MEXTESOL JOURNAL

2007

Vol. 31 No. 1

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

MEXTESOL JOURNAL

Editors:
Ulrich Schrader
Ma. Guadalupe Santos Espino

Leobardo Romero, Production Editor

Volume 31, Number 1, 2007

The MEXTESOL Journal is a publication of the Mexican Association of Teachers of English.

El MEXTESOL Journal es una publicación de la Asociación Mexicana de Maestros de Inglés

Printed in Mexico Impreso en México

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Editorial Board

Troy Crawford,
Universidad de Guanajuato

Fátima Encinas
Benemérita Universidad
Autónoma de Puebla
Universidad Iberoamericana-Puebla

Karen Englander
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California

Juan Manuel Guerra
Q.T.L.A. Quality Teaching Language
Advisors, Monterrey

Nancy Hayward
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Peter Hubbard
Universidad de Guadalajara

Connie Rae Johnson
Universidad de las Americas-Puebla

Patricia McCoy
Universidad de las Americas-Puebla

Michelle Merritt
Universidad de Guadalajara

JoAnn Miller
Free Lance Consultant

Buenaventura Rubio Zenil
Universidad de Guanajuato

Saul Santos
Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit

Kathryn Singh
Tec de Monterrey, Universidad Virtual,
Escuela de Graduados en Educación

Pia Maria White
Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes

Advisory Board

M. Martha Lengeling
Universidad de Guanajuato

Editors

Ulrich Schrader
Centro Mexico Norteamericano de
Relaciones Culturales, México, D .F.

Ma. Guadalupe Santos Espino
Universidad de Guanajuato

ISSN 1405-3470

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

MEXTESOL JOURNAL
Volume 31 / Volumen 31
Number 1 / Número 1
Contents/Contenido

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Editorial Policy

The MEXTESOL Journal is dedicated to the classroom teacher in Mexico and Latin America. Previously unpublished articles and book reviews relevant to EFL teaching and research in Mexico and Latin America are accepted for publication. Articles may be of a practical or theoretical nature and be written in English or Spanish. The Journal reserves the right to edit an accepted manuscript in order to enhance clarity or style. The author will be consulted only if the editing has been substantial.

Research-Based Articles: A research-based article should report original research or discuss research-related issues. These articles are usually submitted as refereed (judged as acceptable, conditional, or not acceptable) by two members of the Editorial Board who are experts in an area related to that of the article. The refereeing process is blind but, if an author wishes, a referee may be assigned as a mentor to guide the author through the revision process. A footnote will state that the article was refereed.

Professional Practice Issue Articles: In order to open the publication process to more authors, refereed or non-refereed articles are accepted in this section. These normally describe professional teaching experiences or library research related to teaching which the author wants to share with the readers. These articles will be read, judged and styled by members of the Editorial Staff for originality, quality and clarity of ideas.

Reviews: The Journal welcomes review articles summarizing published research or professional practice, position papers which promote or defend positions on a current, controversial topic, and book reviews of classroom texts, recorded material, computer software or other instructional resources. Reviews are non-refereed but are subject to editing.

Submission Guidelines: In order to facilitate the publication process, if possible, submissions should first be sent by e–mail to the address of the Journal. The article and any graphics must be written using Microsoft Word and sent as an "attachment." Please specify if you are submitting for a **Refereed** or **Non-refereed** article.

Any correspondence to the Journal concerning manuscripts should be e-mailed to the Editors at the address below. Information concerning advertising in the Journal or MEXTESOL membership should be sent to the National MEXTESOL Office at the addresses also listed below.

Journal Correspondence

National MEXTESOL Office
Fax / Telephone : (55) 5566-8774, (55) 5566-8749
E-mail:nationaloffice@mextesol.org.mx

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Política Editorial

La revista MEXTESOL está dirigida al maestro de inglés en México y en América Latina. Se aceptan manuscritos y reseñas relevantes a la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero e investigación que no hayan sido previamente publicados. Los artículos pueden ser de naturaleza teórica o práctica y pueden ser escritos en inglés o en español. La revista se reserva el derecho de editar un manuscrito aceptado para brindarle mayor claridad o mejorar su estilo. El autor será consultado únicamente para sugerir cambios.

Artículos basados en la investigación: Un artículo basado en investigación debe reportar investigación original o discutir asuntos relacionados con la investigación. Estos artículos generalmente se someten a arbitraje (juzgados como aceptable, condicional o no aceptable) realizado por dos miembros del consejo editorial expertos en un área relacionada con el artículo. El proceso de arbitraje es anónimo, pero si el autor lo desea se le puede asignar a un árbitro como mentor para guiarlo en el proceso de revisión. El artículo se publica con una nota al pie de página para indicar que es arbitrado.

Artículos relacionados con la práctica docente: Con el propósito de abrir las posibilidades de publicación a más autores, se aceptan artículos arbitrados y no arbitrados. Generalmente describen experiencias docentes o investigación bibliográfica relacionada con la enseñanza. Estos artículos son leídos y juzgados por miembros del personal editorial para asegurar su originalidad, calidad y claridad de ideas.

Reseñas: La revista acepta reseñas de investigación publicada o de práctica docente, ponencias que argumentan a favor o en contra de temas actuales o controvertidos y reseñas de libros de texto, materiales audiovisuales, programas de computadoras, y otros recursos didácticos. Las reseñas no son sometidas a arbitraje pero son sujetas a edición.

Indicaciones para enviar una propuesta: Para facilitar el proceso de publicación se recomienda enviar el manuscrito por correo electrónico a la dirección de la revista. Se debe utilizar un procesador Microsoft Word para el artículo y gráficas que lo acompañen y ser enviado como un attachment. Favor de indicar si se desea que el **artículo sea o no arbitrado**.

Cualquier correspondencia a la revista que tenga que ver con artículos para publicación debe ser enviada vía fax o correo electrónico a las direcciones que aparecen abajo. La información concerniente a propaganda en la revista o a membresías debe ser enviada a la Oficina Nacional de MEXTESOL cuya dirección también aparece abajo.

Correspondencia
Oficina Nacional MEXTESOL
Fax / Teléfono: (55) 5566-8774, (55) 5566-8749
E-mail: nationaloffice@mextesol.org.mx

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Manuscript Guidelines Mextesol Journal

Articles must be typed, double-spaced and preferably no more than twenty pages long. The format should conform to the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association (A.P.A.) guideline format.

In-Text Citations:
References within the text should be cited in parentheses using the author's last name, year of publication and page numbers (shown below):

Rodgers (1994) compared performance on two test instruments.
or In a recent study of EFL writing (Rodgers, 1994) .....

Or for Direct Quotes:

Rodgers (1994) argued that, "most existing standardized tests do not accurately assess EFL writing performance" (p. 245).

Reference Page:

The list of references found in an article must appear at the end of the text on a separate page entitled "References." The data must be complete and accurate. Authors are fully responsible for the accuracy of their references. The APA format for reference page entries is shown below.

Books:

Brown, J. (1991). Nelson-Denny Reading Test. Chicago: Riverside Press

Journal Articles:

Ganschow, L. (1992). A screening instrument for the identification of foreign language learning problems. Foreign Language Annals. 24, 383-398.

Fe de erratas

MEXTESOL Journal, 2006, Vol. 30, No. 2, Special Issue: Critical Pedagogies
page 19
Title: Entering the Circle: Mexican Graduate Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Language, Identity and New Discourses in U.S. Universities.

Authors:
Rebeca Gutiérrez Estrada, Universidad de Sonora,
gutierrezrebeca@lenext.uson.mx
Nolvia Cortéz Román, Universidad de Sonora and University of Arizona

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of the Journal contains two articles (both, curiously enough, from Argentina) concerning language learning strategies in the classroom. The article, *A Case Study: What Learning Strategies does a Shy Adult Learner Apply?*, by Bettiana Blásquez deals with one particular student's coping with the study of English as a foreign language and the learning strategies she utilizes. In the second article, *A Study on Affective Factors and Strategy Instruction in the Self-access Mode: Focusing on the Treatment*, Ana Longhini presents the results of a study of a university self-access language learning program with a supplementary strategies instruction component.

The article *Exploring Options for Titulación in Licenciaturas in ELT in Mexico: A Case Study* by Peter Sayer, presents a case study, not of an individual, but rather of an innovative program which allowed university students to complete their degree requirements by developing a project which was particularly beneficial to a local community in the state of Oaxaca.

Next, we have the very interesting article, *Some Historical and Academic Considerations for the Teaching of Second Language Writing in English in Mexico*, which explores the nature and origins of the idiosyncracies of Mexican writing habits. The article ends on how these features present a challenge in teaching EFL / ESL writing to Spanish-speaking Mexican students.

Finally, there is an article about idiomatic expressions, those enigmatic, unavoidable groups of words we use all of the time. The artcle provides background information about these bugbears of comprehension and translation!

This year, the 31st year of its publication, the MEXTESOL Journal will be undergoing an entire revamping of its operations. By the end of the year there should be a new editorial team working hard to provide MEXTESOL members with a professional forum with high quality articles that will help improve English language teaching and learning in Mexico and elsewhere.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

A Case Study: What Learning Strategies does a Shy Adult Learner Apply? [1]

By Bettiana Andrea Blázquez, M.A., Escuela Superior de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Patagonia, Argentina.
bettianablazquez@hotmail.com

Introduction

The study of language learning strategies can provide language teachers with insights into the ways in which different students learn. In one of the courses at my university, Phonetics and Phonology I of which I work as a teacher assistant, I noticed that one student happened to be particularly shy and suspected that her reluctance to participate in the class might well result from unawareness and inadequate use of learning strategies. I therefore decided to conduct an action research project to determine what, if any, relationship there was between this student's learning strategies and her behaviour in class. As I was limiting myself to one learner in particular the method applied in this research project was a case-study approach. Moreover, in order to collect relevant data I decided to use the SILL questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990) and a semi-structured interview so as to complement the information. The findings seem to indicate that there was indeed a connection between the shy behaviour of the student and an inadequate knowledge and use of effective learning strategies.

Literature Review

Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

Among all the various and complex factors that affect language learning, motivation, aptitude, and learning styles, researchers have paid particular attention to learning strategies (Ellis 1994).The initial phase of strategy research started with the studies of "the Good Language Learner" (e.g., Naiman 1978; Rubin 1975; Stern 1975) which tried to find correlations between strategy use and L2 proficiency. As expected, the results indicated that "it was not merely a high degree of language aptitude and motivation that caused some learners to excel but also the students' own active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of individualised learning techniques (Dörnyei and Skehan 2001, 17)."

In the 1990s O'Malley and Chamot and Oxford, among other researchers, attempted to define learning strategies. According to Oxford, "language learning strategies are particular forms of learning behaviour, employed more or less

[1] This is a refereed article.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

consciously by the learner to make language learning easier, faster and enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (1990, 8)." Similarly, O' Malley and Chamot (1990) define strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information (1990, 1)."

Bearing in mind these definitions, I claim that these authors seem to assume that the use of learning strategies facilitates language learning. However, they are not consistent in the way they classify them. While O'Malley and Chamot divide learning strategies into metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective ones, Oxford provides a more detailed framework. To be more precise, she establishes a distinction between direct and indirect strategies within which O'Malley and Chamot's categories, as well as the novel memory and compensation strategies, are included.

In my view, these new techniques are worth considering, since research (Rubin 1975; Rubin 1981; Reiss 1985) has demonstrated that learners frequently use them. Hence I will base my analysis of the evidence for this case study on Oxford's more complete model.

Oxford's Taxonomy of Learning Strategies

This framework draws a distinction between direct and indirect strategies (Appendix A). The former types imply direct learning and require mental processing of the target language, while the latter are in charge of supporting and managing language learning without directly involving the target language.

In the direct group are three kinds of strategies: Memory, Cognitive and Compensation strategies, and the indirect set, comprises Metacognitive, Affective and Social ones. Each of these categories is broken down into two more levels which will be detailed in the following section.

Direct Group

Memory Strategies:

The specific function of memory strategies is to help learners to store and retrieve information. They fall into four sets *Creating mental linkages*, *Applying images and sounds*, *Reviewing well* and *Employing action* (See Appendix B).

In the first set, *Creating mental linkages*, are: *Grouping* (e.g., classifying language material into type of word, topic, similarity, etc), *Associating/elaborating* (e.g., associating two pieces of information like *bread and butter*) and *Placing new words into a context* (e.g. a story) (Oxford, 1990: 41).

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Four strategies are included in the second set, *Applying images and sounds*. They are: *Using imagery* (e.g., a mental image of the word itself), *Semantic mapping* (e.g., relating words linked to a key concept), *Using keywords* (e.g. a combination of sounds and images) and *Representing sounds in memory* (e.g., rhyming) (Oxford, 2001: 364).

The category *Reviewing well* contains one strategy, *Structured reviewing* which consists in overlearning by means of reviewing in spaced intervals. In the group *Employing action* there are two strategies: *Using physical response or sensation* which has to do with acting out a new expression (e.g., open the door) and *Using mechanical techniques* (e.g., flashcards) (Oxford, 1990: 42).

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are beneficial to learners' understanding, manipulation and production of the target language. As shown in Appendix C, four main sets exist: *Practising*, *Receiving and sending messages*, *Analysing and reasoning and Creating structure for input and output*.

There are five *Practising* strategies: *Repeating* (e.g., imitating a native speaker), *Formally practising with sounds and writing systems* (e.g., pronunciation, intonation, register, etc), *Recognising and using formulas and patterns* (e.g., "Nice to meet you"), *Recombining* (e.g., linking phrases) and *Practising naturalistically* (e.g., conversations, reading a book, listening to a lecture) (Oxford, 1990: 45).

The two strategies for *Receiving and sending messages* are: *Getting the idea quickly* (e.g. skimming and scanning) and *Using resources for receiving and sending messages* (e.g., e-mail) (Oxford, 1990: 46).

The set *Analysing and reasoning* comprises five strategies: *Reasoning deductively* which consists of using general rules and applying them to new situations, *Analysing expressions* i.e., breaking down an expression into parts to determine its meaning, *Analysing contrastively* i.e., comparing vocabulary, sounds, grammar of the new language with elements of our L1, *Translating* which has to do with using one language as the basis for understanding or producing another and *Transferring* i.e., applying knowledge of words, concepts, structures from one language to another (Oxford, 1990: 46).

The category *Creating structure for input and output* contains three strategies: *Taking notes* (e.g., writing down the main ideas of a text) *Summarising* (e.g., making a summary of a long passage) and *Highlighting* (e.g., underlining) (Oxford, 1990: 47).

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Compensation Strategies

The purpose of Compensation strategies is to allow students to make up for missing knowledge. There are ten categories that are divided into two sets: *Guessing intelligently in listening and reading* and *Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing* (See Appendix D).

The two strategies that contribute to *Guessing intelligently in listening and reading* are: *Using linguistic clues* i.e., using language-based clues to guess the meaning of what is heard or read and *Using other clues* (e.g., context, text, structure, etc) (Oxford, 1990: 49).

The second set *Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing* contains eight strategies: *Switching to the mother tongue* i.e., using the mother tongue for an expression without translating it, *Getting help* which denotes asking the person to provide the missing information, *Using mime or gesture* (e.g. physical motion to indicate meaning), *Avoiding communication partially or totally* (e.g. avoiding certain topics when difficulties are anticipated), *Selecting the topic* (e.g., choosing the topic of conversation according to one's own interests), *Adjusting or approximating the message* (e.g., making ideas simpler), *Coining words* (e.g., combining new words) and *Using a circumlocution or synonym* i.e., describing the concept or using a word that means the same thing (Oxford, 1990: 50).

Indirect Group

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies aid students in controlling and coordinating their learning process by planning, arranging and evaluating. As shown in Appendix E they include three strategy sets: *Centering your learning*, *Arranging and planning your learning* and *Evaluating your learning*.
The first group is made up of *Overviewing and linking with already known material* which has to do with associating new material with what is already known, *Paying attention* so as to ignore distractors and *Delaying speech production to focus on listening* i.e., until the listening skill is better developed (Oxford, 1990: 138).

Six strategies form the second set, *Arranging and planning your learning*. They are: *Finding out about language learning* (e.g., reading books to improve one's own learning process), *Organising* (e.g. a schedule, notebook), *Setting goals and objectives* (e.g. short-term objectives and long-term goals), *Identifying the purpose of a language task* (e.g., purposeful listening/reading/speaking/writing), *Planning for a language task* (e.g.,

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

resources, aids) and *Seeking practice opportunities* i.e., in a naturalistic situation for example: joining an international social club (Oxford, 1990: 139).

The last set, *Evaluating your learning*, comprises *Self-monitoring* which involves identifying errors and trying to eliminate them and *Self-evaluating* i.e., evaluating one's own progress in the new language (Oxford, 1990: 140).

Affective Strategies

The role of affective strategies is to help learners regulate and control emotions, motivations and attitudes. There are three sets: *Lowering your anxiety*, *Encouraging yourself* and *Taking your emotional temperature* (Appendix F). Techniques that are effective anxiety reducers can be found in the first group. They are: *Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation*, *Using music* (e.g. soothing music to relax) and *Using laughter* (e.g. watching a funny film, reading a humorous book, etc) (Oxford, 1990: 143).

The second set, *Encouraging yourself*, includes the following strategies: *Making positive statements* i.e., saying or writing a positive statement to oneself such as "I'm a good listener", *Taking risks wisely* in spite of possible mistakes and *Rewarding yourself* (e.g. buying an interesting book as a reward for a good performance) (Oxford, 1990: 144).

The last group, *Taking your emotional temperature*, comprises: *Listening to your body* (physical sensations like sweating), *Using a checklist* to discover feelings, attitudes, and motivations, *Writing a language learning diary* in order to keep track of events and feelings in the learning process and *Discussing your feelings with someone else* (e.g., talking with a friend, teacher, relative, about one's own feelings concerning language learning) (Oxford, 1990: 144).

Social Strategies

The last group, the social strategies, attempts to foster students' learning through interaction with others. Examples of these strategies are: *Asking questions*, *Cooperating with others* and *Empathising with others* as shown in Appendix G.

The former set aids understanding and correction and it is made up of *Asking for clarification or verification* (e.g., asking the speaker to repeat, paraphrase, etc) and *Asking for correction* (e.g., asking someone for correction in a conversation) (Oxford, 1990: 147).

The second set, *Cooperating with others*, involves *Cooperating with peers* i.e., working with other language learners and *Cooperating with proficient users*

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

of the new language i.e., working with native speakers usually outside of the classroom (Oxford, 1990: 147).

The last group, *Empathising with others,* is composed of the following strategies: *Developing cultural understanding* (e.g. trying to understand the other person's relation to that culture) and *Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings* i.e., observing others' behaviour as well as their expression of thoughts and feelings (Oxford, 1990: 147).

As shown in the description above there is a variety of strategies in Oxford's inventory. Needless to say, any learner will probably not apply them all. In fact, his/her strategy choice will be affected by other factors such as motivation, learning style and aptitude; among others (Oxford, 1990). Therefore, these variables will be mentioned in this study if they appear in the data.

The Study

The Participant and Action Research Questions

The three students who were asked to participate in this study were in their second year of the Teacher Training Program and they were all attending Phonetics and Phonology I, the subject I am an assistant of. The main reason for selecting them, rather than the other fifteen students who were part of the group, was that they were all reluctant to participate during lessons. However of the three learners invited to collaborate in this study, two of them withdrew. The only subject remaining was Laura (a false name).

At the time when I carried out this investigation, she was 22 years old. She had been studying English for 11 years and had reached an upper-intermediate level in the target language. During the lessons she was attentive and behaved in a responsible way which might indicate that she was eager to learn. However, she showed a certain reluctance to participate in class; she even blushed and sweated whenever she had to speak. This occurred not only in my oral practice lessons which focused mainly on fluency tasks, but also in the theory classes taught by the teacher in charge of the subject.

This shy attitude made me suspect that she was not fully aware of learning strategies and that she probably did not use the most appropriate ones. Considering her situation I posed the following research questions: *What learning strategies did this adult learner make use of? How often did she use strategies for learning English? Which group of strategies did this student employ the most and the least? Was there any possible connection between the kinds of learning strategies that were most and least frequently applied by this learner and her behaviour in class?*

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Techniques for Data Collection

The primary source of data to answer the research questions addressed above came from a questionnaire designed by Oxford (1990) called SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, the version for speakers of other languages learning English 7.0), that links strategies to specific language tasks (speaking, reading, writing and listening). This tool intended to cover all the strategies that are present in the framework of this study.

However, the reliability of the information gathered through this method needed to be checked and explored more thoroughly by being compared with data generated through a complementary elicitation technique. I therefore decided to use a semi-structured interview. This procedure contained open-ended questions and prompts that attempted to encourage the interviewee to give more detailed responses (Wallace 1998).

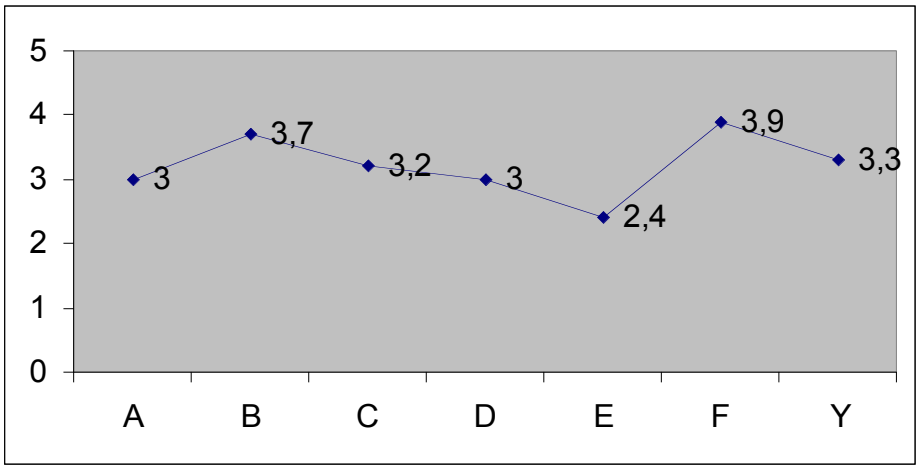
Analysis of the SILL

The graph inserted at the end of this section contains the information about Laura's learning strategy use obtained from the questionnaire. The averages above the macrocategories A, B, C, D, E and F in the SILL tells us how often she used each group of strategies, while the overall average (macrocategory Y) indicates how often she employed strategies for learning English. In order to understand these averages Oxford provides the scale located just below the graph. This scale, which ranges from 1.0 to 5.0, aims at indicating whether the subject was a high, medium or low user of language learning strategies (Oxford 1990).

