to highlight about what autonomous learning entailed than the idea of working by yourself; she referred to psychological states, commitment, extracurricular work, and one's own organization of learning.

Data informed us that not only did some of the participants rethink the idea of autonomy in English learning as a solitary enterprise, but that they expanded their notion to include collaboration with peers as a key element. Participant 1 continued:

> *My perception of autonomous work has changed. Before I thought it could mean working for and by one's self, over time we realize that, like everything else, it is a work that can also be collaborative from which one learns from others' mistakes …" (P.1- L.2)*

As Participant 1 mentioned in her second log, interacting with peers allowed her to build knowledge from their limitations as they can realize each one's needs, and they can work together to fulfill or satisfy them. In fact, while involved in the online peer-tutoring model, the participants favored those spaces in which they were given the opportunity to socialize with others. The online environment encouraged them to form groups and networks. They seemed to benefit from peer-support and felt confident among their own learning community, as Participant 8 pointed out: "*As far as there is confidence, and we have a sort of a group, we knew each other, then it is easier the interaction*" (P.8-9'10). Participant 3 also mentioned that:

> *In general Author's research group offered a lot of tools, it was great because it did not take the tutorials over an academic perspective, but a social space in which we could interact, break schemes, share with partners and other people, and know about culture. (P.3-16' 03")*

Although the concepts of learner independence and autonomy are commonly mistaken as solitary learning, Murphey and Jacobs (2000), for example, posit that the term autonomy does not necessarily imply studying alone, or as Godwin-Jones (2011, p. 6) states, "secluding oneself in a cork-lined room with a mountain of learning materials." Concerning online environments, Snodin (2013) concurs with the previous scholars by conceiving autonomy as a process involving interdependence among partners instead of separation. This occurs because these environments generate a comfortable atmosphere that encourages students to interact and help each other as their affiliation with language learning and autonomy grows. Likewise, Simpson (2002, p. 415) explains that CMC "provides valuable alternative spaces for collaboration and opportunities for learner autonomy."

Motivation becomes the last innovating element identified in the participants' conceptualizations of autonomous learning. In this vein, two participants conceived autonomy as an intrinsic-motivation booster, which led them to perceive autonomy as a joyful practice rather than an external imposition. At the onset of the experience, Participant 1 defined autonomy as "*to work and improve the limitations so we clearly and deeply know of ourselves.*" By the end of the experience, Participant 1 explained her new concept: "*More than obligation, working autonomously is to realize about your drawbacks, so that you can work day by day to improve them, because you like to do it*" (P.1-L3). Although she maintained her idea about autonomy being related to overcoming limitations, she included a new element: motivation.

Three other participants intertwined autonomous learning with the motivation they built to research on issues of their interest, practice the language, and show themselves what they could achieve:

> *We were encouraged more than everything to research if eh ...in that sense one felt interested to know eh... how to express the same idea differently. Something that I highlight is that we were motivated to, in a way, show the things that we do, not to the tutor, not to Author but to oneself. (P.3-34' 37")*

The aforementioned findings concurred with Garrison's (1997) and Benson's (2007) association of autonomous learning with the motivation that learners should develop to become responsible for their own learning. Likewise, Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan's (2002, p. 262) study found that "*there was a strong relationship between higher levels of motivation and greater engagement in outside class activities.*" Their participants constantly reported that when they were not motivated, their autonomous work was limited.

Building a concept about autonomy closely attached to motivation seemed to correlate with the enthusiasm that the participants experienced as a result of their experimentation with the online peer-tutoring model:

> *All these activities motivate us to practice autonomously as it gives us new horizons or approaches to English, and to relate it (autonomous work) to topics of our interest, I was usually looking forward to considering the topics worked on the tutoring and developing them more in my free time. (P.8-L.2)*

Because of the myriad of internet resources provided by the model, the participants found themselves being more likely to promptly continue learning English; thus, enhancing positive attitudes towards learning the language. In addition, they felt empowered to look for different and newer ways to develop their own independent practices. The next section delves deeply into these tutees' autonomous language learning practices as users of the model.

The participants' engagement in autonomous learning: The mediation of the online peer-tutoring model. The online peer-tutoring model was not only a new way of thinking, as described above, but it also had an impact on participants' autonomous English language learning. Overall, the participants ranked the perceived impact of this model in their autonomous practices as high (three students) or very high (five students) (Q2). When being asked to elaborate regarding the high scores they provided, the participants observed that, as a result of this experience, their eagerness for learning had transcended their classroom and even tutoring spaces: "*I have increased my interest for autonomous learning working in different spaces from tutoring*" (P.2-Q2). In this regard, they sometimes continued exploring topics initiated with their tutors. A common answer was "Despite tutoring, I dedicate a lot of time to research on grammar and pronunciation" (P.3-Q2). Another participant remarked: "*It* [RETELE's research group online implementation] *has had a high impact because through the online spaces, I have been able to explore different tools that provide advantages when it comes to practicing English"* (P.2-Q2).

The aforementioned testimonies from the participants aligned with scholars' examination of learning through peer-tutoring mediated by online technologies and the development of autonomy in learning buttressed by Web 2.0. In the first case, Dekhinet (2008) shows how Internet technology increased students' motivation and engagement. In a second study of the kind, Sutrisno (2016) found that students' language knowledge and skills were fostered by their participation in the online community.

One of the autonomous decisions that the participants made concerning their engagement in language practice involved the time they spent working on online tutoring. When comparing data from the first and second questionnaires, some of the participants' reports showed a slight increase in the time they devoted to self-directed learning. Accordingly, two participants claimed that their autonomous work increased one hour per week: while one emphasized that her interest in going deeper into topics studied in tutorial sessions fostered her autonomy, the other underlined her motivation as a powerful source to engage herself in independent work. Two other participants, who invested less than one hour before their engagement in online peer-tutoring, informed us that they were then investing one hour by the end of their participation in the study. The first of these two participants commented: "*I do not devote enough time because I need to do other things but compared to the previous semester, it* [my autonomous work] *was better because I really worked autonomously*" (P.1-Q2). The second expressed that, due to time constraints, one hour was the most she could devote.

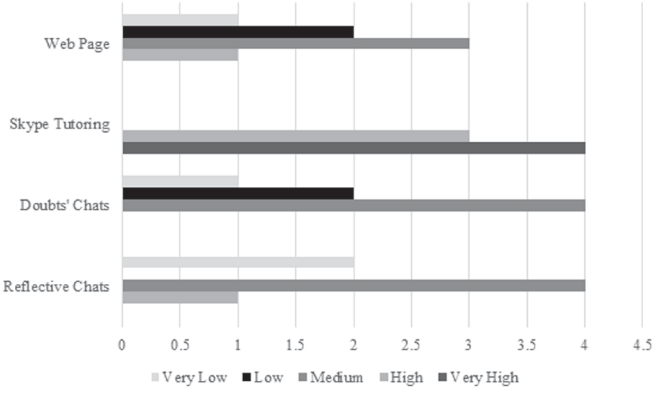
These two participants' answers indicated that they reduced their independent work; one went from six hours to two hours while the other worked one hour less by the end of the study. One referred to time constraints as the reason for this decline whereas the other commented that she divided her time between face-to-face and online tutoring. Two other participants did not report any change.

Another layer intersecting the participants' self-directed practices referred to them as being immersed in the virtual spaces offered by the model for their autonomous work:

> *It is very little time the one I devote to improve my skills, I merely do the tasks [from regular courses] and I forget how important working autonomously is. Tutoring has become the little extra work I do to improve my English. (P.1-L.3)*

Even though the participants were offered multiple spaces to learn through the Internet-supported model, within the second questionnaire, the participants asserted that they seemed to be more engaged in working on some online spaces such as the virtual tutorial sessions, doubts chats, and the web page rather than on others, namely, reflective and conversation practice chats (See Graphic 2).

As Graphic 2 shows, the participants ranked their preference for Skype Tutoring among very high and high, whereas a more diversified ranking was offered to other spaces. Doubts chats or reflection chats, and Author's webpage, were ranked among high, medium, low, or very low. On this matter, some of the participants affirmed that their low or very low participation in some of these spaces was due to their lack of time, interest, or confidence in participating: *"The main reason why I did not participate in the reflection chat was because of time and confidence…in relation to Skype tutoring I always tried to participate because they seemed very meaningful to me" (P.8-Q2).* Another participant mentioned that:



Graphic 2. Students' perceived participation in the different spaces of the virtual model.

> *I had good participation in the virtual tutorials [Skype] because they are quite interesting but in relation to the doubts chats, the web page, reflection chat what happened was that I did not care and that I did not take advantage of the resources. (P.4-Q2).*

In addition to the previous factors, data showed that the participants' tendency to favor certain online tools more than others in their autonomous learning was related to the characteristics of the virtual environment associated with *immediacy, accessibility and comfort, and resources to learn*. Accordingly, Tomes (2001) describes among the benefits of CMC, the possibility for these kinds of new technologies to overcome the limits of distance and time, which make possible collaboration and learning that in some other cases could not take place.

The participants claimed that immediacy became a factor in fostering their autonomous language learning because through WhatsApp and Facebook chats they gained expeditious support to resolve doubts. The analysis of these chats showed that the participants' queries were solved in no more than five to ten minutes. In the same line of thought, they reported that simultaneous interaction in tutorial sessions via Skype permitted a process of immediate feedback and counseling regarding language skills while they worked with their tutor. As a result of this immediacy, some participants claimed that they enhanced their English language skills: *"The answers to all our questions were always resolved in a short time and that showed interest in us. Then we started writing or talking in a better way because we felt the support of someone." (P.1-Q2)*

*Accessibility and comfor*t were related to the participants' engagement in self-independent learning inasmuch as they expressed that they could have access to virtual tutorial sessions at anytime and anywhere. The online peer-tutoring environment enriched their practice as they easily approached materials, activities, or any application of the model from convenient locations where Internet and technological devices were available:

> *These spaces [RETELE's research group virtual spaces] allow us to clear doubts and learn from anyplace we are at, if we have access to the internet" (P.7-Q2).*

> *It [Peer-tutoring model] is good due to the fact of time, I do not have to go from one place to another, and therefore I favor the virtual tutorials by the comfort that they offer. (P.6-25'30")*

Finally, the participants reported that the resources of the online peer-tutoring model buttressed not only their autonomy to work on their language abilities but also their opportunities to learn how to learn. The participants also seemed to be interested in new ways of approaching learning by using mobile applications and Internet sources. They acknowledged that they could capitalize on Skype peer-tutoring sessions, chats of reflection and doubts, along with the peer-tutoring group web page to gain knowledge about the location of learning resources, to get access to those materials and applications of their interest, and to understand how to use them:

> *Due to the increased motivation for autonomous work other than tutorials, I have been interested in learning and studying more by myself, without taking into account the subject at university that assigns us additional work. I have used several tools that tutorials have provided me as links and videos. (P.2-Q2.*

Another participant remarked:

> *Something even harder for me was to describe places and I think that autonomously I have focused on strengthen this aspect by explaining and audio-recording myself. I took advantage of the web-pages my tutor shared through Skype and I listened to and analyzed grammatically how the sentences were constructed and that has been one of the most important aspects in the development of my autonomous work. (P.3–45' 15")*

The previous findings concur with Godwin-Jones' (2011) discussion on the innovative avenues for autonomous learning that the combination of growing online resources, network services, and educational software is offering. As shown in the previous excerpt, Internet tools encourage learning autonomy which, as Godwin-Jones mentions "is for the student to develop effective strategies for pursuing individual learning" (p. 4). The role of the teacher, or in the case of this study the peer-tutor, has also been highlighted in online environments as a support for students' autonomy. These facilitators' guidance is not only related to suggesting virtual resources (Godwin-Jones, 2011) but also promoting students' association with peers in communities (Evans & Moore, 2013; Brooke, 2013), encouraging their recognition of learning and providing feedback (Brooke, 2013).

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

Two sets of findings contribute to understanding how a group of tutees' engagement in an online peer-tutoring model at a public university shaped their autonomous English learning. Firstly, data suggest a transformation in what these participants conceived as autonomy concerning English language learning. The tutees built more nuanced views of

self-directed learning in relation to self-discipline and associated traits, namely commitment and endurance. By delving into a model that provided them with tools to organize their autonomous work, search for options to fulfill their education needs, and exercise those language abilities of their interests, they started to think differently about what autonomy encompasses. Their upgraded conceptualizations also included the belief that autonomous learning was not necessarily an individual undertaking since the possibility of collaborating on online spaces with other tutees, in the emergent online community, was pivotal for them to rethink the role that shared limitations and mutual support can have in self-directed learning. Motivation became the third central element in the tutees' refreshed conceptualizations of autonomy. Apparently, having the opportunity to employ the online model as a source of language practice and research contributed to this renewed perspective.

Beyond their renewed conceptualizations, the tutees invested in their autonomous learning. Some of them claimed that the time they dedicated to self-directed learning increased. Motivation to learn and explore learning options more deeply became prominent reasons for these participants to devote more time to self-directed practices. Despite the fact that their university's expectation regarding students' autonomous work, five hours weekly for a three-credit course, is still higher than what participants detailed by the end of this study, the gains they claimed, so far, can be considered a favorable beginning to closing that gap.

By gaining awareness of the potential of target online environments, the model responded to the need detected by this study concerning the participants' scant understanding of how to take full advantage of Internet technologies for self-directed learning purposes. Overall, the tutees perceived that the model influenced their autonomy noticeably because it facilitated prompt support for obtaining feedback concerning their language learning queries. Likewise, not only did the model make it more convenient for the participants to access learning resources at any time and from any place, but also it provided abundant and innovative internet resources.

Considering this experience, we suggest that internet and all its applications, resources, and facilities should be integrated into online tutoring models rooted in a purposive and well-structured plan. Careful organization, monitoring, and training become the best way to mitigate risks that may emerge during implementation. Moreover, when asked in the final survey about the interaction between online and face-to-face peer-tutoring, all of the participants indicated that a hybrid model was the ideal support for their autonomy. This response leads us to consider as a further research endeavor the exploration of self-directed learning in peer-tutoring based on blended environments.

To close, the researchers strongly recommend that in order to implement any kind of blended-mediated pedagogical intervention, as has been suggested by the participants,

universities not only are ready to make a substantial investment in the required technology, but also to ensure students' high accessibility to labs; thus, learners can explore all the possibilities that the internet may bring to their exploration of foreign languages as they engage in peer-tutoring.

Two additional topics for further research stem from these findings. Bearing in mind the participants' idea of undertaking peer-tutoring as a group dynamic potentiated by virtual environments, research on delving into the intricacies of autonomous learning as mediated by social interaction in these communities of learning is relevant. Likewise, the tutees' tendency to invest more effort in their autonomous learning in relation to some online applications (e.g. Skype tutoring) than in others which can permanently contribute to participants' understanding of self-directed learning dynamics (e.g. reflection chats) should be examined more deeply.

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Principles of Self-Regulation in EFL mediated by Dialogic Tutoring Sessions

Principios de autorregulación en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera mediados por sesiones de tutoría dialógica

Zorro Rojas, Imelda[1]

Abstract

Students' engagement and determination require the use of self-regulated learning strategies to facilitate adequate preparation. This article reports a research study that looks into how eight instructors, who were trained to promote self-regulation, interact with 18 students of a Bachelor of Arts program in English language teaching in Bogotá. The problem was the prevalence of an instructional model of reproduction of knowledge in the English language classes taken by the 18 students. The pedagogical intervention introduces dialogic tutoring. The instructors' voices, in the role of tutors, and the students' voices, as tutees, were collected in 40 videos, a questionnaire, and a focus group. Grounded theory allowed transposing the identification of patterns, code tagging, and code grouping into concepts. This process generated four principles that worked positively in the promotion of self-regulation in this socially and culturally diverse sample of instructors and students, namely: (1) addressing needs, interests and beliefs; (2) setting goals; (3) scaffolding learning; (4) providing quality feedback.

Keywords: autonomy, dialogic tutoring, foreign language, scaffolding, self-regulation.

Resumen

El compromiso de los estudiantes y su determinación para aprender requieren del uso de estrategias autorreguladoras que faciliten una preparación adecuada. Este artículo reporta una investigación

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que indagó cómo ocho docentes, que fueron entrenados en promover la autorregulación, interactuaron con 18 estudiantes de un programa de formación de profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera de Bogotá. El problema consistía en la prevalencia de un modelo instruccional repetitivo del conocimiento en las clases de inglés que tomaban l8 estudiantes del programa. La intervención pedagógica presentó la tutoría dialógica. Las voces de los ocho instructores-tutores y de los 18 estudiantes-tutoriados fueron registradas en 40 videos, en una encuesta y en un grupo focal. La teoría fundamentada permitió la identificación de patrones y la asignación de códigos a los datos, que fueron luego agrupados en conceptos. En este proceso, surgieron cuatro principios que contribuyeron a promover la autorregulación en esta muestra social y culturalmente diversa de docentes y estudiantes: 1. el abordaje de las necesidades, intereses y creencias, 2. la formulación de objetivos, 3. el andamiaje en el aprendizaje, y 4. la provisión de realimentación efectiva.

Palabras clave: autonomía, tutoría dialógica, lengua extranjera, andamiaje, autorregulación.

Introduction

Attention to self-regulation has grown in all disciplines. Despite this surge in interest, classroom practices seem to continue being teacher-centered. This paper reports an inductive qualitative study that examined the academic processes for English language learning in a B.A. in English Language Teaching (ELT) program, in which there was evidence of teacher-centeredness and little evidence of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL). For Nakata (2014), researchers and educators can offer better support if they know about SRL theories which address these two questions: Why is SRL important for promoting knowledge acquisition? How can it contribute to autonomy?

The problem is that, in most tasks, students gave evidence of little or no planning for the English language classes. This suggested that they had very little degree of control; therefore, instruction should focus on co-creating optimal conditions with students for managing their own learning. In the survey questionnaire (Appendix A) several students indicated that they would rather have the instructor explain content than look it up on their own. This suggests dependence. These factors translated into dissatisfaction with how classes were run. In the same survey, the 18 students' perception of agency was low; they felt that their efforts for learning English were insufficient to develop proficiency when compared to what they could understand or do with English outside the classroom. The results of the questionnaire also indicated that current teaching fulfilled an instrumental role of transmitting information without stimulating deep understanding of how English works. Furthermore, the participants' behaviors of putting little effort into their studies were associated with unclear purposes, short and long-term goals, and paths to follow.

In teacher Education, SRL has transcendence; future in-service teachers will, in turn, lead others. Cuesta, Anderson, and McDougald (as cited in Banegas, 2017) found a lack of preparation in SRL in a study with 40 Colombian pre-service teachers of English. I

concur with their assertion that there are challenges to meet for "understanding the distinct situations of young learners who can develop SRL habits and skills from the beginning of their formal educational processes and adult learners, needing to unlearn years of dependent learning habits as well as learn new SRL habits, especially if these adults are to foster SRL in others" (p. 121).

The pedagogical intervention created for this current study consisted of training the eight instructors in dialogic tutoring to account for the problem of the students' lack of auto-regulation strategies. The localized pedagogy of co-construction of knowledge to promote SRL was mediated by dialogic tutoring. For Sarangi (2000), dialogic tutoring has to do with analyzing the types of discourse to determine the type of action to be conducted. The 20-hour training of the eight teacher educators of the B.A. program, henceforth called instructors/tutors, followed the premise that: "Dialogic teaching involves ongoing talk between teacher and students, not just teacher-presentation. Through dialogue, teachers can elicit students' everyday 'common sense' perspectives, engage with their developing ideas and help them overcome misunderstandings." (University of Cambridge, 2017, p.1) From the problem of the dissatisfaction identified in the diagnosis and the 18 participant instructors' decision to promote autonomy, this question guided the inquiry: *How can learners and instructors co-construct self-regulated learning in dialogic tutoring sessions*?

The research study then seeks to establish personal agency in terms of Harris, Brown, and Dargusch (2018), who view agency as a process wherein instructional objectives are achieved through volitional direction and tacit involvement in learning. The following section expands on the central concepts of the inquiry.

Conceptual Framework

Socio-cultural theory. A key feature of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) in human development is that higher order functions develop out of social interaction. Vygotsky (1978) argues that someone's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual, i.e., that investigating cognition requires not isolating it from social context. That is why I examined the context in which the participants act. The interaction of an experienced teacher educator guides and supports the actions of the novice learner. However, I wondered if mediation progressed from dependency to SRL, which revolves around these questions: *Was it done? How did it happen? Which factors were associated with this change?*

The purpose of training the instructors was to propitiate a more effective dialogue that boosts the participating students' potential for autonomous learning. The training sessions insisted on scaffolding learning with the use of an instructional module pack (Kanda University, 2007) about oriented goals. With this (what? view? practice?), social interaction

and collaboration became central. Furthermore, the training was meant to leave behind the power imbalance between students' local needs and the instructors' personal or institutional agendas (Freire, 1970). The new role entailed a transformation for the instructor to become a mediator (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001).

Self-regulation and autonomous language learning. For Kluwe (1987), the term Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) responds to the classic questions that usually arise when cognitive tasks are tackled: *Planning (*What am I going to do? How am I going to do it?), *monitoring and supervising (*What am I doing? How am I doing it?), and *evaluating (*How well or badly am I doing it?).

Students can take control (Benson, 2001) or self-direct their learning (Holec, 1981) in order to interact and use the appropriate resources, strategies and materials (Lantolf, 2000). Other authors have demonstrated that self-regulation has to do with study setting, establishing goals, time management, seeking for help, self-evaluation, attitudes, behaviors, strategies, and self-monitoring (Gu, 2010; Magno, 2009).

For Zimmerman and Bandura (as cited in Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005) attaining self-regulation has to do with three perspectives: socio-cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. For these authors, the triadic processes intervene not only in behavioral skills to manage contingencies, but also in the knowledge and in the sense of personal agency to enact this expertise in relevant contexts. Personal agency beliefs express one's views as to whether one is capable of performing a given task.

For Benson (2011) autonomy is multidimensional; it takes different forms according to the person, the setting, and multiple contextual and micro-contextual factors. The individual makes the decision to progressively assume a role to move from dependence to interdependence; from acquiring knowledge in the classroom to socializing it outside.

Similarly, Little (as cited in Gathercole, 1991) claims that autonomous language learning consists of "the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action." (p. 4) It is not a specific feature, it is a capacity that will grow by practice, or be lost through inactivity. For McGarry (1995), "human beings are autonomous in relation to a particular task when they are able to perform that task (1) without assistance, (2) beyond the immediate context in which they acquired the knowledge and skills on which successful task performance depends, and (3) flexibly, considering the special requirements of particular circumstances" (p. 1).

Dialogic tutoring. Language is a socially constructed sign-system that allows consciousness to arise (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1976). In this research study, the dialogue tutor-tutee aimed at raising awareness on the purpose, the ways, and the root of misconceptions about learning another language. In this project, eight university instructors,

two of which were native-speaker language assistants attended a 20-hour training course in dialogic tutoring. Then they coached 18 students to cope with the English language tasks and more importantly, to co-construct a *pathway* agreeing to plan, execute and fulfill goals that enhance their English language proficiency (Gardner & Miller, 1996). Two examples illustrate the use of module pack. Tutee 1 and tutor Aida discuss a task, on the topic "*idiomatic expressions."* This made up part of the tutee's interest. In another excerpt, Aida, the tutor, promoted speaking with Naty, talking about a trip she made. There are more examples in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. Tutoring was a place to collaborate with a tutee for identifying problem areas and understanding the work involved in solving them.

I concur with Luidig and Mynard (2012) in that tutoring sessions constitute a moment of counseling established by instructors and students in a more balanced relationship of power in which both aim to work on the new knowledge. Dialogic tutoring goes above-and-beyond language issues. To be successful, tutoring keeps conversation focus directed onto (or toward) the student's purpose and onto the design of a path to advance.

Methodology

A diagnosis and an intervention took place over a span of 18 months. This research employed Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2002) for the examination of the pieces of data, labeling, and coding. As more data were collected from eight instructors and 18 students, codes were grouped into concepts, and later into categories, which yielded the principles that contributed to SRL. The responses to the students' diagnostic questionnaire allowed the identification of the problem.

The intervention had twenty sessions of two hours. All the sessions were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions gave an account of the interactions of the participants and allowed knowing the learners' progress and difficulties as well as learning from them (Wells, 2001). Data from the sessions were registered and coded, first manually and then with the software Atlas Ti, which permitted the identification of open and emergent codes. Triangulation derived from comparing and contrasting data from questionnaires (Appendices A and B), 40 transcriptions of video-recordings, and the responses of a focus group (Table 3 below). The inductive qualitative and interpretative analysis (or analyses?) proposed by Grounded Theory meant to determine the effectiveness of dialogues and interactions, and provided the canvas for picturing the data.

Results

The responses to the student questionnaire, conducted before the intervention (Appendix A), established that heteronomy was constant. Students agreed that most lessons

were teacher-centered, and affirmed that they became used to having their teachers provide the explanations. On the other hand, 9 of 18 respondents claimed that they did not use English outside class, while 12 responded that they resorted to Spanish to discuss topics in the English class.

Teacher-centeredness and resistance to use English pointed to a general dissatisfaction with what happens in their English class (See Table 1 and Appendix A).

