



# Authenticity in ELT

Selected Papers from the 42<sup>nd</sup> FAAPI Conference

Edited by  
Darío Luis Banegas, Mario López-Barrios, Melina Porto and Diana Waigandt

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## From the editors

English language learning and teaching, as any educational process, is penetrated by several dynamic concepts which are in a state of constant flux, dialogue, tension, and complementarity. One of such concepts is that of authenticity, the main theme of the 42<sup>nd</sup> FAAPI Conference and the contributions included here.

It is not within the scope of this introduction to provide a definition of authenticity because, even though definitions are necessary, it would be reductive to do so. Instead, we attempt here to indicate some roads which the concept invites us to explore in relation to our professional practices inscribed in larger situated contexts.

In 1985, in a reflective article on the issue of authenticity in the language classroom, Breen concluded that there were four broad types of authenticity within language teaching:

1. Authenticity of the texts which we may use as input data for our learners.
2. Authenticity of the learner's own interpretations of such texts.
3. Authenticity of the tasks conducive to language learning.
4. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom.

(Breen, 1985, p. 68)

Such a classification signalled that authenticity was not a one-dimensional concept, but rather a myriad of situated and interrelated practices. Needless to say, over the years publications have focused on different aspects of authenticity, such as authentic materials and motivation (Peacock, 1997) or classrooms as spaces for authentic interaction (Illés & Akcan, 2017) with almost exclusive reference to the approach which reignited discussions around authenticity: the communicative approach. In a state-of-the-art article, Gilmore (2007) observes that previous to the communicative approach, discussions would surface, but they were silenced by approaches which insisted on structures and prescriptivism. In a similar vein, Mishan (2005) has noted that authenticity is central to other approaches such as material-focused approaches and humanistic approaches. In this regard, more recently developed approaches such as CLIL (Content and language integrated learning), which does include communicative aims but also considers cognitive development, have found an ally in authenticity (Pinner, 2013) as this concept is the basis for meaningful learning opportunities across the curriculum.

In his book on authenticity in English as a global language, Pinner (2016) puts forward the notion of understanding authenticity through a continuum. Based on such a framework, in his opening plenary talk at FAAPI 2017, Pinner discussed authenticity in relation to identity and empowerment among L2 teachers. In his abstract we could read:

English is often marketed as a key to success, a bridge to the world, a gateway to the future, a door to social and economic improvement, and even as a way to make friends with people all over the world. For many, English is a second language; part of their identity and day-to-day life. However, for many more people around the world, the English language is just another compulsory school subject.

Although the reality of English is very clear to students, the exact nature of English is rather abstract. Does Global English really mean global, or does it mainly refer to North America and Britain? Do students need to be fluent speakers who sound like ‘natives’, or will they be able to get by with intermediate skills? If learners need to use English to communicate with the international community, what type of English should they learn? What materials should we use? What is ‘real’ English? In other words, what is ‘authentic’ English?

Meanwhile, in Argentina, authenticity has emerged in previous FAAPI conferences. Here, we shall mention two recent examples which coincide in their interest in exploring the multiperspectives we can encounter in textual decisions in our practices.

At the 2013 FAAPI Conference, Ferradas (2013) discussed literature in the contact zone and suggested the teaching of literature through the use of authentic resources which could trigger experiences around identity and values in learners’ personal narratives. Such a suggestion entails that not only resources are authentic, but also the reader’s response in relation to the constellations which are awakened by engaging with literary texts.

Liruso, Bollati and Requena (2015) investigated genres in English-as-a-foreign-language coursebooks and proposed examining genre authenticity from two perspectives:

On the one hand, we can think of the *verbal and visual authenticity* of the texts used as input data for learners, and consider the degree to which the text brought to the coursebook is a sample of real life. On the other hand, we can think of the *authenticity of the task* learners are expected to perform with such a text/genre, considering the ecological validity of the task. (p. 205, our italics).