According to the information gathered, Laura was a medium user of strategies since her overall average is 3.3, macrocategory Y (medium, sometimes used, from 2.5 to 3.4). The indirect social strategies, represented by the macrocategory F, learning with others, assume a predominant role by accounting for a 3.9 average. Within this category, Developing cultural understanding (5.0) and Asking for clarification (4.0) emerge as dominant strategies. The direct cognitive strategies, macrocategory B, using your mental processes, were usually put into practice by this learner (high, from 3.5 to 4.4). The main specific strategies applied were: Repeating (5.0), Formally practising with sounds (4.0), Practising naturalistically (5.0), Getting the idea quickly (5.0), Using resources for receiving and sending messages (4.0), Reasoning deductively (4.0), Analysing contrastively (4.0) and Summarising (5.0). The medium level use of the direct compensation strategies (3.2), macrocategory C, compensating for missing knowledge, suggests that these strategies were only sometimes used, compared to the social and cognitive ones. As regards specific strategies, the data reveal that Using mime or gesture (4.0) and Using a circumlocution or synonym (4.0)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

were the most frequently employed. The pattern of use for the direct memory strategies, macrocategory A, remembering more effectively, and the indirect metacognitive ones, macrocategory D, organising and evaluating your learning, appear to be highly similar as both of them presented a 3.0 medium average. The most exploited strategies in these respects were: Placing new words into a context (5.0), Using keywords (4.0), Using imagery (4.0), Structured reviewing (5.0); Self-monitoring (5.0), Paying attention (4.0) and Self-evaluating (5.0). As to affective strategies, macrocategory E managing your emotions, the evidence manifests a low level of use (2.4), with Listening to your body (5.0) and Discussing your feelings with somebody else (4.0) being the only types of specific strategies highly utilised.



A	Remembering more effectively (Memory Strategies)
B	Using all your mental processes (Cognitive Strategies)
C	Compensating for missing knowledge (Compensation Strategies)
D	Organising and evaluating your learning (Metacognitive Strategies)
E	Managing your emotions (Emotional Strategies)
F	Learning with others (Social Strategies)
Y	Your overall average

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Key to Understanding the Averages

High	Always or almost always used	4,5 to 5,0
	Usually used	3,5 to 4,4
Medium	Sometimes used	2,5 to 3,4
Low	Generally not used	1,5 to 2,4
	Never or almost never used	1,0 to 1,4

Analysis of the Interview

The day I interviewed Laura, I gave her the opportunity to speak either in English or Spanish. She preferred to answer in English so as to practise the target language. I recorded the information on audiotape, and for the analysis of the data, I selected the excerpts I wished to quote in this study. At this point, I transcribed and edited them minimally so as to preserve the learner's view.

Remembering More Effectively (Memory Strategies)

Data

At the beginning of the interview she talked mostly about how she usually coped with vocabulary.

'It's very hard to remember words. Most of the time I use them in sentences or I include them in my writings. Another thing that I do, but not very often, is to draw pictures or to group words in my computer, for example ways of crying, smiling, etc. I usually write the new words on cards, you know, not to forget them, then, I stick them on the wall, and once I've learnt them I move them. In fact, to remember vocabulary, structures and to learn from my mistakes, I re-read all the material I have, including my written assignments.'

'What about connecting words with sounds?'

'To be honest, the other day I was browsing through the English dictionary and I found that there are words connected to sounds for example the verb *crack*, that's very interesting, but that is something I've just realised.'

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Comments

Memory Strategies
- ♦ Placing new words into a meaningful context
- ♦ Structured reviewing
- ♦ Using mechanical techniques

Language aptitude
Learning-styles

As soon as Laura got the meaning of a word, she sought out opportunities to use it in a meaningful way. Such behaviour is representative of the direct memory strategy of *Placing new words into a meaningful context* which seems to correlate with success in language learning, according to John Carroll's (1981) views on language **aptitude**[2] (in Ellis 1997). This variable as well as learning styles, motivation, personality, and life-experience, among others, affects the way in which learners approach and learn the target language.

Additionally, my learner appears to be aware of the fact that she made use of *Structured reviewing* strategies, not only to remember words and structures, but also to eradicate errors. *Using mechanical techniques* were usually put into practice by this student, as she wrote new vocabulary on flashcards, and moved them once the vocabulary was learnt. However, she claimed that only sometimes did she group words under common topics, she did not associate lexical items with images very often and she was not accustomed to relating sounds with words. This means that *Grouping* and *Using imagery* were not frequently applied by this learner whereas *Representing sounds in memory* was relatively unknown to her.

All in all, the strategies this learner employed to remember vocabulary and her learning style were closely related (Schmeck 1988). In a nutshell, she did not seem to naturally create a relationship between words and pictures (visual links) or words and sounds (auditory links). Her imagery was visceral or emotional or kinaesthetic or something other than visual (Stevick 1989). This is evidence that supports the existence of a strong connection between learning styles and learning strategies.

[2] Natural ability related in part to general intelligence for learning an L2.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Using all your Mental Processes (Cognitive Strategies)

Data

Some minutes later, she started to mention the activities she did to improve her English performance.

'Well….in fact it is very difficult for me to improve my oral performance, because I become very nervous whenever I have to talk. I don't have conversations with my friends, but I speak to myself. You might be thinking I'm crazy, but sometimes I repeat to myself /s/ /z/ to better my pronunciation, because I know I have difficulty with those sounds. First I want to have a good pronunciation, well more than good, and then I'll focus on intonation, not now.' She was silent for a moment, and then she added the following comment. 'What else, I usually read books about Celtic culture and Monarchy, Elizabeth I, you know, all that, I'm really interested in English culture… I really admire it and that is the main reason why I'm studying English… I usually watch English TV programmes. Whenever I have the chance I watch English films and I try to understand without looking at the subtitles. I also listen to English music all day long. Well…apart from this, sometimes I write postcards or messages to my best friend and classmate Rocío, but I find it very difficult because I don't feel sure, I don't know whether I'm writing properly or not, this is a fear I have.'

Comments

Cognitive Strategies
- ♦ Practising naturalistically
- ♦ Using resources for receiving and sending messages
- ♦ Repeating
- ♦ Formally practising with sounds and writing systems

Motivation

Motivation is another variable that influences the learners' preferences in language learning strategies. For example, Laura sounded as if she had a deep integrative feeling when she reported being an admirer of British culture. Moreover, this inner motive is typified by her comments about her devotion to English books, music and films. Consequently, affected by motivation, this integrative oriented learner[3] happened to choose the cognitive strategy *Practising*

[3] According to Gardner (1985) integrated oriented learners are interested in the people and the culture where the target language is spoken. They are more likely to achieve their goals because they are apparently more psychologically motivated than the instrumentally oriented learners who want to learn the language because it is a useful tool for them to get a job, to pass an examination, etc (in Dörnyei and Skehan 2001)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

naturalistically in particular rather than others. In addition to learning a new language, Laura was learning a new culture. Specifically, she was becoming familiar with a range of meanings and concepts that might not exist in her native culture and that British people might want to convey.

For her, improving her oral performance was a hard task, because of her insecurities about her abilities. In spite of her fears, and perhaps driven by the belief that pronunciation played an important role, she was willing to polish her sounds as long as she was not heard by her classmates. To achieve this aim, she profited from hearing herself repeating sounds. The names for these cognitive strategies are: *Repeating* and *Formally practising with sounds and writing systems*.

The information gathered seems to reveal that her sense of insecurity inhibited her from writing messages more frequently. As a result, she employed the strategy *Using resources for receiving and sending messages* only sporadically.

Some Cognitive and Compensation Strategies

Data

Then, the respondent and I began to talk about how to compensate for missing knowledge in a reading or listening activity.

'I usually try to infer, to guess the meaning of the word from context. I try to understand the function of the word or the sentence, if it is a question or a statement. Then, when I have my dictionary available, I look it up in the dictionary. But, as a matter of fact, the first thing I try to do is to get the main ideas of a text, I take down notes, I write a summary with the main ideas. Because it's impossible for me to study something that is not summarised. I always highlight the main ideas with different colours.'

Comments

Cognitive Strategies
- ♦ Reasoning deductively
- ♦ Getting the idea quickly
- ♦ Taking notes
- ♦ Highlighting
- ♦ Summarising

Compensation Strategies
- ♦ Using linguistic clues
- ♦ Using other clues

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Laura's way of accounting for missing knowledge implied mainly inferences and guesses. This learner stressed the importance of meaning as well as getting the main ideas of a written and oral text. For this reason, she relied on the following cognitive strategies: *Reasoning deductively*, *Getting the idea quickly*, *Taking notes*, *Summarising*, and *Highlighting*, which illustrate a top-down approach to comprehension. However, she also applied a bottom-up approach when she paid attention to linguistic and non-linguistic clues, such as context, function, word-order and the like. In this case, she exploited some of the direct compensation strategies *Using linguistic clues* and *Using other clues*. To sum up, she alternated top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve an understanding of a text.

Compensating for Missing Knowledge (Compensation Strategies)

Data

My next questions made reference to how she managed to communicate the desired idea effectively when speaking and writing.

'Whenever a word doesn't come to my mind I use a synonym or I ask my teacher or I look it up in the dictionary' she paused and then went on: 'Well today a friend of mine and I were having a conversation in English, and I used a Spanish word, though I know it's wrong, you know I did this, because I couldn't find the English word. This is something that I don't do very often, just in an informal talk. What I always try to avoid is translating words. Because I don't trust my L1, many times it may mislead you. Another thing that I do… is to use gestures or mimics to make myself understood, but not very often. Sometimes I have good ideas to tell, but if I don't find simple structures or a way to express them, I don't say a word. Definitely, I'm not the icebreaker in the classroom.'
'What about writing?' I asked.

'Well, whenever I have to write a composition, I start with a draft copy, I write more or less ten, this is a way of practising. I look words up in the dictionary to use new structures and to be sure about what I'm writing. I'm not used to using Spanish structures, but I think it's unconscious.

Comments

Compensation Strategies
- ♦ Using a circumlocution or synonym
- ♦ Getting help
- ♦ Avoiding communication partially or totally
- ♦ Using mime or gesture

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Laura was aware of her use of paraphrasing to overcome difficulties when speaking. This is one of the direct compensation strategies called *Using a circumlocution or synonym*. She also made use of the compensation strategy *Getting help*, because whenever she had a doubt she resorted to her teacher to ask for the missing information. If she could not apply the compensation strategy of *Adjusting or approximating the message* by finding a simple way of expressing her opinion, she remained quiet. Again her insecurity prevented her from participating in an oral task and she used *Avoiding communication partially or totally* – totally in this case. When she ran out of words, she sometimes employed physical actions. In other words, she exploited *Using mime or gesture* to make herself understood.

When the subject of my study claimed 'What I always try to avoid is translating words. Because I don't trust my L1, many times it may mislead you.' she meant that word-for-word translation from her L1 could interfere and be the cause of errors when using the target language. She viewed *Translating* and *transferring* (cognitive strategies) as being negative influences. In keeping with this train of thought, she neither employed these strategies nor the compensation strategy *Switching to the mother tongue*. It seems that Laura would probably make use of these strategies if she had more linguistic awareness of both languages which would allow her to improve her lexical processing abilities.

Organising and Evaluating your Learning (Metacognitive Strategies)

Data

I then managed to lead the interview to other topics such as organisation, planning and evaluation.

'In the cover of my notebook I have notes to remember things, but I don't have timetables to study. But I try to organise my notebook by dividing it into common errors, grammar, and I have another notebook for articles and novels. When an exam is near, I organise myself by making a schedule, but not always. Sometimes I plan the manner to encounter a task or activity, I start with the most difficult steps and I leave the easiest for the end. What I began to do this year is to compare my progress. For example, I compare my writings of a year ago, with the ones of this year. What I always do is to pay attention to my mistakes. I learn from them, I look the words up in the dictionary or I read grammar books. By means of remembering what I did wrong, I can eradicate them.'

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Comments

Metacognitive Strategies
- ♦ Organising
- ♦ Paying attention
- ♦ Planning for a language task
- ♦ Self-monitoring
- ♦ Self-evaluating

The organisation of Laura's notebook indicates the employment of the indirect metacognitive strategy of *Organising*. The other metacognitive strategies that she made use of are: *Paying attention* and *Planning for a language task.*

Their exploitation can be inferred from this learner's description of her approach to handling a task. The fact that she planned how to deal with tasks is favourable to language learning, as this strategy might probably allow her to produce and have access to more advanced and complex language (Ellis 1994).

Laura sounded as if she had the capacity to evaluate and give direction to her own learning, when she claimed to be able to self-evaluate her learning progress and to learn from her errors too. This suggests that she exploited Self-monitoring and Self-evaluating metacognitive strategies which, according to the results of Good Language Learners research studies, appear to be closely related to success (Ellis 1994).

Managing your Emotions (Emotional Strategies)

Data

In spite of her range of strengths, Laura did show a real weakness in this area.

'I usually get nervous when I have to talk in front of my classmates. I'm afraid of what they can say about me, if I can't produce a grammatically correct sentence, or about my pronunciation, I'm afraid of making mistakes.'

'I guess you are afraid of what the other students may feel about you.'

'Yeah, that's right,' she replied. 'For instance, I'm not afraid of my teachers, I know they will not tell me anything wrong to me, they are so patient, but I'm afraid of my partners, though they are very sympathetic. Your partner is at the same level as you are, so there is always a comparison between two

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

students. Your classmates may say …"She is pronouncing well and she isn't". She paused and then she went on 'My problem is speaking. I think it's because of my personality, I'm shy, I lack self-esteem and that makes me feel unsure about what I do. Whenever I have to talk I feel a revolution in my stomach, as if I had butterflies, but unfortunately this is not a sign of being in love.' She laughed. 'I don't know what to do with my hands. I move them all the time. I feel all my body hot, and it sweats.'

'Do you do anything to control your body?'

'No, I don't. The worst thing is that just sometimes I risk myself by making some comments or by starting a conversation. But I never say to myself, "Well Laura you are doing well, you are excellent."'

Comments

Emotional/Affective Strategies ♦ Listening to your body

Laura's body expressed its nervousness by moving and sweating, and she was aware of these signs. This affective strategy of Listening to your body appears to be the only one she was acquainted with. By saying 'I'm afraid of what my classmates can say about me', she confirmed my guess that the language itself did not frighten her; rather the task of learning in the classroom did. Perhaps, she felt that she would not be able to fulfil people's expectations about her progress in language learning. In spite of this, she did not blame her classmates; she blamed herself, her personality, by saying 'I'm shy', and 'I lack self-esteem', etc.

Learning with Others (Social Strategies)

Data

Towards the end of the interview, Laura talked about her social relationship with native speakers, the teacher and her classmates.

'I'd really like to travel to learn more about British culture by being there, not here just through books. I have just met two native speakers in my life'. Laura went on to tell me about an experience that had taken place five years ago. 'I remember that one day an Australian girl got into my shop,' she said… 'and she couldn't communicate in Spanish, so I said to myself "this is my chance", but I didn't have the courage to start the conversation, and I talked to

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

her just a little bit in English.' Then she retold another anecdote. 'A month ago I met an Irish priest in a meeting in the church, and he asked me if I wanted to speak with him, but I refused to do so, because I was pretty nervous.'
'Have your ever shared this feeling of nervousness with your classmates?' I asked.

'Only once, my classmates and I shared these feelings of fear, and pressure, and I …really care about what they feel and I think that we have common emotions. I trust my partners, but whenever I have a doubt, I prefer asking my teacher. A thing that really worries me is that I don't practise the language with friends. I think that this afternoon, before coming here, it was the first time my best friend Rocio and I spoke in English. That questionnaire you gave me to fill in made me react.'

Comments

Social Strategies
♦Developing cultural understanding
♦Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings
♦Asking for clarification or verification

The information collected reveals Laura was very interested in understanding the native speakers' culture, and that she cared about her classmates' feelings. This attitude towards English culture and the other students in the same classroom indicates that she applied the social strategies of Developing cultural understanding and Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings. Besides, considering her comments, I may suppose that she profited from asking her teacher whenever she had a doubt, which clearly shows the exploitation of the social strategy Asking for clarification or verification.

Despite the benefits[4] offered by having a conversation in the target language, this learner was unable to take advantage of interacting with her classmates or native speakers (Ellis 1997). However, that afternoon, having done the SILL questionnaire and become aware of the importance of interaction, Laura and a friend had a conversation in English.

Comparing the Two Methods and the Results

The results obtained through these two methods (the SILL questionnaire and the follow-up interview) were quite similar, even though I detected a small number of differences.

[4] the collaborative endeavours of the learners and their interlocutors "scaffold" knowledge

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

With reference to memory strategies, Laura considered Using keywords one of her most frequently employed strategies, whereas in the interview she reported that she had just become aware of the existence of a connection between sounds and words. There is a cognitive strategy that appeared to be rejected in the interview, but was widely accepted and used in the questionnaire; that is Analysing contrastively. In spite of this, there is a correlation between the other cognitive strategies that arose from the data collected through the two methods. As to the affective strategies, Discussing your feelings with somebody else assumed an important role in the questionnaire. On the contrary, it was not mentioned in the interview. Additionally, the interview permitted me to elicit a greater number of highly exploited metacognitive strategies that were not mentioned in the questionnaire, such as Adjusting the message, Avoiding communication totally or partially, etc.

Having compared the results, I am in a position to claim that the combination of these two procedures was a good choice. I was able to elicit factual, more manageable and reliable data by using the questionnaire, yet I could go deeper, get to know my learner's attitudes, experiences and feelings more thoroughly through the unexpected answers yielded by the open-ended questions of the interview (Wallace 1998). The latter technique gave me access to my learner's life, which allowed me to establish a connection with other determining factors, such as motivation, aptitude, learning styles and personality traits. Its flexibility let me clarify the respondent's misunderstandings or problems with further inquiries and if the interviewee said something intriguing a follow-up question was asked.

Answers to my Action Research Questions

By comparing the results and the two methods utilised in this study, I will now try to answer the research questions that were posed at the beginning of this investigation.

1. *What learning strategies did this adult learner make use of?*
   She made effective use of the following macro strategies and specific strategies:

   - Memory strategies*: Grouping, Placing new words into a context*, *Using imagery, Using keywords*, *Structured reviewing* and *Using mechanical techniques.*
   - Cognitive strategies*: Repeating, Formally practising with sounds, Practising naturalistically, Getting the idea quickly, Using resources for receiving and sending messages*, *Reasoning deductively*, *Analysing contrastively, Taking notes*, *Summarising* and *Highlighting*.
   - Compensation strategies*: Using linguistic clues, Using other clues, Getting help, Using mime or gesture, Avoiding communication*

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

partially or totally, Adjusting or approximating the message and *Using a circumlocution or synonym.*
- Metacognitive strategies*: Paying attention*, *Organising, Planning for a language task, Self-monitoring*, and *Self-evaluating*.
- Affective strategies*: Listening to your body* and *Discussing your feelings with somebody else. Only two of the ten strategies listed (Appendix F)*
- Social strategies*: Asking for clarification or verification, Developing cultural understanding* and *Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.*

2. *How often did she use strategies for learning English?*

    - Laura's overall average (3.3) reveals that she was a medium user of strategies. This result seems to justify the inference drawn at the outset that she was not a high user of strategies, that she was not aware of many of them and as a result, that she did not know which ones could possibly be more effective for her.

3. *Which group of strategies did this student use the most and the least?*

    - Evidence supports the view that social and cognitive strategies were the ones she used the most, and affective strategies were the ones she used the least.

4. *Was there any possible connection between the kinds of learning strategies that were most and least frequently applied by this learner and her behaviour in class?*
    - The dominant social strategies were Developing cultural understanding and Asking for clarification or verification. The former strategy accounts for her eagerness to understand the native speakers' culture, which reveals that she was an integrative oriented learner who was psychologically motivated and likely to attain her goals. This inner motivation gave her the necessary strength to be an attentive learner who asked her teachers whenever she had a doubt (the latter strategy).
    - Cognitive strategies, which are the least trainable because of their association with language learning and cognitive processes, were also highly employed by this learner (Skehan 1989). This finding indicates she had a good level of cognitive maturity. The high exploitation of these strategies and her attitude towards learning helped her understand and produce language.
    - However, her shy personality and her low self-esteem were likely to be posing a threat to her conscious predisposition to take risks in learning and using the L2. These factors are a negative force, at least for second language pronunciation performance, because they

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

discourage risk-taking which is necessary for progress in language learning (Guiora 1972 in Lightbown & Spada 1999). Alternatively, she should gain self-confidence so as to overcome her fear of having to speak in English in the classroom and therefore make opportunities to use the language by interacting with her classmates and any native speakers she might meet. One way of doing so is to use affective strategies to a higher degree. Laura only exploited two of the ten affective strategies. This low frequency of use of this kind of strategies and her behaviour in class might well be connected. To my mind, if she had greater awareness of affective strategies and had more practice, she would probably take the risk of participating in class more often and would eventually advance her speaking ability. This hypothesis is supported by Oxford's observation that language learners' control over emotions can result from having a good command of affective strategies. For example, anxiety-reducing strategies and self-encouragement (A and B under Appendix F) can help learners to lower their inhibitions and take risks (Oxford 1990). Thus, these kinds of strategies seem to be the keys to helping Laura.

- Another way of boosting her self-confidence is to provide a broader scope of learning strategies. A more frequent use of learning strategies would probably lead her to enjoy a higher level of self-efficacy, i.e., a perception of being effective as learner (Oxford, 2001).