Table 1. Aspects of Students' Dissatisfaction with their classes

• Not to see our progress in proficiency.
• Not to receive individualized attention.
• Not to review the learned topics.
• Not to do classwork on our weaknesses.
• Not to practice what we have learned.
• Not to consider everybody has a different pace.
• Some of our teachers' attitudes.
• Our teachers' methodologies.
• Too much use of web pages with little or no orientation
• Lessons tend to be boring.
• Lack of determination and autonomy from some of us.

This questionnaire also established that planning posed difficulties; half of the students affirmed that they did not *set short-term goals*. When asked how they self-regulated, they responded, "*using exercises from internet/websites, chatting with foreigners, doing repetition of mispronounced words, integrating feedback, correcting quizzes and exams in class, facilitating self-correction, doing extra exercises*." In addition, they claimed to be skillful in correcting mistakes, but felt they required more strategies. In other words, they could monitor the course contents, but saw no evidence of enactive feedback for actual use of strategies that would give them confidence.

The data gathered after the intervention, with forty video transcripts, and the instructors' responses, helped respond to this question: *How can learners and instructors co-construct self-regulation in dialogic tutoring sessions*? The answer was that learners and instructors manage to construct self-regulation when their interactions go beyond the subject matter, and their dialogues address the learners' needs, interests, and set of beliefs. SRL is also constructed by taking time to identify and negotiate goals and by scaffolding in learning. In addition, enactive feedback (response to act on both the content of and on the process to learn) contributes to the construction of SRL.

In the dialogic tutoring sessions, instructors and students displayed strategies, procedures, resources and decisions to learn English (See Table 2). In addition, students attested to their change of approach and beliefs to tackling the study of the language forms, as well as their ability to communicate. The raw data were grouped in beliefs, autonomy, actions, and evidence of SRL. Table 2 displays the coding and findings established from the density of data.

Table 2. Coding

Beliefs About:	Autonomy Level	Actions	Self-Regulation (Strategies, Procedures And Resources)
• Teaching a foreign language • Second language acquisition • Speaking another language	• Awareness • Intervention • Compromise • Creation • Transcendence	**Tutor'S** • Pathway build up • Use and evaluation of a learning strategy • Comparison of strategies for academic tasks **Tutee'S** • Grammar Clarification • Communicative ability	• Scaffolding/ searching for help • Identification of self-learning objective • Searching a study place • Self-evaluation • Organization • Use of materials • Becoming responsible • Grammar clarification • Communicative skills • Roles • Negotiation of topics • Dialogic tutoring relationship • and validation by the instructor.

The interpretation of behaviors, attitudes, and relationships of the participating instructors and students supported the theorization of new knowledge. The following sections discuss the findings and display the excerpts and other evidences that support them. Participants appear with a pseudonym. The findings are derived from the polyphony of voices. The tutors' voices assessed their experience of dialogic tutoring very positively. The voices of the eight tutors in a focus group appear in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Responses to the Questionnaire. N= 8 instructors

What did Dialogic tutoring allow you to do? • Identify strengths and weaknesses • Discover the students' learning styles and strategies. • Set goals at long, medium and short periods of time. • Engage learners in topics they care for. • Propose engaging tasks. • Promote the use of English in and out of the classroom. Introduce the purposeful use of ICT tools.
What would you recommend about tutoring? • Should be offered by all the instructors (currently half do it) • Assign time and space to it
Why is it worth promoting Self-Regulation? • Provides orientation to learners on the use of resources • *Helps to identify type of learners: Low risk, high risk, dependent, independent and disoriented learners* • *Stimulates critical thinking* • *Makes clusters to promote cooperative work* Supports independent work

The focus group of eight instructors estimated that dialogic tutoring demanded a change from the traditional role of helping students meet course requirements. They claimed that they needed to become counselors, which is to help people change behaviors in the directions they chose. They also felt they should be more of a guide in mapping a pathway for learning with the students. They also said that dialogic tutoring constituted an innovative methodology that demanded more training.

On the other hand, instructors estimated that the promotion of self-regulation required support from the teaching, managerial and administrative staff in order to administer space, time, materials, and equipment. Under this condition, they argued that the use of a resource center would facilitate independent learning with multimedia and print materials readily available. Similarly, booths would favor individual attention with the degree of confidentiality needed.

In sum, dialogic tutoring allowed instructors to get to know the 18 students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and interests. They gained insights into how scaffolding contributed to acquisition (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). They also claimed that participating students improved their command of the language and became more confident.

Tutoring sessions enabled the understanding of cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and attitudinal factors which influence self-regulation. Tutoring cleared the pathway and facilitated new roles in a process in which instructors and students dynamize the process of *learning to learn* (See Appendix B). To attain SRL, I found that tutoring should adhere to these four interconnected principles: (1) addressing needs, interests, and personal agency beliefs recognizes the leaners' awareness of their capabilities to take action conducive to academic achievement; (2) goal-setting reinforces agency; (3) enactive feedback on the content and on the process of learning influences behaviors and agency; and (4) scaffolding individual learning contributes to monitoring, adapting, and assessing achievement.

Finding 1: Needs, interests and personal agency beliefs relate directly to SRL. The first finding suggests that SRL requires the collaboration of teachers and learners to assess needs interests and personal agency beliefs and be prepared to take actions. Table 4 illustrates what learners care for. For example, the dialogs revealed needs of resources, interests in poetry, and beliefs about grammar. These aspects moved tutees 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to seek help.

Observing interaction revealed that the students' needs, interests, and beliefs triggered their behaviors. It was perceived that the set of beliefs conditioned the use or abandonment of language learning strategies for tackling tasks or tests (Castillo, 2014). For instance, Naty referred to her experience of trying to use English on a trip to the U.S.A. to assert a true interest in what she is studying. Similarly, Mike wrote a poem as a means to meet his needs and interests in grammar communication, and expression. Yanis' tutees reflected and made learners conscious about using tips previous to an exam; and Lorena and Angela negotiated a topic in tutorials.

Finding 2: Goal-setting relates directly to SRL. The second finding associated with self-regulation was goal-setting. Becoming aware of needs, capabilities, and rejecting false beliefs make goal-setting manageable. The excerpt below represents an action plan in which the resources at hand contribute to the development of cognitive and metacognitive competences.

> **Cami***: Well. In my opinion, I guess is quite similar to writing an essay. You have to take*
>
> *I don't know- how you can say that- the topic sentence could be the big goal you can take…I guess… we can handle it in that way, and the small goal may be the order how we write, but I really liked it. (emergent code: comparison of self-learning strategies with academic tasks)*

Table 4. Principle One: Addressing Needs, Interests and Beliefs

Tutees	Accounts	Interpretation
1. Talía	**Using a portfolio as part of the module pack (explanation with vocabulary in context, movies, pronunciation)** Tutor (Aida): So, I would like you, first, to reflect on the process. I'd like your opinion: How have you felt with the module pack? Do you come here every week with me and work with the material, I have provided? Tutee: Yeah! Tutor: So, would you like to start Nataly, tell me your experience? Tutee: Well, with this I feel so good, because it is really a way to learn new vocabulary, and is fun doing this activity, like singing songs, repeating songs, writing the vocabulary. In addition, the same happen when watching movies. It is really a comfortable way of learning. I learn many things such idiomatic expressions.	The use of an artifact (Module Pack) helped tutees. It allowed them to use reflection and metacognition. Code: *Use of materials* **Level of Autonomy: Transcendence**
2. Naty	**Evidencing how a need for communicating contributed to being risky and being part of the culture; a visit to the U.S.A.** *Tutee: (Laughs, nervously/ well/ Bueno; my sister and me…. have a friend from Long Beach so, well… we went with her to the mall to buy some clothes and when the clerk approached me and I started speaking English… well I told her to talk uhm. Uhm…* *Tutor (Aida interrupts): Slowly* *Naty: In a slowly way she asked me if I had found everything in the shop.*	Being risker-takers to communicate in the foreign language makes up part of getting involved in the culture; here, scaffolding provided interest in the tutor and this allowed keeping the dialogue going. Code: *Communicating skills* **Level of Autonomy: Intervention**
3. Mike	**Need for demonstrating creativity by means of writing.** Feedback on a poem with an English assistant. State beliefs on the mastery of language as a venue of expression. Perceives that clear objectives relate to SRL.	The level of autonomy (Nunan, 1997) presented in Mike is between two levels: *creation* and *transcendence*. Code: *Transcendence* **Level of Autonomy: Transcendence**

Tutees	Accounts	Interpretation
4. Martha	**Discussing a written test**. Yanis, the tutor and a group of tutees reflect on their exam: *Tutor: My question is…* *Tutor: You mean simple details….* *Martha: You need concentration.* *Tutor: Ok, you need more concentration and not being overconfident.*	The tutor reminded their learners the importance of following tips when studying for an exam. Code: *Belief about learning a language.*
5. Lorena	Negotiating a topic for tutoring (Grammar) Angela : Hi, ok so what do you want for our tutorials today ? Do you want school stuff or do you want to correct some grammar stuff?	Code: Negotiation of topic

Tutor*: Why?*

Cami*: Because if you have a big goal and small goal, we can create a way in order to create a structure. Between that small goal and big goal that you are creating like a structure, so I think it is quite nice because that first point would be the small goal and the second point would be the big goal. We can produce… we can find too many things.(emergent code: evaluation of self-learning strategy)*

Cami: *I mean, for example my biggest goal is to try to understand the present perfect tenses (emergent code: emergent code: establishment of self-learning objective)*

Tutor: *That is grammar...(emergent code: validation from the tutor's code)*

Cami: *Yeah, I know I have a kind of obsession for the grammar. (emergent code: establishment of self-learning objective)*

Tutor: *Well, that is not wrong. (emergent code: validation from the tutor's code)*

Cami, participant 7, knows how to tackle tasks. Cami shows awareness that a plan is needed. He voices the strategy of moving from the parts to the whole for language development. On the other hand, he reaffirms his teacher identity to explain his beliefs and behaviors. In Table 5, excerpts from participants 6, 7, 8, and 9 exemplify the accounts of the conversations that reveal or shape goal-setting behaviors. For instance, Cami declared he had his own strategies for before, during and after writing. The dialogues in Table 5 above illustrate the presence of modifying goals, strategies, planning, and self-evaluation, seeking help, responsibility, and organization.

Cami, as most other participating students, claimed that they self-directed their learning when decisions were their responsibility (Holec, 1981). They also had control of self-regulation of cognition and did it when they modified a meta-strategy. The excerpts in Table

Table 5. *Goal-setting relates directly to SRL*

Tutees	Accounts	Interpretation
6. John	*Maria (tutor)and John tutee discuss self-involvement* *Tutor: well in this independent practice you arrived to a self-evaluation process, of reflection, you review what you were doing well, your strengths and weaknesses and also established goals, tell us, how was that? Ok.* (Done in Spanish) *Tutee: Well, I started familiarizing with the language and then I got involved in grammar, listening and speaking.*	Helping learners to discover the importance of self-regulating contributes to becoming active participants. Code: *Self-evaluation* **Level of autonomy: Compromise**
7. Cami	**Awareness of a process.** Participant stressed the importance of tutoring sessions, and expressed strong beliefs on grammar acquisition. "*Because if you have a big goal and a small goal, we can create a way in order to create a structure."*	Adapting goals to needs demands self-awareness. Reflection on strategies assists instructors in discovering beliefs. Code: *Identification of self-learning objective.* **Level of autonomy: Awareness & Transcendence**
8. Karen	**Interest in grammar (Tutor, María)** *Getting involved in tutoring sessions allowed me reinforce grammar aspects to be confident, and gradually start being more familiarized with the language to participate in conversations*"	Smaller goals gradually lead tutees to fulfill bigger goals. Code: *Beliefs about learning the language.* **Level of autonomy: Awareness**
9. Angie	**Planning the learning process** *Tutor: Today is March 10th, we are here with our student Angie. She has come to the second tutoring session. According to the format I gave her last time, [and] based on a plan of work, I'm going to check to see how she did during the first week. Then we're going to set new goals. I mean objectives to start working weekly.* *Tutor: Hi, Angie: How did it go with your learning objective this week of review?* *Tutee: Well, I have been looking for many ways of learning.* *Tutor: And what was your objective, your learning goal this week that just ended.* *Tutee: I wrote that my difficulty was comprehension when answering questions: that was my objective. Uhm…* Tutor: How to formulate and understand questions?	Maria, the tutor, suggested strategies. For study habits, she did individual and group follow-up. Code: *Identification of self-learning objective* **Level of autonomy: Intervention**

5 suggest that participants had advanced in tackling tasks and awareness on the need of a plan. On the other hand Maria, the tutor, proposed procedures and strategies to Angie, John, and Karen. María stated that for enforcing study habits, she followed up individually in her English class, and that this favored rapport and brought positive changes.

Similarly, Maria held a dialogue with Angie, participant 9: First, on 'many ways of learning' and second, on the difficulties to understand questions. Goal-setting allowed her to communicate better and to commit to a course of action.

Finding 3: The provision of enactive feedback relates directly to SLR. Enactive feedback, understood as seeking a reaction to the content and procedures of learning, proved positive in the construction of SRL. This feedback helped adjusting objectives, ways of doing, and behaving. With quality feedback, tutors were able to keep track of the tutees' performance and allowed them to observe how they advanced. The exchange below between tutor Marina and a tutee reflects attempts to promote self-regulation. Clarification and elicitation techniques and a teacher-initiation student-response pattern stand out. The tutor clarified the differences between passive voice and causative forms.

> **Tutor Marina***: Well, last class we saw causative forms, right? Here you have two samples - showing the exam: "I had my essay marked" and another one was "The essay was marked by the teacher". What did you understand about these? Are these causative forms? Besides, in class we were mentioning if these two sentences were similar or different.*
>
> **Tutee***: I understood that both were similar and that the explanation of have related to the responsibility the teacher assigned.*
>
> **Tutor Marina***: uhm… (Backchannel)*
>
> **Tutee***: My doubt had to do with two similar topics we studied last term: embedded questions and… and eh, I forgot me … ah … and passive voice.*
>
> **Tutor Marina***: The second one is passive voice, right? They talk about the example: My essay was marked by the teacher, then let us remember how it is formed, here it is passive voice: no embedded questions (subordinated questions) not, because these are not questions. The examples that we saw are not questions, right? Then this one is passive voice. How … how do you make a sentence? What is the grammar pattern? What would be this? (The teacher shows the exam) (Emergent code: grammar clarification)*
>
> **Tutee***: The subject*
>
> **Tutor Marina***: Uhm (emergent code: validation from the tutor)*
>
> **Tutee***: the verb*
>
> **Tutor Marina***: But what verb is this one?*
>
> **Tutee***: Past*

Tutor Marina*: What Verb?*

Tutee*: Ah… been (past participle)*

Tutor Marina*: Uhm, remember we use causative form when we want to imply another person, remembered the assistant explained that… when we want to say that somebody causes or ask somebody to do something. This structure differs from Spanish; I had my essay marked; which means that you asked your teacher to correct your essay. (Emergent code: grammar clarification)*

In this feedback, clarification of grammar prevails. Scaffolding with elicitation techniques allows the tutee to keep the floor to clarify the differences between "causative form and passive voice." The backchannel 'uhm…' allows the provision of more explanation on doubts.

The following excerpt, offered by Yanis who was the tutor, and a group of 6 tutees, reflects their thinking about taking an exam**:**

Tutor Yanis*: My question is… You mean simple details…. (Emergent code: belief about teaching a foreign language)*

Tutee 4*: You need concentration. (Emergent code: intervention)*

Tutor Yanis*: Ok, you need more concentration and not being overconfident. Ok I advise proofreading carefully for next time. Ok, that the first part of the analysis and we have…. uh… I want to pass to that part of writing, all right and I want to read the instructions, imagine that you are the man or the woman in the picture (showing a picture) correct? In addition, write about "a meeting" and don't forget the verbal tenses….and did you notice that at the end there was a check list, did you see it…when you were having the exam? Did you notice the check list? Or you did not. Yanis confirmed that the strategies or tips raise awareness of ways to answer and to reduce mistakes.*

Yanis, the tutor, reminds tutees of the pointers for taking an exam. Yanis stressed strategy use and awareness to 1) proofread, 2) follow instructions, 3) pay attention to visuals in exams to know your role, 4) check verb tenses.

Table 6 provides the accounts and interpretations of data gathered about feedback.

The tutors' provision of feedback intends that students grasp language use. Tutor Leidy offers several examples to Amanda, participant 10, and so does Tutor Marina with participant 12. Feedback was also provided on the procedures to tackle the foreign language. Tutor Aida focused on the actions that Natalia had taken or not taken to enhance her language proficiency. That is an example of promotion of SRL with enacting feedback.

Finding 4: Scaffolding relates directly to SRL. Scaffolding makes up part of Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). He suggests that learning occurs when production is stretched through required skillful assistance at points in the learner's ZPD. This zone depends on individual characteristics such as motivation, self-

Table 6. *Principle three: Provision of Enactive Feedback relates directly to SRL*

Tutees	Accounts	Interpretation
10. Amanda	Grammar points. Tutor Lady listens to her tutee Amanda giving an example in present continuous… -Ok. "I am saving," that's correct. Why am I saving? Because it's a thing in progress. You are doing it. Ok, so, if you notice we have talked about present simple and I ask you, what do you do? Present simple. You said "I work for city bank", Stefany said, "I work as a secretary", and Lina said I work in Caracol, and Karina said I look after children. Correct? So, that's present simple. Nevertheless, Lina now said, when I ask, what you use the money for. In addition, she said I am saving for vacation, so, in this moment she is working and she is saving the money, because it is a continuous action in simple present.	Recapitulation of verb tenses, such as present simple, eases the understanding of present continuous. Code: Grammar Clarification Level of autonomy: Awareness
11. Natalia	Follow-up on a study plan Tutor Aida: Tell me Natalia, and which has been your intervention plan. What have you done to fulfill your goals? Tutee: Well, my goal was speaking, eh…well I started talking to myself, let´s say like telling myself about what I have done the previous day. I did it because I do not have nobody to talk with, so I did it on my own. Tutor: And you have a recording about it? Tutee: No, I was going to record it Tutor: That would be interesting	The tutor followed up the feedback provided to Natalia and realized she has started a plan on her own. Code: Identification of self-learning objective. Level of autonomy: Intervention & Creation
12. George	Marina, the tutor, explains the use of causative forms and passive voice.	Codes: Grammar clarification

esteem, anxiety level, risk-taking ability, styles, and strategies. These individual differences are major, relating both to cultural background and to individual personalities (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Castillo, 2014). As evident in Table 7, the participating students required diverse assistance: some in language points, others in exam preparation, and others in speaking. Individual differences accounted for the need of scaffolding to transform their ways of understanding, the curricula and their practices.

The transcription of the dialogue between assistant Nelly, who is a native English language speaker, and Mike, illustrates scaffolding. Mike drafted a poem and worked on it

Table 7. Principle 4. Scaffolding relates directly to SRL

Tutees	Accounts	Interpretation
13. Ana	**Preparing an oral exam, interest in speaking. Expressed belief that language acquisition means taking risks while speaking**. **Tutor** (Aida): *Why are you afraid of speaking?* **Tutee***: Because sometimes there are many people that laugh at me. So, I feel…* **Tutor***: Embarrassed. Even if you are working with your small group?* **Tutee***: Here? No, with this group but with another group yes.* **Tutor***: Tape your rehearsals using your cellphone so you can improve a lot; also search for help with a partner.*	Trying out and rehearsing prior to a speaking activity helps to put aside fears, in this case speaking in front of everybody. Code: Belief about learning the language. **Level of autonomy: Awareness**
14.Ximena	**Preparing for a written exam. Before writing a story, should I write a title, or how should I do?** Aida: "*You should follow the instructions, here (Tutor points the instruction) "write and answer to one of the questions from seven to eight," you decided on exercise seven, right?"*	Following instructions on a piece of writing, make students aware of being successful; also following a guideline Code: *Pathway build up* **Level of autonomy: Awareness**
15. Karol	**Using module pack, establishing goals, showing evidences.** *Tutee: First of all, for me was very interesting this way of learning English, because eh I didn't know this method where you can distribute your time, your skills in like a plan.*	Planning helped participants with time management to advance. Code: *Awareness* **Level of autonomy: Awareness**
16. Vicky	**Need for speaking (Use of diverse sources)** *Tutee: Ah. I want to improve the speaking. And for this, I use the internet, the New York times, or other…* **Tutor** *(complements)…Sources.* *Tutee: Yeah, Sources. Eh, topics that can help me with vocabulary. And if I speak in French or in English, it could help me. Every day I watch the ART program, it's an alternative a means of communication. It is so good because you can find videos or news around the world. It is very good.*	Materials and resources enhance understanding and provide a variety of ways to acquire knowledge. Code: *Beliefs about speaking a foreign language.* **Level of autonomy: Intervention**

Tutees	Accounts	Interpretation
17.Yeimmy	**Building a learning pathway (Use of internet websites).** *Tutee: The teacher showed us a method and also the page where we can improve, we can find ways, articles that help me discover the best way to learn. In this moment, I have done activities with this plan. I have seen…eh…. ¿Como se dice?* **Tutor:** *Better? Better resources.* **Tutee:** *Yes, that's right.*	The use of virtual materials and a guide to use them contributes to academic success. Code: Pathway build up **Level of autonomy: Intervention**
18. Mike	**Need for demonstrating creativity by means of writing.** Feedback on a poem with an English assistant. Expresses beliefs on the mastery of language as a venue of expression.	The level of autonomy (Nunan, 1997) presented in Mike is between two levels: *creation* and *transcendence*. Code: *Transcendence*

with her; they moved from a focus on language to a focus on meaning and expression for understanding rhythm and intonation in a poem. This is Mike´s attempt to write a poem:

Beauty and the beast
Beauty and the maiden with deep blue eyes
seeking her nice tights,
beauty and snow white with her snowed smile
*beauty and the fake princess from whom the ashes rise**
the cast spell on the king son,
beauty is the maiden that makes a beast fight
and go to work and fight six demons until they are killed,
beauty is the girl who loves the beast and no matter how they__,
she will defeat the beast
you are my beauty girl and yeah with deep eyes
*you can *her next tights and know what's a smile,*
you are my princess you are my princess
not fake though, for you love this beast*
even though I am not the king son

Mike's interest in writing a poem made him thrive. Initially, he focused on language, and as the session advanced, the focus shifted to metrics and alliteration. Tutor Nelly scaffolded as follows, "*I mean, it is your poem so you can do whatever you want, right? And like you said you don't have a specific meter, here it does have a rhythm."* With scaffolding, Mike was able to read his poem

with rhythm. Mike said… "*Yeah. But I don't know if when I was reading, I actually would pronounce the word, so that's why I'm asking you to help me.*" Mike's words indicated that he is monitoring himself:

> **Mike***: No, I just write it, I mean, I just try to listen to myself, and if it has a rhythm or something like that I would be like "ok it's cool," but I don´t know like any pattern or any rule to compose these things.*

Mike's effort to draft a poem brings us close to Bakhtin's (1981) idea of a voice that attempts to transcend, that is, the voice of the mind. The topic of *Beauty and the Beast* in Mike's voice transcends with a universal and social voice, a category that Bakhtin (1981) named v*entriloquation*, the secret speech of other.

Mike's autonomy level appears to oscillate between *creation* and *transcendence* (Nunan, 1997). Creation represents a step to heteronomy, which the tutor validated, "*It is your poem and you can do whatever you want.*" On the other hand, the level of *transcendence* indicates self-determination for Mike to modify his behavior.

The following excerpt also shows how scaffolding established a link between instructors and the use of materials (Lantolf, 2000). Talía and Naty interacted with their Tutor Aida to talk about vocabulary in context. The emerging codes refer to *constructing a pathway and using materials*.

> **Tutor Aida***: We tried to see it, because I had the movie in Blue-ray. Well, we are going to see the episode that you were telling me. What else do you do for a listening activity?*
>
> **Tutee Naty***: Well, sometimes I do different things, first I listen to the…*
>
> **Tutee Talía***: The passage and then I read the questions about that or sometimes I do the same as Nata said before.*

As a researcher of this project, I participated in twenty sessions that stressed explanation, reflections, strategy use, goal-setting, scaffolding, and feedback. The tone of the sessions indicated a relationship of equals and revealed a climate of trust (Wells, 2001; Luidig & Mynard, 2012). The 18 participating students' self-regulated by controlling the resources, and the use of artifacts which promoted acquisition (Lantolf, 2000). The tutees' expected success somehow depended on how tutors scaffolded. Table 5 summarizes the salient tutor's dialogic strategies.

The tutor Maria participated in seven sessions which concentrated on identifying and meeting goals, while Marina's contribution stressed reflection on the acquisition process, and feedback focused on testing and on grammar. As a tutor, Yanis participated in two sessions in which she focused on test taking. On the other hand, the two English language native-speaker tutors, Nelly and Angy, reinforced pronunciation and grammar in writing. Following Zimmerman (as cited in Boerkaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005), part of the negotiation arises

Table 7. Tutors' prevalent dialogic strategies in forty sessions

	TUTORS (Pseudonyms)	Tutors' main dialogic strategies
1	Aida (20 Sessions)	Explanations, reflections, suggestion of strategies, development of a learning plan, and scaffolding.
2	María (7 Sessions)	Reflections, suggestion of strategies and development of a learning plan.
3	Marina (3 Sessions)	Explanations and reflections, and scaffolding of grammar points.
4	Nelly (2 Sessions)	Scaffolding
5	Angy (2 Sessions)	Negotiation of topics.
6	Yanis (2 Sessions)	Reflections, and giving tips for test taking
7	Lady (2 Sessions)	Clarifications of grammar points
8	Claudia (2)	Determining topics for tutorial sessions

from the students' interest in one topic, in this case grammar, and the tutors' assurance to provide explanations. The academic behavior is adapted in the interaction.