In the selected papers which follow, readers will find a rich variety of contexts and dimensions through which authenticity is encoded, understood, and enacted. The contributions, in turn, reveal how the authors, all of them teacher-researchers at different educational levels in Argentina, have engaged with authenticity in ELT through research and reflective accounts of their context-responsive practices. Through a micro-lens which examines the richness of our small worlds, i.e. our classrooms, we hope you enjoy the papers selected. If you enjoy them, you can contact the authors and let them know how you felt and, perhaps, ask them for elaboration if you would like to know more about their experiences.

With this approach to the papers selected for publication and their authors, we can conclude that the FAAPI Conference again proves to be the breeding-ground for the socialisation of knowledge, a gathering of teachers from all over the country who hopefully do not work in isolation, but who find that presenting their production for scrutiny at the Conference offers them and attendants the opportunity of stirring thought-provoking discussion, the stepping-stone for future networking, for exchanging bibliography and expertise, in a process of lifelong learning.

The editors and Cristina Mayol (FAAPI President)

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**The papers**

FAAPI

# 1 Awareness of language, authenticity and trust in teaching senior adults

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## 1. Introduction

The teaching of senior adults has been gaining momentum in our country since a number of public policies have addressed the problem of the ageing population by designing numerous programmes for their wellbeing. Among these programmes, the teaching of foreign languages is included in many national institutions. For many years the Ministry of Social Welfare in our country has been developing these policies together with several institutions such as PAMI, public and private universities and provincial governments. In 2017 the National Government passed law number 27360 approving the terms of the *Convención interamericana sobre protección de los Derechos Humanos de las personas mayores*, which, in its article 20, guarantees the right of elderly people to receive education in all its forms including continuing education.(1). One of the fundamental reasons for these policies is that elderly people live longer; they are more active and healthier than before and seek to establish better relationships with their families and their social environment. Thus, these programmes provide a twofold purpose: to instruct and to foster healthier relations with the social milieu of the ageing group.

Continuing education for adults is addressed by andragogy, which has been established as a theory for teaching grown up people. It is a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn by emphasising the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches that are problem-based and collaborative with an emphasis on more equality between the teacher and learner. Nonetheless, a comprehensive theory to cater particularly for seniors in need of continuing their education and socialization is lacking. In her doctoral dissertation, Milagros Román (2005) states that, so far, there is no theoretical orientation or adequate methodology to deal with senior adult students. From the social perspective, several scholars support the notion that it is important for these citizens to share learning with others of their age. Moreover, it has been shown that cognitive problems exist in old age, but they can be compensated by mechanisms which include “ingenuity, resourcefulness and a strong desire to

feel active” (Naom, 2016). Despite the lack of an adequate theoretical background, it is clear that the need for language teachers to be informed on this issue is growing at a quick pace parallel with the growth in numbers of students in this age group.

In this paper I intend to expand notions behind the teaching of senior adults based on my own on-going research. On this occasion, three elements were analysed which help in building a framework for teaching seniors. These three elements are: (1) awareness of Language; (2) authenticity in the relationship between teacher-student, teacher-materials, student-materials and (3) trust for wellbeing.

First I will deal with each of these three elements in turn, then I propose an integration of these elements to elaborate a possible framework for a theory of teaching seniors and finally, I suggest that greater impact of educational research on this topic might be achieved by integrating shared communities of inquiry to improve practice. As this paper shows, there is also a need for further research to elaborate an appropriate approach for teaching senior adults that goes beyond the existing theories on teaching adults and that may attempt to respond to the many questions which arise from the practice of teaching and learning in this particular context.

## **2. Three perspectives**

### **2.1. Awareness of language**

Howard Nicholas (1991) provides a comprehensive attempt at defining language awareness (LA). He suggests that LA has the purpose of making students aware of the nature of language and what role it plays in human life. A further aim of LA would lead to improved use of language. In this view, conscious reflection becomes essential in the area which concerns second language teachers of senior adults especially in the lexico-grammatical area and also in the phonological as well as in the discourse areas. In the particular case of these students, it may be argued that through previous schooling many adults may have some awareness of certain aspects of language but may not be articulate enough in the second language to make this awareness explicit. Nicholas (pp.89-95) suggests this for all learners regardless of their age. But he also states that adults have awareness that language has lexico-grammatical organisation unlike children, who begin to have this awareness at the ages of seven or eight. Based on these assumptions, it is important to introduce LA as an integral part of the learning process having in mind that communicative practice may not be enough to ensure acquisition in the age group that concerns this paper.