Proposal for Further Action

It is not possible to generalise these findings and claim every shy learner uses the same learning strategies as Laura. But after assessing her management of these techniques, I have arrived at the conclusion that I should implement a course of action to serve the following purposes:

- to broaden my learners' scope of learning strategies by means of explicit strategy instruction in everyday teaching
- to help students learn how to use learning strategies and how to evaluate them
- to demonstrate when a given strategy can be useful and relevant
- to help learners monitor their own use of effective learning strategies and discourage the use of ineffective ones (All Wright and Bailey 1991)
- to aid students in learning how to transfer strategies to other related tasks and situations (Oxford 2001)

The first step to take would consist of specifying all the language learning strategies that link to the different tasks learners would deal with. The purpose of

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

this is twofold: to raise students' awareness of the kinds of strategies they would be practising and to help them understand how they are used in a meaningful context. For example if they carried out a listening activity in fluency lessons, students could be asked to get the main idea of the oral text. In this way they would be exploiting the cognitive strategy Getting the idea quickly (Appendix C). If the teacher told them to monitor their own production, sounds, rhythm, division into tone units while retelling what they have heard, they would be practising the metacognitive strategy Self-monitoring (Appendix D). If she/he asked them to complete a checklist to keep tabs on their feelings with the language task they have just carried out, they would be making use of the affective strategy Using a checklist (Appendix F).

The second part of this course of action would focus on discussing the strategies they have experimented with as well as on their usefulness and efficacy. Of course some students would find them effective while some others would not. At that point learners would be asked to use the ones they have found helpful and transfer them to new tasks. Moreover, learners would be encouraged to try other sets of strategies beyond their comfort zone or outside of their preferences so as to actively help them stretch their learning styles (Oxford 2001). One way to do this is to offer a short planned program on strategies in addition to the strategy instruction interwoven into the phonology course.

Eventually, the subject of this study and her classmates alike would be better acquainted with the benefits of strategy use. Equipped with learning strategies, they would know what to practise and how to practise, they would hopefully feel more highly-motivated by new opportunities to learn, and as a consequence, they would become more autonomous, more self-confident and successful learners.

However, I consider it to be of great importance to test this hypothesis and this course of action in a further study. It is time to apply what I have discovered in this study to my professional practice, and further reflect on this topic.

Conclusion

After carrying out this case study, I believe there is a need for integrating both language skills and a systematic development and refinement of students' language learning strategies. This reflection results from the knowledge I have gained through this detailed investigation of one specific student, and its findings will probably serve as the backbone of the Phonetics and Phonology I course in the near future. Assessing the strategy use of this learner contributed to a greater understanding of strategies and it will consequently lead to a strategy instruction program interwoven with phonology.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

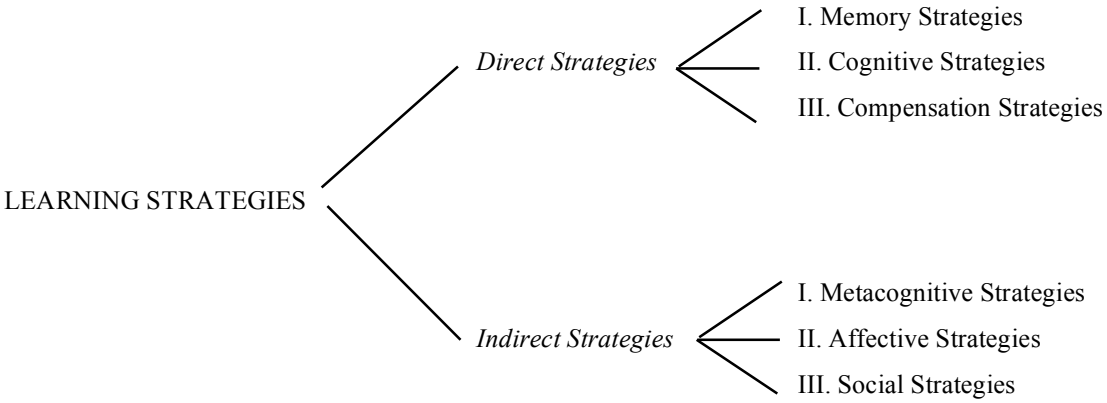
From this paper, it is clear that researching language learning strategies as well as other variables such as learners' interests, aptitude, motivations and learning styles paves the way for understanding how learners learn a target language. Needless to say, low achievers may not become successful in language learning merely by using good learning strategies, as the factors mentioned above also affect success. Therefore, language teachers aiming at implementing strategy use instruction in the classroom should also become acquainted with other individual student differences.

Even though learning strategies are not the solutions to all the problems that teachers and learners are likely to face, they can be powerful tools for overcoming difficulties. Conducting research on language learning strategies provides teachers with clues about how their learners plan and choose appropriate skills when approaching tasks in the classroom. For that reason, we teachers around the world should ponder on the usefulness of learning strategies by carrying out studies in our own teaching environments.

Social Strategies
- ♦Developing cultural understanding
- ♦Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings
- ♦Asking for clarification or verification

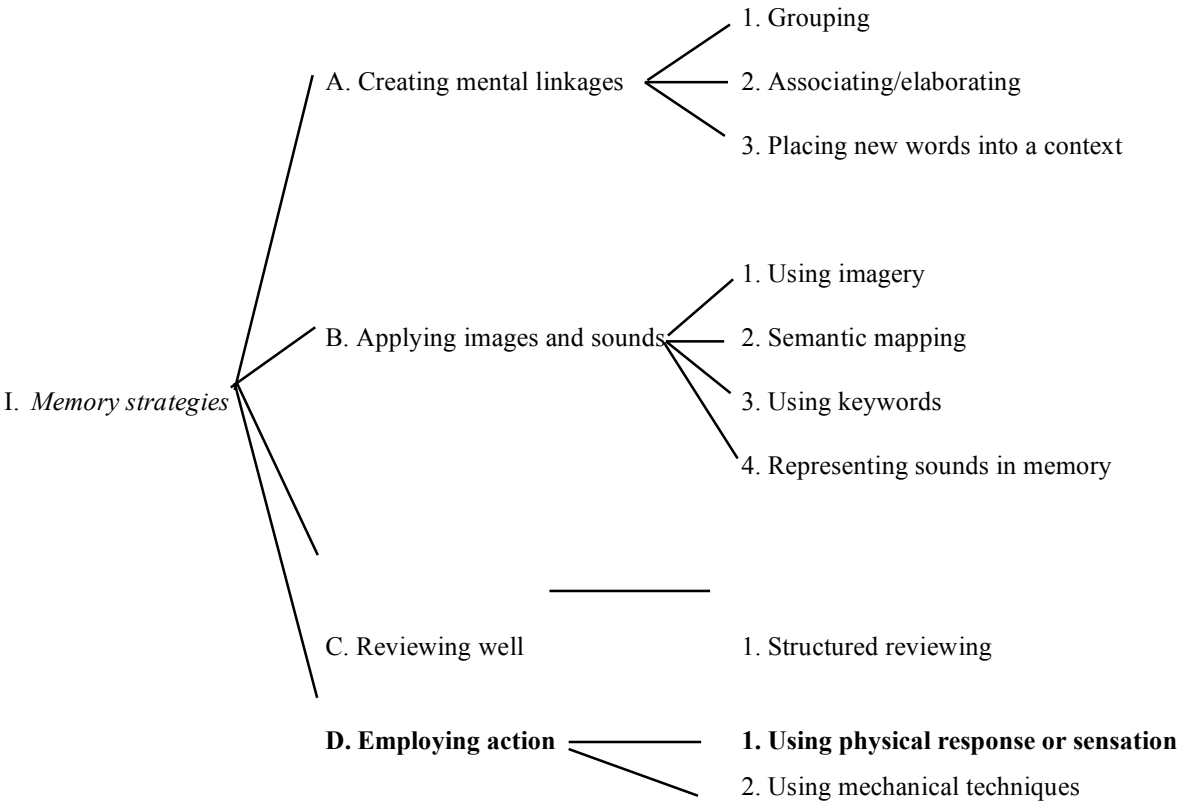
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

APPENDIX A: Oxford's Model of Learning Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 16)

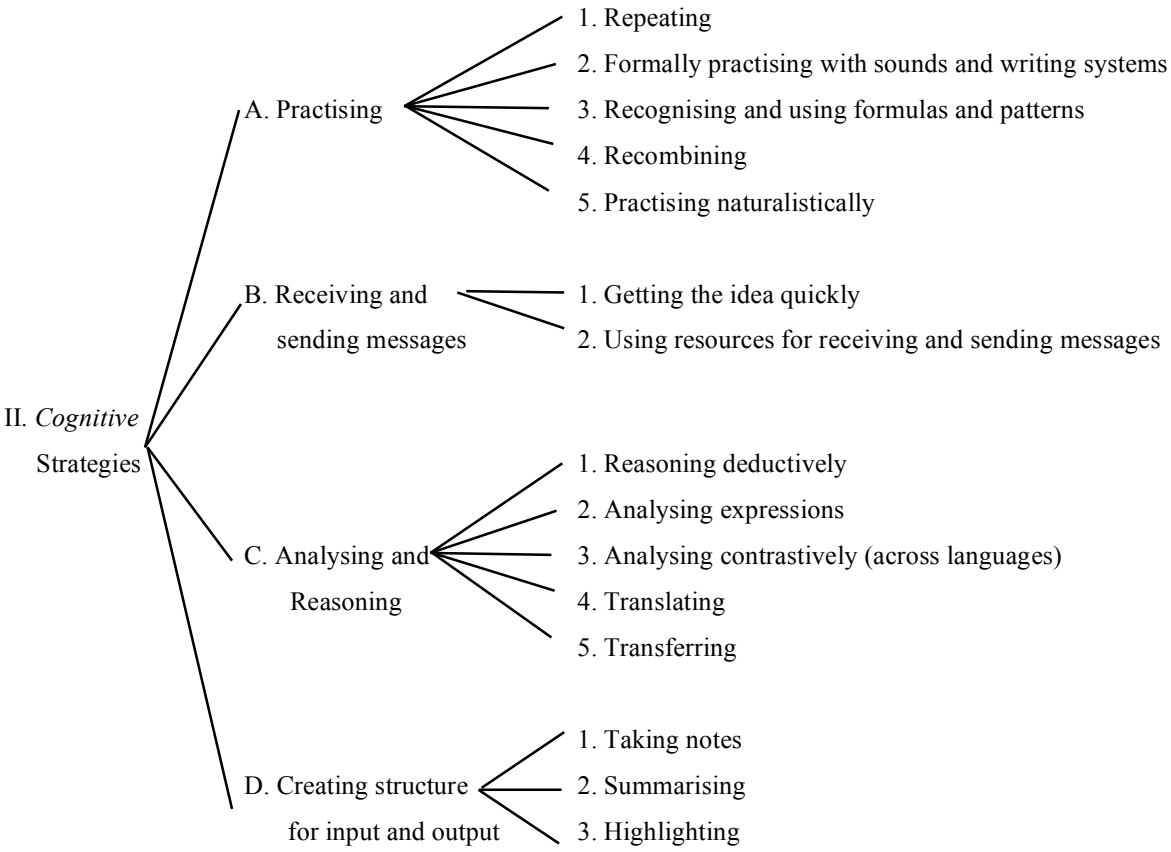
APPENDIX B: Memory Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 39)

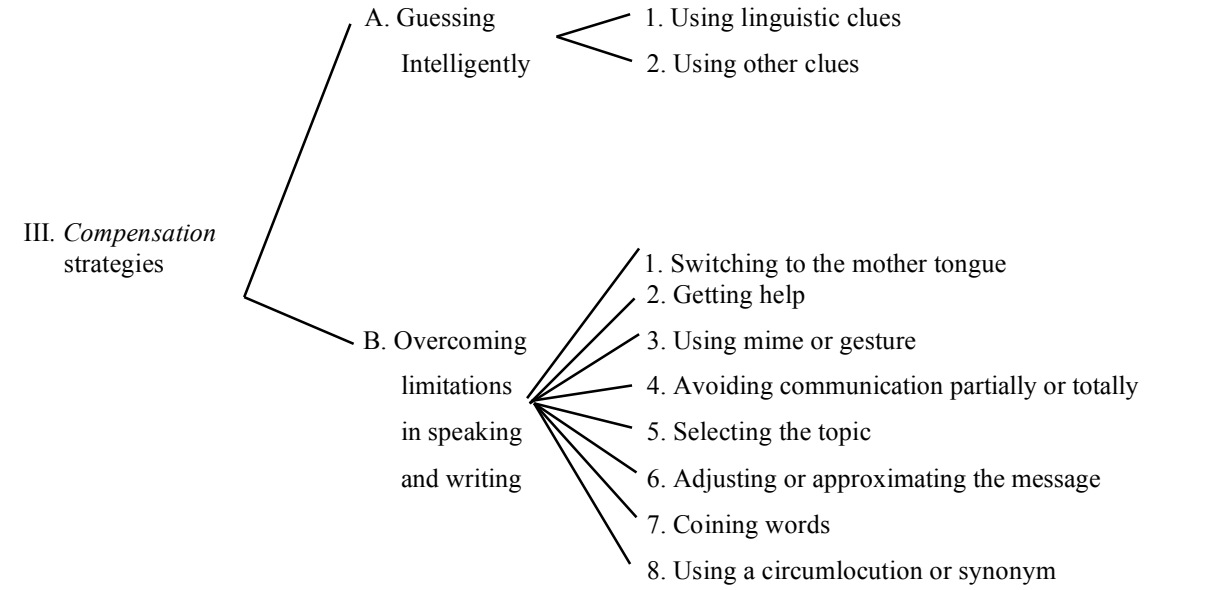
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

APPENDIX C: Cognitive Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 44)

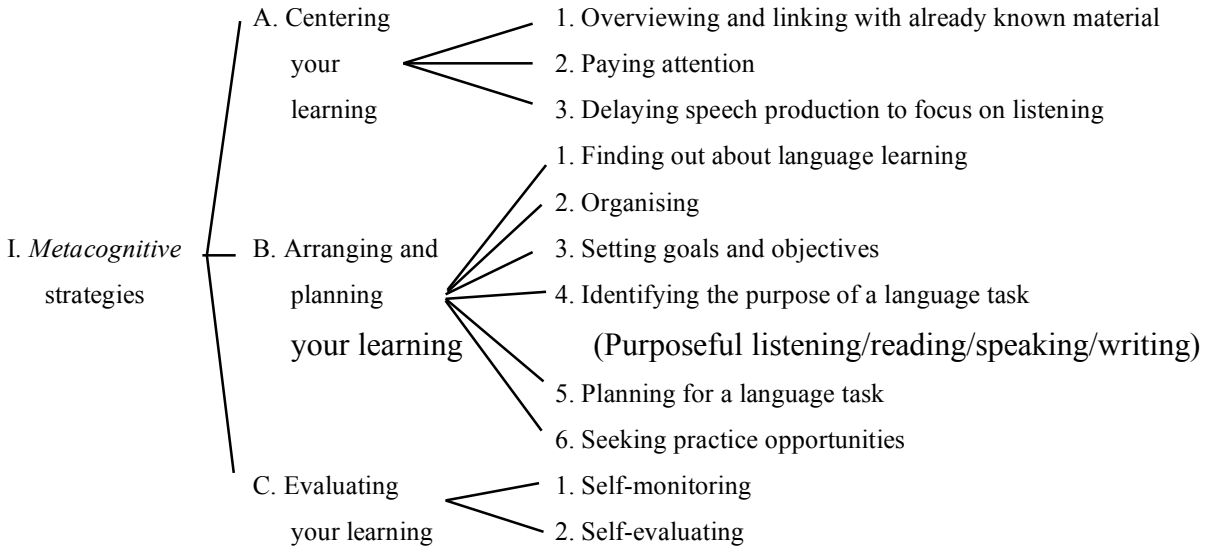
APPENDIX D: Compensation Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 48)

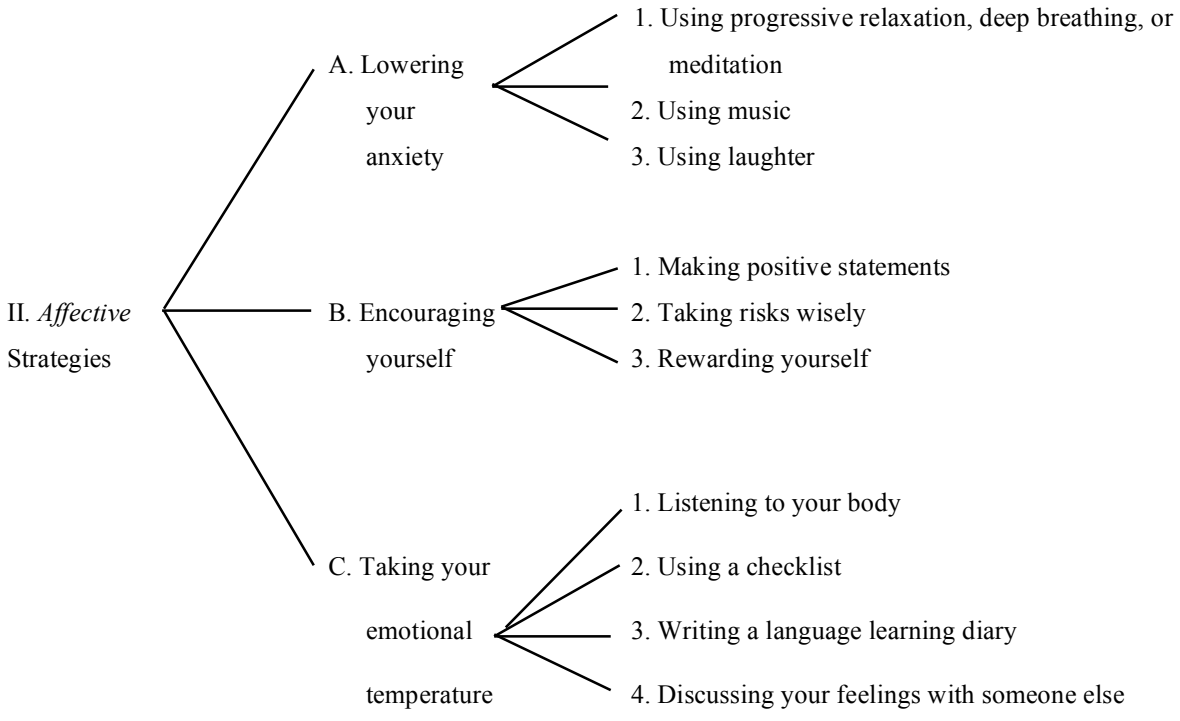
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

APPENDIX E: Metacognitive Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 137)

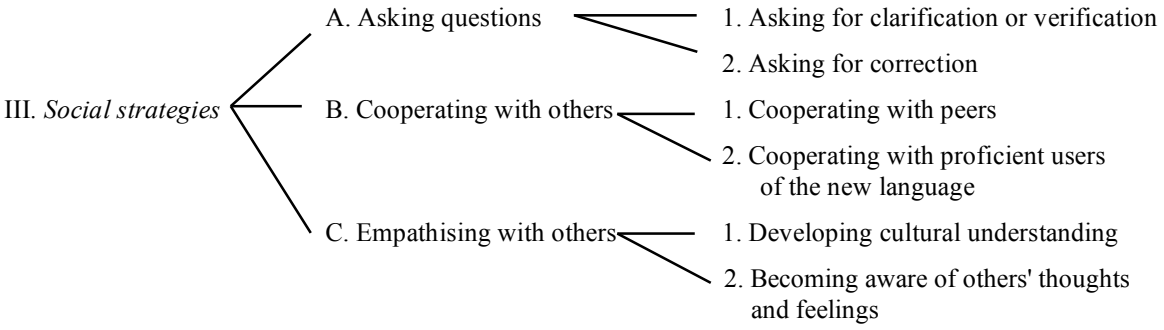
APPENDIX F: Affective Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 141)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

APPENDIX G: Social Strategies



(Oxford, R. 1990: 145)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

References

All Wright, D. & K. Bailey. 1991. *Focus on the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. and P. Skehan. 2001. Individual differences in second language learning. In Handbook of second language acquisition. C. Doughty and M. Long, eds. 1-39. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ellis, R. 1994. *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. 1997. *Second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gardner, R. C. 1985. *Social psychology and second language learning: The roles of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.

Lightbown, P. and N. Spada. 2000. *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Naiman, N., Fröhlich, M., H. Stern and A. Todesco. 1978. *The good language learner*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies of Education.

O'Malley, Y. and A. Chamot. 1990. *Learning strategies and second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. 1990. *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Oxford, R. 2001. Language learning styles and strategies. In *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. M. Celce-Murcia, 359-366. Boston: Heinle and Heinle

Reiss, M. A. 1985. The good language learner: Another look. *Canadian Language Review* 41(3): 511-523.

Rubin, J. 1975. What the good language learner can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly* 9: 41-51.

----. 1981. Study of cognitive processes in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics* 11: 117-131.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Schmeck, R. R. 1988. An introduction to learning styles of learning. In *Learning strategies and learning styles*. pp 3-19. New York: Plenum.

Skehan, P. 1989. *Individual differences in second language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Stern, H. H. 1975. What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review* 31: 304-318.

Stevick, E. 1989. *Success with foreign languages.* New York: Prentice Hall.

Wallace, M. 1998. *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

A Study on Affective Factors and Strategy Instruction in the Self-access Mode: Focusing on the Treatment[1][15]

By Ana Longhini, the National University of Río Cuarto, (UNRC), Argentina. alonghini@hum.unrc.edu.ar

Background of the project

The idea for this study grew out of the concern of the administrators of the National University of Río Cuarto, (UNRC), Argentina, about the number of teachers and researchers in this institution who do not have an adequate knowledge of English. The UNRC is a small (10,000-student), but progressive university, located in the center of the country, about 600 kms. from Buenos Aires. The UNRC is very active in international collaboration with European and American universities. The fact that there are still a number of teachers and researchers who do not have a reasonably good command of English is, of course, a drawback. Most of these scholars from the School of Humanities, School of Engineering, School of Sciences and School of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine have already had some experience in learning English, and feel quite frustrated by their current language abilities. In many cases they have attempted to take English courses more than once but have quit their classes before having made any significant improvement. I felt that there had to be affective factors playing an important role in this discouraging situation and that the implementation of a strategic self-access mode for learning could be beneficial. The present study was supported with a grant from the UNRC.