The focus groups of eight instructors agreed that dialogic tutoring constituted an innovation; they pointed out that environmental factors had to be taken into account as well. They added that the use of campus facilities, materials, and resources should involve the active participation of instructors and the support of the university administration. The new pedagogical practices required training and willingness to change from lecturing to becoming a guide. In the students' point of view, self-regulation and autonomy go hand in hand since change depends on the students' volition.

Conclusions

This study addressed self-regulation and its related aspects of behavior, heteronomy, motivation, strategy use, and agency. The purpose of the pedagogical intervention was to identify the principles that foster the SRL of another language. The diagnosis revealed that the participants' lack of strategies and goals required the attention of the instructors. There was a need to enhance current practices and this meant listening to the tutees' voices.

It was not enough to be aware of purpose and implications in decision-making, action and evaluation; the teaching and the curriculum needed to promote cognitive and metacognitive knowledge. This fact coincides with the findings by Cuesta et al. (in Banegas,

2017). The study provided evidence that dialect tutoring constitutes an effective mediation to build SRL. Participants understood the purpose of their course and, as well, they explicitly accepted responsibility, negotiated objectives, took initiative in planning and executing tasks, and regularly reviewed and evaluated their acquisition processes. The data suggest that knowledge transcended the classroom. There was a consensus among participants that SRL demanded a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others (see also Sabitha, 2013).

Data also indicated that the epistemological understanding between the instructors and the participating undergraduates helped achieve a re-interpretation of roles. The attitude of inquiry and discovery of new ways to approach self-regulation encouraged tutees to seek help. Both learners and instructors were in the capacity of discharging their traditional roles (Holec, 1981).

Furthermore, tutors extended the meaningful use of resources and strategies. The participating students not only self-regulated but also co-constructed what happened. The relationship between tutor and tutee redefined their roles, their ways of working, and the use of resources. In sum, the co-construction of self-regulation influenced individual behaviors. The promotion of self-regulation through dialogic tutoring helped learners to act and explore possibilities that had not been part of their language acquisition. These possibilities promoted interest; they brought a sensation of achievement that also encouraged motivation.

On the other hand, scaffolding of learning contributed to self-regulation and with it, to redefining a course of action successfully. Teacher feedback for learners to act upon language use, language acquisition processes and procedures, proactive behaviors, strategies and resources contributed to goal attainment (Castillo, 2014). In addition, dialogic tutoring recovered feedback as a two-way communication process; tailored to the individual thus creating a positive classroom climate.

This study complements the theoretical components proposed by Zimmerman (in Boerkaerts et al., 2005) that conceives SRL as a social cognitive perspective resulting from an interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. In this study, dialogic tutoring, feedback, and scaffolding allowed deeper knowledge of SRL. This research report contributes to the discussion on how SRL can be mediated by a social construction, which enhances cognitive and metacognitive aspects already identified in the literature (Thanasoulas, 2000). Students and instructors co-constructed self-regulation via dialogic tutoring. The presence of a helpful tutor, sensitive to the learners' needs, interests and personal agency beliefs facilitated goal-setting. Furthermore, scaffolding instruction and provision of feedback on both the language, and on the misbeliefs about learning, paved the road towards autonomy.

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Appendix A. Diagnostic Questionnaire. N= 18 Learners

AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING
Few learners use English to share opinions with classmates.
Few learners use English outside class.
Students ask for explanations about the topics given in class.
What have you liked the most in class? (Answers to the open question).
The lessons given by the native speaker assistants
The teacher's commitment
To learn by oneself and share that experience
The activities developed with my teacher
The feedback provided by teachers and partners
To acquire new knowledge
To fulfill my assessment
To develop the class by units
To use the language
To use cross curricular topics
To review the topics
To be aware of my limitations
To use books and grammar books
To develop a pedagogical project
To attend the English club
What have you liked the least in class?
Not to see our progress
Not to have individualized attention
Not to review the learned topics
Lessons tend to be boring
To be aware that we can fulfill everything
Our teachers' methodology
Lack of determination and autonomy from some of us.
Assume everybody goes at the same pace
Not to work on weaknesses

Too much use of web pages with no orientation
Not to consider everybody's learning assessment
Not to practice what we have learned
The uncooperative attitude of some teachers
SELF REGULATION
How do you regulate your English language learning?
Using exercises from internet
Chatting with foreigners
Doing repetition of mispronounced words
Studying the feedback
Correcting quizzes in class
Facilitating self-correction
Correcting exams
Doing extra exercises

Appendix B. Responses to the Final Questionnaire. N=18 Students

How do you feel about tutoring?	
We improve	4
Very well	2
The teacher is friendly	1
Not available	2
It's rewarding	3
Attendance is limited to exam preparation	1
Provides confidence	2
I do not feel shy and afraid as in class	1
I clarify doubts	1
I do not need it.	1

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Was I Being Critical? Vision and Action in English Language Teacher Education

¿Estaba siendo crítico? Visión y acción en la formación docente en inglés

Basabe, Enrique Alejandro[1]

Abstract

Criticality has recently made its way into the field of English Language Teaching. It has mainly fostered the study of teachers' individual commitments with their social context. A reflective account is offered here based on my praxis when I adopted a critical pedagogy to teach literature in the English language teacher education program at the National University of La Pampa (UNLPam) in Argentina. Drawing on observations and documents, I give in this paper an autoethnographic account of my practice. The results show that I maintained a constant questioning of my practice and a persistent wariness about the appropriateness of keeping a critical position in my teaching context. All teachers should perform these two reflective actions in view of our role as socially and pedagogically responsible agents of practice.

Keywords: teacher education, critical pedagogies, practice theory, autoethnographic narratives.

Resumen

Lo crítico ha logrado instalarse en el campo de la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera y ha motivado investigaciones sobre los compromisos docentes individuales con el contexto social. Se ofrece aquí una narrativa reflexiva de mi praxis al adoptar una pedagogía crítica para la enseñanza de la literatura en el Profesorado en Inglés de la Universidad Nacional de La Pampa (UNLPam) en Argentina. Basado en observaciones y documentos, el trabajo se erige como una autoetnografía que revisa mi

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labor docente. Los resultados muestran una inquisitiva reflexión sobre mi práctica docente y una duda constante sobre lo apropiado de mantener una postura crítica en mi contexto laboral, ambas actitudes que todos los docentes deberíamos tener en vista de nuestro rol de agentes social y pedagógicamente responsables de nuestras prácticas.

Palabras clave: formación docente, pedagogías críticas, teoría de la práctica, narrativas autoetnográficas.

Introduction

As stated by Richards and Lockhart (1996), "critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching," (p. 4) which in turn may lead to change. Reflective practice in English language teaching (ELT) has been reported to be positive not only for novice teachers (Farrell, 2012) but also for experienced teachers (Farrell, 2011) since it offers different perspectives about how we construct a conceptual sense of our vision and action. In this paper, I offer a reflective autoethnographic narrative of my praxis as a teacher educator who adopted a critical pedagogy to teach literature in the English language teacher education (ELTE) program at the National University of La Pampa (UNLPam) in Argentina. Canagarajah (2012) and Tsui (2007) used autoethnography and narrative inquiry, respectively, to delve into the development of the professional identities of ELT practitioners and offered valuable insight into the intricacies of teacher agency and identity in a global context.

At the time covered by this narrative, my practice was framed by the teaching and research project *Critical literacy and literature in English language teacher education* (Basabe & Germani, 2013). Grounded on ethnographic observation and document analysis, the project sought to study the design and practice of a series of experiences that, without disregarding the more usual approaches to the teaching of literature, would integrate those derived from a linguistic reading of literary texts with those advocating for critical reading and for the creation of open spaces of debate. Results have been reported elsewhere (Arriaga & Germani, 2018; Basabe, 2018; Basabe & Germani, 2014). As I had often labeled my practice *critical* but had always felt uncertain about that criticality, I realized that that uncertainty could only be dispelled by the proper reflection that would be guided by the research question: To what extent was I being critical?

Literature Review

My autoethnographic narrative was framed by three interpretative contexts from which the data collected were read and analyzed: (a) agency in practice theory, (b) teacher education, personhood, and the public interest, and (c) criticality in ELT.

Agency in practice theory. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) provided an innovative answer to the issue of how human beings deliberately relate their personal concerns to the social circumstances that surround them. Agency in practice comes through "the space of authoring, the conflictual and continuing dialogic of an inner speech where active identities are ever forming" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 169). The event of authoring oneself constitutes the internal site of subjectivity. Imaginatively, human beings constantly create *figured worlds*, or "socially and culturally constructed realms of interpretation in which particular characters and actions are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Thus, agents create and continuously recreate their worlds in pursuit of the goals that they value, but those goals are constantly contoured by the figured worlds they are always in the process of generating. In this current research, agency in practice theory would explain my decision-making processes of the teacher educator under analysis, as well as my action and my agency, or my "ability to pursue the goals that one values" (Archer, 2000, p. 258).

Teacher education, personhood, and the public interest. In the ensuing autoethnography, I authored my action in the figured world of teacher education. The underlying values of that realm could be explained by recurrence to the conceptual diptych public interest/cultivating personhood suggested by Hansen (2008). The public interest can be understood as a social process "that both emerges from and is enacted by human beings seeking to bring activity to meaningful completion" (Hansen, 2008, p. 18). Teacher education is a practice that occurs in view of the public interest and, as such, it should go further than any particular concern or theoretical position.

However, the public interest is necessarily informed by individual *personhood*. There is in all social endeavors a personal element based on the ability of human beings to choose and decide their agency. In that vein, Hansen (2008) stated that "teacher educators can only benefit from rendering visible their notions of personhood and how these jibe with their assumptions about education and society" (p. 22), or, in other words, making explicit their figured worlds. All teacher educators have a sense of purpose, a vision, and that is not merely drawing on the social but usually self-concerned and particularly personal. It is no wonder then that Hansen (2008) suggested for current times "reconstructing how teacher educators perceive their various interests and commitments" (p. 20), if we still believe in a democratic society.

Criticality in ELT. Criticality has taken two directions in ELT: *critical thinking*, which aims at developing students' skills in terms of logics and decision-making, and *critical pedagogies*, which attempt to relate the classroom to its wider social context and to put into practice a transformational pedagogy (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2016). The work presented in this article could be inscribed under the second label, critical pedagogies, since my praxis under consideration was mostly inspired by readings of Freire (2009), Freire and Faundez

(2013), and specifically of Freire and Shor's (2014) account of the queries and qualms in the everyday experience of teachers' advancement of a critical agenda. It has been claimed, however, that relatively few scholars in ELT have called for any radical or revolutionary change in society, most possibly derived from the tendency to language objectification favored by the field (Chun & Morgan, in press).

This current research study could also be said to respond to the demands of what Chun and Morgan (in press) labeled the "second wave" of critical research in that it addresses issues of a teacher educator's identity in connection with the critical. In his introductory work to Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx), Pennycook (2001) suggested at least three variations for the use of the term *critical*. First, *critical* may be seen "as always engaging with questions of power and inequality" (p. 4). Second, *critical* may also mean "taking social inequality and social transformation as central to one's work" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 6). Last, Pennycook (2001) proposed that *critical* means *crucial* in the sense that, through critical praxes, Applied Linguistics was on the verge of moving into a new state of being: CALx. These three directions implicit in the term *critical* will be traced in the vision and action of the teacher educator examined in this paper, as well as in the succinct but complex definitions offered in this section that will positively inform this autoethnography.

As already suggested above, I had often labeled my practice *critical*. However, I had no clear grounds for the use of that label. Therefore, I devised an exploratory research question: *To what extent was I being critical?* As the data analysis proceeded, I realized the presence of elements in my criticality that I would categorize as mostly *discursive*, generally belonging in the realm of vision, and, as a result, I framed a second research question: *How was my criticality voiced—as a vision or turned into action?* Through this research paper, I seek to describe my vision, what I believed in, and my action, what I actually did, in order to consider as a final point how these could be read as *critical* in view of the interpretive frameworks briefly summarized in this section.

Method

Setting. This work was based on my experience while teaching the course on contemporary English literature at UNLPam. *English Literature II* was a subject taught during the second term of the fourth year of the ELTE program; its corpus primarily comprises the literature of the UK and the USA in the 20th century. About 15 students take the course every year, and it is taught along 17 weeks in the spring term (August to November) in weekly periods of 2 hours. Most students are female, and they are usually 22-25 years old when they take the course. The contents of *English Literature II* officially comprise the three key styles of culture in the 20th century, modernism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism (UNLPam, 2013). However, though these contents are still covered, the course has been

methodologically transformed into a reading seminar. In every lesson, the students explore in small groups, arranged as open spaces of debate and inquiry, themes selected from an initial list assembled as a class. At the moment this research was carried out, there were 10 students taking the course. Eight of the students were female and two were male, nine of them were ages 22-23 and one was 27, and all of them had completed the third year in the program. ELT is one of the four-year programs that can be studied at the School of Human Sciences at the above-mentioned university in which about 150 students are enrolled. UNLPam is a small institution and the only state university in the province of La Pampa, in central Argentina.

Participant. The research study was focused on me, the author of this paper. I graduated as a teacher of English from UNLPam in 1995, and started working there as an Assistant Teacher for *English Grammar III* in 1996. Three years later, I applied for a vacant position in *English Literature II* and started teaching literature in 1999. I became tenured in 2003, when I had already begun studies in pursuit of a master's degree in English Literature at the National University of Rìo Cuarto in 2007. I was sponsored by the British Council to pursue studies to obtain a master's degree in Cultural Studies and ELT in the UK in 2003-2004 and by the Fulbright Commission to obtain a doctorate in Education in the United States from 2008 to 2011. It was in the latter case in which I became acquainted with critical pedagogies, as the education programs offered at Southern Illinois University, where I studied, was mainly based on the tenets of that position. As a result, on my return to UNLPam, I decided to use critical literacy in the literature course I taught and to conduct a small-scale research project on its practice.

Procedure. At the point in my career when I was writing this autoethnography, I felt that I could not separate myself from the critical perspectives that had structured my underlying epistemologies. I had done Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), belonged to a Critical Literacy Special Interest Group (SIG), studied literature from mostly feminist and post-colonial perspectives, and most readings I was doing at the time were in the area of critical pedagogies. *Critical*, then, in the sense used by Lancy (1993), was the paradigm that best represented the way I approached this research. I had been already acquainted with autoethnography, but, until that moment, I had not dared to put the methodology into practice. Even though the research became thoroughly autoethnographic in nature, the intention was that it did not become purely narrative. Following Muncey (2010), then, it was planned as an *analytical autoethnography*. In it, as a researcher and not as a mere narrator/informant, I became the visible member "committed to an *analytic* [emphasis added] research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena" (p. 375). Those broader social phenomena encompassed in this case teaching literature critically in the ELTE program. Following Chang (2007), the autoethnography also constituted an *interactive introspection*, in which both the research assistant and I would interview each other

in order to relive the experiences under analysis and examine them critically. The research followed the processes of data collection and data analysis described below.

Data collection. At first, the source of data comprised ten observations (Obs.) that a research assistant would make from August to October 2016, but once it was decided that the research would be specifically focused on the practice of the teacher educator, other sources were added for the sake of triangulation and for further trustworthiness. From then onwards, it was assumed that an instance of systematic self-observation was to be produced. Thus, two key documents were included, which result highly informative in the interpretative stage of the data analysis. Those were: (a) a subjectivities statement (SS) that I had composed in May 2015 as part of another study (Basabe, 2016), and (b) my teaching diary (TD), which consisted of 12 entries (E) written during the same period about the research assistant's observations. Moreover, the research assistant also designed and conducted two semi-structured interviews, which took place in October 2016, immediately after the research question was established and when all previous data were already coded. Finally, minor sources of data, including documents, such as the syllabus, lesson plans, and class handouts, were also collected and scrutinized.

Data analysis. The descriptive stage of the study was mainly informed by the notion of analytical autoethnography. The data sources were coded in a data-driven mode (Gibbs, 2007). The categories for content analysis were highlighted in the sources of data under consideration. Comments were also made about any particular element that was deemed worth either explaining or expanding upon. An initial broad classification of codes was suggested as both researchers proceeded through the analysis: what I believed in, my *vision*, was not necessarily informing what I was actually doing, my *action*. Therefore, both vision and action were kept separately and coded accordingly, and once the data coded under one label reached its saturation point, we would try to summarize it under a general narrative statement.

The concept of interactive introspection informed the explanatory level of analysis. That involved the research assistant's peer checking of the coded data and a series of meetings for discussion, the last one resulting in an interview on the basis of the written autoethnography, which provided not only the outsider perspective but also external data to confirm or dispute the internal data generated from my personal reflection. Data analyzed at the descriptive stage of the research inform mostly the results section of this paper; those interpretations emerging at the explanatory stage comprise the discussion section.

The interweaving of data collection, analysis, and interpretation ultimately led to the production of the autoethnography. That involved "moving back and forth between self and others, zooming in and out of the personal and social realm, and submerging in and emerging out of the data" (Chang, 2008 p. 5). Some limitations must be pointed out, though.

On the one hand, this autoethnography may be excessively focused on me in at the expense of others. On the other hand, the research assistant's stance towards my interpretations was often positive, which is understandable in view of her critical engagement with the proposal and the fact that she had been my student at university. Last, issues such as class or genre, among others, were not explicitly examined, which could have caused the emergence of other relevant insights from the analysis. Nevertheless, they are indirectly revealed throughout the results.

Results

Here, brief narrative accounts of the data-driven coding will be offered, preceded by a statement summarizing the code as heading. Interspersed with the results are explanatory comments intended to provide the text with the analytical quality of an autoethnography.

Vision: What I believed in

Literature as part of life. That was a recurrent idea in my narrative. It explains the personal-growth approach to teaching literature that I had tried to put into practice since the early 2000s. The notion appears in my subjectivity statement, where I quoted Woolf's (2000/1925) dictum that "life had its way of adding day to day" (p. 47) as a motto that helped me overcome challenging situations in life. Therein, it is also mentioned that a student once told me that he expected literature to teach him "something that is valuable for life" (SS). Moreover, in one of my diary entries, I recorded having met a group of students in the corridors of the university and having generated in them an unexpected interest in the lives of Virginia Woolf and W. B. Yeats. After that conversation, I concluded that "there are all these intertextual relationships and these relationships with real life and all of these flood (sic) our relationship with literature" (TD. E. 6). Lately, I found a relatively more theoretical statement about the issue, and I used it to start the course on English literature in 2016: "This is literature as a fact of life –there is nothing to be afraid of in looking closely at the facts of life" (McRae, 1991, p. 59) (Obs. 10.08.16).

Literacy as a basis for language teaching. This belief had its grounds in my own education. In my statement of subjectivities, I stated, "I have always used literature and literacy as strategies" (SS). At primary (elementary) school, I thought, "there was something that 'disclosed' who I was, and that was my social class" (SS). I felt that, due to my working-class origins, I did not belong on the team of "good students" and that I needed to find "an ability that would make of me a good student" (SS). It was thus that I turned to reading and writing extensively. As an adolescent, I turned into an introvert and became rather lonely. Literature then became an "escape" from living in a small village, and when I had to leave it and go to university, I would have chosen Spanish but I chose English because I thought

I had to study something more profitable. Once I graduated, literature was, together with textual grammar, the two areas in which I began working, and I gradually found that the connection between both was stronger than what I had supposed at the very beginning.

Throughout this narrative, *literacy* points at a competence broader than reading, understood in the traditional sense in use in ELT settings, and encompassing all forms available within the teaching and learning enterprise to interpret and make sense of the world around us. *Literature* initially embodied for me a way of gaining access to the cultural aspects of English as a foreign language but then turned into motivation for personal growth. I replicated this personal process undergone in my relationship with literature when I progressively turned the literature course I taught into a literacy class in which I modeled different approaches to text and different ways of teaching. In that way, I attempted, first, to inscribe my practice in the craft tradition. For Coldron and Smith (1999), teachers usually inscribe their practices within a series of traditions: the craft, the moral, the artistic, and the scientific. In a paper that I wrote for my PhD studies (Basabe, 2010), I positioned myself in the craft tradition. Teaching in that tradition involves following a patterned plan in order to achieve a pre-determined end but also responding spontaneously to the unforeseen scenarios that constantly emerge in the context of the classroom. Second, even though I considered that teaching literacy was necessary, I tried to bridge that personal goal with what was institutionally required from me, i. e., that I teach literature. Last, I made those contradictory decisions about the course explicit to my students, and they responded accordingly (Obs. 10.08.16).

Criticality in education and society. This I also saw as stemming "from my own awareness of class consciousness and of having used literacy and literature as a tool to overcome my initial social constraints in educational institutions" (SS). More often than not, I openly claimed that I disregard class stratification as an issue to be discussed as part of the literature class, but covertly, I tried to use social class as a valid category of analysis and to generate a certain degree of class-consciousness. I seldom expressed those views publicly, even though, as attested by the research assistant, I repeatedly contemplated those issues in my teaching diary. Perhaps, I just concealed them from my students in an attempt to have them "walk the critical walk" (TD. E. 3). I considered that issues concerning or experienced by the working class were usually left aside from either the literature curriculum or the entire ELTE program at the university where I worked. Therefore, once I could openly start acknowledging my working-class origins, sparking discussions about class in the literature classroom made me feel that I was making an apt and necessary contribution to a critical debate about society and education in the context of ELT.

Critical pedagogies in action. This was a very strong wish of mine, and the reason why, when I was given a full-time tenured position and the first chance to conduct a research project, I chose to design and carry out a study devoted to critical literacy in the literature

classroom in ELTE (Basabe & Germani, 2014). However, I still felt there were "issues I wanted to talk about and I could not," to which I added that "I can't or I don't know how to get disengaged from the logics of modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism" around which I had used to organize the syllabus until 2009 (TD. E. 12).

However, I had established for myself some basic principles about the shared construction of knowledge, and I tried to tackle key social issues such as identity, gender, and class in my literature classes. Moreover, I felt "happy" when I recognized hints of critical responses from my students (TD. E. 12). Examples of this were: the time "when students 'reacted' to Steinbeck's (Steinbeck, 1965/1937) *Of mice and men* and to the tasks I proposed to them" (TD. E. 2), or "when they got to the core of a poem 'Hunger'" (TD. E. 3), in which cases my views coincided with the ones registered by the research assistant: "Even though the topic is not pleasurable, they are enjoying it!" (Obs. 20.08.16). Despite the positive attitude of my students, at some point during the term, I concluded that "I am tired of teaching. Of teaching and nobody caring. Of teaching and suffering the effects of what is not achieved… Of teaching and seeing the world not changing in the direction I want it to change" (TD. E. 8). Then, I guessed that that was the perpetual dilemma of those in the process of becoming critical educators: our vision of education will hardly become true during our lifetimes, and therefore, we feel the strain.

Action: What I did

Teacher-centered practices. Though not always lectures, the classes I taught were, according to the observations, "excessively guided" (Obs. 10.08.16, 20.08.16, 2, 14.09.16) and "very teacher-centered" (Obs. 13.10.16). Sometimes, I even took control of the interpretation of literary texts, and, as a result, the students became reluctant to speak (Obs. 14.09.16). I felt, however, that "there are strong expectations that I explain because I am (apparently) the one who knows; that makes me sometimes unable to manage my suggestions that they become responsible of their own readings" (TD. E. 3). On another occasion, I was perceived as "theorizing too much, which limited the students' interpretation from the very beginning" (Obs. 14.09.16). That made me feel the tug of ambivalence, and in a diary entry I recorded: "I have a contradictory feeling: I would also like to provide them with sociological readings of literature, but that would make little space for their own readings" (TD. E. 3). Yet, one element that stood out in my teacher-centered practice was the use I made of the blackboard, which, somehow hyperbolically, was described by the research assistant as "breaking with traditional ways" (Obs. 19.10.16). I had never reflected on that, but what I acknowledged I had always tried to do is, in accordance with the research assistant's observations, to "guide students' interpretation" (Obs. 22.08.16) and "just contribute to organize ideas" (Obs. 14.09.16) through the creation of a shared interpretation of the literary text. This was done by carefully triggering concepts from the students, extending from their own readings of the

literary texts and limiting my intervention to the creation of shared web-diagrams on the blackboard. There, I only suggested different relationships among the notions they offered, and I discarded suggesting myself any of those that would force them to understand the texts the way I had previously interpreted them.

Deconstruction of teaching practices. Together with the assessment criteria for the course (Obs. 10.08.16), there was always a clear disclosure not only of the course organization but also of the teaching strategies in use. In one of the first lessons in 2016, for example, I claimed, "the course follows a traditional teacher-centered logic at the beginning and gradually moves towards a student-centered perspective at the end" (Obs. 20.08.16). That comment coincided with the sense of "disorganization," reported by some of the students in their answers to my survey (TD. E. 12). However, it was through my diary that I once realized how I deconstructed my teaching practice or, in other words, how I disclosed to them all of what usually stays "behind the scenes" (TD. E. 5) of classroom discourse. That day, a student felt free to comment, "Oh God! So much fuss because we haven't read!" (TD. E. 5), and as in fact most had not read the end of the play they were analyzing, I asked those who had to make utmost efforts not to disclose the end. That way, I made evident, perhaps inadvertently, the constructed quality of the literary text. In other cases, I made remarks about the students' endeavors, such as some well-crafted pieces of creative writing or the ironic "we are in kindergarten" when they did not want to work (Obs. 19.10.16). That was sometimes criticized because of the straightforwardness of the act, as recorded in some of the students' surveys, but also oftentimes, when remarks were tactfully delivered, regarded as a token for "taking into account different learning styles" (Obs. 10.08.16).