Participation in the learning process by introducing LA is beneficial in several ways. On the one hand, raising the question of how we learn or acquire languages may be addressed to bring to the fore a meta-cognition which can be helpful. Stephen Brookfield (1995, para.11) states that “adults possess a self-conscious awareness of how it is they come to know what they know; an awareness of the reasoning, assumptions, evidence and justifications that underlie our beliefs that something is true”. He states that helping students how to learn a second language may be more appropriate to schools than to adult education. Yet, in the case of seniors, a revival of their academic experiences is necessary to be brought to consciousness for several reasons. These citizens may have left school a long time ago and may have forgotten learning techniques as well as the metalanguage necessary to discuss and comprehend linguistic phenomena. Others may have certain cognitive deterioration either caused by the ageing process or medication and still others may never have reflected on their own learning processes. So it becomes necessary to help them develop a method for learning by raising awareness of how languages are structured and learnt.

On the other hand, LA may be benefited by developing critical thinking. Critical thinking involves inquiry, explanation and understanding in such a way that a transformation is produced. This transformation, according to Mezirow (1993, p. 147), makes it possible to “move from one level, stage or phase of development to another”. For this author, comprehension involves processes which act between perception and interpretation. Thus he describes the processes by which interpretation takes place:

scanning which involves exploring, differentiating, remembering, feeling, intuiting and imagining and construing. This involves the process of schematization, metaphor, metonymy and categorization. There are two interdependent forms of construing. One pertains to construing immediate appearances in terms of spatial-temporal wholes, distinct processes and presences- an entity is construed from its unique form or movement or its form is construed from serial occurrences or its shape or size construed by its appearance. A second form of construal involves experiencing things in terms of concepts and categories that come with our mastery of language, although we do not necessarily consciously name or describe to ourselves what we construe (Mezirow, 1993, p. 147).

## 2.2. Authenticity

To thine own self be true

And it doth follow, as the night the day

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

W. Shakespeare, Hamlet

The International Encyclopaedia of Adult Education (English, 2001) states that authenticity is not mentioned in the adult education literature. Paolo Freire and numerous educators have addressed and promoted an authentic practice within the teaching of adults. The question arises as to what an authentic practice entails. In the previous section a reference to transformation theory was made as it is believed by many that an authentic practice in teaching will bear as a result a process of transformation that will have an effect both on the cognitive and affective spheres of the individual.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, authenticity is highly valued and it seems to be connected with being passionate about one's practice. Moreover, Stephen (2016) lists a number of characteristics that a psychologically mature and fully authentic person should display:

Have a realistic perception of reality. Accept themselves and other people. Be thoughtful and have a non-hostile sense of humour. Be able to express their emotions freely and clearly. Be open to learning from their mistakes. Understand their motivations (Stephen, 2016).

In the educational sphere in particular, Kreber (2014), a well-known scholar from the School of Education University of Edinburgh, has reviewed several educators on the matter of authenticity. As a result of her study with colleagues, she states that authenticity must not be confused with a pursuit of personal pleasure and may affect the teaching-learning relationship by allowing a certain degree of selfishness. Moreover, authenticity is still a vague concept so it may be difficult to articulate it properly with practice.

Three relationships are examined in this paper in terms of authenticity: teacher student, teacher-material and student-material.

- Teacher-student: It is claimed that teachers should genuinely reflect their personal identity by establishing consistency between their values and actions. Also, their actions should be directed at others, i.e. being sensitive to the interests of students.

- Teacher - material: Kreber (2014) seems to point to the value of content and engaging students with it in meaningful ways. I stress meaningful ways since it is an issue that can lead to misinterpretation. By *meaningful*, I understand something that can be operationally transformative of what the students bring to the situation. Therefore, promoting a genuine interest in the material would be the key to this relationship. Critical reflection comes into play again i.e. the origin and rationale behind everything the teacher chooses to work with.
- Student.-material: The enthusiasm teachers have towards the material they have chosen is reflected onto students. A successful relationship between students and materials will be reached when the material is closely related to the interests of students. In other words, demands and needs must be met with the material not only in terms of lexico-grammatical issues or subject matter. It means the material needs to be worthwhile for students, in other words, reach “a horizon of significance” (Kreber, 2014, p.2). As a result, an approach that steers away from the prescribed curriculum of several textbooks is advisable in the case of seniors.