This research builds on earlier research on:

a) learning strategies in both ESL and EFL (See, for example the studies by Bialystock, 1981; Brown y Palincsar, 1982; Cohen, 1987; Dansereau, 1985; Nunan, 1996, O´Malley et al., 1985; Oxford, 1989; 1993; 1996 and Wenden and Rubin, 1987);

b) affective factors such as self-efficacy and attitude (See, for example, Kahn and Prickel, 1998; Pajares and Johnson, 1996; and Pajares and Kranzler, 1994) and

c) the use of technology in EFL learning. (See, for example, Bush, 1997; Garret, 1991; Joiner, 1997; Kern, 1995; Lafford and Lafford, 1997; Longhini et. al, 1998; Martínez-Lage, 1997; and Stock, 1993)

It was also inspired by Oxford's claims (1997) that consideration of individual differences in attribution and self- efficacy as well as differences in

[1] This is a refereed article.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

learning styles, learning strategies and motivation could give us a clearer insight into how knowledge is constructed.

Goals of the project

I decided to investigate the effect of self-efficacy and attitude on strategies-based EFL learning of sophisticated adults working in an autonomous and interactive multimedia setting. By "sophisticated adults" I mean worldly-wise and experienced learners. My research questions were the following:

- Among sophisticated adult EFL learners who are exposed to a combination of interactive multimedia instruction and strategies training, what is the relation between initial differences in a) self-efficacy expectations, b) attitude about autonomy, c) attitude about computer assisted language learning, d) attitude about learning strategies and language proficiency gains, respectively?
- Among sophisticated adult EFL learners who are exposed to a combination of interactive multimedia instruction and strategies training, how do initial differences in a) self-efficacy expectations, b) attitude about autonomy, c) attitude about computer assisted language learning, d) attitude about learning strategies compare to attitudes after the treatment ended?

Treatment

The treatment consisted of 40 one-hour weekly teacher-guided sessions on learning strategy instruction for autonomous learning in tandem with weekly three-hour self-access sessions of EFL learning (independent work), with emphasis on the development of the listening ability. The self-access sessions permitted the students to work autonomously, on their own multimedia PCs, in their offices or at home, applying the learning strategies that had been presented and practiced during the weekly session with the teacher. Apart from this, students were recommended to take advantage of, at least one monthly teacher-student conference hour. Office-hours served as a tutorial offered to students so that they could use me, the teacher, for intellectual and affective support. I acted as a knowledgeable partner, clarifying language points, guiding students to find solutions to learning problems, and discussing with them the course contents, the approach, the materials and any other topic that interested them. On my part, I made use of these meetings to elicit their opinions and feelings about the treatment in general and their use of strategies in particular, as well as their feelings toward the self-access experience (qualitative data). An ad-hoc questionnaire was used to keep a record of these meetings in order to track students' development.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Before starting

The sample was self-selected and consisted, initially, of 67 subjects (the initial sample diminished significantly and the causes for dropping out are discussed under "Findings"). The average age was 38. These students had already expressed their needs informally when they let the administrators of the UNRC know about their desire to take an EFL course. At the moment of enrolling in the course, students had to answer a bio-data questionnaire which also inquired about their area of specialization and level of knowledge of other foreign languages. At the same time, in order to assess students' self-perception of their language proficiency, they were asked to rate their proficiency in English by answering a scaled-item question (very good / good / fair / poor). (See Appendix 1).

First meetings

During the first meetings the subjects completed three semantic differential scales in Spanish to assess attitudes toward a) technology (see Appendix 2), b) interactive multimedia instruction (see Appendix 3); and c) autonomous learning and self-access (see Appendix 4); and two different Likert-type scales to assess a) expectancy beliefs (see Appendix 5) and b) attitude toward learning strategies (see Appendix 6). All of these scales were repeated during the twelfth month of the treatment. Subjects were also administered the TOEFL prior to the beginning of the treatment, after six months, and at the end of the treatment. Furthermore, they were administered the Style Analysis Survey (SAS), (Oxford, 1990, translated into Argentine Spanish by Longhini, 1997), in order to help students know about their own learning preferences. This was done during the third class, after the teacher had presented the course, discussed its characteristics and familiarized the students with concepts such as "learning styles," "autonomous learning," and "self-access." The results of the SAS were used to further "tailor" the course. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), (Oxford, 1990, translated into Argentine Spanish by Longhini, 1997) was administered during the ninth weekly one-hour session with the teacher. By this time, the students had already received "awareness training" (Oxford, 1990), that is, they had been made aware of the existence of language learning strategies and their potential to help them accomplish various language tasks.

Strategy instruction

Essentially, the course was based on a selection from Oxford's taxonomy of language learning strategies (1990). The strategies selected were those that lend

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

themselves better to autonomous learning with multimedia computers in an EFL context (as different from ESL). Some of them had to be slightly adapted to fit our culture, and they were complemented with others that emerged from the students and the situation. The strategies that were emphasized were those for the development of the listening ability; however, many speaking strategies were also discussed and applied to the extent that they helped improve the listening skill. Students received "completely informed training" (Brown et al., 1980) on language learning strategies; that is, there was explicit teaching about the nature of strategies, their significance, how to use them, how to monitor them, how to evaluate them and how to transfer them. As students were supposed to apply the strategies learned in the classroom to the independent learning they did on their own with their computers and other materials at home or in their offices, emphasis was placed on transference. In the weekly one-hour teacher-guided lesson, strategies were integrated into class materials, and students were encouraged to discuss and reflect on their use and applicability for further transfer to the learning of contents when working autonomously in the self-access mode.

I soon realized that getting students initiated into explicit strategic learning training is not a simple task, and it is not something that can be done overnight because it requires dedication, reflection and patience. After making sure that students, in general, had grasped the concept of "learning strategy" and, more specifically "language learning strategy," I shifted the focus to listening strategies. I introduced the topic of "listening" in one's mother tongue: what it implies, how it is done and when it is successfully accomplished. This raising of students' consciousness refers to what they do when they listen in their own native language and was fundamental to start speaking of listening in English and the affective factors related to it. The comparison between the strategies and the processes used for listening in one's native language and those used in listening in the foreign language was a recurrent topic throughout the training period. Time and again, when students "complained" about not being able to understand the speaker on the tape or on the screen, we analyzed the possible reasons that could be preventing them from understanding and then related the situation to a hypothetical or experienced L1 situation. This was done for the students to reflect on what they meant by "I cannot understand" when listening to English, and how different their perception would be, even with the same amount of "understanding" in their native language. Here, notions such as "the informative value of lexical words," "the informative value of grammatical words," "situational context," "grammatical context," and "guessing meaning from context" came up. Speaking about my own language learning history was very useful as a way of illustrating the theoretical concepts, and also for students to know that I shared their feelings. Anecdotes about successful communication in spite of little individual word misunderstandings on my first visits to an English speaking country delighted the students. I found that my students—also being adults—felt better when they realized that I had gone through situations similar to the ones that they were experiencing. Not only strategy use demonstration, but also

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

strategy assessment demonstration, was integrated into the weekly lesson materials. That is, I tried to give students explicit training on how to evaluate the effectiveness of a strategy and to discard or replace ineffective strategies. I illustrated my point by verbalizing the processes I went through when working on a given task, showing them how after monitoring my comprehension, and finding it unsuccessful, I decided to try something different and, for example, capitalize more on my knowledge of the world and pay closer attention to the context of situation. When giving training in strategy assessment, emphasis was placed on "finding the Spanish equivalent" and then "contextualizing, contextualizing, contextualizing" as an effective strategy to learn how to "think in English," for example. Students were assigned the task of trying out this strategy and comparing the results with other memorization strategies that they had been applying.

Reflecting on learning preferences and strategy use

From the very first meeting, students were introduced to the concept of "strategy" in a broad way. Then we discussed the use of strategies in everyday life, and the usefulness of strategic behavior, always illustrating the discussion with examples. Next I started to get students familiarized with the concept of "language learning strategy" and we commented on the different techniques we all resort to when trying to memorize something, or when trying to understand a complicated paragraph we are reading. The conversation led us to the differences in strategies used by people of different ages, different levels of instruction and different cultures. Only then, after students had been introduced to the concept of "language learning strategies" and had made comments on the use of these strategies, were they administered the Argentine Spanish version of the SILL[2][6]. Another scale the students completed was the Style Analysis Survey (SAS), (Oxford, 1990). Before administering the SAS, I tried to raise students' awareness of the existence of different learning styles and how they can determine learning preferences. We discussed the advantages of certain styles for certain tasks, always making it clear that no one style is necessarily better than the others. Students made interesting contributions to this discussion. Before completing the SAS, students were informed about the existence of other learning style surveys and even of other methods for finding out about learning styles. They were advised to keep in mind that surveys are not absolute, that they just show traits, and that these traits can generally be altered, made more flexible, and even changed for one's own benefit. The relation between learning preferences and the use of learning strategies was quickly established and thoroughly discussed, and always illustrated amply with examples provided by either me or the students. I encouraged discussion about "good strategies" not necessarily being "good" for everybody to get students convinced that each

[2] In translating the SILL, I had tried to make sure that enough context was given for students to understand the questions, and had taken special care to use equivalents that sounded familiar to our culture, for example, I translated "flash cards" as "tarjetones."

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

individual has to find the strategies that suit herself/himself best, according to her/his learning traits.

Students were stimulated to reflect on and compare their results on the SAS to the image they had of their own learning styles and to try to find a relation between their preferred way of learning and their favorite strategies, if any. During practically every class I tried to encourage reflection about the extent to which a better knowledge of one's preferences for learning can make learning more enjoyable and can lead to improved results.

The self-access mode and interactive training with the multimedia computer

The most salient characteristics of the self-access mode—the managing of one's own learning, freedom, responsibility and self-assessment—were introduced and discussed in detail during the first meetings.

I presented the interactive multimedia courseware for EFL learning that was going to be used, and explained how to use it. Once the students got to know how to use the software, I started prompting, and eliciting from students themselves, ways to apply the strategies we worked on in class to their independent learning with the computer and more conventional materials such as tapes, dictionaries, grammar books, notes, etc. Throughout the whole treatment we discussed the strategies that they were using when working autonomously, the ones that they found most useful, the ones that they had not even tried, the ones that they preferred, etc. This transference of strategies from "in class" to independent learning took time and effort. Metacognitive strategies (following Oxford's taxonomy (1990): "planning," "monitoring," "directed attention," "selective attention," etc.) were a special concern, for they were indispensable for students to manage their autonomous learning. Great emphasis was also placed on the application of cognitive strategies (following Oxford's taxonomy (1990): "repetition," "grouping," "taking notes," "inference," "activating background knowledge," etc.), to prevent the entertaining and motivating effect of the multimedia computer from misleading the students, who could think they were investing their time in learning, when they were actually just letting screens pass in front of their eyes.

Findings

The correlation of TOEFL scores with attitude scales showed that those subjects with below-the-mean attitudes toward technology, toward self-access and toward expectancy beliefs scored significantly lower ($P<.10$) on the first TOEFL, those subjects who scored above the mean on the learning strategy

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

scale obtained a higher TOEFL score than those who scored below the mean on the same scale, the difference; in this case, however, was not significant.

Of the nineteen subjects that had been identified as having a favorable attitude toward the treatment, six dropped out of the course. The same happened with eleven out of the twenty two subjects that had been identified as having an unfavorable attitude. Twelve months after the start of the course, the average attendance was about twenty students. An ad-hoc survey showed that the causes of attrition did not have to do with the course itself but with reasons related to scheduling conflicts, lack of time, and career plans. However, I consider that it is quite reasonable to think that the self-access mode of learning does not suit all personalities. This could be the reason why several people quit the course after realizing they would have to take responsibility for their own learning. In fact, this has become a controversial issue in the field of autonomous learning[3]. The 24 students who remained in the course answered anonymous questionnaires (later coded and analyzed) about their feelings toward the treatment. All of them emphatically expressed enthusiasm about the approach as well as their desire to continue learning English independently and with the aid of strategy instruction. Some of them stated that they liked "this way of studying" but they were not satisfied with their achievements because they had not "devoted enough time to English." Some of the unedited reponses to the question "Do you like this way of learning: working autonomously with your computer and attending a weekly strategy instruction lesson with the teacher?" were: "Yes, because I can manage my study time and I enjoy it;" "Yes, I find it interesting, motivating, attractive;" "Yes, because it's a natural way of learning" (emphasis mine); "Yes, because it's an innovating methodology and gives very good results;" "Yes, because it's fun and I learn;" "Yes, I find it entertaining and easy;" " Yes. I find it entertaining, creative, enjoyable;" and "Yes, because I can manage my times." Some of the students stressed the fact that self-access work in tandem with strategy training with a teacher was what they liked the most. They said, for example: "I like self-access because I can go at my own pace, and I like the classes because they're flexible and they respect our needs." It was also apparent that students valued the opportunity for socialization and collaboration that the strategy instruction lesson gave them: " I like the classes with the teacher because it's important to me to have the chance to interact with people. I'm an introvert and what I need is talking to people."

When the battery of affective scales administered during the 12th month was compared with the initial results, the comparison showed that there was a significant difference (α=.004) between the mean scores on the scale to assess attitude toward autonomous learning and self-access (see Graph 1).

The comparison of the TOEFL total score means at 0 and 12 months of treatment also showed a positive significant difference (P<.10). However, no

[3] See, for example, Cotterall, 1995 and Walter, 1997.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

significant difference was found between the score means in attitude scales and the TOEFL scores administered during the 12th month (see Graph 2).

Conclusion

This study dealt with an important problem in most Argentine universities – and very likely in most Latin American universities- which is that a significant number of teachers and researchers do not have an adequate knowledge of English, even when the great majority of them have taken English courses more than once in their lives. I developed a hypothesis that affective factors play an important role in situations like these, so I decided to look at the effect of a self-access mode of learning with the complement of strategy instruction. The strategy instruction treatment I used was intended to foster autonomy and facilitate the learning of a foreign language on the part of sophisticated students; likewise, the self-access mode lent itself as the "ideal" setting for this type of student. What the qualitative aspect of this study showed was that students gradually improved their attitude toward the treatment, and progressively accepted my guidance with enthusiasm (they had looked somewhat suspicious and diffident at the beginning), followed my explanations with attention and became actively involved in discussions about learning strategies, learning styles and autonomous learning. At the same time, their TOEFL scores showed gains.

As for the treatment, I was pleasantly surprised to know that students had found that learning strategies were so useful that they began applying the strategies, e.g., social and affective strategies that we had practiced in class, in their daily work in their laboratories. Regarding the data collection instruments, I still wonder what the relation is between what they said that they did when I asked them to verbalize their strategies, and what they were really able to do at the time of processing the learning material on their own. However, at the same time, I know this is a concern I share with most researchers involved in topics related to internal processes. I also suspect that sometimes students cannot find the way to express what they do when trying to read or listen for full understanding, and that they consider training in speaking about strategies a waste of time. My experience has shown that one has to be very cautious about insisting on the verbalization of internal –and even external—processes, at least when working with sophisticated adults. The good thing is that, in the end, many "reluctant" students are persuaded by the positive and pervasive results of becoming familiarized with language learning strategies.

At the same time, the attrition rate, i.e., the number of participants who dropped out of the course –quite typical of self-selected samples[4]--may have obscured the results of the statistical analysis.

[4] A group of students involved in a research project is considered self-selected when they volunteer for the research.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

I think we should continue examining the ways in which students learn and especially how affective factors influence their learning, trying to improve, in all possible ways, our measuring instruments, so that we get more reliable data. At the moment, in an attempt to go beyond the findings here, I am working on case studies of some of the students who stayed in the course until the end.

Acknowledgements

Preparation of this paper was supported by the Secretaría de Ciencia y Técnica de la Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto and was made possible by the invaluable assistance of the members of my research team.

I would like to acknowledge María Inés Valsecchi for her contribution to this study and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

A special thanks to Mextesol editor Ulrich Schrader for his very helpful suggestions and for his patience. I definitely owe much to him.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

References

Bialystok, E. (1981). The role of conscious strategies in second language proficiency. *Modern Language Journal* 65: 24-35.

Brown, A. L., Campione, J., and Day, J. (1980). Learning to learn: On trainingstudents to learn from texts. *Educational Researcher* 10:17-26.

Brown, A., and Palincsar, A. (1982). Inducing strategies learning from texts by means of informed, self-control training. *Topics in Learning and Learning Disabilities* 2 (1): 1-17.

Bush, D. (1997). Implementing technology for language learning. In M. Bush and R. Terry (Eds.) *Technology-enhanced language learning*. National Textbook Company, Chicago, IL.

Cohen, A.D. (1987). The use of verbal and imagery mnemonics in second language vocabulary learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 9 (1): 43-62.

Cotteral, S. (1995). Readiness for autonomy: Investigating learner beliefs. System 23 (2): 195-205

Dansereau, D. 1985 Learning strategy research. In J. W. Segal (Ed.) *Thinking and learning skills: relating learning to basic research*. Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale NJ.

Garret, N. (1991). Technology in the service of language learning: Trends and issues. *The Modern Language Journal 75*: 22-39.

Joiner, E. (1997). Teaching listening: How technology can help. In M. and R. Bush Terry (Eds). *Technology-enhanced language learning*. National Textbook Company, Chicago, IL.

Kahn, R., and Prickel, D. (1998). Self-Efficacy, teaching strategies, and writing performance. 32nd. Annual TESOL Conference, "Connecting Our Global Community", Seattle, Washington.

Kern R. (1995). Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity and characteristics of language production. *The Modern Language Journal 79:* 34-56.

Lafford P., and Lafford, B. (1997). Learning language and culture with internet. In M. Bush, and R. Terry (Eds.). *Technology-enhanced language learning*. National Textbook Company. Chicago, IL.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Longhini A., Martínez, I., Moral, M., Chiappello, M., Beck, S., and Valsecchi, M. (1998). Incidencia de la aplicación de estrategias de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera . Revista de la UNRC. Nº17. Universidad Nacional de Rio Cuarto, Argentina.

Martinez Lage, A (1997). Hypermedia technology for teaching reading. In M. Bush and R. Terry (Eds) *Technology-enhanced language learning*. National Textbook Company. Chicago, IL.

Nunan, D. (1996). *The effect of strategy training on student motivation, strategy knowledgr, perceived utility and deployment*. The English Center, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

O'Malley, J., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manzanares G., Kupper L. and Russo, R. (1985). Learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students. *Language Learning 35*: 21-46.

Oxford, R. (1989). Use of language learning strategies: A synthesis of studies with implications for strategy training. *System 17 (*2): 11-23

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Oxford, R. (1993). Research on second language learning strategies. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 13*: 34-48

Oxford, R. (Ed) (1996). *Language Learning Strategies around the world: Crosscultural perspectives* (Technical Report 13) Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

Oxford, R. (1997). Constructivism: Shape-shifting, substance, and teacher education applications. *Peabody Journal of education 72* (1): 1-25.

Pajares, F., and Kranzler, J. (1994). Self-efficacy, self-concept, and general mental ability in mathematical problem-solving. *Florida Educational Research Council Research Bulletin, 26*: 14-24.

Pajares, F., and Johnson, M. (1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in the writing of high school students: A path analysis. *Psychology in the Schools, 33*: 13-25.

Stock, R. (1993). *The potential impact of multimedia in language learning*. Muesli News.

Walter, C. (1997). Learner Independence: why, what, where, how, who? *Independence 2*1, Spring: 11-17.

Wenden, A. y Rubin, J. (1987). *Learner strategies in language learning.* Prentice Hall

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Appendix 1

INFORMACION PERSONAL

1. Fecha _____

2. Nombre _____

3. Facultad _____

4. Especialidad _____

5. Edad _____ 6. Sexo: _____

7. Lenguas extranjeras que entiende o habla
   a- _____
   b- _____
   c- _____

8. Nivel de competencia en esa o esas lenguas
   a- _____
   b- _____
   c- _____

9. ¿Cómo evaluaría su nivel de competencia en inglés comparándolo con el de sus colegas, la gente que trabaja en su Departamento?

   Excelente ☐ Bueno ☐ Regular ☐ Pobre ☐

10. ¿Cuál ha sido su mejor experiencia en el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera?

    _____

    _____

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Appendix 2

¿Qué opinión tiene usted sobre la **tecnología**?
Exprese su opinión marcando con una cruz en la escala que aparece más abajo. Por ejemplo:

cara		X				barata

En este caso la cruz indica que, en su opinión, la tecnología es mas bien cara y no barata, pero no es muy cara.

LA TECNOLOGÍA

simple						compleja
desagradable						agradable
incomoda						cómoda
divertida						aburrida
novedosa						rutinaria
innecesaria						necesaria
útil						inútil
valiosa						despreciable
ineficaz						provechosa
beneficiosa						perjudicial
difícil						fácil
confusa						clara
asequible						inasequible
incomprensible						comprensible
complicada						elemental
tediosa						fascinante
excitante						inhibitoria
imprescindible						sustituible
frustrante						gratificante
conocida						desconocida
fría						cálida
insegura						segura
atemorizante						Amistosa

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Appendix 3

¿Qué opinión tiene usted sobre la **computadora multimedial**?
Exprese su opinión marcando con una cruz en la escala que aparece más abajo. Por ejemplo:

cara				X		barata

En este caso la cruz indica que, en su opinión, la computadora multimedial es mas bien barata y no cara, pero no es muy barata.