Personal involvement in the teaching-learning process. Even though the students were apparently motivated when they started the course (Obs. 10.08.16), "the first feelings I had were anguish, instability, frustration… Uncertainty!" (TD. E. 1). That demonstrates my sense of permanent worry, and my deeply held notion that every single move I made was an enterprise of almost titanic dimensions. That was, above all, the way I lived teaching, and although the feeling might read quite disheartening, it turns into an empowering circumstance, as I gradually allowed my students` views enter the teaching process and tried to involve those students at the personal level, too. I valued one student's insistent connections of many texts that they were reading with the film *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Brody & Taylor-Wood, 2015) (TD. E. 1 and 6), for instance, and I provided detailed explanations to students that particularly tended to disagree with the shared interpretations of the class (Obs. 20.08.16). However, when I noticed "more and more resistance to my readings," I realized that "I feel good about this, but then I could do very little about it" (TD. E. 4, Obs. 20.08.16 and 19.10.16). One student, though, once voiced her view that "this is not time we wasted" (TD. E. 8), which I interpreted as an acknowledgement of the usefulness of class discussions in which she was expected to get involved at the personal level.

Now, as for the actions that I consciously carried out to involve my students with their learning at the personal level, two can be particularly highlighted: the selection of literary texts and my intention to foster student-generated discussions in the literature classroom. The former had become the highlight of the course in the students' surveys in the last three years, and I also felt pleased with the literary works from which I chose to develop materials: Joyce's (1996) "Eveline," a story about a girl having to make a crucial decision in life; Tóibín's (2010) "The Street," the story of a gay relationship between Arab migrants in Barcelona; or Berryman's (1989) "The Ball Poem," a poem about the epistemology of loss. These somehow display my critical position towards society and education mentioned above.

I tried to continually foster student-generated discussions in my literature classes, as in the case when I apparently adopted "inconclusive, erratic perspectives so that the students discuss and defend their own perspectives" (Obs. 19.10.16), or when, in an attempt to persuade them, I affirmed, "We need to discuss. That's the mood of this course. Otherwise, you think I am always right and that's not true" (Obs. 14.09.16). Their interventions were not actually as many as I had wanted them to be, yet, one of them concluded that eventually "every one of those who take the course gave every reading or interpretation his or her personal 'touch'" (student's survey as registered in TD. E. 12). At some point, I concluded that "I feel something like (sic) each one of them [the students in the group] *must* have seen something which in a way has helped them think there is the chance of becoming critical… Some attitude, some text, some activity" (TD. E. 12).

Critical tasks in literature. In that vein, I gradually changed the approach to teaching literature from a cultural model towards a personal-growth model, and I consequently re-organized the contents of the course into the conflicts that are usually present in a literary work: man versus nature, man versus man, man versus society, or man versus himself. In that way, I provided my students with a framework for reading and interpretation expecting personal responses from them but that does not leave analysis aside. Examples of that way of teaching included choosing one among a set of characters, and using the persona they selected, retelling their version of the story or class discussions in which groups were assigned to discuss the actions of one character but were later asked to change their perspective to that of another one (Obs. 19.10.16). At some point during the course, I wrote an assignment based on the students' particularly biased judgments of the events in a literary text:

> *Smith is a poor adolescent in a youth detention center in Essex in the 1950s. His father has recently died. Lennie is a migrant worker travelling with his friend in rural California in the 1930s. Smith has robbed a local shop; Lennie has killed a woman. Yet, you feel pity for the latter, not for the former. Give 3 (three) sound reasons for each case in which you explain why you judge them that way.*

Tasks like these helped students position themselves in the place of certain characters and see the world through their socio-cultural and ideological circumstances. That reality triggers from the students mostly personal and quite creative responses, together with the fact that the literary works selected for the course generally dealt with the lives of typically underrepresented subjects, e. g. Black women, Pakistani gay men, Southern laborers, and juvenile delinquents. This is evident in some of the observations (Obs. 09.11.16 and 11.11.16). One student reported, "before this literature (sic), I had only paid attention to the plot of the stories and to themes, without actually considering how they were constructed through the language" (student survey recorded in TD. E. 12). I felt, though, that having achieved that response did not necessarily mean I had taken them to the critical positions that I had tried to reach.

Discussion

In this section, I address the results presented above mainly from the perspective of Pennycook's (2001) three variations for the use of the term *critical*. At some points, I suggest a broader scope, and I discuss my vision and action in the terms specified by Hansen's (2008) notion of personhood or in view of Holland et al.'s (1998) agency in practice theory.

In *Miedo y Osadía*, Freire and Shor (2014) recommended at least three steps to be followed in the critical direction: (a) to overcome the fears of both teachers and students by gradually sharing a common critical language, (b) to keep structure and rigor around critical work, and (c) to apply a dialogical methodology and a situated pedagogy. In view of the results, it could be stated that there were partial accomplishments in my *action*, as reported by myself, especially in terms of me having tried to follow tenets (b) and (c). I attempted to put into practice a form of critical pedagogy based on my own personal and teaching experience. I had realized that literacy had become a major issue for my students, and I had therefore decided to change the literature course I was assigned to teach into one highlighting critical literacy and a personal-growth model in its approach to literature. I also made utmost efforts to provide that change with a relative degree of structure and rigor through my personal involvement with and my continuous deconstruction of the teaching process. In brief, I achieved, through my action, moving in the direction of providing the critical with that sense of cruciality hailed by Pennycook (2001).

However, I felt I could not set a clear critical agenda either at the personal or the institutional level. Still following Pennycook's (2001) variations for the term *critical*, it can be stated that, even though acknowledging my concern about class stratification, for example, I had seldom taken social inequality or social transformation as central to my work. Moreover,

I reported to have hardly gotten engaged with questions of power and inequality, except sporadically in the restricted context of teacher-student interactions within the classroom. In that, I might have been unable, as suggested by Freire and Shor (2014), to overcome the fears of becoming critical by gradually sharing a common critical language with colleagues and students, a vision that I could have turned into action through exercising my own agency in the context of ELTE.

There also seems to be, in my persistent questioning attitude, an inability to actually measure my capacity to reach a transformational practice. Through my teaching and research, I was able to make my personal commitment with a critical pedagogy explicit in my working context, and I represented that as bridging my personal inclinations with the public demands of the purpose or teacher education, in the sense described by Hansen (2008). I was restricted, though, in my *vision* due to a persistent wariness of the appropriateness of keeping a critical position in my teaching in view of the course and the population I was working with and of my perceptions of the institutional demands of my context, which I perceived as imposing on me a merely linguistic approach to teaching. These constraints, moreover, are very much in accordance with the determined tendency in ELT to treat language as a set of neutral, decontextualized forms and structures (Chun & Morgan, in press). As a result, I could not configure a truly enabling figured world from which to pursue the goals that I valued, and I only authored minor actions in that direction. There was in me, consequently, still much to be carried out in terms of what Holland et al. (1998) called improvising artfully in figured worlds.

Conclusion

In response to my initial research question, I must conclude that I was being critical only to the extent to which I felt I was allowed by my figured world a context in which I tended to represent both the population I was teaching and the institutional demands as restricting my agency. Even though the notions of the critical informing my practice were certainly drawing on wider disciplinary understandings of education and society than those of ELT, my vision and action were firmly grounded in the settings and practices proper to the field. As such, it should be concurred with Chun and Morgan (in press) that they were not ready to set any radical or revolutionary agenda in ELTE.

In response to my second research question, it should be stated that the event of writing my analytical autoethnography itself became for me a turning point between how my criticality was voiced as vision and how it was turned into action. As reported in the section on results, before this step was made, I had only made minor attempts at adopting a critical stance or assuming a working-class position only within the classroom. Together with an article in which I demonstrate my ways of teaching (Basabe, 2018), this text may help bridge

the gap between my vision and my action since I am assuming now a public position in the critical direction. I tended to grow critically, however, only to the extent that the figured worlds I framed for myself had let me do so.

Further studies are needed that inform how teachers exercise their agency and their capacity to become critical, and many more should probably be written in an attempt to show how those abilities are constrained by the geopolitics of knowledge and the coloniality of power. Analyzing these constraints, however, would go beyond the aims of this research: to describe my vision and my action and to consider to what extent they were critical.

Overall, criticality cannot be measured in absolute terms, either in vision or in action. Teachers, as well as teacher educators, can only *grow* critically, and they should be considered critical as long as they continue growing in the critical direction. It is hoped then that this work will provide new insights about the issues of agency and personhood of a teacher educator so that it inspires other teachers who aspire to transform their practices in order to turn them into critical praxes.

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The Lingua Franca Core: A Plausible Option?

El modelo Lingua Franca Core: ¿Una opción viable?

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Abstract

One important decision that English language teachers should make is to decide on a pronunciation model. This decision should be based not only on mere preference, but also on technical information. This paper seeks to review the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a pronunciation model proposed by Jennifer Jenkins (1998, 2000) in an attempt to facilitate communication for L2 speakers. This paper also presents a set of reactions that her proposal has prompted in scholars in the area of teaching English language pronunciation. Such reactions are the manifestation of rejection of the LFC which is based on a number of arguments. First, there is no agreement as to the number of interactions that occur in English in L1 and L2 contexts. Thus, the predominant use of L2 speakers of English is questioned. Secondly, the advantage of the intelligibility of non-native speakers over native speakers in interaction with other non-native speakers is also subjected to scrutiny. Finally, a special focus on implications for the L1-Spanish-speaking learner of English is proposed, as well as for English language teachers who teach pronunciation. For instance, a series of issues which could facilitate the learner's workload is discussed. One the other hand, the implementation of the LFC implies that the amount of work to be done by the teacher would be drastically increased. This necessarily entails a disadvantage in terms of both time and teaching materials to be allocated by the English Language Teaching (ELT) professional.

Keywords: ELT; pronunciation; pronunciation models; intelligibility; Lingua Franca Core, language teachers; L2 speakers.

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Resumen

Una de las decisiones importantes que debe tomar el profesor de lengua extranjera tiene relación con el modelo de pronunciación que este adoptará. Tal decisión debiera basarse no solo en una mera preferencia, sino también en información de carácter técnico. Este trabajo es una revisión del Lingua Franca Core (LFC), un modelo de pronunciación propuesto por Jennifer Jenkins (1998, 2000), el cual intenta facilitar la comunicación para aquellos hablantes del inglés como L2 y las reacciones que su propuesta ha desencadenado en académicos en el área de la enseñanza de la pronunciación de la lengua inglesa. Tales reacciones son la manifestación del rechazo al LFC, lo cual se basa en una serie de argumentos que aquí se detallan. En primer lugar, no se ha llegado a un acuerdo en cuanto al número de interacciones que ocurren en los contextos de inglés como L1 y L2. De esta forma, la ventaja —en cuanto a la inteligibilidad de hablantes no nativos por sobre los nativos en interacciones con otros no nativos— también se ve sometida a cuestionamiento. En segundo lugar, se da cuenta sobre la ausencia de detalles tanto fonéticos como fonológicos del LFC, entre otros argumentos. Finalmente, se hace hincapié en las implicancias para el aprendiente hispanoparlante de inglés como L2, así como para los profesores de pronunciación inglesa. Por ejemplo, se discute una serie de asuntos que pudiesen facilitar el esfuerzo del aprendiente. Por otra parte, la implementación del LFC implica que el trabajo realizado por el profesor aumentaría en forma drástica. Esto necesariamente conlleva una desventaja tanto en términos de tiempo como en el material que el profesional de la enseñanza del inglés debe utilizar.

Palabras claves: ELT; pronunciación; modelos de pronunciación; inteligibilidad; Lingua Franca Core, profesores de lengua; hablante de segunda lengua.

Introduction

It is an unquestionable fact that English has become the language of communication worldwide (Sharifian, 2017). Every day, millions of interactions are conducted in English in contexts where the participants' L1 backgrounds are of languages other than English. The rise of English as an international language has had a great impact on fields such as second language acquisition, applied linguistics, and English language teaching (ELT). Even though the teaching of second language pronunciation has received less attention than other fields within second and foreign language acquisition, such as syntax or morphology (Al-Azzawi & Barany, 2016; Foote, Trofimovich, Collins, & Urzúa, 2016; Koike, 2016; Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), it has still received some focus. Unfortunately, that focus is sometimes accidental rather than planned (Al-Azzawi & Barany, 2016).

In the teaching of any language, be it as a second or foreign language, a key point lies in deciding what accent is to be adopted as the model for the learners (Carrie, 2013; Moedjito, 2015). In the case of English, the general tendency is in the direction of a native accent. In other words, the type of accent spoken by an individual "…usually of an inner circle English and largely based on monolingual language practices and norms" (Hansen-Edwards, 2016, p. 1). Thus, the choice is between two commonly adopted native-speaker varieties (Carrie, 2013; Moedjito, 2015). These are Received Pronunciation (RP), which is the accent taught

to L2 English language learners who aim at a British model of pronunciation, and General American (GA) for those who prefer the American accent.

It is also unquestionable that in spite of the efforts that L2 English language learners make, they rarely attain near-native or native-like pronunciation (Chan, 2018). Empirical research has attempted to determine the factors that prevent these learners from achieving native-like levels of pronunciation attainment by examining a number of variables that are thought to be the cause of failure in accomplishing this goal. A review by Mackay, Piske and Flege (2001) provides an examination of the factors that have been studied as the predictors of attaining an L2 foreign accent. These factors include: age of L2 learning, length of residence in a country where the L2 is the language of communication, gender, years of formal instruction, motivation, language learning aptitude, and amount of L1 and L2 use. The findings seem to agree that the best predictor of L2 foreign accent is that of age of learning (Mackay *et al*., 2001; Oyama, 1976; Patkowski, 1990). This evidence seems to support the notion of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which claims that near-native speaking attainment in a second language is biologically determined. Thus, the L2 learner will not always be able to achieve native-like proficiency in a second language due to age constraints (Ghazi-Saidi, Dash & Ansaldo, 2015; Szyszka, 2015). All of this seems to be true, especially for the attainment of the kind of/level of L2 pronunciation.

Apparently, empirical evidence seems to indicate that all efforts to adopt a native speaker model of pronunciation in language teaching, after a certain age, are hopeless and theoretically unfounded (Susan, Suzanne & Carter, 2018). This may happen due to the fact that most language-acquisition cognitive functions take place during childhood. These functions seem to disappear once the L1 has been settled; therefore, these are no longer available for L2 learning (Schmid, Gilbers, & Nota, 2014). This makes posing the following questions a must for any ELT professional and anyone involved in the area: are native speaker accents a valid model for L2 learners to imitate? What is then the L2 pronunciation model to be adopted? The answers to these questions are not straightforward and are the cause of vigorous debate among scholars and phoneticians worldwide. However, in relation to the first question, there seems to be a consensus that the present goal in L2 English pronunciation should aim at intelligibility rather than native speaker mastery (Susan, Suzanne, & Carter, 2018; Pourhosein, 2016).

I shall now offer an examination of the two ends of the continuum on the above-mentioned issue. On the one hand, I review the approach proposed by Jennifer Jenkins (1998; 2000) termed "The Lingua Franca Core." Then, I present an examination of two of its detractors, namely Trudgill (2005) and Wells (2005), who claim that the L2 English learner will not communicate, exclusively, with other non-native speakers. It seems impossible, they claim, to predict who those L2 speakers will interact with using English in future interactions.

Neither teachers nor students can foretell what contexts, whether EIL or EFL, they will take part in. Finally, a discussion on the contribution of each approach is offered.

The Lingua Franca Core

Jenkins (1998) claims that, as learners generally fail to acquire native-like pronunciation of English, the direction of English language pronunciation teaching should be changed. This direction should no longer aim to get the learner to achieve a native accent of English as their target model. Instead, the English language teacher should aim at "comfortable intelligibility." She argues that, contrary to what has widely been assumed and accepted, native speakers' pronunciation is not the most intelligible model to adopt. In addition, she gives an account of the large and rapid rise of the number of non-native speakers of English and the number of interactions that occur among them, and states that in most of these interactions the participants are non-native speakers of English.

On the basis of evidence in support of the CPH and the international status of English, Jenkins devised what she calls "The Lingua Franca Core," which consists of a set of features that she considers essential for mutual intelligibility, as reported by her own empirical evidence on interactions conducted in English in international contexts (Jenkins, 2002). These include the areas concerned with the production of segmentals, placement of nuclear stress, and articulatory setting (Jenkins, 1998). Additionally, a set of non-core features is provided. These non-core features are not essential since their absence does not affect intelligibility. Among these are word stress, features of connected speech (elision, assimilation, linking, and weak forms), and rhythm. Finally, Jenkins (1998, 2000) claims that any trace of L1 transfer is not to be considered an error since under the LFC it would be labeled as a regional variant.

Concerning English language teachers' role, Walker (2001) emphasizes their responsibility to reformulate priorities regarding the choice of a model that allows L2 English learners to achieve an acceptable level of intelligibility. Walker also supports Jenkins's contribution in the development of the LFC, and highlights that this is the only approach based on findings drawn from empirical evidence. According to Walker (2001), a possible solution in setting the priorities in the teaching of pronunciation lies in having recourse to contrastive analysis between the phonological systems of the L1 and the L2. Additionally, Walker (2001, p. 2) claims that the adoption of the LFC is/was informed by contrastive analysis results in a positive effect for two reasons "a) the total workload required of teacher and learner is now greatly reduced; b) the new goals are more achievable both in terms of teaching and learning." This practice has been adopted by authors such as Zoghbor (2018), who examined the differences and similarities of Modern Standard Arabic and the LFC in order to identify possible communications breakdowns. Finally, Walker (2001) suggests that adopting the LFC would imply a lower psychological burden on the learner by means of emphasizing what

she/he *can* do and not by setting unrealistic goals that she/he *cannot* achieve, such as imposing the insurmountable objective of native speaker pronunciation.

The Other Side of the Coin

The first objection to Jenkins's work is that manifested by Trudgill (2005). This author suggests that there is a distortion of the actual superiority of non-native speakers of English over native speakers in terms of number. Trudgill states that the number of non-native speakers is much smaller than the one that Jenkins (2000) asserts, as reported by Crystal (as cited in Trudgill, 2005). This may happen since, in her account, Jenkins includes the figures corresponding to those speakers of English in an ESL background and those whose level of proficiency is not high enough to be considered real speakers of the language. Moreover, Trudgill (2005) adds that the number of interactions in English is far larger among native speakers of English than among L2 English speakers. This would, to an extent, discredit the notion of English as an International Language which is used by Jenkins (2000) to address the interaction of non-native speakers with other non-native speakers in English. However, the current total number of English language speakers worldwide is estimated at 1,132,366,680, out of whom 379,007,140 are L1 speakers and 753,359,540 are L2 English speakers (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig, 2019). These figures are in line with those claimed by Jenkins.

Trudgill (2005) then points out that non-native English language speakers will not only wish to communicate with other non-native English language speakers, but also with native speakers of English. Even more, some will even aim to attain native speaker pronunciation. Thus, there is no point in having English language learners make a choice on who they want to interact with, for the range of their potential interlocutors includes speakers from all backgrounds: ESL, EFL, or native English language speakers (Wells, 2005). Additionally, English language learners may want to use English with a variety of interlocutors and not exclusively with one single group of speakers. Thus, there is no way for English language teachers to predict with whom their learners are going to use English. In other words, these teachers should be able to cater for a range of learner preferences. The same issue is raised by Wells (2005).

Trudgill (2005) then proceeds to refute Jenkins's (2000) claim that non-native English language speakers are a more intelligible model. He does this by citing different studies which conclude that non-natives find only a slight advantage in the speech produced by other non-native speakers at their initial stages of L2 English learning. For instance, he mentions a study conducted by Wijngaarden (as cited in Trudgill, 2005) in which he found that trilingual Dutch-L1 speakers (L2 English, L3 German) found non-native speakers more intelligible than native speakers. However, this occurred when they listened to the speakers

using their second foreign language (German, their lower-proficiency second language). On the contrary, when they listened to the speakers in their primary second language (English), they found native speakers of English more intelligible than other non-native speakers.

With respect to the LFC, Trudgill (2005) suggests that Jenkins's proposal in phonological terms is insufficient. He claims that the LFC focuses on the phonetic level. Even more, he claims that the LFC still poses a huge burden on the language learner. Finally, he claims that it is overwhelmed with vagueness and lacks detail concerning the number of segments and phonetic information of the vowel system. For instance, there is no account (or count?) of the number of pure vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs. Furthermore, RP and GA, on which the LFC is grounded, do not have identical vowel systems. In addition, in these two native-speaker accents, there are a large number of words which are pronounced with a different vowel phoneme. For example, the word "got" is pronounced /gɑ:t/ in GA, whereas RP has /gɒt/. The lack of phonological and phonetic detail about vowels that the LFC presents allows for an endless number of confusing realizations for this and other similar words which, rather than facilitating communication and intelligibility, could hinder them.

Another argument offered by Dauer (2005) is in relation to phonological and phonetic observations on changes that could have been proposed in the LFC. For instance, she criticizes the fact that the LFC is a rhotic model grounded on a non-rhotic accent (RP). First, Jenkins does not provide a justification for the rhoticity of the LFC. If rhoticity is to be used to help distinguish pairs of words such as /pɒt/ and /pɔ:(r)t /, then vowel length does not seem to be as important as the LFC suggests, or at least this item has not properly been accounted for. Additionally, a word like "fire" is pronounced as /faɪr/ in GA and as /faɪə/ in RP. However, the LFC does not specify whether words like this should be pronounced as /faɪr/ (with a diphthong) or /faɪər/ (with a triphthong) as a result of rhoticity. Thus, the LFC does not account for the treatment of diphthongs and triphthongs, a practice which generates doubt about the sequence of segments in words such as "fire" and other similar words which have a different phonemic sequence in GA and RP. Again, it is worth remembering that the LFC is based on these two accents.

Dauer (2005) also disagrees with Jenkins (2000) about the teachability of word stress. Concerning this issue, the LFC does not consider this feature an essential one. However, Dauer (2005) emphasizes that the LFC considers aspiration of /p, t, k/ in initial position in stressed syllables to be crucial for intelligibility. This is a fundamental contradiction, for it is impossible to use aspiration accurately without being able to properly stress words. Hence, the treatment of word stress has also been neglected.

In summary, there is no consensus as to the number of L1 and L2 interactions in English. Thus, it is difficult to determine which group of English users is predominant, native speakers or non-native speakers. Besides that, it is argued that there is no way of

predicting the potential interlocutors that learners of English will have in their future interactions. Moreover, the advantage of non-native speakers over native speakers in terms of intelligibility is questioned in light of empirical evidence. Finally, not only is the LFC full of vagueness and imprecisions in terms of its phonological system and phonetic details, but it also presents a paucity of essential information on important features such as stress, aspiration, and their relationship.

I shall now offer a discussion of the issues that have been raised by both parts in the debate. For this, I shall provide examples and insights drawn from my own experience both as a learner of English and as an English language teacher to learners whose first language is Spanish.

Discussion

Jenkins (2000) claims that native English language speakers' pronunciation is not the most intelligible. However, non-native English language speakers' deviations from the native standard form make non-native speech even more difficult (Lev-Ari, van Heugten & Peperkamp, 2016). This is especially true when the non-native listener is not familiar with another non-native speaker's accent. For instance, in a study by White, Treenate, Kiatgungwalgrai, Somnuk, & Chaloemchatvarakorn (2016), the results suggested significant differences between accent familiarity and listener comprehension. The study included audios recorded by speakers with eight different accents. These included Thai, Irish, British, Spanish, Korean, Indian, Croatian, and Nigerian English. The accents were assigned to four groups according to the listeners' level of familiarity with such accents. The results revealed significant differences across all groups. The group with the highest test scores was that with the most familiar accents. This group included the Thai, the British and the Irish accents.

As an EFL speaker of English, I have myself experienced the difficulty to understand both native speakers and non-native speakers of English on many occasions. To illustrate this, I shall mention an anecdote that happened to me when I was at a baker's shop and was served by an Asian man during my stay in Australia. It is worth mentioning that at the time I was not familiar with any Asian accents in L2 English. Having ordered some rolls of bread, the attendant asked "soft or crunchy?" However, he produced the utterance as ['sɒft ɔː 'kʌntɹi] which I interpreted as "soft or country?" I was not able to understand what he meant until a few minutes later with the help of context as I began thinking of phonetically similar words which could apply to the situation. This is a clear example of how unintelligible pronunciation can lead to miscommunication. To this, I have to add the many other occasions on which I have experienced a similar situation, not only as a foreigner overseas, but also as an English language teacher.

Regarding the issue described in the preceding paragraph, I agree with Trudgill (2005) that non-natives of English do not understand other non-natives of English more simply because they produce fewer phonological contrasts. Actually, reducing the number of these contrasts may result in misunderstanding; let us just consider the case in which L1 Spanish speakers generally tend to collapse /æ, ʌ, ɑː/into [a], thus producing *cat, cut,* and *cart* as homophones.