### 2.3. Trust

The clear role of trust in an authentic relation between teachers and students especially at an age which is many times afflicted by the typical worries of elderly people makes it necessary to achieve collaboration, mutual respect and reliance. Interactions based on the personalities, moods and values of both teachers and students are the sites of trust.

Leighton, Seitz, Chu and Bustos Gómez (2016) created a model for trust in the learning environment which they base on emotional, psychological and social factors. Their model is called LEAFF (Learning Errors and Formative Feedback). There are three elements in this model: (1) Instructional climate, (2) Students’ mental processes of learning and (3) Students’ academic performance.

The first element is self-explained, so I would like to dwell on the second and third for the purposes of this particular context. The mental models of learning (schemata) in senior adults have been formed through previous instruction and settle on previous experiences of wellbeing in the environments where they have had an active life, i.e. academic, work, affective, among others. Hence, seniors become strongly attached to these models since they were successful at some point in their lives. This creates a situation in which oftentimes elderly students feel reluctant to participate for fear of making mistakes. Seniors are particularly

sensitive to punitive attitudes from the teacher and their peers about their errors. They must be encouraged and helped to take risks, to innovate their strategies and to solve problems by scaffolding. The amount of feedback must sometimes be sacrificed at the expense of a relaxed atmosphere for learning.

The third element in the model deals with achievement performance. Trust is a key issue in terms of performance. Senior adults need to feel that performance is an opportunity to show what they know and what they do not know. Thus, if they are given the chance of producing in a relaxed atmosphere they are more willing to receive feedback and help. For this reason, we must ensure that the learning atmosphere is one of safety. In this way they will be able to take more risks, accept that errors are part of the learning process, show more creativity, motivation and higher order thinking.

A list of positive behaviours is given by the authors (Leighton et al., 2016, pp. 37-79) regarding trust. Among them the following are particularly important:

- asking non-threatening questions
- overtly discussing difficulties and researching reasons for these difficulties
- discussing how students feel about feedback
- suggesting activities they enjoy both in and out of class
- remembering students' questions
- attempting to explain things again and choosing a different approach if something is not understood
- encouraging students to make mistakes to learn as this allows for further explanations.

The authors also list what teachers should not do:

- making know-it- all statements
- insisting on working harder
- insisting on doing things our way.

### **3. Integration of topics and conclusion**

The difficulties which arise through the various pre-judgements on teaching senior adults need not inhibit the many scenarios that have come into existence since these citizens decided to

take up second language study courses. Seniors definitely may become good foreign language learners provided the course situation integrates strategies on the part of the teacher such as those mentioned above which will make learning a second language possible. Setting aside the question on whether people of all ages learn in the same way or not, what is clear is that all choices teachers make should be based on certain considerations such as context, adaptation to the learning environment, learners' individual characteristics and learning experiences and learner-teacher beliefs and values. Language awareness within a framework of trust and authentic relationships might be a constitutive part of these basic considerations. The careful choice of appropriate materials which motivate both teachers and students becomes essential in this context. Conceiving the senior adult as a generic category blurs individual differences and does not help educators to make these careful choices of materials and strategies. A thorough knowledge of the group of seniors one is working with most certainly enables teachers to make careful and well-thought choices. Respect and consideration for this very particular group of students need to be included in the practice to ensure that low self-esteem levels caused by previous situations of failure in learning a second language do not interfere with the learning process.

Ultimately, the aspects that need to be considered are the cognitive styles of learning of senior adults, their own strategies for learning, and personality traits such as anxiety levels, control expectations and self-esteem. Their motivation is to be taken into account as well, although teachers should be aware that each individual has personal motivations and the spectrum may span widely from fulfilling a long standing desire to learn something to a mere social need.