LA COMPUTADORA MULTIMEDIAL

desagradable						agradable
estresante						cómoda
divertida						aburrida
novedosa						rutinaria
innecesaria						necesaria
útil						inútil
organizada						desorganizada
ineficaz						provechosa
beneficiosa						perjudicial
difícil						fácil
confusa						clara
asequible						inasequible
incomprensible						comprensible
complicada						elemental
tediosa						fascinante
práctica						impráctica
motivadora						desmotivadora
imprecisa						exacta
amistosa						atemorizante
aburrida						interesante
gratificante						frustrante
imprescindible						sustituible
excitante						inhibitoria
fría						cálida
segura						insegura
desconocida						conocida

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Appendix 4

¿Qué opinión tiene usted sobre el **aprendizaje autónomo e independiente (auto-acceso)**?
Exprese su opinión marcando con una cruz en la escala que aparece más abajo. Por ejemplo:

fastidioso					X	agradable

En este caso la cruz indica que, en su opinión, el aprendizaje autónomo e independiente es muy agradable.

APRENDIZAJE AUTÓNOMO (AUTO-ACCESO)

simple						complejo
desagradable						agradable
incómodo						cómodo
divertido						aburrido
novedoso						rutinario
innecesario						necesario
útil						inútil
organizado						desorganizado
ineficaz						provechoso
perjudicial						beneficioso
difícil						fácil
confuso						claro
asequible						inasequible
relajado						estresante
complicado						elemental
tedioso						fascinante
práctico						impráctico
motivador						desmotivador
confiable						inseguro
inhibitorio						excitante
sustituible						imprescindible
frustrante						gratificante
amistoso						atemorizante
desalentador						alentador
conocido						desconocido
interesante						monótono
rígido						flexible
tranquilizante						preocupante

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Appendix 5

ESCALA DE NIVEL DE AUTO-CONCEPTO Y AUTO-EFICACIA

A continuación Ud. va a encontrar aseveraciones con respecto a **su nivel de expectativas en el aprendizaje del inglés**. Después de leer cada ítem, por favor indique con una cruz la respuesta que se adecue a su situación. Note que puede elegir de entre cinco grados distintos, entre dos extremos. Trabaje rápidamente, es mejor poner lo primero que piense.

	EXC.	M. Bueno	Bueno	Regular	Malo
1- Para las lenguas extranjeras soy					
2- Para la lengua inglesa soy					
3- Para leer en voz alta en inglés soy					

	M. Fácil	Fácil	Normal	Difícil	M. Difícil
4- Aprender inglés anteriormente me ha resultado					
5- Leer comprensivamente en inglés me resulta					
6- Pronunciar palabras en inglés me resulta					
7- Comunicarme oralmente en inglés me resulta					
8- Escribir una nota o una carta sencilla en inglés me resulta					

	Muy Pla-centero	Placentero	Normal	Desagra-dable	M. Desa-gradable
9- Aprender inglés anteriormente me ha resultado					
10- Comunicarme oralmente en inglés me resulta					

	Muy Util	Util	Indife-rente	Relativa-mente útil	Inútil
11- Aprender inglés anteriormente me ha resultado					

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

	M. Cómodo	Cómodo	Indife-rente	Bastante Estresante	Estre-sante
12- Comunicarme oralmente en inglés me resulta					
13- Escribir una nota o una carta sencilla en inglés me resulta					

	M. Fácil	Fácil	Difícil	M .Difícil	Imposible
14- Entender conversaciones en inglés me resulta					
15- Entender inglés en la televisión o en el cine me resulta					
16- En actividades de comprensión auditiva, comprender la idea general me resulta					
17- En actividades de comprensión auditiva, aparear la idea de lo que escucho con la respuesta más aproximada me resulta					
18- En actividades de comprensión auditiva, entender conversaciones cortas entre dos personas me resulta					
19- En actividades de comprensión auditiva, responder preguntas sobre lo que escuché me resulta					
20- En actividades de lengua escrita, completar una oración con opción múltiple					
21- En actividades de lengua escrita, encontrar el error en una oración me resulta					
22- En actividades de lectura comprensiva, encontrar la misma idea dicha con otras palabras me resulta					
23- En actividades de lectura comprensiva, responder preguntas de comprensión de opción múltiple me resulta					

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Appendix 6

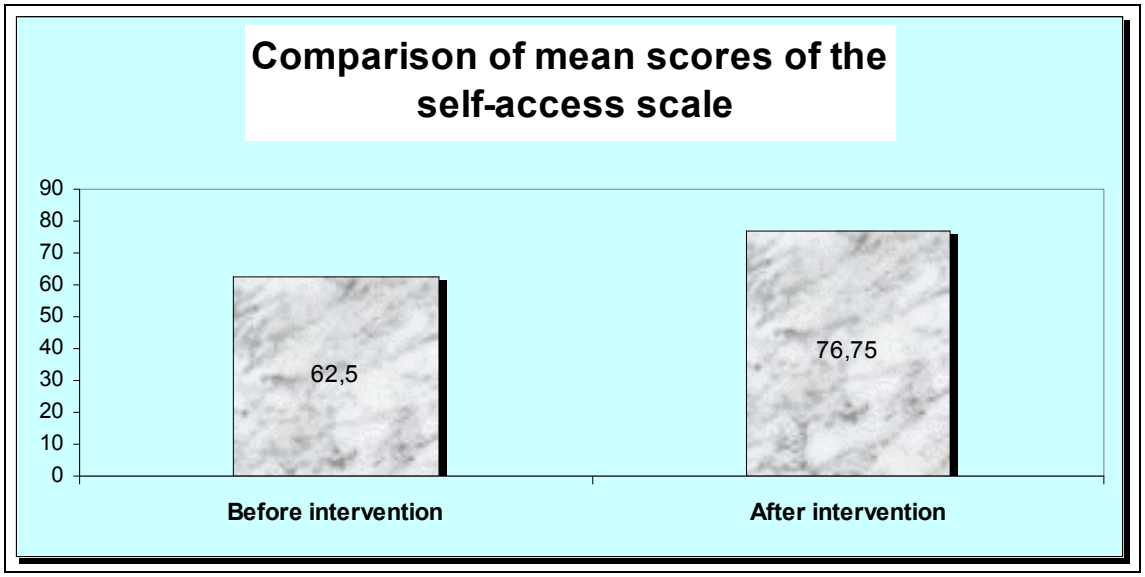
ESCALA DE ACTITUD SOBRE ESTRATEGIAS DE APRENDIZAJE

A continuación Ud. va a encontrar aseveraciones con respecto al uso de **estrategias de aprendizaje**. Después de leer cada ítem, por favor indique con una cruz la respuesta que se adecue a su situación. Note que puede elegir de entre cinco grados distintos, entre dos extremos. Trabaje rápidamente, es mejor poner lo primero que piense.

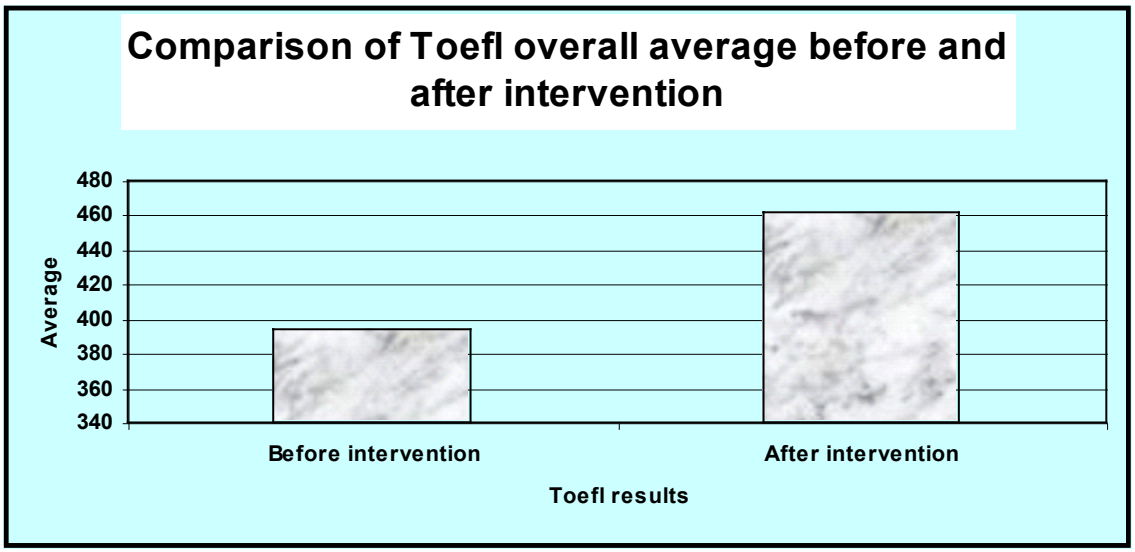
	Siempre	General-mente	A veces	Rara vez	Nunca
1- Soy optimista en cuanto a descubrir formas de estudiar que me faciliten el aprendizaje					
2- Me gusta decidir qué estudiar y cómo					
3- No recurro a nada en especial para estudiar vocabulario, sólo repaso mis apuntes o leo del libro					
4- Después de cada clase repaso en casa el material visto..					
5- Para estudiar vocabulario nuevo recurro a distintas y variadas técnicas.					
6- Regularmente repaso temas dados hace tiempo.					
7- En la clase de inglés prefiero que la profesora me diga qué hacer y cómo, a tener que decidirlo yo.					
8- Creo que a esta altura de mi vida no hay mucho que pueda hacer para mejorar mi forma de aprender el inglés					
9- Creo que lo que puede ayudarme a aprender inglés es la tecnología, pero no lo que yo ponga de mi parte.					
10- En casa o en mi lugar de trabajo ensayo pronunciación y expresiones en cualquier momento del día.					
11- Creo que hay mucho que yo puedo hacer para aprender inglés con éxito.					
12. Busco oportunidades para hablar inglés con nativos o gente que hable bien en inglés.					
13. Creo que una actitud positiva con respecto a mis condiciones para aprender inglés me puede ayudar.					
14. Cuando miro TV o veo películas en inglés, presto atención a lo que dicen y cómo lo dicen					

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Graph 1



Graph 2



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Exploring Options for *Titulación* in *Licenciaturas* in ELT in Mexico: A Case Study[1]

By Peter Sayer, Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO), Mexico. Peter.Sayer@asu.edu

Abstract

Recently there has been a move towards making the curricula of tertiary education in Mexico more flexible (*flexibilización*). Among the recommendations for making the curricula of undergraduate degrees (*licenciaturas*) more flexible is the expansion of options for the final degree requirements (*titulación*) beyond the traditional thesis. This paper reports on one particularly successful experience we had with a group of students at the language department of the public university in Oaxaca who opted for one of the "new options": developing a professional project. This suggests ways that the professional project can engage students in creating an experience that gives them the opportunity to use creatively the knowledge developed during their years in the program, and as well, can have a positive impact on English language teaching in the communities that our universities serve. It is meant both to illuminate how a range of different theoretical aspects of applied linguistics and language pedagogy can be contextualized and integrated into one project, and to suggest ways that university language departments can better connect to local schools and teachers.

Keywords: Options for *titulación*, professional project, *telesecundarias,* Oaxaca

Exploring Options for *Titulación* in *Licenciaturas* in ELT in Mexico: A Case Study[29]

With the surge in interest in English language learning in Mexico in the 1990s, and the corresponding efforts to professionalize the field of ELT, many Mexican universities initiated *licenciatura*[3][10]programs in teaching English as an additional language (BA TESOL). The curricula of these programs have been

[1] This is a refereed article.

[2] The success of the project reported on here is due to the diligence and excellent work of the students: Jacqueline Alcocer Huerta, Hildeberto Cruz Torres, Gibrán García Mendoza, Edgar Martínez Santos, Marta Ortíz González Mariana Selina Pérez Méndez, and Ana Edith Tomás Ramírez. Special thanks to my colleague Donald Kissinger, who took the lead on the final stages of the project, and to Ángeles Clemente for her invaluable collaboration. As well, I'd like to recognize the original work done by Prof. Leticia Morales Flores, the efforts of Mtro. Inocencio López and the teachers of the La Cañada region in Oaxaca, and the excellent editorial team at the Fondo Editorial: Fidel Luján, Cuauhtémoc Peña, and Claudia Guichard Bello.

[3] There is a "Glossary and explanation of terms" at the end of this article for words in Spanish that are particular to the Mexican educational system that may be unfamiliar to readers.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

heavily influenced by the input of the British Council, both directly by involvement of BC staff in the development of the *planes de studio*, and by the influence of the COTE- and DOTE-trained teachers who are teaching in these programs. Still, although the content of Mexican BA TESOL programs has been influenced by applied linguists and ELT professionals from abroad, their organization and structure fit within the traditions of the Mexican university system. This has included the requirement, for students to graduate from the rank of *pasante* to *titulado*, of completing a thesis.

Recently, however, there has been a move towards the *flexibilización* of tertiary education in Mexico (SEP, 2001, pp. 183-218). Among the recommendations for making the curricula of licenciaturas more flexible is the expansion of options for titulación beyond the traditional thesis. This article reports on one particularly successful experience we had with a group of students at the public Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO) who chose one of the "new options": developing a professional project. While it may be hard to duplicate the fortuitous combination of timing, the "*onda*" of the group of students, and the enthusiasm of the school administrators, I offer this story as a case study to suggest ways that a professional project can engage students in creating an experience that gives them the opportunity to creatively use the knowledge developed during their years in the program. Additionally, and ideally, professional projects should also have a positive impact on English language teaching in the communities that our universities serve. As a case study, it is meant both to illuminate how a range of different theoretical aspects of applied linguistics and language pedagogy can be contextualized and integrated into one project, and to suggest ways that university language departments can better connect to local schools and teachers. I leave it to the reader – especially if you are an asesor or administrator in a language department – to look for ways this contextually- and historically-situated story may be of relevance in a specific setting.

The licenciatura program in Oaxaca: Expanded options for titulación

The UABJO licenciatura program was started in 1992. Ten years later, after five *generaciones* had graduated, and a *semi-escolarizado* program and an extension language center in the Istmo de Tehuantepec had been opened, we were looking for ways to improve. The original *plan de estudios* had been "patched" in various ways: *materias* shifted around, contents changed, and new teachers brought in, but we were still worried that our *tasa de titulación* was very low. After ten semesters of classes, students struggled to finish an 80-page thesis written in standard academic English. Many were taking years, and some were not graduating at all; teachers were putting in long hours as *asesores* working with students to revise, and revise… and revise theses like "How to Use Games to Teach English," or "The Role of L1 in the EFL Classroom." Due to the low numbers of *pasantes* who actually reached *titulación* after several

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

generations had finished their coursework, the length of the final work had been reduced from an 80-page thesis to a 30-40-page *tesina.* Still, this did not satisfactorily solve the problem, since although some students produced excellent works of empirical research (several are fine examples of reflective action research), we felt that for many, ourselves included, the experience was very frustrating, and did not necessarily make the students better language teachers. In fact, despite not being *titulados*, many were already working as English teachers, and we had observed first-hand the excellent work they were doing in their classrooms with their students.

Writing a thesis, we reasoned, requires mastery of a certain genre of academic writing. It requires skills in doing research. While both of these types of knowledge are important, the amount of attention they received in the *plan de estudios* was minimal. Should we emphasize academic writing and research more then? In fact, except for a handful of students who go on to study a *maestría*, they are hardly likely to use either very much after they graduate. Better, we thought, to spend the time on *materias* dealing with developing English language proficiency, pedagogy, and applied linguistics; after all, our *perfil del egresado* is aimed at the *formación de docentes,* not *investigadores.* So one of our professors, Dra. Ángeles Clemente, took the lead and developed a PIFI-funded pilot project to test the waters for new options for *titulación*. We kept the thesis as an option for those students who found research attractive, but also offered an *examen global de conocimientos, práctica docente,* and *proyecto profesional.*

Immediately, we found difficulties in implementing the global exam option. Since we had not "standardized" the contents of the courses in the form of *programas institucionales*, it was impossible to establish the minimum knowledge base that we could hold students accountable to in designing a global exam. While the global exam as an option for *titulación* may be more feasible now that the *programas institucionales* have been developed, we still find a tension – perhaps even contradiction – in our move towards a more flexible, constructivist orientation in the *plan de estudios*, and the linear, behaviorist view of learning and knowledge implicit in a standardized global exam and pre-set institutional programs (cf. Freeman & Johnson, 1998, and Tsui, 2003 for treatments of teacher knowledge and expertise). And so although this option exists in theory, no student has yet chosen this option. In Clemente's pilot project (2002-03), the initial group of about 40 students, by their own choosing, split almost evenly amongst the three other options.

The option of *práctica docente* has worked out well. Originally, this option was perceived by both teachers and students as being easier, even considered a cop-out compared to the others. We wanted to dispel this view, to make their first "real" teaching stint rigorous and demanding, while at the same time not losing sight of the fact that the focus was on practical issues of language learning with real students in a real classroom. For the most part, the *práctica* option has

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

succeeded in requiring students to synthesize knowledge learned as discrete pieces in course design, materials design, lesson planning, teaching methods, and test design. As well, in the discussion groups that accompanied the practicum experience, student-teachers were able to bring to the table and discuss with peers problems that rarely get attention in their formal classes: classroom management and discipline, grading, parents' expectations, and negotiating the politics of the institutions where they were doing their practicum. Finally, by having students engage in forms of action research and reflective teaching (Richards and Lockhart, 1994), for most of the student-teachers the "product" of the practicum – a reflective journal and portfolio compilation of materials – showed clear evidence of the learning process of becoming English teachers. The end product of this option is the *portafolio docente*, which compiles the syllabus the teacher designed, materials used, lesson plans, examples of students' work, a reflective journal, and a short (8-10 page) paper connecting theory and practice. Because the compilation of this portfolio is closely linked to their daily work in the classroom, students who have selected this route have been more successful in getting *titulado* than their *compañeros* doing the thesis.

The professional project as an opción de titulación

Of the four choices, the *reporte de proyecto* was the most nebulous. The idea was to have an option that was somewhere between the theory and empirical research of the thesis, but not limited to classroom teaching as with the practicum. It would – we hoped – be practical, but informed by theory (or theoretical, but grounded in practice if you like.) We didn't want to define exactly what it was supposed to be, however, since we hoped that students would see opportunities in things they were already working on that they could turn into a *reporte de proyecto*. Good examples of some of the initial proposals students brought were "An English course for Oaxacan travel agents and hotel workers," or "A teacher's guide to on-line resources for learning English in high school."

So we intentionally left the *proyecto* open-ended. Originally, we had thought that the *proyecto* topics would be based on proposals brought to us by the students. However, we found that it also provided a way for greater collaboration between students and professors, since as teachers we are often approached by persons involved in education at some level who want help with some aspect of language teaching. Because we believe very strongly that, as a public school of higher education, it is our duty to serve the community, we try to get as involved as we can. The day Mtro. Fidel Luján from the *Instituto Estatal de Educación Público de Oaxaca's* (IEEPO) *Fondo Editorial* called me asking if I'd take a look at a manuscript for an English textbook proved to be the beginning of one such opportunity for students and professors to collaborate and make a contribution to the community.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

The IEEPO telesecundaría project

Mtro. Fidel is the director of the *Fondo Editorial* of the IEEPO. When we met, he explained that the manuscript was a Spanish translation of theEnglish-as-a-Foreign-Language section of the SEP's "Basic Concepts" or *Conceptos Básicos* book for the *telesecundaría* schools. I had heard of the *telesecundaría* system – where lessons are transmitted via satellite from Mexico City – but since my work mainly kept me in the capital city of Oaxaca, I had never had the chance to actually go and visit one of the many "satellite schools," most of which are in the outlying, mountainous areas of Oaxaca, in communities where there are between 10-25 *egresados* of the primary school. The *telesecundaria* system:

> *Atiende a alumnos de 13 a 15 años y está diseñada para funcionar preferentemente en comunidades rurales que tienen menos de 2500 habitantes y en las que no es posible instalar escuelas secundarias generales o técnicas por que hay un número reducido de egresados de primaria. […] Combina elementos de la modalidad escolarizada con aspectos específicos de la educación a distancia*[4][11]*.* (IEEPO, 2005)

Unlike other *secundarias*, the satellite schools have only one *maestro* per group. Although the curriculum is exactly the same as non-satellite schools for each grade level, during the first 20 minutes of each 60-minute block the students watch a video-lesson beamed from Mexico City, and then spend 30 minutes doing textbook activities that correspond to the video-lesson. Martínez-Vásquez (2004) explains that: "El modelo de la telesecundaria trata de propiciar el autodidactismo, concibe al profesor como un 'facilitador', un orientador del aprendizaje del alumno[5][12]" (p. 138). The *telesecundaria* system was established in 1968 and during the 2002-03 school year had 15,204 classrooms and over a million students throughout the country and, since *secundaria* (grades 7-9) became obligatory in 1993, now enrolls 47% of all *secundaria* students (Cortéz Valadez, 2004; see also the EduSat website, which broadcasts the transmission on-line at http://edusat.ilce.edu.mx/canal 11.htm). In Oaxaca, the *telesecundaria* system continues to expand rapidly; in during 2004-05, 55 new schools were opened (Ruíz Ortíz, 2005).

Although the *telesecundaria* system undoubtedly increases access to education for many marginalized communities, the teachers and students in these schools continue to face significant challenges. In particular, the *Consejo Técnico* had identified the English classes as one area that was especially

[4] Serves students from 13 to 15 years old and is designed to operate preferably in rural communities that have populations less than 2,500 and where it is not possible to create general or technical middle schools because there are too few students leaving the primary schools. […] It combines elements of the normal (traditional face-to-face) modality with specific aspects of distance education. (Author's translation)

[5] The telesecundaria model tries to promote self-directed learning, where the teacher is conceived as a "facilitator," someone who orients the student's learning. (Author's translation)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

problematic. The preface of the manuscript Luján showed me explained its purpose, which was a result of:

> *La iniciativa del Consejo Técnico del Sector 08 de Telesecundarias en el estado de Oaxaca, el cual consideró las necesidades educativas detectadas en la asignatura de Inglés a partir de un diagnóstico aplicado a 43 grupos de las escuelas telesecundarias más marginadas de cada zona escolar de dicho sector; cuyos resultados señalaron que 50% de los grupos omite la clase de Inglés; 40% desarrolla el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de esta asignatura en forma no sistematizada, lo que genera índices no satisfactorios en el aprendizaje de los alumnos*[5]*.*

The administrators and teachers in Sector 08, centered around the town of Huatla de Jiménez in the Cañada region about 3 hours from the Oaxacan capital, were concerned that English classes just weren't working for their students or teachers. Their survey confirmed this: only 10% of teachers felt that they were able to do a decent job with their English classes.