Unlike phonological contrasts, a feature that does seem to play a crucial role in understanding other speakers is that of speech rate (Chang, 2018). In general, non-native speakers of English tend to present a much slower speech pace than native speakers of English (Baese-Berk & Morrill, 2015). This does, to some extent, aid intelligibility. However, slower speech tempo does not guarantee intelligibility. On the contrary, on many occasions non-native English language speakers are still found to be unintelligible regardless of their slower speech rate.

Within the notion of English as an International Language (EIL), Jenkins (1998) suggests that the LFC grows out of the need to adapt to the change of direction of English as a result of the non-native-to-non-native interactions in English. The aim of the LFC is then to facilitate the learning of the pronunciation of English in the EIL context. Thus, a question emerges, as Wells (2005) poses it, "Do you and your students want to be able to interact with native speakers? Or only with non-native speakers?" (p. 1). Or put differently, do you discard or discriminate against a particular group of speakers of a language when you embark upon the task of learning it?

In terms of vowel quantity, Jenkins (as cited in Dauer, 2005) recommends that these should be clipped before voiceless consonants and lengthened before voiced consonants, e.g. *sat, sad* [sæt, sæːd]. In terms of quality, Jenkins suggests that any trace of a foreign accent is permissible as long as vowel quality is consistent. However, by bearing in mind these two recommendations about vowel quantity and quality, consider an L1 Spanish speaker, who is an L2 English learner, whose /æ/, due to L1 transfer, goes in the direction of cardinal vowel [a], which is allowed by the LFC, and who, again by means of the LFC, was taught to lengthen this vowel before a voiced consonant. A learner of this kind would eventually end up producing something similar to [haːd] for "had", in its strong form according to the rules of the LFC. Hence, a native speaker of English, or even a non-native speaker of English, would most likely decode this as *hard* rather than *had*.

It can be concluded that speakers whose pronunciation is based on the LFC will eventually be understood by other non-LFC-pronunciation-based speakers, regardless of the type of pronunciation these potential interlocutors might have. In such a case, extreme freedom in the quality and quantity of vowels might lead to misunderstanding if interaction with native speakers were to take place, for different native speakers might rely on these

two features differently to decode the meaning of some words. A native English language speaker of RP and a native speaker of, say, Australian English might focus on different parameters to distinguish the difference between pairs such as *cut* and *cart* as pronounced by a non-native speaker of English. The RP speaker would most probably focus his attention on vowel quality rather than quantity, whereas the Australian speaker would do the opposite due to the phonetic characteristics of the systems of each speaker. This is due to the fact that RP distinguishes the separation of vowel qualities for /ʌ/ and /ɑː/ (Bjelaković, 2016) as opposed to Australian English which uses the same quality for both (Andreu Nadal, 2016).

In accordance with the LFC, the processes involved in connected speech such as weak forms, elision, and assimilations are to be avoided. This is contradictory with Jenkins's claim (as cited in Trudgill, 2005) that the LFC would "Drastically reduce the pronunciation teaching load" (p. 79). If avoidance of these features were to facilitate the pronunciation of English, then how could it be easier for the learner to pronounce phonological sequences such as that encountered in phrases like /henri ðə sɪks θrəʊn/ which even native speakers tend to avoid by means of the elision of some segments. Undoubtedly, the teaching of these features of connected speech is an aid for English language learners to overcome such difficulties and achieve comfortable levels of intelligibility when interacting with a native speaker of English (Moedjito, 2015).

The LFC claims that vowel epenthesis is preferred (over the elision of consonants?) as compared to the elision of consonants. Thus, words like "McDonald's" would sound better and more intelligible as "Macudonaludo", presumably pronounced as something in the direction of [mækʊdɒnæluːdəʊ], or "product" as [pərɒdʌkʊtə] rather than [pɒdʌk]. First, this results in words containing a much larger number of syllables (twice as many in the case of "McDonald's", and even more than twice the number of syllables for "product"), leading to a potentially higher degree of unintelligibility than those realizations that contain elision of consonants.

As Wells (2005) states, the irregular spelling system of English is one of the sources of the many difficulties that the English language learner faces. This is especially true for those learners whose L1 has a high level of correspondence between its spelling system and its pronunciation, e. g. Spanish and Italian. These difficulties can be overcome with appropriate instruction aided with adequate techniques. In this respect, the use of phonetic transcription plays a paramount role, Wells (2002) claims:

> *The principal reason for using phonetic transcription is easily stated. When we transcribe a word or an utterance, we give a direct specification of its pronunciation. If ordinary spelling reliably indicated actual pronunciation, phonetic transcription might be unnecessary; but often it does not. (Wells, 2002, para. 2).*

The LFC includes the deletion of /ð, θ/ from the phonemic inventory of English as an International Language (EIL). In this respect, I think it is a much better decision to encourage

English language learners to acquire these segments, if they are not already part of their L1 inventory. Practicing these segments in order to master them seems sensible; on the contrary, not learning them at all does not. Thus, the latter scenario entails that the learner is at risk of being exposed to possible misunderstandings.

After all, evidence seems to indicate that L2 English learners can actually benefit from pronunciation instruction (Barrera-Pardo, 2004). In addition to the segments mentioned above, as Dauer (2005) pinpoints, there is no mention to /ʒ/ whose distribution is limited and could well be coped with by substitution with other phonemes. For instance, it could be replaced by /ʃ/ in intervocalic position, /ʃ/ or /ʤ/ in final position as in "beige", and with /ʤ/ in its extremely rare initial position in "genre".

The LFC is supposed to facilitate the teaching load and goals for the language teacher (Jenkins, 1998, 2000). Concerning this matter, I must state I strongly disagree. In spite of the effort that any English language teacher may make, it seems impractical for them to survey their learners on what type of pronunciation model they would like to learn and then cater for all tastes together in one class. This would evidently result in educational chaos and a much larger workload for English language teachers. Besides, not all English language teachers can count on the necessary expertise or confidence (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) to teach pronunciation, which adds extra difficulty to the situation.

I do agree though, just as Wells (2005) does, that English language learners' goals should be considered as well as their L1 background. This necessarily leads to rethinking the L2 pronunciation models. Thus, the issue is, as Trudgill (2005) poses it, not whether to adopt or not a native model of L2 pronunciation but to which extent it is adopted. English language teachers should then ask themselves: what is the best L2 English pronunciation model available that suits my students' needs and L1 background? In this way, the possibility goes beyond RP or GA. In the case of Chilean learners of English, who happen to be those who I teach and for the majority of whom RP has been the model for decades, is RP still a valid and suitable option? Considering that Spanish-speaking learners of English generally produce /r/ in post-vocalic position, should General American then or any other rhotic accent be adopted as the model to aim at? Of course, the answer to this question is not straightforward. Decisions made in this regard can benefit to a great extent from work informed by contrastive analysis.

Conclusion

In terms of adopting models for the teaching of English pronunciation, no one owns the truth. As can be seen from the arguments presented above, scholars and academics from all over the world have made their contributions. Although I do not consider the LFC a

feasible option, Jenkins has raised the issue and made an attempt to offer a solution to the difficulties and challenges that millions of English language learners face every day. Still, (or Yet, Conversely,) Trudgill offers a more sensible approach by claiming that it is important to bear in mind the extent to which native speaker models of English language pronunciation are aimed.

Finally, other issues such as learners' goals, and their L1 backgrounds, should also be considered when choosing an L2 English pronunciation model. The teaching and learning of English language pronunciation should be guided and aided by useful tools such as phonetic transcription, for the more advanced learners, and other resources which are now more accessible such as computer software, mobile apps, and internet tools (Buss, 2016).

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Points of Improvement: Reflective Strategy to Support Chilean EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Lesson Planning

Puntos de mejora: una estrategia reflexiva para apoyar el proceso de planificación de profesores de inglés en formación

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Abstract

This action research study aims to explore the contribution of the use of points of improvement as a reflective strategy to support eleven Chilean EFL pre-service teachers' ability to plan communicative-oriented lessons. Through questionnaires and a focus group, participants' responses were examined using thematic analysis. Findings yielded that their beliefs about communicative-oriented lessons were in fact linked with the communicative approach. Lastly, their perceptions towards the use of points of improvement as a reflective strategy showed more awareness in the classroom, narrowing the gap between their pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge.

Keywords: reflective practice, lesson planning, pre-service teachers, CLT.

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Resumen

Esta investigación acción tuvo como objetivo explorar la contribución del uso de los puntos de mejora como una estrategia reflexiva para apoyar la capacidad de once profesores en formación de un programa chileno de pedagogía en inglés para planificar lecciones orientadas a la comunicación. Por medio de cuestionarios y un grupo focal se examinaron las respuestas de los participantes utilizando un análisis temático. Los hallazgos arrojaron que sus creencias sobre las lecciones orientadas a la comunicación están vinculadas con el enfoque comunicativo. Por último, sus percepciones sobre el uso de puntos de mejora como estrategia reflexiva mostraron una mayor conciencia en el aula, lo que estrecha la brecha más entre su conocimiento pedagógico y disciplinario.

Palabras clave: enfoque comunicativo, planificación, profesores en formación, práctica reflexiva.

Introduction

The Chilean curriculum for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) suggests that English language teaching should focus on the development of macro skills of listening, writing, reading, and speaking in order to promote students' ability to communicate fluently in this language (Ministerio de Educación de Chile, 2015). Most of the English Language teacher education programs in Chile have begun to train pre-service teachers in methodologies to plan lessons under these criteria of the national curriculum. This training, thus, should follow a communicative-based approach. Despite these directions, EFL lessons in Chile still seem to be based on traditional approaches for various reasons. For instance, English language teachers experience more difficulties having to do with the language. These are related to motivational aspects (Glas, 2013), linguistic deficiencies in students' L1 (Díaz et al, 2008), and contextual difficulties, which make it even harder to comply with the Ministry requirements. Therefore, teachers tend to opt for traditional teaching practices (Yilorn & Acosta, as cited in Yilorn, 2016, p.107).

In view of the above scenario, early instances of reflection should become pivotal for raising pre-service awareness about the new trends of teaching EFL (Farrell, 2013). This means that one road to be aware of new approaches to teach English, and actually being able to reconsider them during the process of teaching, is through reflection. In fact, Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) has shown to have a great impact on undergraduates' beliefs regarding the way they will engage in different methodologies to teach EFL (Barahona, 2014a; Tagle et al., 2014). Henceforth, the importance of leaving room for EFL pre-service teachers to start reflecting upon the EFL curriculum seems crucial. It is deemed important to explore how guided instances of reflection could indeed help EFL pre-service teachers to put into practice what they are taught at university in SLTE programs. With this in mind, this article presents an action research study that explores the contribution that points of improvement as a reflective practice strategy may have in the pre-service teachers' planning of communicative-oriented lessons as part of their final practicum experience.

Theoretical Framework

Reflective practice. Echoing Dewey's words, one sees that reflection can be seen as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933, p. 6). Henceforth, reflection is essential for an EFL teacher as, through it, teaching and classroom practices can be modified or reaffirmed by the identification of espoused theories or beliefs related to the exercise of their profession.

For EFL pre-service teachers, this becomes even more relevant since experiencing processes of reflection while they are starting to be immersed in school settings is seen as crucial in their learning-to-teach process (Barahona, 2014a). However, despite the importance of reflection instances, studies in the field of SLTE have shown that little time is devoted for pre-service teachers to engage in such processes, a practice which seems to be related mostly to academic and schools demands (Farrell, 2014). The Chilean context is not excluded from this reality as SLTE programs in this country still seem to be more oriented towards developing "linguistic competence and knowing about the language" (Martin, 2016, p. 37) rather than questioning or reflecting on practical matters. For example, some of the participants from Martin's study (2016), in which she investigated the curriculum of Chilean SLTE programs, reported that time was the main constraint when trying to implement lessons with a reflective focus.

For reflective practice to be carried out, there needs to be time for "language teachers [to] systematically examine their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning throughout their careers" (Farrell, 2013, p. 1). In this respect, EFL pre-service teachers in the Chilean context have been gradually introduced and immersed in these types of reflective instances in the past few years. This has been done by allowing EFL pre-service teachers to notice what their beliefs about teaching and learning and/or practices are, leading eventually to more informed pedagogical and classroom decisions, as well as to engage in different approaches to teaching (Díaz, Martínez, Roa, & Sanhueza, 2010).

In this respect, beliefs are a key element to becoming reflective practitioners; therefore, for the purposes of this study, providing an account of what is understood by beliefs in the educational context is relevant. Considering the various definitions which have been given to this construct (Borg, 2003; Kagan, 1992), beliefs will be understood here as "more or less integrated and consistent sets of ideas" (Solar & Díaz, 2009, p. 59) that impact the way teachers think, behave, and make decisions in the classroom, thus shaping their practices (Borg, 2003; Tagle-Ochoa et al., 2014). In addition, given that beliefs are ingrained in our memory, they will be seen as likely to be modified if processes of reflection take place (Farrell, 2013; Tagle et al., 2014).

With respect to the concept of reflection, for the purpose of this study, it will be conceived in terms of stages (Schön, 1983; Murphy, 2013; Farrell, 2013). These stages are said to be related to past, present and future teaching experiences. Each of those experiences helps EFL pre-service teachers to make sense of events that might have an impact on their pedagogical and classroom practices.

From Schön's perspective (1983, 1987), two main reflective processes are carried out when engaging in reflection: 1) when a pedagogical action is taking place and 2) after the action takes place. Those two processes of reflection are named reflection in-action and on-action respectively (Schön, 1983, 1987). Both processes are considered to be quite beneficial, particularly for pre-service teachers and nursing students (Murphy, 2013; Farrell, 2013). In order to complement the above reflective instances, Murphy (2013) and Farrell (2013) have added a third stage: reflection for-action. This phase adds the notion of future experiences by noticing the implications that the pedagogical action could have hereafter.

In view of the little space given to reflective instances in Chilean SLTE programs (Martin, 2016), the insights provided by Farrell (2000), Murphy (2013), and Schön (1983, 1987) have served as guidelines to design a reflective-based strategy, points of improvement, to equip EFL pre-service teachers from a Chilean university with awareness raising on the process of lesson planning.

Reflection on-action. Reflection on-action is related to what happens after a class has been implemented. Schön (1983) implied reflection on-action is the ability to analyze, review, and evaluate a situation in order to gain insights for future practice. According to Farrell (2013), this type of reflection allows teachers "to think critically about the lessons they taught, the learning objectives, the classroom activities and, thereby, building an awareness of the teaching process" (p. 3). For Conway (2001), this "looking back" implies "turning inward, examining one's own remembered experiences and/or anticipated experiences, not exclusively looking back in time" (p. 90). Thus, this process of reflection is related to how teachers are able to see themselves and their pedagogical decisions after they have taught.

Conway's insights (2001) on how reflection should take place help teachers to appreciate the importance of understanding the weaknesses and strengths of implemented lessons. The more these instances are provided to EFL pre-service teachers, the more they might improve their awareness and willingness to modify their practices. Taking this into consideration, EFL pre-service teachers might be encouraged to look back on the lessons they have already performed in order to establish what went well, what did not, which factors might have influenced their pedagogical actions, and how those factors could eventually affect their future teaching practices and their own beliefs about language teaching and learning. EFL pre-service teachers are constantly collecting data that would allow them to plan actions (Farrell, 2012); the more they are encouraged to anticipate or prevent situations while they

are planning, the more informed their decisions in the classroom might be as they have reconstructed knowledge from their own experience.

Reflection for-action. Once the aspects that need improvement have been identified in the stage described above, EFL teachers need to decide which actions will be taken and how those actions or changes would impact their future teaching practices. Thus, this reflection-for-action stage aids in improving upcoming classes since "it may entail a teacher's making note of the weaknesses in a lesson and proposing action to address these problems in future lessons" (Farrell, 2013, p. 4).

Wilson (2008) asserted that reflection for-action must be carried out in a systematic process. If this systematicity is neglected, "we are limiting the potential for the development of professionals" (Wilson, 2008, p. 183). Teacher education programs have neglected reflection for several years (Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008) and have left behind the ability to 'imagine' (Conway, 2001). Thus, pre-service teachers need to participate in instances of reflection in which they display the ability to imagine what could possibly happen in a certain situation. Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) suggest that this type of reflection might allow teachers to examine possible scenarios and anticipate events by taking action and considering their own teaching practices. Conway (2001) has added that, as pre-service teachers engage reflection for-action, they are able to deal with likely situations in a more positive perspective.

These instances would indeed "enable teachers to articulate to themselves what they do, how they do it, why they do it, and what the impact of one's teaching on students' learning is" (Farrell, 2012, p. 14). In order to achieve this, Wilson (2008) suggests aiding pre-service teachers in considering different scenarios and the strategies they need to apply to address those situations. Since EFL pre-service teachers participate from these processes, they engage in a dialogic reflection where they are able to hear their own voice by weighing competing claims and viewpoints, and exploring possible solutions (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

In sum, engaging EFL pre-service teachers in reflection on-action and for-action may lead to informed teaching decisions, and thus, a more suitable environment for learning.

Points of improvement as a dialogic strategy for reflective practice. Taken into consideration all the aforementioned characteristics of a systematic reflective procedure, *points of improvement,* as a dialogic strategy, is defined as an instance in which EFL pre-service teachers identify areas in which they feel weak, need to keep working, or need support. Through a guided dialogue, they are oriented in the process of reflection, which helps them gain awareness from previous lesson performance and determine the course of action to be taken. This dialogue will also guide them when considering the factors that might have affected their decisions, so that they are more likely to explore alternative solutions. This dialogic reflection considers "stepping back from, mulling over or tentatively exploring reasons" (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 42) as teachers become more aware of "the problematic

nature of the professional action" (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 46). When EFL pre-service teachers engage in determining points of improvement, they have the opportunity to challenge their own beliefs about the process of teaching and learning. Hence, this reflective strategy aims at supporting them during their teaching practicum so that they are able to deal with those aspects that need more attention.

The Communicative Language Teaching approach. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is widely used by language teachers over the world. It meant a shift away from the traditional approaches to English language teaching which focused on mechanical repetition and decontextualized tasks. Despite its popularity, this approach is often "misunderstood and misapplied" (Scrivener, 2011, p. 31). This misunderstanding can be related to the idea of emphasizing only speaking and listening skills in the classroom, not being explicit on learners' errors, and also on excluding grammar from the curriculum (Wu, 2008). It can be argued then that EFL teachers might not be familiarized with what the application of CLT in the classroom really implies, and thus, their own beliefs regarding the main characteristics of this approach might have an impact on how they teach English.

The main focus of CLT is to promote the development of learners' communicative competence. According to Richards (2005), in order to be engaged in a more communicative-oriented methodology, language teachers should focus language learning on real communication, providing learners with opportunities to try out what they know, to be tolerant of learners' errors, and to understand them as examples of progress in communicative competence. In addition, opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency should be provided by integrating skills such as speaking, reading, and listening, and by allowing students to unveil language structures. Hence, in order to carry out a communicative language class, a lesson plan with these characteristics and clear awareness of the local teaching context must be designed. In the Chilean context, providing learning experiences that are context dependent, and close to students' lives and interests, is highly relevant. Given the inequality gap (Agencia de Calidad, 2019), there are many contexts in which English is perceived as irrelevant, and associated with well-off groups (British Council, 2015). Thus, English language lessons are expected to have a communicative purpose that allows learners to connect and engage with the language experience.

Lesson planning. Planning is helpful when EFL pre- and in-service teachers need to decide what they are going to teach based on their school demands and context. Therefore, lesson planning should be considered as a "proposal for action" (Harmer, 2015, p. 211) which serves as guidance and not as a fixed set of procedures that must be carried out by language teachers. In this respect, Richards and Renandya (2002) define lesson planning as "a process of transformation during which the teacher creates ideas for a lesson based on understanding of learners' needs, problems, and interests, and on the content of the lesson itself" (p. 27). In addition to this, Scrivener (2011) characterizes lesson planning as a

"thinking skill" since it serves to foresee what will happen in the classroom (its atmosphere, learners, and materials).

In the EFL context, lesson planning should address learners' needs, problems, and interests (Richards & Renandya, 2002), and consider external elements which may affect the enactment of the plan, namely space, students, time, and materials (Diaz Maggioli & Painter-Farrell, 2016). Similarly, lesson planning should address the integration of the four language skills, contextualized and authentic tasks, and meaningful patterns of interaction among learners, all of this in order to promote communication (Ministerio de Educación de Chile, 2015). However, this task turns out to be challenging for EFL pre-service teachers when they realize their students' level of English, the resources and space available, and the administrative challenges that they have to face in their daily teaching. Henceforth, knowing how to design and implement a lesson that results appropriate for their teaching context is crucial for these teachers.

During EFL pre-service teachers' education, compulsory subjects in the curriculum include those related to methodologies and approaches to teach English. Martin (2016) carried out a study related to SLTE in Chile, in which she found that SLTE programs included modules related to the history of traditional methods, lesson planning, and strategies for developing the four language skills. In addition, she unveiled that while only 31% of these universities had instances of reflection present in their programs, most of them had one or two EFL methodology courses with four hours weekly on average. This situation means that the fundamental instances when pre-service teachers in these programs could integrate their teaching knowledge and reflect on their teaching beliefs may not be enough. This insight could bring implications to their future as teachers of English.

In the program in which this current study took place, the reality did not seem much distant from the one reported by Martin (2016). Fortunately, curricular changes were carried out in 2016 and a new plan was designed. This new plan provides teacher educators with the opportunity to include instances of reflection such as reflective practice as a core topic in all pedagogical modules, starting from first year.

Another difficulty EFL pre-service teachers seem to face when planning a lesson is related to various elements such as learners' needs, teaching context, curriculum demands, and ministerial recommendations. Despite these teachers' theoretical knowledge on approaches to language teaching, EFL pre-service teachers seem more concerned with preventing or solving situations in the classroom rather than paying attention to the instruction delivery (Barahona, 2014b; Díaz & Ortiz, 2017). In this regard, SLTE in general, and in Chile in particular, should embrace this tension during pre-service teachers' education so that they could feel more open in being flexible in the delivery, as well as being context aware to design lessons in a more effective way.

Second language teacher education in Chile. SLTE programs in Chile are undergraduate courses which last five years in most universities. Generally, in their last year, pre-service teachers in these programs are expected to undertake the final teaching practicum, in which they have to carry out different tasks required by both the program and the school where they do their practicum. However, tension arises between university programs and schools as both institutions tend to focus on theory and practice respectively (Barahona, 2014a). In this scenario, planning an English language lesson can become a challenging task as school realities can strike pre-service teachers really strong (Sahin-taskin, 2017). What EFL teachers find in their context helps them reconceptualize how planning should be and how it should be addressed. This is why reflection is seen as a useful tool to change or reshape pre-service teachers' planning ideas (Barahona, 2014a; Díaz & Ortiz, 2017; Farrell, 2001; Tagle-Ochoa et al., 2014).

Method

This study is framed within an action research design. It studies a particular educational setting to improve its learning and teaching processes. Therefore, its design involves the following overlapping stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Burns, 2009).

Research problem. As part of the planning stage, the problem which was identified was based on my personal experience as a teacher educator. EFL pre-service teachers struggle when they are required to plan lessons within the CLT. This has been noticed, particularly, within the module *Professional teaching practicum* at a Chilean university where this study was conducted. The group of pre-service teachers, who participated in the study, faced problems when they had to plan communicative-oriented lessons since they did not fully understand how to apply CLT in their own teaching context. Even though they were able to establish points of improvement regarding this challenge, these points were neither present in their following lesson plans nor reflected in the implementation of their lessons. It seemed at that point that the main issue was their lack of reflection on their pedagogical decisions. This was evident during the process of lesson planning, since they were not able to consider sequence of activities, meaningful tasks and topics, students' preferences, interests and characteristics, and macro-skills.

During the weekly sessions, this group of pre-service teachers reported that they wanted to work on their lesson plans in order to make them communicative-oriented. With this in mind, the research question guiding this study is: *how does the use of points of improvement, as a strategy for reflective practice, support EFL pre-service teachers' skills to plan communicative-oriented lessons?*

Research objectives. The objectives of the study are (1) to explore the contribution of using points of improvement, as a reflective strategy, on the participating EFL pre-service teachers' ability to plan communicative-oriented lessons; and (2) to identify the participating

EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs about communicative-oriented lessons and their perceptions regarding the contribution of using points of improvement, as a reflective strategy, on their ability to plan communicative-oriented lessons.

Participants. There were eleven EFL pre-service teachers participating in this study, eight females and three males aged from 23 to 25 years old. Their participation was based on their full attendance to the course called *Professional Teaching Practicum Workshop* provided as part of a teacher education program by a Chilean university. The criteria for selecting this sample considered the following aspects:

- *Previous courses of ELT methodology*: all the participants have taken courses of ELT methodology.
- *Lesson planning courses*: the participants have been part of courses in which they had to plan English language lessons.
- *Previous practicum experiences at schools*: all participants have already been immersed in school contexts. Participating pre-service teachers had previous experiences of teaching English at least two hours weekly at school.

The aforementioned criteria allowed the participants to rely on their previous teaching knowledge and experiences to reflect on their current practices.