As for methodologies, approaches that are universal are not suitable in this particular context since they tend to blur individual learning strategies and the experiences adults bring to the learning situation. Határ and Grofcíková (2016) review the different methodologies considering their advantages and disadvantages for senior adults. It is advisable for teachers to attempt a variety of these approaches based on their knowledge of the group of students they are teaching. Basically, it is important to apply a trial and error approach and see what works best for the particular group of students one is working with.

Shared communities of practice and inquiry are an essential step to improving the approaches currently implemented by teachers. Educators coming together to share a concern on their practice and to improve what they do could prove beneficial for producing novel techniques to teach seniors. These communities could also integrate multiple professional

groups as teachers of senior adults need to expand their knowledge of psychology, neurology and medicine to an extent that will provide them with tools for better understanding the processes taking place within the teaching-learning situation of senior adults.

Much research is needed to approach this group of students conscientiously and with commitment. The needs of those senior citizens who pursue language courses have changed considerably in the last years. Contemporary seniors are mostly active, intelligent, have gone through basic academic experiences or are capable of higher order thinking due to their higher academic practices and exposure to technological advances –TV, films, some ICT- and while their needs and demands keep on changing, the approaches a teacher chooses might not be suitable for the constant and varying expectations seniors bring with them. Therefore, on-going research is to be pursued to engage in creative and improved practices.

## Notes

(1) Information provided by the Ministry of Social Welfare in May 2017

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## 2 Building up authentic knowledge through teacher research

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### 1. Introduction

In this paper, we will share the experience of implementing teacher research with a group of volunteer remote teachers (RT) and overseeing how they approached the task of researching and reflecting upon their own teaching practices to build up authentic understanding of the nature of remote teaching and learning. We will analyse how teacher research (TR) provided a valuable tool to develop meaningful and contextualised teacher knowledge and practices. We will also look into how RTs dealt with challenges and implemented techniques to achieve research objectives.

### 2. Context: Remote teaching in Ceibal en Inglés

Faced with a shortage of qualified English teachers in the country and the mandate to give all Uruguayan children access to English language instruction is that the *Ceibal en Inglés* (Cel) remote teaching programme was developed with the joint management of the British Council. Remote teaching, as implemented here, consists of a videoconferencing lesson taught by an RT from centres located in Uruguay, Argentina, The Philippines and The United Kingdom, and two face-to-face lessons taught by the students' regular Classroom Teacher (CT). Videoconferencing is defined as

point-to-point communication established between two or more computers equipped with video cameras. The use of videoconferencing means that the pupils can interact by speaking and listening to the remote teacher. (Stanley, 2017, p. 3)

This implies not only a new way of delivering language lessons, but also the development of new skills on the part of the RT, as well as the CT. Stanley (2017) summarises these challenges when saying

the demands on the remote teachers are high since they have to project themselves through the camera into the classroom, engage the learners, and manage a variety of technology, including the video conferencing equipment and a laptop with a variety of software and websites, so that RT can present language, practise pronunciation, show songs and videos, play games, etc. (p.1)

RTs therefore will need to adjust their pedagogical practices to suit this new particular way of engaging with their learners.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

#### **3.1. Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

We follow Freedman (1998) when defining teacher development as a process which “works on complex, integral aspects of teaching; these aspects are idiosyncratic and individual....The purpose of development is for the teacher to generate change through increasing or shifting awareness” (p. 40).

Mann (2005) summarises the main themes that define teacher development:

- is a bottom-up process (..);
- values the insider view (in this case, the teacher) rather than the outsider view; (..)
- is a process of articulating an inner world of conscious choices made in response to the outer world of the teaching context; (...)
- is wider than professional development and includes personal, moral and value dimensions;

(Mann, 2005, p.105)

In line with the above, the British Council has researched and designed a framework for continuous professional development which seeks to support teachers and governments to promote quality education and achieve the United Nations sustainable goal for education. In this model action research (AR) has a central stage as basis for a transformative practice.