The most obvious problem was that the materials given to them by the SEP were completely in English. These were not very useful to the teachers, many of whom are in fact bilingual Spanish-indigenous language speakers, but whose exposure to English was limited to what they themselves had acquired in *secundaria*. They decided that the first step was to translate the materials into Spanish so that the teachers could have some basic notion of what they were teaching. One of the teachers on the *Consejo Técnico* had a good mastery of English and had taken on the task of translating every reading passage and cartoon caption from the SEP's *Conceptos Básicos* book, level 1. They passed this translated manuscript on to the *Fondo Editorial* which passed it along to the IEEPO's *mesa técnica* for evaluation and recommendation about suitability for publication. The response in the form of an official *dictamen* of the *mesa técnica* was honest, if not very encouraging. The manuscript had many translation problems, and they could not endorse its publication. Interestingly, their *dictamen* even included a critique of the manuscript's methodology as *"no va de acuerdo a los actuales métodos comunicativos en la enseñanza de segundas lenguas propuestos por la Secretaria de Educación Pública*[6]*"…* and this despite the fact that the translation had not changed in the least bit the methodology of the original SEP materials!

---

[5] The initiative of the Rules Committee of Sector 08 of the State of Oaxaca, which has been concerned to carry out an educational needs analysis of, based on a diagnostic done of 43 groups in most marginalized *telesecundaria* schools in each area of the sector. The results of this diagnostic indicated that 50% of the groups omitted English class, and 40% carried out the teaching-learning of English unsystematically, the effects of which generate unsatisfactory outcomes in the students' learning. (Author's translation)

[6] It is not in line with current communicative methods in the teaching of second languages as proposed by the Ministry of Education.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

When he received the *dictamen* of the *mesa técnica,* Luján took the extraordinary step of not simply returning to the Cañada teachers with a "thanks, but no thanks." Instead, he approached us at the Centro de Idiomas. "*Veo que sus intenciones son nobles*," he said of the *telesecundaria* teachers' efforts. "*Quiero que lo revisen a ver si el proyecto tiene algo de valor, si hay forma de apoyarles*[7]." His words were rousing: as a teacher dedicated to improving both public schools and English language teaching, how could I ignore a request for help from schools that are among the most marginalized in our state? He told me that if there was something of merit in the manuscript, he'd figure out some way to get it published. How could I say no? I told Luján I'd go over the materials and prepare another *dictamen*.

However, with the reality of teaching an extremely heavy courseload, and with various other projects underway, I really didn't have the time. Still, I could see that in that pile of type-written pages there was the kernel of a good idea: put together a Teacher's Guide for them. It certainly wouldn't solve everything that was wrong with teaching English in *telesecundarias*, but it would at least give something concrete to work with to the 90% of teachers who had admitted they felt frustrated and lost trying to teach English. The manuscript sat on the shelf for a week.

The next week, Mtro. Inocencio "Chencho" López came to the university to pay me a visit. He was in charge of the *Consejo Técnico* of Sector 08, and it was he who had delivered the manuscript to the *Fondo Editorial.* He reiterated what the preface had said: that about half of the teacher-facilitators simply skipped English class, turning off the TV-transmissions and either dedicating the time to catch up on other subjects, or sending the kids to play in the patio while they worked on something else. López had come down from the Cañada, and had brought the original SEP *Conceptos Básicos* books that the translations had been made from.

He also explained that they had tried to turn the dialogues in the books into recordings, but they had recorded them on aging cassette machines, with whomever they could find who could speak some English, and so predictably the final products were nearly unintelligible and of no pedagogic value. Since I was already working on the translations, he asked, couldn't I also help do something with the tapes? The project was getting bigger, but at the same time I realized how worthwhile it was. I liked López right away; he was gentle and soft-spoken, but you could tell immediately how enthusiastic and determined he was to try to change things for the better in his district.

I decided to ask other colleagues and students to see if there was anyone willing to help. Donald Kissinger and Ángeles Clemente both offered to serve as *asesores,* and I approached the group of students who were just starting their

[7] I can see that their intentions are noble. […] I want you to look it over to see if the project has some value, if there's some way to help them.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

final year and who I knew were fishing for *titulación* topics. I explained about the project and asked if anyone still needed a topic, or would be willing to change. I was delighted when seven students, who I knew were academically very strong and motivated, decided to band together to take on the project. Together we prepared another *dictamen,* which recommended that the manuscript be rescued, and that we were willing to work on it. Luján pledged that if we could give him a quality product, he would find a way to get it published.

Organizing the project

The question then became: how to split the project seven ways and make it all add up to what López' teachers needed and wanted? And furthermore, as *asesores* we wanted to make sure that our students ended up with individual final projects that would meet the school's requirements for *titulación.* Even though the options for *titulación* had been expanded, because of the *reglamento* of the university, the final product still had to resemble an individually-written thesis.

The way we organized the project came to resemble the rock concert production from the Jack Black film *School of Rock* (White & Linklater, 2003). In that movie, each student in Dewey's classroom was responsible for a part of producing the rock concert. (The protagonist's name, Dewey, is a nod to the American educational philosopher John Dewey who advocated precisely this kind of progressivist approach to schooling and the pedagogy exemplified in the movie.) The IEEPO project was very much like Dewey's rock concert: each of the seven students (their official title became "*profesores practicantes"*) had a certain role to play, and each was responsible for figuring out how to produce his or her own piece. At the same time, each part had to be coordinated with the others. The ten of us (the three *asesores* and seven student-teachers) decided to divide the project into four distinct parts:

1. Ethnographic landscape: The socio-cultural context of the *telesecundarias* (student in charge: Edith Tomás)

2. Preparation of the Teacher's Guide based on the original translations (students in charge: Jacqueline Alcocer and Marta Ortíz)

3. Preparation of the listening materials from the written dialogues in the book (students in charge: Gibrán García and Edgar Martínez)

4. Organization of in-service workshops for teachers: How to use the materials (students in charge: Mariana Pérez and Hildeberto Cruz)

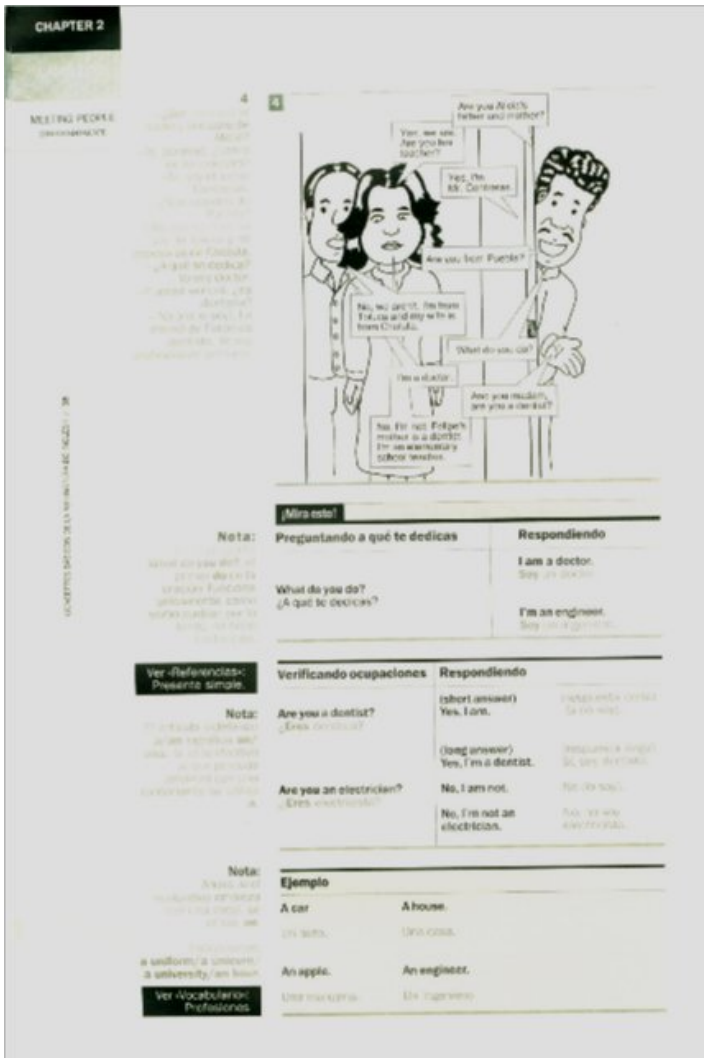
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

First of all, we realized that in order to better understand what was working and what wasn't about the *telesecundaria* English classes, we needed to have more background information. None of us had actually spent any time in a *telesecundaria,* and we felt it would be too presumptuous of us to start without becoming better acquainted with what actually happens in a *telesecundaria* classroom. Edith was responsible for and took the leadership role in this part of the project, preparing an ethnographic overview of the English classrooms. She and several of the project members went to *telesecundarias* to observe and film the classes. They brought back their fieldnotes and videotapes for us to discuss as a group. Edith also made the 3-hour trip to Huatla de Jiménez to see the community and meet the teachers, administrators and students who would be using the materials. We felt that this ethnographic survey was an essential first step to understanding how the materials produced could best serve the teachers, and Edith did an excellent job of deciding how to organize an ethnographic survey. For this, she had to read up on what the purpose of ethnography is, as well as make contact with the schools, hone her observation skills, and develop skills with using video recording equipment.

Jacqueline and Marta were responsible for turning the manuscript that the *mesa técnica* had criticized and rejected into a Teacher's Guide – a *Libro de Apoyo para el Maestro* – that could be published by the *Fondo Editorial.* Based on the observations and interviews done for Edith's ethnographic part, they decided that the Teacher's Guide should include more than just a literal translation of the original *Conceptos Básicos* book. They greatly improved the translations, and provided short explanations to teachers about grammatical and lexical points. They also developed a pronunciation guide and compiled vocabulary lists and a grammar reference section for each chapter. Finally, they developed a "Fun Activities" section, showing how the vocabulary lists could be turned into crossword puzzles or word searches, songs, and kinesthetic activities like the "Hot Potato Game." For this, they had to consider what made a good translation, and look into translation theory. Also, they looked at many examples of teacher's editions of popular ELT coursebooks to see what elements to include and how to present them most effectively. They also incorporated what they'd learned from the ethnographic survey so that the activities they suggested could be realistically used by teachers with limited English proficiency, with limited planning time, and in places where material resources are scarce. We also had a formal meeting with the staff of the *Fondo Editorial* to talk about layout and formatting, and learned a lot about the process of editing and preparing a manuscript for publication.

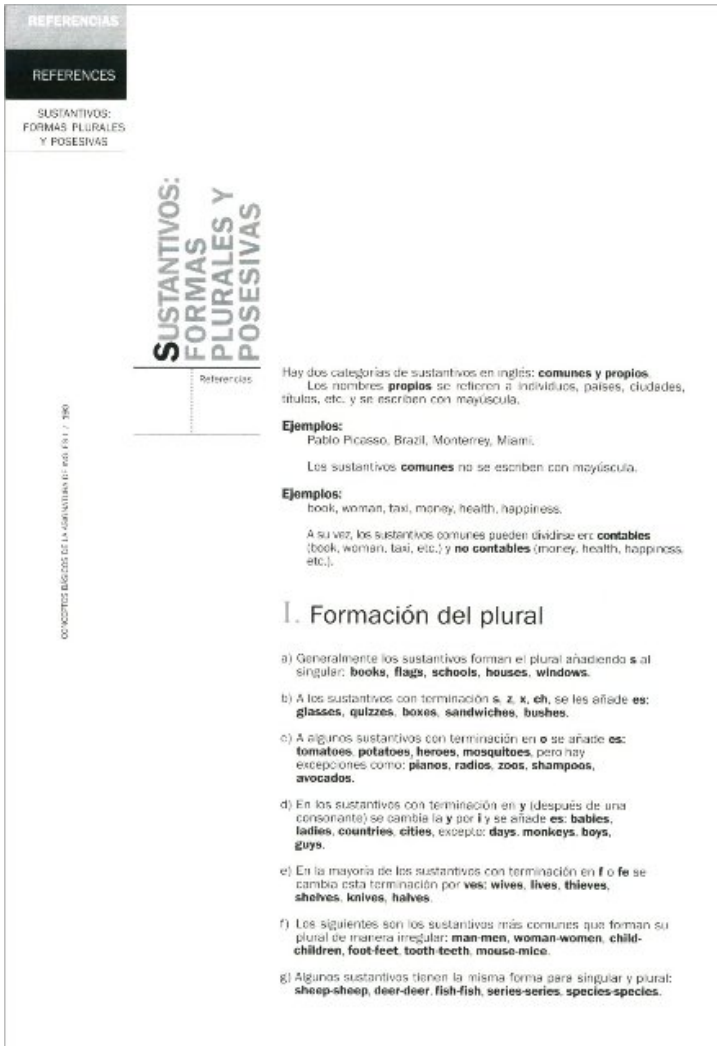
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Figure 1: Page from the *Libro de Apoyo* showing the translation of the dialogues.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Figure 2: Page from the *Libro de Apoyo* showing additional explanations and materials.



REFERENCIAS

REFERENCES

SUSTANTIVOS: FORMAS PLURALES Y POSESIVAS

SUSTANTIVOS: FORMAS PLURALES Y POSESIVAS

Referencias

Hay dos categorías de sustantivos en inglés: **comunes y propios**.
Los nombres **propios** se refieren a individuos, países, ciudades, títulos, etc. y se escriben con mayúscula.

Ejemplos:
Pablo Picasso, Brazil, Monterrey, Miami.

Los sustantivos **comunes** no se escriben con mayúscula.

Ejemplos:
book, woman, taxi, money, health, happiness.

A su vez, los sustantivos comunes pueden dividirse en **contables** (book, woman, taxi, etc.) y **no contables** (money, health, happiness, etc.).

I. Formación del plural

a) Generalmente los sustantivos forman el plural añadiendo **s** al singular: **books, flags, schools, houses, windows.**

b) A los sustantivos con terminación **s, z, x, ch**, se les añade **es: glasses, quizzes, boxes, sandwiches, bushes.**

c) A algunos sustantivos con terminación en **o** se añade **es: tomatoes, potatoes, heroes, mosquitoes**, pero hay excepciones como: **pianos, radios, zoos, shampoos, avocados.**

d) En los sustantivos con terminación en **y** (después de una consonante) se cambia la **y** por **i** y se añade **es: babies, ladies, countries, cities**, excepto: **days, monkeys, boys, guys.**

e) En la mayoría de los sustantivos con terminación en **f** o **fe** se cambia esta terminación por **ves: wives, lives, thieves, shelves, knives, halves.**

f) Los siguientes son los sustantivos más comunes que forman su plural de manera irregular: **man-men, woman-women, child-children, foot-feet, tooth-teeth, mouse-mice.**

g) Algunos sustantivos tienen la misma forma para singular y plural: **sheep-sheep, deer-deer, fish-fish, series-series, species-species.**

Gibran and Edgar took on the task of preparing the listening materials to accompany the Teacher's Guide. They recruited volunteers amongst their *compañeros* in the *licenciatura* program as well as foreign students studying Spanish at the school to make the recordings. They had decided that it would be good to include a mix of both foreign and Mexican accents. Gibran used *CoolEdit* software to mix and format them on the computer, add ambient music and transitions, and finally burn the master CDs. The final product was an

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

impressive, professional-sounding set of recordings that could be replicated many times for the classroom teachers without losing sound quality. Besides the technical skill involved in mixing and editing the sounds, the students also learned a lot about what makes for good listening materials.

Finally, the group decided that the materials would have more impact if they could present and explain them directly to the teachers. Mariana and Hildeberto were in charge of planning and leading a 2-day workshop. All seven of the student-*profesores practicantes* and one of the *asesores* (Don) went to Huatla and Tlaxiaco in La Cañada and presented the materials to over 300 teachers from over a hundred schools. They showed them the translations, and how they were aligned to each lesson in the *Conceptos Básicos* book. They also concentrated on how the pronunciation guide could be used, and how to use the extra activities. However, before the students could carry out this training, they needed a crash refresher phonology course. The *asesores* led these bi-weekly meetings, and we also discussed as a group how to be an effective trainer and came up with strategies for the training sessions (cf. Woodward, 1990). This was a great culminating event for the project, since the students were able to give their work directly to the teachers. Inocencio López was on hand, and with all the formality and ceremony that is expected at such events, he led the official presentation of the materials and kicked off the training courses.

Postscript

The project, somewhat amazingly, stayed on our anticipated timeline, thanks to the students' hard work and the intra-group peer pressure they applied on each other to get things turned in on time. Fidel Luján had originally contacted us in September. We met with Inocencio and put the team together in October. By Christmas, the students had completed the ethnographic description of the *telesecundaria* English classes, and the preparations of the Guide and listening material were well underway. We hoped to finish the Guide by March, so that the *Fondo Editorial* would have 3 months to get it to press, and have it done in time for the workshops in June. In the meantime, the students would complete the recordings and have time to make multiple copies.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Figure 3: The final product: The *Conceptos Básicos* translation and Teacher's Guide.

Unfortunately, the production schedule for the book was delayed, and not all the CDs could be burned in time for the workshops, but the workshops were successful nonetheless. The seven students had a group *examen profesional* – the "thesis defence" – where they presented the project to 50 of their fellow *licenciatura* classmates. The project was officially capped the following autumn when Fidel Luján, Mtro. Inocencio, the *asesores,* and the newly-*titulados licenciados en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras* attended the book presentation ceremony (IEEPO, 2003).

Conclusions

It is worth highlighting several important aspects of this project:

1. The high level of motivation and investment of the group members: the students were responsible for the success or failure of the project. Though

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

the *asesores* "scaffolded" important decisions and served as resources for them, it was <u>their</u> project.

2. The project forged ties between the university, the schools, and the state education ministry. Three of the students have since been hired by the ministry, and two of them are working in the Cañada region where the project was done.

3. The learning that the students engaged in was highly contextualized and task-oriented (eg. learning about ethnography, training, observation, or phonology in order to be able to put it immediately into practice).

4. The final products – the guide, CDs and workshops – are tangible things that will directly impact the quality of English teaching where it is most needed.

From a researcher's point of view, I wish we'd included some kind of follow-up to the project so we could evaluate its impact. For example, I wonder now how many teachers are currently using the materials? What do they think about them? Have the materials increased the percentage of teachers (from 10%) who felt they were able to do a satisfactory job with English class? In what ways? A short questionnaire, coupled with some interviews with teachers could evaluate the ultimate impact the project has had, though unfortunately, there has been neither time nor resources to carry it out.

In sum, I've presented this story as a case study of the kind of possibilities that curricular *flexibilización* and new options for *titulación* can provide. Admittedly, it would be hard to repeat the experience. We were incredibly lucky to have enthusiastic and competent collaborators in the *telesecundaria* group as well as the excellent team at the *Fondo Editorial*, and of course we were privileged to work with an exceptional "dream team" group of students whose abilities and personalities meshed in just the right ways, and were dedicated and hard-working. Nevertheless, although it can't be replicated, the experience points to ways that project work can promote learning in the constructivist sense: the students improved their language skills, engaged in action research, gained experience in real-world contexts, made important professional contacts, and were able to move directly from *pasante* to *titulado* status.

Endnotes

1. The methodology for teaching English tries to emulate the main principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). However, it seems that there has been little consideration of how CLT may be made "context-sensitive" (Bax, 1997) or represent "appropriate methodology" (Holliday, 1994) for the distance and self-directed model that the *telesecundaria* embodies. In fact, there seems to be a

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

disconnect, which training courses like *SEPAinglés* have not yet addressed, between the tenets (or dogma?) of CLT and the local necessities and realities of teaching and learning English in many rural Mexican communities.

Glossary and explanation of terms

Asesor – Academic or thesis advisor

Compañeros – Classmates or peers

Consejo Técnico – The rules committee

Dictámen – An official report

Egresados – Students who have graduated from a degree program.

Examen global de conocimientos – Comprehensive knowledge examination

Flexibilización – An educational policy instigated by the federal Ministry of Education that promotes greater academic flexibility and mobility. Students studying in flexible, a credit-based system should have more control over their academic trajectory, including the choosing of courses, duration and intensity of studies (ie, a part-time student can take more semesters to finish), and types of activities that can earn academic credit, and ways to increase quality and terminal efficiency.

Fondo Editorial – Publishing office

Formación de docentes – Preparing teachers; teachers' training

Generaciones – A "generation" is a group of students who start and go through the program together as a cohort

Instituto Estatal de Educación Público de Oaxaca's (IEEPO) – State Ministry of Education in Oaxaca

Investigadores – Researchers

Jefas – Leaders (fem.)

Licenciatura – An undergraduate (bachelor's level) degree program

Maestría – A master's degree

Maestro/a – Teacher

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Materias – Academic courses.

Mesa Técnica – An expert committee. The state Ministry of Education has a *mesa técnica* for each curricular area.

Onda – synergy, style, or vibe

Opción de titulación – An option for the culminating project

Pasante – Someone who has finished the coursework, but not the final thesis requirement.

Perfil del egresado – The "graduation profile" specifies the program's objectives. The *perfil* serves to orient means-ends curriculum development by defining the "final product": the student's knowledge, dispositions, and abilities upon finishing the program of study.

PIFI (Programa Integral del Fomento de la Investigación) – A Ministry of Education initiative to support innovative research and development projects in tertiary education

Planes de estudio – The curricular map. In most non-flexible Mexican curricula, the plan de estudios specifically exactly for the student which classes she must take, and in what order they must be taken.