Research procedures. In the intervention (action stage), a planning phase was first carried out within a four-week period of time in which the teacher-researcher in charge of the *Professional Teaching Practicum Workshop* observed the participants' lesson delivery and provided feedback on the design of their lesson plans. Based on this first phase, the need for reflecting on the participating teachers' decisions appeared. Points of improvement emerged then as a plausible strategy to guide the participating EFL pre-service teachers as a first attempt for reflective practice. Eventually, the intervention stage was carried out focusing exclusively on encouraging and developing processes of reflection upon the procedure followed for designing the participating teachers' lesson plans. This stage lasted for a month, with a frequency of one session (90 minutes each) per week.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaire (see Appendix A). This instrument sought to collect information regarding the participants' beliefs about the process of lesson planning and communicative-oriented lessons. It consisted of a set of open-ended questions with two dimensions: process of lesson planning and CLT.

Focus group (see Appendix B). The focus group was conducted after the implementation of the reflection instances in order to explore the extent to which the use of points of

Stages of the action plan. The action plan had three stages as described below:

Session	Description	Focus
1	The participants discussed the questions provided by the teacher-researcher, they analyzed where their beliefs about CLT and lesson planning came from.	Beliefs
2	The participants discussed the principles of CLT in groups. They reflected on their lesson plans and analyzed the extent to which they had been communicative-oriented. Considering that information, the participants determined points of improvement for the upcoming lesson plan.	Points of improvement Perceptions
3	The participants planned a communicative-oriented lesson applying the principles of CLT approach and considering the characteristics of their contexts. They also took into account their points of improvement for the lesson.	Principles of CLT and points of improvement.

improvement contributed to enhance the teachers' lesson plans. This instrument was chosen based on its usefulness to unveil factors that may influence motivation, perceptions, or opinions about a topic; in this case, the contribution of the reflective strategy in their ability to plan communicative-oriented lessons (Silverman, 2013).

Data analysis techniques. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire and focus group. By following Braun and Clark (2006), the analytical stages considered: Familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, defining and naming the themes.

Findings

Findings will be reported in line with the research objectives by showing the most recurrent categories and codes yielded from the participants' responses. Each code within a category will be described and illustrated with excerpts.

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about communicative-oriented lessons. The most repeated categories related to pre-service teachers' beliefs about communicative-oriented lessons are related to the contextualization of the contents to be taught and the skills which should be fostered in the different activities done in class. The group of participants considers contextualization relevant as they expressed that giving a context or situation for the class activity would allow their students to understand the purpose of using English. The following excerpts illustrate the participants' most recurrent opinions:

- "Contextualization of the content: this is highly important since students need to know when and how to use what they learn." (PST2, Questionnaire)

- "Students need a situation in which they can use the language effectively and in a realistic way." (PST3, Questionnaire)

These responses show that the participating EFL pre-service teachers are more likely to engage in communicative-oriented lessons as, for them, contextualization of the contents presented seems crucial. By doing so, they would help their students to acquire the language in a meaningful way as they are able to access English in real-life situations.

Participating EFL pre-service teachers also consider linguistic skills as important when delivering their lessons because these might promote students' involvement in the lesson, with particular attention to productive skills. The following excerpts show this point.

- "Emphasis on productive skills (speaking-writing)." (PST6, Questionnaire)
- "Focus on skills rather than structure because the communicative approach proposes teaching by motivating students to learn through developing or actually using skills instead of focusing on structures." (PST2, Questionnaire)

These perceptions suggest that the participants understand the manner in which they need to orient their lessons, always by following communicative aspects such as contextualization of language content and using the language through actual (written or oral) communication. However, these are only two aspects of communicative-oriented lessons. The participants did not mention aspects related to interaction among learners or diverse assessment instances, amid the various characteristics of a communicative-focused class (Richards, 2005).

Thus, it seems that what these teachers have so far experienced in their language teaching methodology courses might have had an effect on their beliefs regarding what is most important to include in communicative-oriented lessons. At this pre-service stage, they seem to be aware of some of the main aspects of CLT to be developed in their classes, so it is expected that such knowledge is extended during their preparation stage while immersed in the various courses related to teaching methodological issues (Martín, 2016).

Pre-service teachers' perceptions about the contribution of points of improvement for their ability to plan communicative-oriented lessons. Regarding points of improvement, the participants mostly mentioned the benefits that this strategy provided them. One of the first benefits mentioned had to do with how this activity helped them raise their awareness of their teaching decisions and what needs further development. These pre-service teachers mentioned the positive impact of reflecting before and after they designed their lesson plan as a way of monitoring their own teaching decisions. This aspect can be observed in the following excerpt:

- "It has helped me a lot to establish improvement points, and it's the first thing I do after class. I am more aware in classes." (PST1, Focus Group)

- "I have become more aware of my pros and cons as a teacher while establishing points of improvement. When you are conscious about them, you know that you can change that situation. During the feedback session I could reaffirm and realize what was effective or not. I can make more informed decision while I am teaching. If you are committed to what you do, you constantly think about how to improve and that becomes your routine as a teacher." (PST, Focus Group)

For this group of teachers, establishing points of improvement seemed useful and easy to do as part of their teaching practice since they focused on a particular aspect of their lessons as a starting point, this in turn allowed them to observe their practice mindfully. The participants reported that, after the intervention, they felt more aware of their teaching decisions while giving the lesson. This could be an example of reflective practice, as it allows teachers to think back about their lessons and how to improve them (Farrell, 2013). This is an interesting finding since awareness of how their teaching occurs is more likely to happen when they have been exposed to these reflective tasks for a longer period of time. Thus, this insight seems to suggest that EFL pre-service teachers' involvement when they determine points of improvement in their lesson plans has positively influenced their beliefs since the gap between their disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge started to narrow down.

In this respect, Contreras and Prieto (2008) assert that beliefs represent a relevant basis for pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum, because beliefs guide their teaching. That is to say, if beliefs are not challenged, they would remain, and changes will not take place. The fact that they reflect on their teaching actions is the first step to start modifying their pedagogical practices, since this reflective practice strategy guided them on entering into "a dialogue with themselves and other teachers so that they can reach a new level of awareness and understanding of their practice" (Farrell, 2015, p. 35).

In fact, the participating EFL pre-service teachers described *points of improvement* as a strategy that they could incorporate in most of their lessons as shown below:

- "I always think of my points of improvement, but I consider them for all the lessons, not only for the ones being observed at university." (PST10, Focus Group)
- "Immediately after I establish these improvement points, I go and investigate how I can improve that. I'm looking for strategies on the internet and I'm asking 'how can I implement it?' and I start testing it in class." (PST7, Focus Group)

How these pre-service teachers used this strategy for reflection aimed at overcoming challenges in a creative way is evident in the previous excerpts. These also illustrate that the pre-service teachers take an agent role in their teaching decisions showing willingness to find solutions and improve their practice. It could be argued that they are becoming reflective practitioners, as they are able to notice improvements in their own lessons.

Another benefit resulting from the use of points of improvement was considering new elements in their planning. The lesson plans included more communicative-oriented activities, educational contexts played a huge role in their lesson, and English became a means to give more importance to students' cultural backgrounds and preferences. The fact that after the intervention they started using engaging topics related to their students' interests shows that they are more concerned about their own teaching contexts and the tasks they prepared. This point can be observed in the following excerpts:

- "There is an element that I take into account: whatever it is, it should be communicative and simple, so that the students can quickly understand the idea of what to communicate and feel safe." (PST1, Focus Group)
- "I consider that I do have to create a story to present the context of the task. I use *let's imagine that*, because in that way they feel they have a purpose to communicate and not just answering questions to the teacher." (PST2, Focus Group)
- "It's to take into consideration the students' preferences: what motivates them, where they move, what the focus of their communication is. The learning objective of the class should be according to how students live, their experiences; we teachers adapt the class to them, not them to the class." (PST7, Focus Group)

As can be seen, through the use of points of improvement, the participants were able to consider elements of CLT, their students' experiences, and the inclusion of a communicative purpose and context as fundamental for their lesson planning. By doing so, this group of EFL pre-service teachers show that this approach was suitable to help their students learn English despite their usual struggle to apply CLT in the classroom (contextual factors, such as class size and institutional requirements).

Thus, this point shows that SLTE programs should consider opportunities for EFL pre-service teachers to adapt CLT to their own reality. Factors such as large classes and low performance in the English language subjects could hinder the process of lesson planning. However, that could be changed if EFL pre-service teachers develop more awareness – through reflective instances such as the one studied here – about their context and how to take advantage of the socio-cultural background of their students.

Conclusions

This study aimed at exploring the contribution that points of improvement, as a reflective practice strategy, may have in pre-service teachers' planning of communicative-oriented lessons as part of their final practicum experience. The participants' perceptions in this respect showed that their beliefs regarding communicative-oriented lessons are more related to the contextualization of the language content and on a focus on producing the language.

Similar aspects were also highlighted in relation to the potential benefits of using points of improvement – as a strategy for reflective practice – when planning their lessons with a communicative focus. These EFL pre-service teachers became more aware of these aspects which they perceived as fundamental of CLT, but which they had to adapt to their own teaching contexts. This latter realization, that of the need for adapting their lesson plans, was one of the main results of the reflective strategy studied here. By using points of improvement these pre-service teachers became more aware of their own teaching decisions and what needed further development and improvement. This reflective instance also encouraged their agency to look for solutions to overcome the challenges faced (e.g. adapting CLT to their own contexts), thus to improve their teaching practice. Hence, the benefits of using such reflective instance served these participants to "gain some reflective distance to understand better the meaning of lived experience" (Conway, 2001, p. 90), in this case, of their initial experiences at planning lessons with a communicative focus.

Despite the small scale of this study, the benefit of providing a systematic reflective instance to those who are soon to become teachers is quite evident. Reflection needs a high status as part of teacher education, particularly in SLTE, in order to promote major changes in the Chilean EFL classroom.

Changes cannot be made if pre-service teachers are not immersed in instances where they can share their experiences and challenge their own beliefs in a supported environment. The findings of the current study suggest that, by being given the opportunity and guidance, EFL pre-service teachers could embrace reflection as part of their teaching practice. Slight changes in courses in EFL teaching methodology, close to the local context, can actually open the door to a reflective teacher who embraces the richness of the Chilean classroom.

Further research

As this study mainly focused on reflection on and for action, it would be interesting to see how EFL pre-service teachers are able to consider their points of improvement when they have to implement their lesson plan in the classroom. It would also be interesting to study the implementation of this strategy for reflection all along the practicum line within a teacher education program. This would serve to confirm the benefits reported here and to extend evidence of its potential usefulness.

Limitations and Implications

This action research study was carried out as part of the weekly sessions that a group of EFL pre-service teachers had at a university as part of their undergraduate SLTE program for a limited period of time; therefore, there were no opportunities to observe their spontaneous

decisions while they were teaching and how those decisions may have influenced the way they conceived the process of lesson planning.

Participants declared feeling unprepared to design communicative-oriented lessons. The main implication for the teacher-researcher in her/his practice as teacher educator is that more instances to apply and reflect on their knowledge about CLT and the Chilean teaching contexts must be included in the syllabus in order to guide the participating pre-service teachers in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Similarly, the first sessions of the *Professional Teaching Practicum Workshop* should be devoted to talking about this approach and unveiling the pre-service teachers' beliefs about it in an attempt to help them shape their teaching skills. This opportunity is relevant for these pre-service teachers to discover whether they are actually applying the principles of a communicative-oriented lesson that is appropriate for their local context.

Another important implication is for the teacher-researcher as a teacher educator: more room should be given to reflection. It was clear that despite the few sessions devoted to the intervention of points of improvement, the EFL pre-service teachers benefited considerably. They expressed the opportunity they had to think about their past, present and future teaching actions systematically, which allowed them to identify what needed to be improved and modified. The major benefit of such reflection helped this particular group of teachers to reconceptualize their communicative-oriented lessons by considering their specific teaching contexts, thus adapting the theoretical understandings of the concept not only to the physical context of the class, but also to the particular needs of their students. Hence, formal reflective instances such as the one here proposed may indeed be aiding in narrowing the gap between theory and practice.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire

1. If you are instructed to plan a communicative-oriented lesson plan, what do you think you need to include/consider?
2. What do you think planning a lesson involves? (E.g. processes, components, stages, etc.)

Appendix B. Focus group

1. ¿Cómo se sienten al momento de planificar clases más comunicativas?
2. Cuando planifican una clase comunicativa, ¿cuáles son los elementos que para ustedes son importantes y por qué?
3. ¿Hasta qué punto fue útil para ustedes establecer puntos de mejoras?

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A Virtual Learning Object (VLO) to Promote Reading Strategies in an English for Specific Purposes Environment

Un objeto virtual de aprendizaje (OVA) para promover estrategias de lectura en un ambiente de inglés con propósitos específicos

Hernández Urrego, Sandra Cecilia[1]

Abstract

This study describes the influence of a Virtual Learning Object in the promotion of reading strategies in a class of English for Specific Purposes for the majors of Social Communication and Journalism at a private institution of higher education in Bogota, Colombia. Students' failure to meet the school standards led to the design and implementation of a virtual tool to support academic achievement. Data came from a sample of 15 students' reading cycle reports, self-assessment of progress, questionnaires, and interviews. Results suggest that the developed VLO did promote the participants' appropriation of reading strategies proposed in the design of the course. The process with the VLO not only prompted higher reading comprehension, but also facilitated and enriched learning experiences.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), reading strategies, reading comprehension, Virtual Learning Object (VLO), virtual tool design.

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo describir la posible influencia de un objeto virtual de aprendizaje (OVA) en un grupo de estudiantes de comunicación social y periodismo en un curso de inglés para fines

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específicos, quienes tenían dificultad para cumplir con los objetivos de lectura en inglés en una universidad privada de Bogotá (Colombia). Para efectos del estudio, se recolectaron datos de 15 estudiantes por medio de cuestionarios, entrevistas y de los reportes de los ciclos de lectura en la plataforma Moodle. Los resultados sugieren que el OVA promovió la implementación de las estrategias de lectura por parte de los participantes, mediadas por los ciclos y las etapas de lectura propuestas en el diseño de la herramienta. El proceso con el OVA no solo propició mejores habilidades de comprensión lectora, sino que también facilitó y enriqueció la experiencia con la lectura en inglés de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: diseño de herramientas virtuales, estrategias de lectura, comprensión de lectura, inglés para fines específicos (ESP), objeto virtual de aprendizaje.

Introduction

Teaching faces different challenges in this era of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). One of them is the necessity to meet the demands of the information society and the adaptation of learners to work in an ICT environment. This passes by the tasks of providing prompt and friendly access to information. For this purpose, going beyond the language classroom walls can be achieved with the implementation of innovative ICT proposals that promote learners' reading competences and strategies. The sustained insertion of new technologies in the field of ELT has been documented by Lopera-Medina (2014). In addition, Clavijo Olarte, Hine, & Quintero (2008) suggest that Virtual Learning Objects (VLOs) have proved to be dynamic, flexible, and cooperative and personalized vehicles to promote strategies for learning foreign languages in virtual environments, specifically reading strategies.

This paper reports the findings of an intervention carried out in a private institution of higher education in Bogota, Colombia. Despite the instruction and exposure to content in English for freshmen students of Social Communication and Journalism using ESP (Suárez-Montes & Díaz-Subieta, 2015), students fail to comply with the English language requirements of the university, especially the ones related to their competences in reading in this target language. This evidence is reported taking into account a data triangulation plan (Sagor, 2000), which indicates the use of different perspectives to support the findings and collect the information (see Appendix). In this fertile scenario for innovation, a VLO was proposed for an ESP course as an alternative to promote and find evidence of the sustained use of reading strategies.

VLOs have become one of the most important modalities to further reading comprehension in universities. Nappa and Pandiella (2012) explain that VLOs and web resources provide many benefits for language learners. They develop skills for reading; they encourage independent learning and transfer English language content interactively. Students can communicate, exchange ideas, and work with other classmates through different activities (Nappa & Pandiella, 2012).

Additional research presents the VLO as a means to motivate students and build their self-confidence provided that it offers interaction, individualized instruction, and teacher support. There are other advantages to the VLO; for instance, Muñoz Arteaga et al. (2006) highlight important upsides of these web resources such as accessibility, flexibility, reusability, durability, educability, interactivity, and adaptability, which refer to the practices and procedures used in the actual teaching moment. These upsides were all considered in the current study.

Similarly, Barraza (2014) conducted a qualitative study which demonstrated that strategies enhanced reading through the utilization of a Virtual Lab. Aspects such as reading learning experience, effectiveness, interactive activities, and graphic organizers not only improved comprehension but made it enjoyable and practical.

In Colombia, the implementation of virtual tools for EFL has been a quintessential alternative to excel language learners' L2 competences. The use of ICT to read and write in college (Castillo, 2017), web-based courses fostering reading strategies namely, prediction, skimming, and scanning (Osorno-Gonzalez & Lopera-Medina, 2012), as well as Cross-cultural Virtual Forums displaying students' cultural stories by integrating reading activities and consolidating vocabulary (Clavijo Olarte, Hine, & Quintero, 2008), exemplify the headway of virtual resources in the EFL local context. Considering the insights in these studies, the research question to answer in the current study is: What is a possible influence of a VLO in the promotion of reading strategies in ESP students of second semester of social communication and journalism? The following sections provide a description of the procedures to obtain an answer to this question.

A Virtual Learning Object (VLO) to Teach Reading Strategies

This segment discusses conceptual and theoretical considerations that underpin the study reported in this paper. A Virtual Learning Object (VLO) can be understood as a pedagogical mediator intentionally designed for a learning purpose. Arias-Soto, Buitrago-Escobar, and Pineda-Báez (2011) define it as "a vehicle for providing authentic material for the student to have contact with real language" (p. 35). In addition, these authors highlight other benefits such as the development of reading skills in EFL and self-confidence in students. In the same vein, Wiley (2002) considers that VLOs allow the transit of learning models based on the construction of knowledge that permits the implementation of an intelligent teaching-learning environment. VLO acts as a useful device with its objectives and plans with which learners can mutually interact, learn, and propose their ideas.

As far as the advantages of incorporating interactive and technological strategies for ESP reading, Barraza (2014) suggests that they encourage independent learning by developing

analysis and reflection, clarifying doubts, and transferring content, all of which can be used as control mechanisms and self-assessment. On the other hand, Wiley (2002) argues that those strategies help learners to expand the cognitive skills that they use to understand, select, organize, develop, and interpret the information they find in the VLO web resource. Overall, these aspects suggest that VLOs are more relevant in teaching and learning practices when the content and virtual functional quality are presented in a more attractive way for students to start working on reading activities.

Reading Comprehension in EFL

Neufeld (2005) understands reading as a process of making meaning in which there is a constant problem-solving exercise demanded by the interaction between the reader and the text. For Koda (2005), it entails "converting print into language and then to the message intended by the author" (p. 4). For Hellekjaer (2009), reading "comprises decoding the written text on the one hand and efficiently processing the information on the other hand" (p. 200).

Departing from the aforementioned conceptions of reading, Koda (2005) argues that comprehension happens when readers extract and process different information from the text and integrate it with their knowledge of the world. In this sense, reading constitutes a meaning-making process of constructing a supportable understanding of a text (Neufeld, 2005). Neufeld highlights two features in this comprehension process. First, seeking to comprehend a text is an active, intentional thinking process through which the reader constructs meaning. Second, during students' understanding of a text, this process varies because of their background knowledge and experiences. Thus, the reader attends to the information in the texts -encodes it- and constructs meaning through interaction and involvement with it. What the learner does to comprehend, encode, retrieve, and recall information is recognized as strategies, which are essential in reading development (Pang, 2008; Castillo, 2014).

For Snow Chair (2002), reading constitutes a heuristic comprehension process situated in a socio-cultural context and shaped by students' experiences, cultural practices, and background knowledge. Meaning construction entails transactions among the reader, the text, and the tasks; these change in the micro-developmental processes of *pre-reading*, *during-reading*, and *post-reading*, which show the transition of what the reader brings to the text and what they take from it.

Two fundamental reasons support this model. First of all, the variety of reading strategies that the model offers allows students to become active and purposeful readers able to monitor their own reading comprehension process. For instance, when students interact with the text, they recognize new vocabulary, organize and evaluate information, and

establish connections with their own socio-cultural context; this shapes their background knowledge. A second reason is that reading strategies can be integrated to help learners understand specialized articles and texts in ESP. Each element of this micro-developmental process (the reader, the text, and the activity) interweaves and integrates one to another in permanent interaction.

Reading strategies should be practiced, reinforced, and refined continually. They are based on the complexity and extensiveness of the text that the individual is reading. These parameters become an alternative to tackle difficulties in the reading practice in ESP classrooms, as suggested in this paper. Drawing on Snow Chair's (2002) reading model, this current research study presents a proposal for teaching reading strategies in an ESP class. As Snow Chair (2002) suggests, by using different kinds of texts and tasks, the strategies applied were selected according to the students' ages, their conditions and needs.

Reading processes in English for Specific Purposes. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), reading in ESP is an approach centered on students' needs and interests to empower them to manage their understanding of technical and discipline-related texts. For Hutchinson and Waters (2005), ESP meets the learners' needs and reasons for learning, which determine the method and content to work in class. Likewise, Dhieb-Henia (2008) explains that ESP should provide learners with different types of activities to help them deal with the texts proposed. All of this facilitates two main processes: acquiring vocabulary and content, and establishing a dynamic interaction with further applications of knowledge. VLO would serve those purposes by integrating interactive resources such as videos, games, and animations.

In the current research study, VLOs constitute a pivotal variable since the virtual alternatives provide engaging learning experiences with contents of interest to audiences. The study then hopes to contribute to discussions on designing and implementing context-sensitive the VLO as a pedagogical mediation giving the potential that virtual tasks offer to enhance and monitor language development.

Method

The study employed representative features of a descriptive qualitative case study. It was based upon a problem previously identified (Merriam, 2009): a group of English students' failure to comply with reading competence objectives for an ESP course. The study is also situated in a specific setting, a private institution of higher education in Bogotá, with a group of fifteen second-semester students majoring in social communication and journalism who were taking an ESP course at the same institution, and whose ages ranged between 16 and 24 years. This characteristic relates to the case study paradigm as a *bound system* (Yin, 2014). For

Hernández-Sampieri, Collado, & Baptista-Lucio (2014), qualitative research focuses on "The understanding and deepening of the phenomena […] in a natural environment and in relation to the context" (p. 364). Accordingly, one of the main reasons for engaging in qualitative research was to address a specific situation that could bring about relevant transformative outcomes to the participants involved and to the educational setting in general.

The data informed both what happened when a VLO was introduced and the manner in which the 15 participants felt about what happened in the VLO. The emerging categories established the results of the study that revolved around the possible influence of the VLO in the promotion of reading strategies in the participants. Thus, data from the reports of the VLO reading cycle provided information to understand the participants' language development and their self-assessment at the end of the three cycles.

In addition, the responses to the questionnaire provided the insights that the participants gained from the activities and strategies of the VLO (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The semi-structured interview (Merriam, 2009) captured the participants' perceptions and reasoning of what happened in the VLO, as well as tracked the most relevant strategies that informed their work with the VLO.

Implementation of a Virtual Learning Object in ESP

The VLO was designed using free software named EDILIM. The tool had 99 pages, which contained three reading cycles, each including a variety of texts about the cinema, movie directors, entertainment, design, and topics related to the participants' major. There were interactive activities with puzzles, crosswords, and word search for promoting reading strategies in ESP (Snow Chair, 2002). These contents and activities derived from the diagnostic assessment in which participants expressed their preferences and took into account their English language proficiency level. Similarly, most of the students who participated in this stage of the design of contents and activities considered it relevant for strengthening their reading strategies through online activities. In sum, both contents and purposes were articulated with Wiley's (2002) premises of quality for a virtual object, which should follow "a set of requirements that need[s] to be measured according to the needs of its users" (p. 117). The design of the VLO also considered the three elements proposed by Snow Chair (2002), namely *the reader*, *the text*, and *the activity*. The three elements intrinsically related to the participants' contexts. This followed the principle that elements are interwoven with three micro-developmental processes called*, pre-reading*, *while reading*, and *post-reading*.

VLO adjustments came after a piloting stage, which informed aspects of refinement in the VLO. As the researcher and developer of the implementation of this study, I acquired self-confidence and improved my abilities in designing and applying the data collection

Table 1. Planning of the Reading Cycles

Topics	Week	Activities/ Description
Cycle 1	From October 3rd Until October 21st	1. **1. Topic**: Famous Filmmaker Woody Allen **Objective**. To identify details and use information to build up meaning. 2. **2. Topic**: Colombiamoda 2015 as seen by a Spanish entrepreneur. **Objective**. To identify details and use information to build up meaning. 3. **3. Topic**: Colombia celebrates `historic' Oscar Ceremony in spite of not winning award. **Objective.** To find main ideas in a specific context.
Cycle 2	From October 26th Until November 8th	4. **1. Topic:** 55 Best Tips for a Successful Magazine Cover **Objective**. To strengthen skimming and scanning reading strategies. 5. **2. Topic**: Vintage Cover art forms. **Objective**. To consolidate reading skimming and scanning strategies. 6. **3. Topic**: If Netflix Is Indeed Insourcing TV Production Then It May Change TV Forever. **Objective**. To improve the ability to understand and comprehend newspaper articles.
Cycle 3	From November 1oth Until October 26th	7. **1. Topic:** The radio: Why listening to the radio gives us more pleasure than watching TV or using a laptop **Objective.** To predict possible facts based on information gotten in newspaper articles. 8. **2. Topic**: Domestic abuse in The Archers- how the radio-show is helping women spot signs. **Objective.** To understand and comprehend newspaper articles by the use of reading strategies. 9. **3. Topic**: Are intelligence sector reforms enough to protect Colombia's journalists? **Objective**. To take part in the solution of problems and concerns from reading newspaper articles.

instruments. At the same time, the information that I gathered throughout the piloting served to sustain the pedagogical intervention (Merriam, 2009). Once the final version of the VLO was done, it was uploaded onto the Internet (http://itaemoodle.pedagogica.edu.co/). Then, it was implemented with the participants to facilitate the strengthening of reading strategies.