The model operates in four levels from awareness to integration along twelve developmental areas: planning lessons and courses, understanding learners, managing the lesson, knowing the subject, managing resources, assessing learning, integrating technology, taking responsibility for own professional development, using inclusive practices, using multilingual approaches, promoting 21st century skills, and understanding educational policies and practices.

The four levels of development (Table 1) follow the understanding that professional development is a lifelong process of improvement both personal and professional which “leads to the improvement of [teachers’] agency and their development of their organisation and their pupils” (Padwad & Dixit, 2011, p. 7).

**Table 1. Stages of Professional development.**

INTENDED CHANGE	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	STARTING POINT
Change in awareness, knowledge, motivation    Change in practice, habit, skills and belief	<b>Awareness (A)</b> you have heard of the particular professional practice	Beginning with little/no prior knowledge/skills, attitudes, beliefs
	<b>Understanding (U)</b> you know what the professional practice means and why it's important	Beginning with prior knowledge/skills, attitudes, beliefs
	<b>Engagement (E)</b> you demonstrate competency in this professional practice at work	Beginning to embed new ideas/practice, attitudes, beliefs in practice
	<b>Integration (I)</b> you demonstrate a high level of competency in this professional practice and it consistently informs what you do at work	Beginning to set an example in ideas/practice, attitudes, beliefs

(Extracted from British Council CPD framework development and rationale, British Council, 2015, p. 12)

### 3.2. Teacher Research as a developmental strategy

In accordance to the stages described in the framework (Table 2) is that we sought for a strategy for professional development in our context that allowed us to bridge the gap

between understanding and engagement. We found in teacher research (TR), and in particular in Action Research, a valuable tool to achieve our intended aim.

Dikilitas (2015) defines teacher-research as

a form of research conducted by classroom teachers to investigate an issue they identify and reach some conclusions for themselves that can be constantly revised, improved and changed (p.49).

Two implications arise from this definition. The first one is that TR implies the teacher taking the role of the researcher, alone or with the help of others. It is not about an external researcher carrying out an investigation into the teacher's practice. Secondly, TR is a *self-initiated process* on an issue, "problematic issues or 'puzzles' as well as successes in their practice" (Smith, Rebolledo & Connelly, 2014, p.111).

Borg (2013) summarises the benefits of TR as suggested in the literature:

- develops teachers' capacity for autonomous professional judgements (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004);
- reduces teachers feelings of frustration and isolation (Roberts, 1993);
- allows teachers to move out of a submissive position and be curriculum innovators (Gurney, 1989);
- allows teachers to become more reflective, critical, and analytical about their teaching behaviours in the classroom (Atay, 2006);
- makes teachers less vulnerable to and less dependent on external answers to the challenges they face (Donato, 2003);
- fosters connections between teachers and researchers (Crookes, 1993);
- boosts teachers' sense of status (Davies, Hamilton and James, 1993).

(Borg, 2013, pp. 15-16)

TR certainly possesses the potential of becoming a useful tool to allow a process of development and empowerment for the teacher and a source of authentic knowledge about their teaching practices. TR is about developing teacher autonomy and enhancing professional identity. As Rebolledo, Smith, and Bullock (2016) state TR advocates "autonomy, reflection and empowerment allowing teachers to explore their own contexts and practices in order to better understand their work and promote their students' learning"( p.5).

Within our CPD framework, TR has a clear role in the area of taking responsibility for own professional development (Table 2) considering the arguments expressed above.

**Table 2. Description of taking responsibility for professional development professional practice.**

<b>Taking responsibility for professional development</b>	
<b>Taking responsibility for my own professional development involves the following elements:</b>	
Understanding my professional needs, interests and learning preferences in order to identify areas for development.	Being aware of, selecting and engaging in, appropriate professional development opportunities and resources to inform my classroom practice, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaborating with colleagues and other professionals</li> <li>• reflective practice</li> <li>• teacher research and other forms of classroom inquiry</li> <li>• attending and presenting at conferences</li> <li>• participating in training</li> <li>• reading and publishing</li> <li>• joining teachers' associations</li> <li>• observing other teachers and being observed.</li> </ul>
Defining my short-, medium- and long-term career goals.	
Understanding the developmental pathways available to reach my specific career goals.	
Using technology to facilitate my professional development.	
Staying up to date with developments in education in teaching and learning.	
	Reflecting on and evaluating the benefit of my continuing professional development and its impact on my classroom practice and my learners' achievements.