Portafolio docente – Professional or teaching portfolio

Práctica docente – Teaching practicum

Profesores practicantes – Practicum teachers

Programas institutionales – Official course description and syllabi for courses within the curriculum

Proyecto profesional – Professional or culminating project

Reglamento – Oficial rules

Reporte de proyecto – Project report

Semi-escolarizado – A modality of study designed for students who are working. A "semi" program usually includes evening, weekend, and/or intensive courses during vacations and breaks.

SEP – Mexican Ministry of Public Education

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Tasa de titulación – The index that indicates the percentage of the students completing coursework who have finished the culminating thesis project and received the final degree.

Telesecundaria – A junior high school, equivalent to grades 7-9, in predominantly rural areas of Mexico where lessons are beamed via satellite transmissions into the classroom.

Tesina – A short thesis, perhaps 20-40 pages

Titulado/a – Someone who has finished all the academic requirements of the program, including the thesis.

Titulación – The process of completing the degree requirements

References

Bax, S. (1997). Roles for a teacher educator in context-sensitive teacher education. *ELT Journal, 51*(3), 232-241.

Cortéz Valadez, J. (2004). *Telesecundaria en México: La Televisión que Educa.* Available on-line at http://www.ciberhabitat.gob.mx/escuela/alumnos/telesec/. Accessed June 20, 2006.

Freeman, D. and Johnson, K.E. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly, 39*(3): 397-417.

Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate Methodology and Social Context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca (IEEPO). (2005). *Educación Secundaria.* Internet site at http://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/ieepo/4f.htm. Accessed June 20, 2006.

Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca (IEEPO). (2003). *Conceptos Básicos en la Asignatura de Inglés I: Libro de Apoyo para el Sistema de Telesecundaria.* Oaxaca, Oax: Fondo Editorial IEEPO. Information on-line at: http://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/ieepo/2c4j.htm

Martínez Vásquez, V.R. (2004). *La Educación en Oaxaca.* Oaxaca: Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Richards, J. and Lockhart, C. (1994). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ruíz Ortiz, U. (2005). *Primer Informe del Gobierno: Educación.* Oaxaca: Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública. Available on-line at http://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/ieepo/3ia.htm. Accessed June 20, 2006.

Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). (2001). *Programa Nacional de Educación 2001-2006*. México, DF: SEP. Available on-line at: http://www.sep.gob.mx/wb2/sep/sep_2734_programa_nacional_de

Tsui, A. (2003). *Understanding Expertise in Second Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

White, M. (Writer), & R. Linklater (Director) (2003). The School of Rock. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures.

Woodward, T. (1990). *Models and Metaphors in Teacher Training: Loop Input and Other Strategies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Some Historical and Academic Considerations for the Teaching of Second Language Writing in English in Mexico[1]

By Troy Crawford, Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico
crawford@quijote.ugto.mx

Overview of Writing from a Social Perspective

Writing is closely tied to rhetoric (Henry 2000, Johns 1997 and Silva 1990). The foundation of the development of writing over the course of human social evolvement has moved away from writing to communicate, to a process of graphic display memorization. I think that in this process we have actually abandoned the teaching of writing in the second language classroom per se and become servants to a process of training students to adhere to certain predetermined graphic display options. As such, this literature review is very critical and questioning of the research consulted in the field of teaching second language.

Current State of Second Language Writing

> Writing instruction in the academy at most institutions, followed the so called Harvard model: students produced demonstration essays or research papers usually on a belletristic topic (because English departments had staked claim to writing instruction in a student's 'general education'), elaborated in the hermetic environment of a classroom, to be submitted to one instructor as the sole arbiter of their worth (Henry 2000, p.IX).

It would be thought that this type of practice would receive some form of modification, but to this day "students continue to produce singly authored display essays… an apt surrogate for a future manager in a high-volume mode of production" (Henry 2000, p. X).

Research Tendencies

In the 1970's composition theory research moved from students' products to their writing processes. This in turn prepared the way for the shift to writing contexts in the 1980's. This has now led to the point where we can focus on agency[2] (Henry 2000, pp.45-46).

[1] This is a refereed article.

[2] In this context "**agency**" refers to the capacity of individual humans to act independently and to make their own free choices.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Current Classroom Practice

One of composition's most endearing traits is its persistent connection to teaching practices. James Berlin's comprehensive history of twentieth-century post-secondary writing instruction in the United States traces the dominance of "current traditional" rhetoric[3], which "makes the patterns of arrangement and superficial correctness the main ends of writing instruction" (1987 cited in Henry 2000, pp.1-4). Sharon Crowley extends the critique, noting shortcomings of such instruction in the realms of purpose and audience as well as the narrow range of subject positions offered to writers:

> In current-traditional pedagogy students' papers are not constructed as messages that might command assent or rejection. Nor do current-traditional teachers constitute an audience in any rhetorical sense of that word, since they read not to learn or be amused or persuaded, but to weigh and measure a paper's adherence to formal standards. Hence the current-traditional theory of discourse is not a rhetoric but a theory of graphic display, and so it perfectly met the humanist requirement that students' expression of character be put under constant surveillance so they could be "improved" by correction (Composition 96 cited in Henry 2000, pp.2-3).

As a result, composition is conceptualized as: "an endeavour consisting in mastering forms, engaging little disciplinary content knowledge" (Henry 2000, p.4).

Writing in the Second Language Classroom

Traditional writing emerges in the European Enlightenment and is closely related to "scientific positivism" and tends to give language a description of facts and rules that are allocated in a two-dimensional textbook (Johns 1997). This was the driving force in the 1960's and 1970's when applied linguistics focused on research that dealt primarily with count features of language (Bhatia 1993). This focused the teaching of writing on lists of grammatical and lexical 'facts' as they have been discerned through quantitative research (Johns 1997). This coincides with the research of Henry (2000) in that the dominance of the Harvard model in the 1970's moved classroom practice to aspects of teaching forms and

[3] **Rhetoric** is the art or technique of persuasion through the use of oral language. Rhetoric is one of the three original liberal arts or *trivium* (the other members are dialectic and grammar) in Western culture. In ancient and medieval times, grammar concerned itself with correct, accurate, pleasing, and effective language use through the study and criticism of literary models, dialectic concerned itself with the testing and invention of new knowledge through a process of question and answer, and rhetoric concerned itself with persuasion in public and political settings such as assemblies and courts of law. As such, rhetoric is said to flourish in open and democratic societies with rights of free speech, free assembly, and political enfranchisement for some portion of the population.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

graphic display to students. This was a transfer to a classroom practice that focuses on factual organizational models through imitation (Johns 1997 and Silva 1990). There are minor differences but the general focus is on surface level standard descriptions of formal language.

The core of traditional theories is: "literacy is acquired through direct practice, focused on the production of perfect, formally organized language patterns and discourses" (Johns 1997, p.7).

> Good habits are formed by giving a correct response rather than making mistakes" (Richards and Rogers 1986, p.50). What this type of classroom framing does is it leads us to a domain where "the learner is a passive recipient of expert knowledge and direction. Not surprisingly, the role of the teacher is that of expert and authority, the person who directs all student learning….for traditional theories, language and textual forms are central (Johns 1997, p.7).

Introduction to a Social/Classroom Perpective

The teaching of writing has been traditionally based on composition theory that focuses the teaching on the mechanics of the text. This focus has led to a mechanical classroom process that leaves out many aspects of language. The following paper is an attempt to show some academic and historical aspects of writing and how these influence and affect the texts that students here in Mexico may produce in the English language classroom.

First of all, it has to be made clear that speaking and writing are not just different ways of doing the same thing; rather, they are two distinct things (Brookes and Grundy 1998, Byrne 1988, Halliday 1985 and Raimes 1983). "Writing evolves when language has to take on new functions in society. "These tend to be the prestigious functions, those associated with learning, religion, government, and trade" (Halliday, 1985, p. XV). Hence, writing tends to take on an elite or educated appearance within society and becomes the standard by which a society tends to classify the correct use of language (Halliday 1985). However, writing does not represent or incorporate all the features of a language (Halliday 1985). Actually, writing tends to lend itself to conformity and standardization to help create a 'pure' language form that is planned, organized, and legislated by society (Halliday 1985). As writing becomes institutionalised in the form of education it receives more pressure to conform and subsequently lends itself to the creation of recognisable genres within a society (Halliday 1985 and Swales 1990).

The idea that writing is in some way a reflection of a given culture is not strange, "writing evolves in response to needs that arise as a result of cultural

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

changes" (Halliday 1985, p.39). The relationship between language and culture is immediately accepted in spoken language (Canale 1983). There appears to be no discussion that cultural factors directly influence spoken language (Richard & Schmidt 1983). However, the relationship between written discourse and culture while evident, is at the same time controversial (Jiang 2000). Apparently, there is a tendency to not accept it in written discourse or at least to minimize its influence (Leki 1991 and Swales 1990), especially in technical writing (Ornatowski 1997 and Subbiah 1997). Yet there is much evidence available that establishes the influence of cultural factors in how writing is approached and interpreted by the members of a given discourse community (e.g. Rose & Kasper 2001, Hinkel 1999, Connor 1996, Thrush 1993, Leki 1991, Montaño-Harmon 1991, Jenkins and Hinds 1987, and Kaplan 1967). In fact, from the point of view of the theories of linguistic relativity, literacy, and discourse types and genres, we can assume that "patterns of language and writing are culture specific, the activity of writing is embedded in culture, and writing is task and situation based and results in discourse types" (Connor 1996, p. 9). Yet, when considering the developments of the teaching of second language writing to students a pattern devoid of culture tends to emerge.

The teaching of second language writing can be considered from different points of view. Raimes (1991) in her review of second language writing comments on the beginning of a series of traditions under the following classification: Focus on form (1966) where writing was used to reinforce oral patterns of the language; Focus on the writer (1976) where the ideas of making meaning, invention and multiple drafts led to the process approach; Focus on content (1986) where the demands of the academy are considered and content based instruction emerges; and Focus on the reader (1986) where the expectations of the reader are dominant and English for academic purposes is born. Or, as Silva (1990), in his historical sketch of second language composition, outlines the following categories: Controlled-composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for academic purposes (must be noted that Silva (1990) does specify that this approach is oriented to creating writers that will conform to the expectations of an American academic institution). These categories are almost identical in concept to those offered by Raimes (1991) and supply a general overview of the major developments in the approaches of teaching second language writing. "There is no doubt that the developments in ESL composition have been influenced by and, to a certain extent, are parallel to developments in teaching of writing to native speakers of English" (Silva 1990, p.11).

These categories all hold some basic concepts in common. Written language is different from spoken language. There is a need to aid second language students in developing their ability to write in English. There are different types of writing events that students need to learn. The latter is clearly evident when considering the assumptions that surround the process approach and English for academic purposes. These categories also hold something much

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

more important in common, they do not consider the student's native language or culture and the influence they can have on the production of written texts.

This lack of consideration for the student's native language is a strong basis for debate. Most of the aforementioned research comes from studies that center on native English speakers and the results may not have the broad applicability that is claimed (Purves and Purves 1986). Writing is a complex culturally defined activity that is clearly linked to a wider social context within a given society (e.g. Rose & Kasper 2001, Hinkel 1999, Kramsch 1998, Nelson 1997, Abbot 1996, Connor 1996, Ferris 1994, Thrush 1993, Leki 1991, Montaño-Harmon 1991, Jenkins and Hinds 1987, Purves and Purves 1986, Breen 1986, Ong 1982, and Kaplan 1967). This leads to the need to adopt a stance against much of the past as well as current research on second language composition, which is based almost exclusively on American composition theory and language studies (Canagarajah 1999) and shows the need for considering the social context of writing in the classroom (Breen 1986).

Writing cannot be considered a mechanical process that is purely linear and highly predictable (Purves and Purves 1986). Writing needs to be thought of as an activity.

> To think of writing as an activity is to allow for change in what is an act or an operation and to allow for modification and rearrangement of those acts and operations in particular contexts. To think of writing as an activity is also to realize that in virtually every instance there is a purposive nature to the act, a planned result, which is a particular text for a particular occasion in a particular cultural context (Purves and Purves 1986, p.175).

Using this type of framework it becomes clear that process cannot be separated from product; and language cannot be divorced from culture. This is due to the fact that a writer brings different types of knowledge based on experience with the world into the activity of writing.

> The three basic forms of knowledge requisite for the writer in any culture, or, to put it another way, the three major sets of constraints imposed by a culture upon a writer, include:

1) Semantic knowledge which involves knowledge of words and larger units of discourse and what they mean, so that such knowledge continues growing throughout the life of the individual.
2) Knowledge of models such as text models and other culturally appropriate formulaic uses of language…
3) Knowledge of social and cultural rules governing when it is appropriate to write and when it is obligatory to write as well as knowledge of the appropriate procedures to use in the activity of writing. This knowledge,

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

> which some call pragmatics, includes knowledge of appropriate aims and of what is appropriate to include in certain kinds of writing... (Purves and Purves 1986, pp.178-179).

Therefore, it is possible to sustain the argument that the activity of writing is created and governed by cultural or social constraints. This implies that we need to rethink how a text is viewed.

When considering second language writing and culture, the following elements can be considered: a writer, a text and a reader (Silva 1990). All of these are bound within the framework of a context. When a second language student enters the classroom, she/he brings a different conceptualisation of text and reader with him/her. Simply because of the fact that the individual has moved into a new environment, the context has been modified. This produces the need to have a more ample understanding of all the elements involved in order to create the necessary conditions for the effective learning of writing and the need to study within the context of the non-native speaker's first language (Ferris 1994). To start the process of understanding all the elements involved and how they interact, the focal point will be determining the concept of text.

To consider the definition of a text is no simple matter. Scholars interchange and freely speak of 'spoken and written text' or 'spoken and written discourse'. 'Text' can even be expanded in a broader sense to include all language units with a recognizable communicative function, rather spoken or written (Crystal 1987). For the purpose of this investigation *text* will be defined as "a stretch of written language as the product of an identifiable authorial intention, and its relation to its context of culture as fixed and stable" (Kramsch 1998, p.57). By taking the stance that written language is fixed and stable, and adding the cultural context, it becomes relevant to consider the cultural development of how writing is viewed. As such the historical aspects of the development of writing in Mexico are fundamental for understanding how to teach writing in Mexico.

Written Mexican Spanish

To understand what is considered today to be socially acceptable writing in Mexico, it becomes necessary to turn back to the initial encounter of the Spanish conquistadores/colonizers and the native peoples of the territory now called Mexico in 1521, and the Spanish attempt to Christianise the new-found colony. The contact between Spanish and Náhuatl is perhaps one of the richest sources of interlinguistic influence because of the unique historical factors and the length of Spanish domination of Mexico (Francis and Navarrete Gómez 2003). Regardless, the Spanish conquerors arrived in Mexico with what became a well designed weapon of empire: Language.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

In 1492 Antonio de Nebrija published the first grammar of a modern European language, *Gramática de la lengua castellana*. In the preface, he made a statement that turned out to be far more powerful than he could have imagined: "Language has always been the companion of empire" (Nebrija published in 1980, p.97) and the Catholic Church appears to have taken this to heart. This can be inferred by the fact that Luis de Granada the author of *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae*, material designed specifically from the response of the Council of Trent (1545-63) to revitalise Catholicism then confronted with the Protestant Reform; also attempted to arm the Catholic Church for the New World with another work: *Breve tratado* (Abbott 1996).

The *Breve tratado* is unique in several aspects. First, it is possibly the first written work directed at an unknown audience and takes this situation into account. Second, it clearly establishes that the New World audience has distinct expectations that will in some way differ from those in Europe. Finally, it assumes a universal human rationality (Abbott 1996). Here the Spanish Clergy demonstrates a clear, rational and organized preparation of using rhetoric as a means to persuade distinct audiences. More importantly, it shows a clear insight for the need to accommodate language use for different perceived social needs. However, there is one major flaw in the work,

> Granada, like theorists before him, conceives of an audience as an assemblage of people linked to the speaker by nationality and language. Granada shows little concern with the possibility of encountering an audience truly alien to the speaker" (Abbott 1996, p.17).

Nevertheless, Granada opened the door to the most important historical event that offers an understanding of written Mexican Spanish.

The event is the arrival in 1529 of Bernardino de Sahagún to New Spain. Sahagún wrote extensively about his experiences in Mexico, producing texts in Spanish, Latin, and Náhuatl that explored theology, philosophy, history and anthropology (Abbott 1996 and Díaz Cíntora 1995).

> Sahagún proved to be not only an evangelist but a most accomplished ethnographer as well. He was a serious and sensitive observer of the life of the Mexica people and, more importantly, a thorough and indefatigable recorder of what he observed. Indeed, historians are deeply indebted to Sahagún as an essential source of knowledge about Mexica life prior to and immediately after the conquest. So extraordinary was Sahagún's work, claims Jorge Klor de Alva, that it 'led to the first examples on modern ethnographic fieldwork and narrative, thereby making him the first modern anthropologist' (Abbott 1996, p.24).

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

One of his fantastic ethnographic accomplishments is of paramount importance to understand the development of contemporary written Mexican Spanish of today.

Sahagún's Book 6 of the *General History* collected in 1547, entitled 'Of the Rhetorical and Moral Philosophy of the Mexican People' contains what Europeans' called rhetoric and the Mexica called Huehuehtlahtolli which variously translates to English as 'ancient word', 'speeches of the ancients' or 'speeches of the elders' (Abbott 1996, Díaz Cíntora 1995 and Sahagún 1999). The Huehuehtlahtolli are an accurate collection of the formal speeches that accompanied major events in the lives of the Mexica. Sahagún recognised them as rhetoric and pointed out that they clearly differed thematically, structurally and stylistically from European oratory (Abbott 1996, Díaz Cíntora 1995 and Sahagún 1999).

> The oratory of the Mexica is typically brief, aphoristic and repetitive. Indeed, the dominant form of the ancient word might be described as constant repetition made palatable by metaphoric variety (Abbott 1996, p.35).

Basically the Huehuehtlahtolli contain many of the characteristics that Walter Ong (1982) refers to as "psycho-dynamics orality". "In particular, Mexica oratory is structurally additive rather than subordinative, stylistically copious and redundant and thematically conservative" (Abbott 1996, p.35). While unfortunately the Huehuehtlahtolli are the last words of the Mexica people, fortunately they lay the foundation to understanding the current structure of written Mexican Spanish.

Because the Huehuehtlahtolli compounded together with Valadés (1996) *Rhetorica Christiana,* illustrate two very different, and often incompatible, conceptions of rhetoric for Europeans that emerged for the new world in the seventeenth century, rhetoric was divided into "two different theories of persuasion – a complete and complex one for the Europeans and another, compressed and simple, for Amerindians" (Abbott 1996, p.112). Valadés makes an attempt to modify European rhetoric for American needs in the *Rhetorica Christiana*. His incorporation of the narration of native life into the framework of

> Ciceronian rhetoric demonstrates an awareness and understanding of the peoples around him. Moreover, his elevation of *memoria* and visual imagery, while derived from Renaissance sources, is also a product of his experience among the Mexica (Abbott 1996, p.113).

This concept of Mexica rhetoric was quickly challenged. In 1557 an edict was issued to teach Spanish, Christian doctrine and good manners to the Indians (Zavala 1996). This finally made possible the extension of the post primary schools which taught Latin, poetry, rhetoric, mythology, and ancient history.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Language teaching intensified when Archbishop Rubio Salinas insisted on creating schools (1753) to teach Spanish with the goal of extinguishing the indigenous languages (De la Mora Ochoa 2003, pp.99-101). This was later brought to the level of a requirement by Archbishop Francisco Antonio Lorenzana in 1769, when he made learning Spanish obligatory (Zavala 1996, p.25).

> For three centuries Spanish was the dominant language and every possible combination was employed with no success in learning, but only success in ideology that tended to destroy the Indians. The only norm that was taught was ideology, language did not really matter (Barriga Villanueva 2003, p.121).

This 300-year process did not really produce the intended results. The renowned Mexican historian Justo Sierra said in an address on December 16, 1946

> …the nationalization of the Spanish language began through persuasion and because of need: much was accomplished, it was a long term project; today it is still not finished, because the governments seem to no longer care and the clergy have become lazy (Zavala 1996, p.27).

This situation continues. The National Seminar on Bilingual and Bicultural Education of 1979 concluded that there was still a long way to go to achieve the goal of teaching Spanish writing. The written language presents difficulties as indigenous languages are too embedded with orality (Barriga Villanueva 2003, pp.119-123). As a result,

> Spanish is taught without taking into account diversity, variations, or changes. When Spanish is taught, it is through political will power of domination and assimilation of the indigenous population, protected by a prototype of Spanish created by the current historical intellectual class; with a total submission of the cultured dialect (Barriga Villanueva 2003, p. 123).

In conclusion, Mexico has developed its current national language from a somewhat unusual pattern starting from a native rhetoric dominated by Spanish and leading to an often non-functional national language programme. Nevertheless, two conceptions of Mexican Spanish rhetoric emerge, and this is the starting point when considering where written Mexican Spanish stands today as compared to written American English.

While the internal structure of written English has been extensively studied, written Mexican Spanish has not enjoyed the same treatment. Even though Mexico has one of the largest Spanish speaking populations in the world,

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

it has only seen two major studies comparing its rhetorical structure to English (Montaño-Harmon 1991). As unusual as this may seem, there is still much insight to gain from what little literature is available in the area of contrastive studies between Spanish and English.

Santiago (1971) and Santana-Seda (1975) produced studies that show the marked differences in the organisation of written discourse in tests written in Puerto Rican Spanish and English. These studies illustrate that compositions in Puerto Rican Spanish contain much higher proportions of coordinate structures, nonsequential sentences, additive constructions, and one- and two-sentence paragraphs.

Montaño-Harmon (1991) conducted what seems to be the only large scale study comparing the internal structure of written Mexican Spanish and English from the perspective of contrastive rhetoric. Montaño-Harmon analysed 25 secondary school textbooks for teaching writing in Mexico. Also, secondary compositions were collected from two school districts in the US and two in Mexico. From a pool of 600 texts, 50 for each language group were used for comparison in a statistical analysis program using ANOVA and t-test procedures[4]. The results open a clear window into Mexico's linguistic history and how it may be influencing current textual structures.