The lessons were organized in three cycles considering aspects such as objectives, reading-author(s), grammar, vocabulary, reading strategies, and assessment (Lopera-Medina, 2014; Craven, 2003). The students could recall and identify the reading strategies through self-assessment checklists presented in each reading cycle. This self-assessment in turn helped them monitor their reading progress. The three cycles were designed as follows:

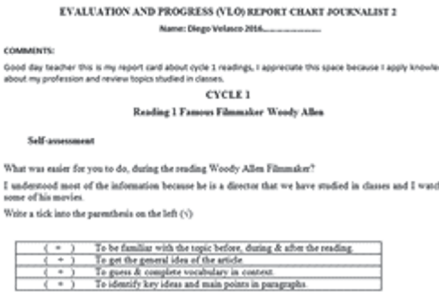
Cycle 1 contained three simple short newspaper articles about cinema directors and entertainment; the students needed to identify details and build up meaning. Cycle 2 contained topics about magazines and Netflix productions. Finally, Cycle 3 included articles about the role of the radio and the importance of protecting journalists in Colombia. Hence, after participating in the previous two cycles, the students could take part in the solution to problems presented in the articles. Finally, final tests were designed to check students' reading comprehension of the topics and the use of the reading strategies suggested in the VLO.

The chart describes the organization of the VLO with a variety of tools associated with the students' field of action. I carefully designed and selected each of the readings, images, and activities to secure a good experience for the students. Information was presented with the main goals and instructions being to promote participation in an organized and sequential way. The tool displayed an array of options such as access to links, videos, dictionaries, and an online translator in order for students to make the most of their virtual learning process in ESP.

Results

Data collected through VLO reading cycle reports, questionnaires, and the semi-structured interviews were analyzed through Sagor's (2000) 'coding data for analysis strategy.' This consisted of reading information, sorting it according to themes, and organizing it into codes and categories. For this particular study, I established a connection between the data and findings simultaneously. The units of analysis were identified in data by identifying the smallest but significant pieces of data that lead to finding patterns (Merriam, 2009). At the same time, I established a connection with the data and findings in order to identify hidden information. For the interviews especially, I used content analysis to interpret the participants' answers and to identify themes or patterns in them (Powers & Knapp, 2006). The emerging categories (the VLO as a mediator for reading, reading strategies employed by

Table 2 . *Reading Stages and Sample Task*

	**With this first activity in Cycle 1, the students started to get familiar with the reading strategies and developed the reading activities.** **Reading Stages** **Before the reading** **Activated previous knowledge.** **Students answered questions according to what they knew about Woody Allen.**
	During the reading Identify the main information in the article. Students read the article and understood it to continue with the next activity. After the reading Restate information about the article. Through this activity, students solved the puzzle to activate memory and problem solving, consolidating some of the most important ideas about Woody Allen's article. Self-assessment report This is the image that the VLO showed on the screen about the reading activities developed by students to know the number of attempts, results, and percentage obtained.

the students, and VLO reading strategies as a facilitator in reading comprehension) constituted the possible influence of the VLO in the promotion of reading strategies in the participants.

The VLO as mediator for reading strategies development in ESP. Nappa and Pandiela (2012) argue that the actual mediation of virtual tools increases interaction with texts while learners achieve an independence to read which would not otherwise be possible. Virtual tools also contribute to honing their sight word vocabulary, fluency, and management of new information, all of which are crucial for improvement in reading comprehension (Assia, 2012). The 15 participants interacted with multimedia activities in the VLO that allowed them to become familiar with ways to approach the texts. In the data obtained

from participants, they identified a connection between the VLO and the activities that involved reading strategies. Thus, topics as "tools that enhance reading processes" (in the questionnaire) and "tools that enhance understanding" (questionnaire and interview) derived from the students' experience with the tool.

- S11: "I had never done reading activities online, which allowed me to learn new topics in English and fostered my confidence when reading."
- S13: "I had the opportunity to learn more about topics related to my profession by means of doing different readings and activities." [Question 1 – Questionnaire and Interview]
- Student 6: "The VLO was beneficial to know topics of great importance for my profession, helping me to learn new things." [Interview Question 13]

The data show that the VLO played the role to mediate for interaction between the participants and the texts evident through the way the students acknowledged the learning potential of the readings deployed in the virtual tool. Additionally, since the students were able to regulate their own reading process (Dhieb-Henia, 2008), more possibilities to gain confidence developing the reading practice in this alternative mode was evident too.

In the two last excerpts extracted from the interventions of students 13 and 6, the connection between the reading contents proposed in the VLO and the professional context of the readers was perceptible. As stated in the literature review, the students then established connections with their own socio-cultural context by interacting with virtual texts, then shaping their background knowledge (Snow Chair, 2002).

Reading strategies employed by students in the VLO. The reading model chosen for this study worked as an umbrella frame for the implementation of reading strategies. Reading was conceived as a constructive, meaning-making process that involved the interconnection of four main elements: the reader, the text, the activity, and the context. It had to do with the reading strategies proposed by the Reading Study group (Snow Chair, 2002). The strategies were integrated through the following reading processes: before reading, during reading, and after reading. The data collected through the Moodle self-assessment report showed the following list of reading strategies that the students were aware of employing during the three cycles.

Table 3 shows the recurrence of using 17 identified strategies by the students. The column "yes" shows the number of students who used the strategy. The students exercised all of the reading strategies at some point of the process within each of the three cycles. I contend that getting familiarized with the VLO contents and dynamics, then using the

Table 3. Self- Assessment Report for Reading Cycles 1, 2, 3

I'm able to do it	Yes	No
1. To associate the topic with the images, VLO'S multimedia activities and tools provided.	(15ss)	-
2. To understand most of the vocabulary presented in the articles.	(14ss)	-
3. To be familiar with the topic before, during & after the reading.	(15ss)	-
4. To understand the general and specific ideas in the articles.	(15ss)	-
5. To identify key ideas in paragraphs.	(14ss)	(1s)
6. To predict and infer information from the text.	(15ss)	-
7. To identify the reading strategies in the articles: activating previous knowledge, skimming, scanning, identifying main ideas, relating vocabulary, summarizing and asking question about the topic.	(15ss)	-
8. To improve through the reading process key information to build up meaning.	(14ss)	(1s)
9. To read more often for improving my understanding.	(14ss)	(1s)
10. To use the vocabulary learnt in other readings.	(15ss)	-
11. To guess words' meanings from reading context.	(14ss)	(1s)
12. To associate and activate my knowledge with the readings.	(15ss)	-
13. To understand a greater percentage of the readings.	(13ss)	(2ss)
14. To explain the articles' importance associated with my profession.	(15ss)	-
15. To relate the readings of articles to my own experiences.	(15ss)	-
16. To reflect on what I learned from the article.	(14ss)	(1s)
17. To take part in the solution and concerns from reading newspapers articles.	(14ss)	(1s)
18. To enjoy and being an active reader.	(15ss)	-

integrated tools (videos, links, and presentations to orient the student) were of paramount importance for the achievement of this result.

In the interview conducted with the students at the end of the process, they could notice that the activities proposed had a purpose in each cycle. That purpose was articulated with the reading strategies as general guidelines, oriented to have the students find out how to read and answer reading comprehension questions in a specific article.

- S6: "The Reading strategies promoted by the VLO were effective because they guided us a lot. They are like guidelines on how to read in every moment, before, during and after reading and answer the questions in the article."

Interview- Question 5: What are the strategies you found more useful?

- S7: "Activation of previous knowledge, skimming, scanning, predicting, main idea identification, vocabulary association, concluding and making questions about the article." [Questionnaire and Interview]

The data collected in the final questionnaire showed that the students learnt how to read and understand a text in English by using reading strategies, as these allowed them to understand the articles better. VLOs are generally conceived to have added values in the teaching and learning process in ESP, since the participants benefited from the possibilities these tools offered. Some of these were practicing with readings and related activities to discover reading strategies that fostered reading comprehension of specialized texts in English.

VLO reading strategies as facilitator in reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is the process of capturing and constructing meaning from a text; in this case, a written text included in the VLO. It is the result of the interaction that occurs when the text itself, the reader, and the context interweave (Neufeld, 2005). Speaking of the text itself, I highlight the fact that the students were able to tap on the design and approach used to distribute readings in the VLO, namely, the organization by cycles and the micro-developmental processes (pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading).

The students learned how to read and understand a text in English by using the reading strategies abovementioned, as these allowed them to understand the articles better. The following excerpts demonstrate how the VLO equipped them with tools to understand the texts presented.

- S8: "The strategies were necessary to comprehend texts more accurately, starting from the 'before Reading' part. That allows approaching better to the text and they are good to improve vocabulary and be able to draw conclusions about the Reading."
- S9: "The Reading strategies allowed me to make meaning of the topics, to see what the author wants to convey."

  [Interview Question 13 – Questionnaire and Interview]

The incorporation of the VLO highlighted the fact that both the teachers and students worked in a friendly environment that benefited their practices, and enhanced the pedagogical expertise and engagement with learning (Beatty, 2012). With the VLO, the participants expanded knowledge and practiced English more in interactive activities such as puzzles,

games, crosswords, and word search, among others. The participants expressed that, with the strategies, they learned to navigate through activities and were able to map the texts.

With respect to the VLO cycles, the participants were able to identify details and build up meaning from texts in the first cycle. In cycle two, the participants practiced to increase their capability to understand newspaper articles, and, in cycle three, the participants proposed solutions to the issues presented in the newspaper articles. The data in Figures 1 and 2 below, extracted from the VLO reading cycle reports with Moodle, contrasts the total of correct answers to reading comprehension requirements.

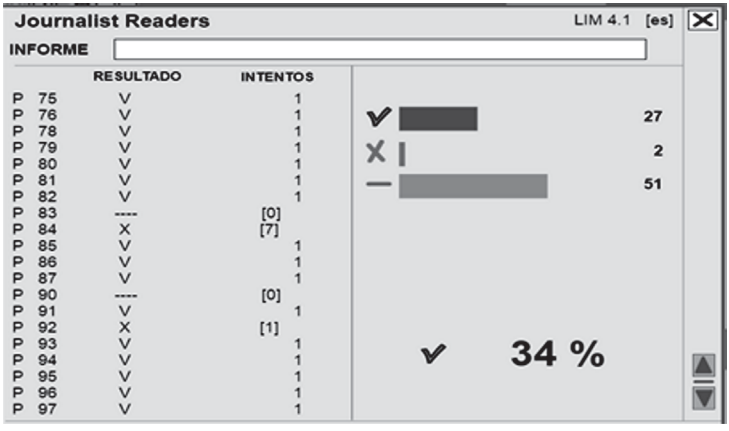


Figure 1. Example of Moodle Reading Report - Evaluation and Progress.

Figure 1 shows the students' progress in their comprehension abilities. Only one participant resorted to seven tries, but all of them could do crosswords, sentence-matching, and word search to check understanding on their own. This flexibility was not available in direct classroom instruction. The participants took an initial test before the pedagogical intervention and a final one after it. Figure 2 contrasts those results to shed light on the effectiveness of promoting reading strategies to comprehend written texts in ESP mediated by a VLO.

The graphic of the initial and final tests provides a picture of the significant difference between the results that the students obtained before and after the implementation of the VLO. This shows that the students could have taken advantage of the use of reading strategies when dealing with newspaper articles in ESP. Consequently, the participants showed an overall increase in the outcome in reading comprehension. Regarding the objectives of the test, these results suggest that the students, over time, become more equipped with the linguistic competences they need in their professional life as social communication or journalism students.

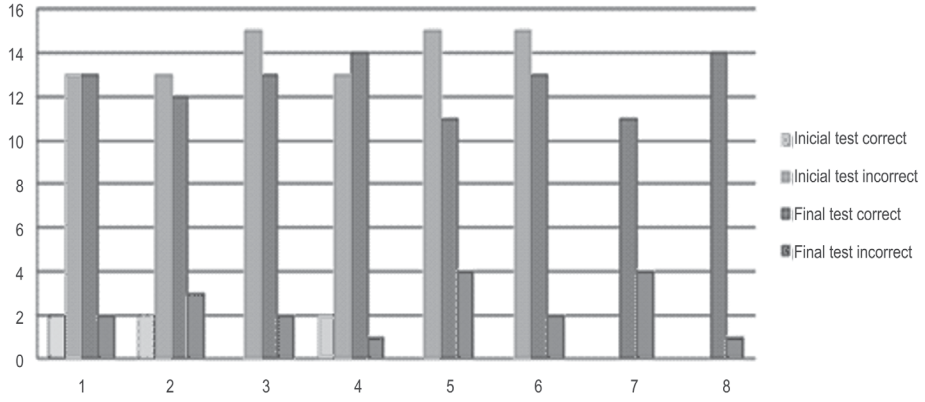


Figure 2. Initial Test vs. Final Test results.

Conclusions

According to the results presented in this paper, VLOs serve to promote reading strategies for ESP courses. That promotion depends greatly on the way VLO resources are deployed, which in this study meant setting manageable learning objectives, grading and selecting texts and topics that are sensitive to the learners' needs, and including an informed selection of engaging games and activities. In this manner, VLOs mediate and ease interaction between students, teachers, and texts. This paper postulates that the development of reading strategies constitutes the core of a successful pedagogical intervention and that the support of VLO contributes to it. The results presented above attest to the participants' efforts of meaning-making.

Furthermore, these results showed that the students became aware of the importance of the reading strategies promoted by the VLO in order to understand better the process involved in interpreting newspapers and academic texts. This happened with the use of strategies such as activating previous knowledge, skimming, scanning, inference, or drawing conclusions. The increase in comprehension can be attributed to the work done on the VLO. The final reading test showed the progress in understanding the texts.

The participants also strengthened their knowledge and the strategies necessary to tackle academic and scientific texts. They were able to recall and identify reading strategies in the self-assessment checklists of each report of the VLO reading cycle. The evidence gathered from the reports in the Moodle platform of the course consisted of the participants' self-assessment and the work done in the three cycles monitored by the teacher. The participants coped with the difficulties found in terms of the appropriation of the concepts and resources presented in writings. Consequently, this enhanced their linguistic repertoire for coping with

articles and reports on social communication and journalism. This assertion derives from the contrast of the students' responses in the interviews, questionnaires, and reports at the beginning and at the end of the implementation.

Upon analyzing the data of the VLO's implementation there was evidence that the participants followed the reading sequence proposed by Snow Chair (2002) for before, during, and after the reading; this was manifested in interviews. The proposed reading sequence acted as an interconnecting method and a promoter of specific orientations that determined somehow the reading process that participants underwent when using the VLO.

From the intervention with the VLO in this population, it can be inferred that the use of reading strategies promoted by the VLO went a long way in establishing connections between the students' own socio-cultural context and texts, thus enhancing their background knowledge. In this respect, it can safely be claimed that VLO provided learners with tools to facilitate and enrich their overall reading and learning experience.

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Appendix. Data Collection Matrix, Sagor (2000).

Research Questions	Data Source No1	Data Source No 2	Data Source No 3	Data Source No 4	Data Source No 5
1. What is the possible influence of a Virtual Learning Object in the promotion of reading strategies in ESP students of second semester of Social Communication and Journalism?	• Initial test • Final test **Purpose:** To check students' previous reading comprehension in EFL before enrolling the VLO Journalist readers and what students' achieved on reading comprehension strategies at the end of the VLO.	Initial Questionnaire Final Questionnaire Purpose: To get insights about students' perceptions and opinions about the VLO implementation to teach reading strategies in ESP.	Interview Purpose: To obtain participants' responses, perceptions, interactions and views about the VLO activities and the reading strategies used to understand articles in ESP.	VLO reading cycles reports with MOODLE services. Purpose: To learn students' development in the 3 reading cycles proposed. To check the MOODLE report to see students' participation and reading cycles progress. Students' self-assessment.	Teacher's Journal Purpose: To write and obtain as many descriptions as possible from students' interactions, perceptions and insights gained about the VLO'S activities and reading strategies designed and implemented.

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Designing Language Assessments in Context: Theoretical, Technical, and Institutional Considerations

El diseño de evaluaciones de lengua en contexto: consideraciones teóricas, técnicas e institucionales

Giraldo, Frank[1]

Abstract

The purpose of this article of reflection is to raise awareness of how poor design of language assessments may have detrimental effects, if crucial qualities and technicalities of test design are not met. The article first discusses these central qualities for useful language assessments. Then, guidelines for creating listening assessments, as an example, are presented to illustrate the level of complexity in test design and to offer a point of reference to evaluate a sample assessment. Finally, the article presents a discussion on how institutional school policies in Colombia can influence language assessment. The article concludes by highlighting how language assessments should respond to theoretical, technical, and contextual guidelines for them to be useful.

Keywords: language testing, language assessment literacy, qualities in language testing, test design.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo de reflexión es el de crear consciencia sobre cómo un deficiente diseño de las evaluaciones de lengua puede tener efectos adversos si ciertas cualidades y consideraciones técnicas no se cumplen. En primer lugar, el artículo hace una revisión de estas cualidades centrales para las evaluaciones. Seguidamente, presenta, a manera de ilustración, lineamientos para el diseño de pruebas de comprensión de escucha; el propósito es dilucidar el nivel de complejidad requerido en el diseño de

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estas pruebas y, además, usar estos lineamientos como punto de referencia para analizar un instrumento de evaluación. Finalmente, el artículo discute cómo las políticas institucionales de establecimientos educativos en Colombia pueden influenciar la evaluación de lenguas. Como conclusión, se resalta la idea de que las evaluaciones de lengua, para ser útiles, deberían responder a lineamientos teóricos, técnicos y contextuales.

Palabras clave: cualidades de las evaluaciones de lengua, diseño de exámenes, evaluación de lenguas, literacidad en la evaluación de lenguas.

Introduction

Language assessment is a purposeful and impactful activity. In general, assessment responds to either institutional or social purposes; for example, in a language classroom, teachers use language assessment to gauge how much students learned during a course (i.e. achievement as an institutional purpose). Socially, large-scale language assessment is used to make decisions about people's language ability and decisions that impact their lives, e.g. being accepted at a university where English is spoken. Thus, language assessment is not an abstract process but needs some purpose and context to function. To meet different purposes, language assessments are used to elicit information about people's communicative language ability so that accurate and valid interpretations are made based on scores (Bachman, 1990). All assessments should have a high quality, which underscores the need for sound design (Alderson, Clapham, & Wall, 1995; Fulcher, 2010).

In the field of language education in general, language teachers are expected to be skillful in designing high quality assessments for the language skills they assess (Clapham, 2000; Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2018; Inbar-Lourie, 2013). The design task is especially central in this field; if it is poor, information gathered from language assessments may disorient language teaching and learning.

In language assessment, scholars such as Alderson, Clapham, and Wall (1995), Brown (2011), Carr (2011), and Hughes (2002) have provided comprehensive information for the task of designing language assessments. Design considerations include clearly defined constructs (skills to be assessed), a rigorous design phase, piloting, and decisions about students' language ability. Within these considerations, it is notable that the creation of language assessments should not be taken carelessly because it requires attention to a considerable number of theoretical and technical details. Unfortunately, scholars generally present the design task in isolation (i.e. design of an assessment devoid of context) and do not consider –or allude to– the institutional milieu for assessment.

Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to the reflection in the field of language education on how the task of designing language assessments needs deeper theoretical and technical considerations in order to respond to institutional demands in

context; if the opposite (i.e. poor design) happens, language assessments may bring about malpractice and negative consequences in language teaching and learning. The reflection intended in this article is for classroom-based assessment. Thus, I, as a language teacher, consider the readers as colleagues who may examine critically the ideas in this manuscript. The information and discussion in this paper may also be relevant to those engaged in cultivating teachers' Language Assessment Literacy (LAL), e.g. teacher educators.

I construct the reflection in the following parts. First, I overview fundamental theoretical considerations for language assessments and place emphasis on the specifics of the technical dimension i.e. constructing an assessment. Second, I stress the institutional forces that can shape language assessments. Finally, these components (theory, technicalities, and context) form the foundations for assessment analysis in the last part of the paper, in which I intend to show how the relatively poor design of an assessment may violate theoretical, technical, and institutional qualities, leading it to invalid decisions about students' language ability.

Qualities of Language Assessments

In this section, I present six fundamental qualities for language assessments. Knowing about them, although in general terms, helps to understand the assessment analysis in the last section of the paper. I draw on the work by Bachman and Palmer (2010) to represent a widely-accepted framework for language assessment usefulness. Since most qualities below have sparked considerable discussions in the field of language assessment, for comprehensive coverage of the research and conceptual minutiae, readers might resort to Fulcher and Davidson (2012) or Kunnan (2013).

Construct validity. This is perhaps the most crucial quality of language assessments. If an assessment is not valid, it is basically useless (Fulcher, 2010). Before 1989, validity was considered as the capacity of an instrument to assess what it was supposed to assess and nothing else (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Lado, 1961). After 1989, Messick's (1989) view of validity replaced this old perspective and is now highly embraced: The interpretations that are made of scores in assessment should be clear and substantially justified; if this is the case, then there is relative present validity in score interpretations. For interpretations to be valid, naturally, assessments need to activate students' language ability as the main construct (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Reliability. Strictly in measurement terms, reliability is calculated statistically. A reliable assessment measures language skills consistently and yields clear results in scores (or interpretations) that accurately describe students' language abilities. The level of consistency is suggested when the assessment has been used two times under similar circumstances with the same students. However, as Hughes (2002) explains, it is not practical for teachers to

implement an assessment twice. For illustration, suppose two teachers are checking students' final essays, so every essay receives two scores. If the scores are widely different, then there is little or no consistency in scoring, i.e. the scores are unreliable. If scores are unreliable, this will negatively impact the validity of interpretations: The two teachers are interpreting and/or assessing written productions differently.

Authenticity. Authenticity refers to the degree of correspondence between an assessment (its items, texts, and tasks) and the way language is used in real-life scenarios and purposes; these scenarios are also called TLU (Target Language Use) domains (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Assessments should help language teachers to evaluate how students can use the language in non-testing situations, which is why authenticity is a central quality of language assessments (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Interactiveness. Language assessments should help students activate their language skills (i.e. the constructs of interest) and strategies for dealing with the assessment itself. If an assessment only stimulates a student's knowledge of math (or any other subject) then this assessment scores low on interactiveness. Likewise, the assessment should activate the relevant topical knowledge to perform, for example, in a speaking or writing task.

Practicality. Suitable and available human and material resources should contribute to the design, administration, and scoring procedure for a language assessment. If resources are scarce, assessment practicality decreases. Since human, physical, and time resources are needed (Bachman & Palmer, 2010), they should be used in a way that helps to streamline the assessment development process, ergo making it practical. Using a long writing assessment in a 40-student group may not be practical for scoring, as it will take too much time for one teacher to assess and interpret students' constructs; this can be especially impractical if the teacher needs to balance other teaching responsibilities, namely planning future lessons.

Washback. It is generally considered as the impact that assessments have on teaching and learning. It can be positive or negative (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Washback has been discussed as part of impact, or the influence of assessments on people and society. After Messick (1989), the field has conceptualized impact as consequential validity. Taken together, the overall consensus seems to be that language assessments should lead to beneficial consequences for the stakeholders involved (Bachman & Damböck, 2018; Shohamy, 2001). In language classrooms, results of language assessments should help improve students' language ability. Shohamy (2001) remarks one should not use them as elements of power, e.g. to discipline students for their misbehavior in class.

Ethics and fairness. Even though these two principles are not part of the framework in Bachman and Palmer (2010) or of technical discussions for assessment design, they have had much heated debate in language assessment. As such, ethics and fairness are not qualities of assessment (reliability and authenticity are) but philosophical pillars that drive professional

practice. Thus, ethics refers to professional conduct to protect the assessment process from malpractice; this conduct involves stakeholders in assessment, namely test-takers and professional testers (International Language Testing Association, 2000) but arguably includes language teachers and students (Arias, Maturana, & Restrepo, 2012). Fairness, on the other hand, refers to the idea that all students should have the same opportunity to show their language skills. No student should have an advantage over others (ILTA, 2000); similarly, irrelevant variables (e.g. a student's race) should not be used to assess students differently, for better or for worse. Thus, an unfair use of an assessment can be unethical.

In terms of the qualities of construct validity, reliability, authenticity, interactiveness, practicality, and washback, Bachman and Palmer (2010) and others (for example, Fulcher, 2010) argue that they are relative rather than absolute. An assessment is relatively practical rather that completely practical or totally impractical. The qualities are evaluated by, first of all, having an assessment's purpose in mind. Additionally, as commented earlier, these qualities have received considerable attention and led to differing views on their state of affairs. When it comes to design, however, guidelines for constructing assessments are agreed; this is the next topic I review in this paper.