The compositions from the study were analyzed in terms of sentence types, lexical cohesion, syntactic cohesion, and coherence. The majority of the results were similar, but the results that differ clarify a precise image of written Mexican Spanish. First, consider the general information of the texts:

Table 1: Basic information about the texts

	Means	
Discourse Feature	Mexican Spanish	Anglo-American English
length of text	184.86 words	155.70 words
number of sentences	5.38	9.90
average length of sentences	41.10 words	17.10 words

(Montaño-Harmon 1991, p.420)

[4] Standard tests used in inferential statistic to calculate frequency.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

From this point on the findings become even more interesting. The features that are most striking about written Mexican Spanish are: 1) prolific use of run-on sentences, 2) constant reiteration for lexical cohesion, 3) dominance of additive and causal conjunctions and 4) very frequent conscious deviations from the topic (Montaño-Harmon 1991). This is all the more interesting considering that the flexible order possible in a Spanish sentence carries over to the paragraph level (Vásquez-Ayora 1977). This in turn produces longer sentences that cannot be translated into English without breaking them into separate ideas (Vásquez-Ayora, 1977). This is explicitly taught at the secondary school level as shown in the analysis of the textbooks for the Mexican secondary school level. The "textbooks all emphasize effective communication based on eloquence achieved through work in:

1) Vocabulary building by using synonyms, antonyms, paraphrasing, and derivations;
2) Writing practice focusing on tone, style, and vocabulary based on written models from literary figures;
3) Practice in elaborating a given idea in writing in various ways as one attempts to develop the theme in greater depth;
4) Work on correct grammar and mechanics at the sentence level

(Montaño-Harmon 1991, p.418).

This is further developed in the family structure where children are taught to play with formal and ornate language as part of their social skills. Also, children learn to play with the flexibility of language, where meanings are hidden between lines, in repetitions for emphasis, and in pauses (Riding 1986). According to Riding "in these endless linguistic contortions, the Mexican's fascination with detail and obsession with nuance are constantly satisfied" (1986, p. 19). All of these elements were present in the texts written by the Mexican students in the research carried out by Montaño-Harmon. This led to the conclusion that native Mexican Spanish speakers do not perform well in written evaluations in English in the United States because of the application of a criteria that imposes a linear, deductive discourse pattern deemed logical and organized in American English (Montaño-Harmon 1991). The above suggests the possibility that the concept of rhetoric is the social basis for the creation of text by a given community and that it varies from community to community (Haller 2000, pp.375-381). This in turn creates the need to see writing as a community project that originates from its cultural roots. To show an example of this community project over time, consider this example of the development from Náhuatl to Spanish, with an English translation provided at the end. On the following page is a verse from the Huehuehtlahtolli. Notice how the sentences have been constructed and the use of punctuation.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

> Maca huelic cochiztli xicchiuhto; xizatehua, ximocuitihuetzi in yohuallixelihui; momolicpi, motetepon ic xitlacza, ximeuhtiquiza, motolol momalcoch xicchihua, xicnotza, xictzatzili in tlacatl in totecuyo, in yehuatzin in Yohualli in Ehecatl, ca maahuiltitzinoa in yohualtica mitzcaquiz; auh uncan mitzicnoittaz, uncan mitzmacaz in tlein molhuil momacehual (Díaz Cíntora 1995, p. 37 original Náhuatl verse).
>
> No le tomes sabor al sueño; despierta, incorpórate, levántate de pronto a la media noche, ve postrada sobre los codos y las rodillas, luego párate, haz tu inclinación y reverencia, invoca, **llama a voces al señor, nuestro señor, al que es Noche y Viento, pues él gusta de oírte por la noche; entonces tendrá piedad de ti, entonces te dará lo que mereces** (Díaz Cíntora 1995, p. 43, His translation to Spanish of the same verse).
>
> Do not fall in love with sleeping; awake, gather yourself, arise in the middle of the night. Go humble on elbows and knees, then stand up, incline yourself and honor. **Call in voices to the lord, our lord, He who is Night and Wind. He likes to hear you at night. He will have mercy on you. He will give you what you deserve.** (My translation of the Spanish verse)

In Náhuatl the original author of the book that was consulted added the punctuation. However, it can be seen from the Náhuatl to the Spanish translation the author made changes in the structuring of the sentences. In the translation from Spanish to English there were additional changes; most notably the last three lines of the text that I have highlighted for emphasis.

Considering that written Mexican Spanish is based on Náhuatl rhetoric and that extremely long sentences of this type are still common in current Mexican Spanish writing, it becomes apparent the added difficulties a Mexican Spanish speaker could have when learning to write in American English.

Implications

From these different components that are present in the target population of students learning to write in English as a second language in Mexico, some strong implications can be drawn. Clearly, the element of culture plays a major role in the process of writing and the cultural aspects rely heavily on a series of social elements that are related to the social structure of a given group. Many of the complications that Mexican students face when learning to write in English come from differences in how people learn to write in Mexico vs. how people learn to write in the United States.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

As second language teachers, we need to rethink how we approach the process of teaching the activity of writing in the classroom. We need to give more consideration to the relationship between language and culture in written texts. Finally, we need to give more consideration to our students' mother tongue and the role it plays in using written language from the point of view of rhetoric.

References

Abbott, D. (1996). *Rhetoric in the New World: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in Colonial Spanish America*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Barriga Villanueva, R. (2003) El deseo y la realidad: La enseñanza del español a los indígenas mexicanos. Publicaciones del Centro de Lingüística Hispánica 49, 109-138.

Berlin, J. (1987) *Rhetoric and reality: Writing instruction in American colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Bhatia, V.J.(1993) *Analysing Genre: Language use in Professional Settings*. London: Longman.

Breen, M.P. (1986). The Social Context for Language Learning --A Neglected Situation. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (7) 135-158.

Brookes, A. and Grundy, P. (1998). *Beginning to Write*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Byrne, D. (1988). *Teaching Writing Skills*. London: Longman.

Canagarajah, A.S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Canale, M. (1983). 'From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy', in Jack C. Richards & Richard W. Schmidt (eds.). *Language and Communication*, New York: Longman

Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second language writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Díaz Cíntora, S. (1995). *Huehuehtlahtolli: Libro Sexto del Códice Florentino.* Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

De la Mora Ochoa, A. (2003) La estandarización del español mexicano. Publicaciones del Centro de Lingüística Hispánica 49, 97-108.

Ferris, D. (1994). Rhetorical Strategies in Student Persuasive Writing: Differences between Native and Non-Native English Speakers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 28(1), 45-65.

Francis, N. and Navarrete Gómez, R. (2003) Language Interaction in Náhuatl Discourse: the Influence of Spanish in Child and Adult Narratives. Language, Culture and Curriculum. 16(1), 1-17.

Haller, C. (2000) Rhetorical Invention in Design: Constructing a System and Spec. *Written Communication* 17(4), 353-389.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *Spoken and Written Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Henry, J. (2000) *Writing Workplace Cultures: An Archaeology of Professional Writing.* United States of America: Southern Illinois University Press.

Hinkel, E. (1999). (Ed.) *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Jenkins, S. & Hinds, J. (1987). Business Letter Writing: English, French and Japanese. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(2), 327-345.

Jiang, W. (2000). The Relationship Between Culture and Language. *ELT Journal*, 54(4), 328-345.

Johns, A. (1997) *Text, Role, and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaplan, R.B. (1967). Contrastive rhetoric and the teaching of composition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 1(4), 10-16.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leki, I. (1991). Twenty-five years of contrastive rhetoric: Text analysis and writing pedagogies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(1), 123-143.

Montaño-Harmon, M. (1991). Discourse features of written Mexican Spanish: Current research in contrastive rhetoric and its implications. *Hispania* 74, 417-425.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Nebrija, A. (1980). *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, (Ed.) Antonio Quilis. Madrid: Editora Nacional.

Ong, W. (1982). *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Methuen.

Ornatowski, C. (1997). 'Technical communication and rhetoric' in Katherine Staples and Cezar Ornatowski (eds.). *Foundations for Teaching Technical Communication vol. 1*, Greenwich, Connecticut.

Purves, A. & Purves, W. (1986). Viewpoints: Cultures, Text Models, and the Activity of Writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 20(2), 174-197.

Raimes, A. (1983) *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. & Schmidt, R. (1983). *Language and Communication*. New York: Longman.

Riding, A. (1986) *Distant Neighbours: A Portrait of the Mexicans*. New York: Vintage Books.

Rose, K. and Kasper, G. (2001). Pragmatics In Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sahagún, B. (1999). *Historia General de las cosas de Nueva España*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.

Santiago, R.L. (1971). *A Contrastive Analysis of Some Rhetorical Aspects in the Writing in Spanish and English of Spanish-Speaking College Students in Puerto Rico*, PhD. Thesis. Columbia University.

Santana-Seda, O. (1975). *A Contrastive Study in Rhetoric: An Analysis of the Organization of English and Spanish Paragraphs Written by Native Speakers of each Language*, PhD. Thesis. New York University.

Silva, T. (1990). Second language composition instruction: developments, issues, and directions in ESL in Barbara Kroll (ed.) *Second Language Writing: research insights for the classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Subbiah, M. (1997). 'Social construction theory and technical communication' in Katherine Staples and Cezar Ornatowski (eds.). *Foundations for Teaching Technical Communication vol. 1*, Greenwich, Connecticut.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thrush, E. (1993). Bridging the gaps: Technical communication in an international and multicultural society. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 2(3)271-283.

Valadés Diego (1996). *Retórica Cristiana*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Vásquez-Ayora, G. (1977). *Introducción a la traductología: curso básico de traduccción*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Zavala, S. (1996) *Poder y Lenguaje desde el Siglo XVI*. El Colegio de México: Mexico City.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

Idiomatic Expressions:
A problem in learning and translating languages

By Antonio Mauro, Universita della Calabria, Italy mino.tauro@libero.it

We have all heard or read the phrase "language is a living thing", although most of us never really think about how and why this occurs. All living things grow and change regularly and constantly, and so does a language. It is easy to recognize the differences between Milton's English and the English used in contemporary books, papers or documents, but even modern English grows and changes ceaselessly. It is important to understand how a language develops today, because modern languages tend to adopt new idiomatic expressions at a faster rate than in the past. When learning or using a language, the speaker cannot choose whether to use or to omit idiomatic expressions, since they are not a separate part of the language but an essential part of it. You do not need to be a linguist or glottologist to realize that the vocabulary of a modern language grows steadily through the regular introduction of new words generated by new developments in knowledge or new social and political phenomena. At the same time, there are idiomatic expressions that lose favor, go out of style, and finally disappear. New events, developments, discoveries and ideas must be given a name in order to permit communication first among people speaking the same language and then among people speaking different languages. Thus the problem arises of how to transfer a meaning or a concept into a language where no equivalent word or phrase can express the same idea. In such a context, the translation of "idioms" represents a particularly difficult task that requires a thorough knowledge of both languages if the meaning of the "idiomatic expression" is to be fully preserved.

Idioms can be defined in many ways, although the most simple and exact definition is that an idiom is a number of words which, taken together, mean something different from what they mean when they are taken individually. Our aim is not to provide an in-depth analysis of English idioms, because it is impossible to make a clear and complete classification of all idiomatic expressions of the language or to find an equivalent example in another language. Our discussion focuses on how idiomatic expressions affect the work of a translator, on the problems they cause and on the possible solutions. In order to carry out this analysis it is necessary to look at the processes and development through which new words (neologisms) are created, because neologisms are most of the time the determining factor in the creation of an idiomatic expression. Thus, many times an idiomatic expression can be translated successfully into a foreign language only if we know the origin and meaning of the neologism that brought the idiomatic expression into existence.

One way a neologism can be formed is by changing a noun into a verb or a verbal phrase into a noun. Examples of nouns formed from verbal phrases are

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

stop-over (a pause or a break) or *check-up* (an inspection or control). Examples of verbs formed from nouns are *to pilot* (to fly an airplane)*, to radio* (to send a message) *and to service* (to repair a car). It is easy to give words a new grammatical function because English is a flexible language, and changing the function does not necessarily imply changing the form.

Another way to form a neologism is to change an adjective into a verb to express a process, as in *bulletproof* or *soundproof*. All these changes in the function of a word have one purpose: to make the form of the words used shorter and more direct. All these language short-cuts are quicker and more convenient to use, and that is the reason why they are becoming more and more popular (and more difficult to translate!).

Verbs can also be made from the root of a noun, such as *to housekeep* (from the noun *housekeeper*) or *to babysit* (from the noun *babysitter*). Another type of short-cut joins two or more words together in order to form one single adjective replacing a long phrase, such as *round-the-clock* service instead of *a service which is offered 24 hours a day*.

Neologisms can also be created by adding endings such as *–isation* or *–ise* to adjectives or nouns. These types of language short-cuts are particularly used in newspapers and in television language and a typical example is *Americanisation*. Other neologisms are the result of prefixes such as *mini-, -maxi, -non, -super, -extra* or *–uni* which are placed in front of adjectives and nouns to express quantity or quality in the shortest and quickest possible way. Some examples of these neologisms are *supergrade gasoline* (best quality), *unisex* (clothes for men and women), *non-stop flight* (without making stops), *extra-large* (the biggest size available) and *minidisk* (a small-size compact disk).

Finally, new words can also be created by mixing just a part of two words that already exist, such as *brunch* (breakfast + lunch), *smog* (smoke + fog) and *laundromat* (automatic + laundry). Modern English is becoming more and more tolerant with the adoption and usage of these neologisms, and some sort of deviation from the grammatical rules of the past is now accepted both in spoken and written English. And also words which were considered to be *slang* in the past may be more acceptable in present-day English, although they may still be considered to be colloquial or informal. An excellent example are the two words *bloody* or *damn* which in the past were considered to be unacceptable language, but are used by almost anybody today.

Knowing the origin of a neologism does help translators in their difficult job of finding a more or less corresponding equivalent in another language, but it does not solve the problem completely. A second and just as important step towards the solution of the issue consists in taking a close look at some of the most peculiar features of idiomatic expressions. A very important aspect that must be stressed is that idioms are not only colloquial expressions, as many

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

people believe. Idiomatic expressions also appear both in slang and in formal style, and examples can even be found in poetry. Many times the way in which the single words of an idiomatic expression are put together is odd, illogical or even grammatically incorrect, but this is just one of the most typical features of an idiom. Because of the above-mentioned special features of most idiomatic expressions, we have to understand their meaning and learn how to use them as a whole, and we often cannot change any part of them. The English language is extremely rich in idiomatic expressions, and that is why it is almost impossible to speak and write English correctly without using idioms. English native speakers are often not aware at all that they are using lots of idiomatic expressions when they speak or write, and maybe they do not even realize that many of the idioms they use are grammatically incorrect. Non-native speakers and, in particular, non-English native speaker translators make the correct use of idiomatic English one of their main aims, and the fact that a great number of these idiomatic expressions are illogical or even grammatically incorrect causes them difficulty, especially in translations.

It is impossible to explain why a specific idiomatic expression has developed an uncommon or unusual arrangement or choice of words, because the idiom has been fixed by its long usage. For example, the very common English idiomatic expression *to buy a pig in a poke* means to buy something without inspecting it previously and which is worth less than what it has been paid for. The word *poke,* which is an old English word meaning *sack*, is no longer used today and it only appears in present-day language with this meaning in this specific idiom. Therefore, this example shows clearly that the idiomatic expression has survived, whilst the single word disappeared a long time ago. Although we have stressed the great variety and importance of understanding the source and origin of idiomatic expressions, the most important thing about idioms is their meaning. Sometimes native speakers do not even realize that there are grammatically incorrect idioms because they focus on their meaning and understand them perfectly, whereas a translator may find it extremely difficult to transfer the meaning and content of an idiomatic expression from one language into another, especially when no equivalent cultural context or words exist in the other language.

Idioms may have many different structures or forms. They can be very short or rather long and can represent a translation problem regardless of their length. A great number of very short idioms consists of some combination of noun and adjective, such as *cold war*, while some other idiomatic expressions are much longer, such as *to take the bull by the horns*. Some idioms have a regular structure but their meaning is not clear; other idioms have an irregular or even grammatically incorrect structure but their meaning is obvious; and finally there are idioms where both the structure and the meaning are not clear. The idiom *I am good friends with him* is both irregular and illogical in its grammatical structure because the pronoun *I* is singular and the correct form should be *I am a good friend with him* or *"of his"*; but the translator would not have any problems

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

in translating this idiomatic expression into another language, because the meaning of this idiomatic expression is perfectly clear although its structure is irregular. The idiom *to have a bee in one's bonnet*, on the other hand, has a regular form but its meaning is not obvious. It means, in fact, that one is obsessed by an idea, but how can the translator know this unless he has learned it as an idiom? Finally there are idiomatic expressions such as *to be at large*, where we find an unusual grammatical form (verb, preposition, adjective and no noun) and an unclear meaning. Unfortunately, most idioms belong to the second group (regular form and unclear meaning) and this is a serious risk for translators. An idiom of the first group (irregular or incorrect structure and clear meaning) does not represent a translation problem, because its clear meaning can be easily transferred into a foreign language without being affected by its irregular or even incorrect grammatical structure. An idiom of the third group (irregular or incorrect structure and unclear meaning) does not cause excessive risks to the professional translator, because its unusual or irregular grammatical structure arouses suspicion in the non-native translator, who will double check the expression to make sure there are no hidden meanings. The real problem arises with the great number of idioms belonging to the second group (regular and correct structure and unclear meaning), because precisely their regular grammatical form does not reveal the hidden *idiomatic meaning* of the phrase, so the danger of an unfaithful or even completely wrong translation into the other language is extremely high for a translator who has never heard the idiomatic expression.

Even within this second group there are idioms which are clearer than others, so they are easier to guess and eventually easier to translate. One of these easy-to-guess idioms belonging to the second group is *to give someone the green light*. We can guess the meaning of this idiomatic expression even if we have never heard it before, because we can associate the words *green light* with the colors of the traffic light where green means "GO!", so we can imagine that this idiom means *to give someone permission to do something*. Other idioms can be guessed easily if we hear them within a specific context, that is to say, if we know how they are used in a particular situation. For example, let us take the idiomatic expression *to be at the top of the tree*. If we hear the sentence *John is at the top of the tree now*, we are not sure what this is telling us about John. Is he in a dangerous position? Is he hiding? But if we hear this phrase in a specific context the meaning becomes clear to us: *Ten years ago John joined our company and now he is the general manager. Yes, he is really at the top of the tree.* Now we perfectly understand that this idiom means *to be at the top of one's profession, to be successful*. However, some idioms are too difficult to guess correctly because they have no association with the original meaning of the individual words. Some examples are *to bring the house down* (which means 'To cause great laughter in the audience') and *to fall between two stools* (which means 'to miss two opportunities because one hesitated in choosing either of them). If they have never heard them before, the translators will have great difficulties first in understanding these idiomatic expressions and then in finding a

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

faithful equivalent in the other language. Furthermore, there is an even more dangerous type of idiomatic expression that can put in trouble even experienced translators who have a fluent knowledge of the foreign language: idiomatic expressions with phrasal verbs that have a second 'hidden' meaning along with their first 'obvious' meaning. The problem in this case is that a great number of non-native speakers only know the most common meaning and often are unfamiliar with the other less popular meaning of the idiomatic expression, even when it is used in a clear and specific context. A good example here is the idiomatic expression *to tell someone where to get off*. Most non-native speakers (and translators) do know that *to get off* means to step out of a train, bus or other transport means, but they do not know that this phrasal verb has another quite different and less known idiomatic sense: it means *to tell someone rudely and openly what you think of him*. In other words, the idiomatic meaning of this phrase remains unintelligible to a non-native English reader or translator whenever it is used with its less popular idiomatic sense.

We have taken into consideration several aspects of idioms: where they come from, their form, their meaning and the difficulty translators face when they try to find an equivalent expression in another language. Before we put an end to our discussion we need to say that another difficulty that foreign learners and translators experience when they try to use and translate idiomatic expressions is that they do not always know in which situation it is correct to use an idiom, because they do not know the level of style. In other words, they do not know whether an idiomatic expression can be used both in a formal and in an informal situation, because most of the time the choice of the words depends on the person one is speaking to and on the situation or place at the time of speaking or writing. This is another quite serious problem for the non-native translator, because there is a high risk of using colloquialisms or extremely informal expressions in an official translation, and this could be considered rude and impolite.

The impossibility to perform a comprehensive list and analysis of all idiomatic expressions existing in one language and to provide an equivalent example in all other languages leads us to the same conclusion that most linguists, translators and translation theorists come to: not everything can be translated, and this is particularly true for idioms. Thus, when we learn a new idiomatic expression or try to translate its meaning into another language we must be aware of the fact that, instead of paying attention to the meaning of the single words, we will have to focus on the concept or message that is conveyed by that idiomatic expression as a whole. The idiom is not a list of words with individual meanings; its words are rather the tiles of a mosaic whose meaning can only be understood, interpreted and translated correctly into another language if its integrity and completeness are preserved.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license

References

Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. London: Routledge

Bell, R. (1991). *Translation and Translation Theory and Practice*. London: Longman

Browne, V. (1987). *Odd Pairs & False Friends – Dizionario di False Analogie ed Ambigue Affinità fra Inglese e Italiano*. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli Editore S.p.A.

Browne, V. & Natali, G. (1989). *Bugs & Bugbears – Dizionario delle False Insidie e dei Tranelli nelle Traduzioni*. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli Editore S.p.A.

Kirsten, M. (1998). *Translation and Language Teaching: Language Teaching and Translation*. Manchester: St. Jerome

Munday, J. (2001). *Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. London: Routledge

Munday, J. (2002). *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. London: Routledge

Newmark, J. (1995). *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press

Nida, E. (1975). *Language Structure and Translation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Robinson, D. (1997). *Becoming a Translator*. London: Routledge

Rossetti, C. (1974). *Dizionario delle Difficoltà e delle Ambiguità nella Lingua Inglese*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondatori Editore S.p.A.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license