Technical Considerations for Designing Language Assessments

These considerations refer to the nuts and bolts for writing useful items, tasks, and rubrics to be used in language assessments. As explained earlier, when authors refer to design technicalities, the focus is usually on assessments themselves rather than the theoretical and institutional universe to which the assessments respond.

In language assessment textbooks specifically designed for language teachers, authors walk readers through the genesis, qualities, development, and evaluation of assessments in general (for example, McNamara, 2000). Conversely, authors dedicate extensive sections of their books to explaining the intricacies of writing assessments. Table 1 below synthesizes the considerations that generally apply to all assessments, as seen in Alderson, Clapham, and Wall (1995), Buck (2001), Hughes (2002); Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), Brown (2011), and Carr (2011). The table is presented as a checklist for those interested in using it for classroom-based language assessment.

The considerations in Table 1 represent sound practice in assessment for language teaching and learning. They imply professionalization of the field and, when implemented properly, they reflect high levels of LAL, as scholars have discussed (Fulcher, 2012; Taylor, 2013; Malone, 2017). At a granular level, Brown (2011) and Carr (2011), for example, have provided specifics for constructing assessments. Tables 2 and 3 below contain a synthesis of guidelines for constructing listening assessments. I must state that I chose this skill arbitrarily

Table 1. Fundamental Considerations for Designing Language Assessments.

___ There is a document that details how the assessment should be designed, e.g. what constructs it will elicit, what discourse it will assess, how items and tasks should be written, etc. This document is called *Test Specifications*.
___ The purpose(s) for using the assessment is clear to teacher, and when appropriate, students.
___ The constructs, or specific skills, the assessment is targeting are clear and underlie the entire assessment.
___ The stated constructs are based on a theory of language use, e.g. communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001) or communicative language ability (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).
___ Alternatively, the constructs are based on clear language learning objectives in a language course.
___ The assessment seeks to tap into language constructs rather than other irrelevant constructs.
___ The assessment is useful to collect information about the stated language constructs, and therefore, to serve the purpose for which it is to be used.
___ The assessment follows design guidelines (see next section) for professionally constructed assessments.
___ The assessment items and tasks reflect language use and interaction in the real world.
___ Items and tasks in the assessment are generally clear for teachers to use and students to take. These stakeholders should be familiar with the formats to be used.
___ Whenever and wherever possible, the assessment has been piloted to see how it functions in practice, and improved based on the results of this process.
___ Methods for scoring assessment performance (answer keys and rubrics) are crystal clear to aim for high reliability.
___ The interpretations derived from assessment data help teachers and students meet the purpose of interest.
___ Decisions based on assessment data are pertinent to the assessment purpose, e.g. provide further support after a progress assessment that yielded poor results.
___ The assessment (process) and data from it are to be used ethically and fairly.

as it is the construct underlying the sample assessment in the last part of the paper, *Analysis of a Language Assessment*. The listening assessment I examine is meant as an example of how a poorly designed assessment can be problematic. Tables 2 and 3 below gather ideas from the authors in Table 1 (except for Fulcher, 2010, whose ideas I included in these new tables). I present the tables as checklists for teachers to design or evaluate their assessments. In Table 2, readers can find crucial generalities for designing listening assessments. Notice that most of these guidelines can also apply to the design of reading assessments.

Table 3 explains the specifics for creating sound multiple-choice and true-false items to elicit listening skills specifically. However, as is the case with Table 2, applicable guidelines below can be used for designing reading assessments.

Table 2. General Guidelines for Designing Listening Assessments.

__ The assessment is based on test specifications.
__ There is a clear construct definition for the assessment.
__ Therefore, the items are clearly relevant for the construct it aims to assess.
__ The items (multiple-choice questions with options or true-false statements) help to achieve the purpose of the assessment.
__ The instructions for students are clear. Using the students' L1, when possible, is a good idea. Including an example of the expected response is useful, too.
__ The items follow item specifications laid out for this assessment.
__ The items are written at the level of students' proficiency.
__ If possible, all items should be included on one page. Students should not have to turn pages when doing the test; this can be particularly problematic in listening tests.
__ The texts used for the assessment are produced in natural English (i.e. authentic) and do not contain language errors.
__ The texts are useful for writing the items: An assessment assessing authors' opinions needs to be based on a text with sufficient opinions.
__ Sound quality in the tracks must be high.
__ The number of items in the test should be spread out according to text length. If a recording lasts two minutes for a 5-item test, then it is not a good idea to have two or three questions in the last 30 seconds. Roughly, there should be a question every 20 seconds.
__ All items and tasks must avoid language that can be racist, discriminatory, or in general insulting for students.

Table 3. Guidelines for Designing Multiple-Choice and True-False Items in Listening Assessments.

Multiple-Choice Questions
__ Questions or statements in the stem (what comes before the options) should be written clearly. If the stem is not clear for a fellow teacher or a student, then it probably is not clear for the students with whom it will be used.
__ Questions or statements should not have unknown vocabulary for students.
__ All options need to be plausible, i.e., they can be answered only by listening. If a student can guess the answer without listening, then the item is not assessing this construct.
__ One item should not give away the answer to another item. In some cases, for example, the way question 4 is written has information to answer question 3.
__ All items need to be independent from one another. Each item is assessing one bit of the construct(s), so if there is overlap between one item and the other, one of them should be discarded.
__ The correct answers (the key) in the test are not following a pattern, such as a-c-c-d, a-c-c-d.

__ Avoid negatives in stems (not, will not) as they make the item difficult to interpret. If absolutely necessary, then highlight them with bold, underline, or CAPITALS.
__ All items need to have only one unambiguously correct answer. One way to do this follows.
__ Do not repeat words in options. I have seen many items written this way:

What is the boy wearing?

a. A hat, a white t-shirt, blue jeans, and black sneakers.
b. A hoodie, blue jeans, and blue sneakers.
c. A wig, blue jeans, and black sneakers.

Supposedly, b is the key. However, a and c are also possible because they both have the words blue jeans and black sneakers. They are partially true, so students can argue the answers are right, when in reality this item does not have one clearly right answer.

__ Options should be semantically related. If a question has three options with, say farm animals, and one is a wild animal, then this last option needs to be changed.
__ Options should have a similar length. Students tend to choose the longer answer. In many cases, this answer is actually the right answer, so the students do not show the construct but simply guess.
__ Stems should be short. In listening tests, long stems can be problematic as they introduce reading comprehension, a construct that is not relevant in this scenario.
__ Avoid needless redundancy or repetition. Example:

Why is the kid mad at his mom?

d. Because she did not give him more time to play.
e. Because he was sleeping.
f. Because...

__ Avoid options such as All of the above or None of the above as students may go for such option, which is usually correct, without really listening. These options tend to assess two or more constructs at the same time, which makes interpretation challenging.

True-False

__ Do not include absolutes or ambiguous terms such as never, always, or sometimes. They tend to make statements false and therefore can be guessed correctly.
__ Sometimes, a character in the text uses an absolute or ambiguous word, in which case it is a good idea to write "According to ___"
__ Avoid felicitous items when they are true. Some examples are "Lina likes listening to music." or "The family had a lot of fun during the trip." These items tend to be true, given their positive nature, so students can choose them without listening.
__ Each statement should assess one idea and not two or more. The following statement is asking about two things:

Mary left early, but she brought the package with her.

If Mary did not bring the package but did leave early, one part is true and one part is false. This item would need to be rewritten. Remember: The answer should be one and only one.

__ Just like multiple-choice questions, true-false statements should not be long and complex.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 synthesize the most important technicalities for listening assessments as they bring together ideas that conform to conscientious design. Additionally, they can help language teachers to critically evaluate and reflect upon how they design language assessments. Although the above guidelines are used to analyze a sample listening assessment in this paper, broad connections can be drawn to the other language skills, namely reading, speaking, and writing. Such relationships include the following:

- Language assessments serve purposes, so they must be clear for all parties involved; examples are diagnostic, progress, and achievement assessments.
- Any language assessment needs to have a clear description of the constructs (specific skills) to be assessed.
- Language assessments should be based on test specifications; this is a document that explains what the instrument measures and what its purpose is; how items (for listening and reading) and tasks (for speaking and writing) can be constructed, including the number of sections, for example, among other considerations.
- The method used (i.e. the assessment itself) should elicit the construct in the test specifications and be useful to achieve the stated purpose.

For further evaluation and reflection, language teachers may consider their assessment life-worlds (Scarino, 2013), i.e. the institutions where they do assessment. I discuss this matter in the next paragraphs.

Institutional Considerations for Designing Language Assessments

The previous section displays the key issues to design or evaluate language assessments as a task that requires detailed attention. Now I refer to what may be uncharted territory in the design of language assessments. Specifically, I discuss the institutional policies that can shape language assessments, particularly in the Colombian context. The overall message is that contextual and institutional considerations should be well-thought-out for designing useful assessments.

In Colombia, *Decreto 1290* by the Ministry of National Education (2009) enacts the concepts, characteristics, procedures, and policies that guide assessment at educational institutions. Colombian elementary and high schools should implement this decree. Consequently, the decree is written for all school teachers in Colombia and also, naturally, it applies to language teachers, so it may be construed as a powerful force that has the potential to influence language assessment. For example, the decree establishes the use of self-assessment instruments, a practice that is highly encouraged in language assessment

(Oscarson, 2013). This means that alternative assessment, in which students are responsible for their own learning, is suggested in the decree and the field of language assessment.

Additionally, the decree alludes to ethical uses of assessment, so it is exclusively concerned with documenting and improving student learning. That is to say, assessment should be used to see how much students are learning about a subject, whether it is biology or French; it should not be used to scare students or control them.

National standardized examinations in Colombia (such as *Pruebas Saber 11*[1]) represent another influential national and institutional policy that impacts language assessment. Language teachers in Colombia may replicate test items and tasks from this examination so that they prepare students to take it, although this is not necessarily a successful practice (Barletta & May, 2006). This same situation is evident in other contexts where language teachers' assessments reflect the constructs of national tests (for example, see Sultana, 2019).

Additionally, specific details about how assessment should be done are described in the PEI (*Proyecto Educativo Institucional* – Institutional Educational Project) and the *Manual de Convivencia* (roughly translated as Manual for Coexistence) of each Colombian school. Both documents have origin in the Colombian general law of education No. 115. Because these two documents regulate schools as a whole, they can as well influence language teachers' work. Although the documents are indeed necessary in schools, oftentimes their prescriptions conflict with language teachers' perceptions, a situation which can lead to tensions in language assessment (Barletta & May, 2006; Hill, 2017; Inbar-Lourie, 2012; Scarino, 2013).

More specifically, assessments may be influenced by the language learning philosophy of each school. If a school considers communicative competence as the main goal for language education, and this is clearly stated in the school curriculum, then assessments should likewise elicit communicative competences. However, as studies in Colombia and elsewhere have shown (Arias & Maturana, 2005; Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Díaz, Alarcón, & Ortiz, 2012; Frodden, Restrepo, & Maturana, 2004; López & Bernal, 2009), there tends to be a discrepancy between beliefs and practices: Language teachers believe communicative language assessment is important but frequently their practices show emphasis on linguistic constructs through traditional assessments.

In a related manner, the language curriculum, and specifically syllabi, built from each school's PEI can directly influence language assessment.[2] Scholars in language assessment

[1] Pruebas Saber 11 is an exam taken by Colombian students in 11th grade, the last grade in high school. The test assesses the curriculum at large, and this includes English. The English language section assesses grammar, vocabulary, pragmatic awareness, reading, and writing.

[2] As far as I am aware, there are no studies that connect language assessment in Colombia to PEIs. However, I can stand corrected, if shown otherwise.

(for example, Bachman & Damböck, 2018; Brown & Hudson, 2002) argue that instruments have content validity provided that they elicit the specific language skills and knowledge that are part of a course or syllabus. Hence, syllabi serve as a point of reference to develop assessments and interpret the data that emerge from them.

Another aspect that influences language assessments is each school's modality. For example, in Colombian schools, in tenth and eleventh grades, students usually receive additional instruction in a particular subject, e.g. commerce, mechanics, interculturality, and tourism, among others. Given these modalities, language assessments may revolve around these general topics to document and drive language learning. Even though I have not seen any published studies describing this practice in Colombia, my personal interaction with high school teachers has confirmed that they connect language assessments to the school's modality, hoping to make this assessment more relevant and authentic for students.

Last but not least, language teachers consider students for designing language assessments. Learner characteristics that may shape assessment include their proficiency level, learning styles, age, needs, and even interests. Since classroom language assessment is mainly concerned with improving language learning (Bachman & Damböck, 2018; Fulcher, 2010), it becomes paramount then to devise high-quality language assessments for students as stakeholders who are directly impacted by them.

To summarize, language assessments can be influenced by three major components: theoretical ideas that apply to language assessments, technical issues that represent professional design, and contextual and institutional policies in which language assessment occurs. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between language assessments and the forces that can shape and support them.

Language Assessments		
Theoretical Considerations	**Technicalities of Design**	**National and Institutional Policies for Learning**

Figure 1. Forces that Can Influence and Support Language Assessments.

Taken together, the aforementioned force a position of language assessment as a central endeavor for teachers and students. Given the importance that the process of doing assessment represents, the design of assessments is one of its pillars.

Analysis of a Sample Language Assessment

The purpose of the analysis presented in this section is to have readers, especially language teachers, reflect on the design of a listening assessment in light of the discussion held in the preceding sections. For context, Table 4 includes information of an example scenario for this sample listening assessment.

Table 4. Example Context for Analyzing a Language Assessment: General Characteristics.

Characteristic	Description
Type of school	Public
Language Learning Philosophy and Curriculum	Based on communicative competences in listening, reading, writing, and speaking; syllabi based on the Suggested Curriculum in Colombia (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2016)[3]
Methodology	Problem-based learning
Types of Language Assessments	Traditional such as paper-and-pencil tests and alternative such as self and peer assessment
School modality	Tourism
Grade and number of students	10th grade; 40 students
Purpose and decisions for both assessments	Formative: Identify learners' progress in listening and provide feedback on strengths and aspects to improve.

The listening assessment is targeting this construct: *Identify specific information on how ecotourism projects have impacted the areas where they operate and the people who live in and visit them.* There are ten items –five multiple-choice and five true-false–meant to elicit this construct. Further, the assessment was to be applied in the middle of a language course, hence the purpose of checking *progress*.

I recommend that readers copy and paste or print out the Appendix (i.e. the assessment) so that they can reflect on it as they read the analysis that follows. The analysis starts with theoretical aspects, then uses technical considerations, and finalizes with institutional policies.

[3] The Suggested Curriculum contains the proposed methodological and curricular approach for elementary and high school in Colombia. It was designed by the Ministry of National Education.

Theoretical level. The listening assessment is about collecting information on how students identify specific information on *the impact* of ecotourism projects. Items 1 (organizations speakers talk about), 3 (location of Los Flamencos), 9 (changes in the sanctuary), and 10 (Henry's team) are about collecting information on other specific information, not the one expected in the construct. One way to circumvent the problem of assessing irrelevant constructs is to rewrite the construct specification for this assessment. Additionally, items 2 (what *Nativos Activos* do) and 3 (location of Los Flamencos) have more than one possible answer: Options *a* and *c* in item 2 overlap, which also happens with options *c* and *d* in item 3. This has an effect on the reliability of this assessment because the right answer is not consistent. In other words, the correct answer should be only one, and not two as it happens with these two items. Option *c* in question 4 (why Minra loves working with *Nativos Activos*) is the longest answer and it happens to be the key (i.e. the correct answer). This means a student can guess and get the item right for the wrong reasons (i.e. without actually listening); students tend to choose the longest answer when everything else fails (Brown, 2011; Carr, 2011). Guessing can also happen with item 10 (Henry's team), which seems obviously false in the context expressed in the recording.

Multiple-choice and true-false items lack authenticity as these are not operations we do in real life: We do not listen to natural conversations with options from which to choose. However, the topic in the recording (touristic places in Colombia) and the places talked about are real; also, in real life, students may be interested in listening to someone explaining the impact of ecotourism projects, especially at a school with the modality explained in Table 4.

This assessment is relatively interactive as it engages listening skills *and* test-taking strategies (e.g. guessing); the latter can obscure interpretations about the target construct. If students knew about the places being discussed in the recording, then the assessment would be eliciting world knowledge rather than listening skills. On the other hand, items 5 (benefit Minra does not mention) and 6 (structural improvements) seem to be directly engaging the operations necessary for students to show the construct. As for practicality, the item types in this assessment can be scored easily, but their design requires a high level of detail and expertise, as Tables 2 and 3 suggest.

The washback effect of this assessment may have been limited, since students got a score but did not receive information on what exactly to improve. This is particularly problematic as this assessment was meant to provide feedback on progress; in short, it was more summative than formative, as initially considered in Table 4.

Finally, since this assessment has poorly designed items, there may be wrong conclusions about students. Some may have gotten items wrong because of design, so the scores do not lead to clear interpretations. This then causes a problem of fairness because the score does not accurately represent students' listening construct of interest. If the teacher realizes that

there are problems with the assessment, after administering and checking it, he/she should not use scores or interpretations from it; if she/he does, then this is an unethical practice.

Technical level. This listening assessment has the following technical strengths:

- It can be argued that the construct is clear; this is a strength because it should help language teachers to design items that target this construct and not others.
- The recording for this assessment includes several instances of effects on area and people; thus, the strength is that the text is useful for the construct of interest.
- The items are spread throughout the recording and not piled up in a short period of time. This is good, as it can help students focus on relevant information while listening, and not have them worried about having to understand a great deal of information in a short period of time.
- The items do not contain any biases towards students, i.e. language used in the items is neutral. The strength, therefore, is that the assessment is not insulting and should not have any negative impact on students' affect.
- In general, the items are short, so influence of reading comprehension is low. This is positive because listening is the construct about which the assessment is eliciting information.

In contrast, the following are some aspects that render this assessment problematic:

- Items 1, 3, 9, and 10 are not construct-relevant. Specifically, the problems are that they are not collecting information about the intended listening skill; they may be assessing listening but not the specific construct for this assessment.
- Item 1 can be answered with information from items 2, 4, 5, and 9, so the problem is that this diminishes the reliability of interpretation: Did students get items right because they have the skill or because they guessed?
- The problems with items 2 and 3 are that they have more than one correct answer because options overlap. Again, this creates a violation of reliability. If a teacher assigns a distractor as wrong yet it is right, there will not be score consistency. Additionally, since a right answer is considered wrong, then the assigned interpretation –that the student does not have the skill– is not valid.
- Item 7 is both true and false. The first part is true and the second part (*have educated visitors*) is false, so this is a problem because the item should be either true or false, not both. Also, this item is noticeably longer than the others, which may introduce reading comprehension in this listening assessment; this is a problem because the construct of interest is listening.

- Item 9 is neither true nor false. There is no information in the recording for students to judge this item. Changes may be needed but the speaker does not mention anything about this concern, so it cannot be said that the statement is false. This may be problematic because the item is not assessing the construct for this assessment.
- Item 10 can be guessed without listening, so the problem is that a correct answer for this item does not imply existence of the construct, i.e. it is not reliable. Henry works in a project where they have visitors, so it is very unlikely that his team does not like to educate them.

Institutional level. Lastly, this assessment partially aligns with Colombian policies for assessment. It partly assesses listening, which is a skill or content in the English as a foreign language class in Colombia and elsewhere. Further, the assessment uses item types (true-false, multiple choice) students can take in the *Pruebas Saber 11*, but this examination does not include listening as a construct. The assessment is aligned with the school's language learning philosophy as it is meant to assess listening, a communicative skill. Also, the assessment is based on standards from local policies for language learning in Colombia and is clearly aligned with the school's modality. Specifically, the standard for the assessment comes from *El Reto* (Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia, 2006), a document that states the specific communicative competence students are expected to develop in Colombian high schools.

Since the purpose of the assessment, as stated in Table 4, was to provide feedback on strengths and aspects to improve upon, then the decisions the language teacher made should be more aligned with this overall purpose. Instead of assigning numbers, the feedback from this assessment can be based on what students felt while taking it, including problems they had and the process by which they got items right. However, as there are design problems with this assessment, then its potential to meet the stated purpose is rather limited.

If the instrument were used for self-assessment purposes, and thus aligned with principles in the *Decreto No. 1290*, other problems could emerge. If students guessed answers correctly, then they would not really be reflecting on their listening skill. Furthermore, since several items are inappropriately designed, students might get confused between what they got right/wrong and what the transcript states.

In conclusion, although some aspects of this assessment are aligned with theoretical, technical, and institutional considerations, there are serious design problems. Because these problems exist, the usefulness of the assessment to gauge listening comprehension and to meet the stated purpose is highly questionable. Failure to meet expected design guidelines can, therefore, lead to inaccurate interpretations of students' language ability. Likewise, if

general considerations (see Table 1, for example) are not met in general language assessment design, then their value and usefulness may be limited.

Limitations

There are three limitations that warrant discussion in this paper. To start, language assessment in context may be conditioned by other factors not included in this paper. For example, I do not consider theoretical issues such as summative and formative assessment; technical aspects such as how to write distractors; and institutional considerations such as classroom routines. Thus, the reflection and analysis of the sample assessment may be limited in their scope, especially because the assessment of other language skills is not considered.

Second, the analyses are based only on my perception as a language assessment enthusiast. Other stakeholders may have different views towards the items presented in this instrument and, therefore, provide a different picture of what it represents and how useful it can be. Scholars have suggested that more people should be involved in analyzing tests and their quality for a better picture of their validity (for example, Alderson, Clapham, & Wall, 1995).

Lastly, the analysis was based on one assessment for one language skill. Given space constraints, I could not include assessments for other skills, which may have communicated with a wider readership. For instance, there are specific design considerations for speaking, reading, and writing assessments, namely a clear construct definition, written items and tasks, and items or tasks aligned with institutional policies for language learning. Thus, further practitioner reflections on language assessment design should be welcomed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Scholars have written extensively about the design of language assessments for classroom contexts. Their work directly targets the needs that language teachers may have when tasked to develop assessments. What seems to be a gap in the literature is that sample assessments are not analyzed against the theory, design instructions, and context where they happen most: the classroom. To contribute to filling this gap, in this paper I first overviewed common theoretical considerations in language assessment at large (e.g. validity and reliability). Then, as a way of illustration, I provided a detailed description of technicalities for the design of listening assessments and included institutional, school-based features that impact language assessment. I used this example to highlight the craft of design and I hope language teachers realize that this level of detail is present in designing assessments for other skills, e.g. speaking.

In the last section, I analyzed one assessment for the target skill by combining theoretical, technical, and institutional dimensions. In doing so, my purpose was to raise awareness of the

implications of creating assessments and how, in this process, various expectations converge. The more aligned with these considerations, the more useful assessments can be for the contexts in which they are used.

A related recommendation for practitioners is to use Tables 1, 2, and 3 in this paper as checklists to evaluate the assessments they create. Although the tables are not comprehensive, they offer the best practices in design, as I have synthesized from various authors in language testing. Specifically, teachers can discuss the guidelines as they illuminate their practice and arrive at personal reflections for improvement; teachers working in teams can exchange their assessments and analyze each other's design to see how they align or not with guidelines.

If teachers reflect on the assessments they design and use and consider theoretical, technical, and institutional facets, they will be in a better position to potentiate students' language learning so as to arrive at reliable, valid interpretations of language ability.

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Appendix. Sample Listening Assessment for Analysis

Background: This assessment is based on an audio in *English, please! 2* (grade 10th), an English language learning series developed by the Ministry of Education in Colombia (2016) for grades ninth, tenth, and eleventh. Activities for this audio are in the student's book, pages 167-168. The transcript can be found on page 165 of the teacher's guide.

The present assessment was based on this Colombian standard for learning English:

Identifico personas, situaciones, lugares y el tema en conversaciones sencillas.

(I can identify people, situations, places and the topic of a simple conversation.)

From this standard, the following listening construct was the target for the assessment:

> *Identify specific information on how ecotourism projects have impacted the areas where they operate and the people who live in the areas or visit them.*

There are five multiple choice items and five true-false items for analysis purposes in this paper.

---

1. What kind of organizations are the speakers talking about?

   a. Ecotourism
   b. Economy
   c. Animal
   d. Education

2. What do *Nativos Activos* do?

   a. Manage San Bernardo Natural Park.
   b. Help local communities in Bolivar.
   c. Protect the Caribbean Sea.
   d. Work for local communities

3. Where is Los Flamencos located?

   a. Isla Grande
   b. Baru
   c. Rioacha
   d. La Guajira

4. Why does Minra love working with Nativos Activos?

   a. It's the most important thing in her life.

b. The people are very participative.
c. Decisions for the park depend on the whole group.
d. The project brings joy to the community.

5. Which of these benefits does Minra NOT mention?

a. Education for the group
b. Transportation
c. Services for visitors
d. Money for the locals

6. Minra says that they have made structural improvements. T__ F__

7. They have worked with the community on a compost program and have educated visitors to create compost. T__ F__

8. Henry says that restaurant services are not included in this project. T__ F__

9. In the Sanctuary where Henry works, they need to make more changes. T__ F__

10. Henry's team does not like to educate visitors. T__ F__

After the assessment: Students received a score that was meant to represent their progress in listening.

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- The Editor is responsible for maintaining the quality of the contents of the journal and, as such, has the final say on whether to accept or reject a manuscript.
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