(Extracted from CPD framework for teachers, 2015, p. 14)

In line with the theoretical framework above, we can argue that RTs' professional development should not only cater for development in strengthening how-to-do skills related to day-to-day teaching, but it also should help RTs to further broaden their experience in reflecting upon pedagogical practices. Through AR, RTs are given the opportunity to explore challenging areas of their classroom realities. In this particular case, CeI is not only the area of enquiry but also the common ground for RTs.

The following section describes the experience of implementing TR with a group of RTs and how they approached the task to build up an authentic knowledge-sharing community with teachers' central participation.

#### **4. The process**

There have been two cohorts of RTs participating in AR. Two schemes, 2015-2016 (pilot) and 2016-2017 (second round), were implemented. Throughout the process, researchers' notes were kept, meetings were recorded and documents kept for analysis.

##### **4.1. The pilot**

In 2015, the Research Managers in Argentina and Uruguay found that - due to the innovative and brand-new nature of Cel - the field of AR had not been explored. In pursuance of offering opportunities for CPD and an environment for constructing authentic knowledge, a pilot scheme was launched.

Fifteen RTs in Argentina were invited to participate in the piloting so as to promote reflective approaches to RLT, and develop educational research skills. Ten showed interest in participating and embarked on such a journey. The pilot comprised two phases. The first one took place during the 2015 second semester. Weekly meetings were held to accomplish two objectives: to introduce RTs to the field of AR (all of them were new to it and they requested for theoretical background) and to explore issues the RTs expressed interest in within their RLT classrooms. Meetings were structured as 40-minute sessions to discuss theory-related issues in AR and 40-minute sessions to work on RTs AR projects.

During the theory sessions, a general introduction to AR theoretical framework was provided and then, those concepts were put into practice in the project-exploration sessions. The contents for the theory sessions covered formulating research questions, deciding on data collection methods, planning for change, taking action and collecting evidence for those actions, among others. During the sessions, RTs brainstormed ideas, shared the actions taken and their results, suggested courses of actions to peers, self-assessed teaching practices, reflected upon those practices, and prepared to share their projects with other RTs.

The second phase took place during the 2016 first semester. By this time, RTs had already explored their contexts and collected evidence of the actions taken in RLT. Projects were almost ready to be shared, although RTs still needed help on how to write reports and present for external audiences. This second phase was conceived as a writing workshop. Meetings were held monthly and RTs brought their drafts to be shared. Each RT made suggestions on aspects to add/ improve. In this way, the projects started to be shaped as AR reports which were potentially publishable.

Out of consideration to the impact on everyday operations at the RTC, the recurrent meetings had to be rescheduled. A major challenge was to find the right time to work on the AR projects. Some RTs expressed their impossibility to attend meetings after work. Sessions were held weekly for the majority of the group and there were online updates for those who could not attend the regular meetings. Another challenging area was demotivation due to the choice of topics, either the topics were too broad or unfeasible. Academic writing is still an area to be worked on. RTs seem to find it difficult to put into paper what they have explored and they tend to procrastinate the task of sharing their findings in a written report.

#### **4. 2. The second round**

Once the pilot finished, round 2 was planned. This time RTs from Uruguay were invited to join the scheme at the RTC there. There are two groups now working on AR. In pursuance of attending each group's needs, the schemes in Uruguay and Argentina followed different dynamics as described below.

In Uruguay, and given the existence of a wider TR scheme which supports all English Language teachers interested in carrying out research into their practices, RTs were invited to join this wider scheme which follows the the Champion Teachers scheme philosophy in Chile and the exploratory action research (EAR) methodology. During the first cohort of this scheme in 2016, RTs and RTC coordinators attended face-to-face exploratory sessions, but were unable to put their research ideas into practice. The timing in which the research period was intended to be carried out collided with other requirements RTs needed to comply with. The first lesson learnt had to do with timing of such schemes. The second semester was not a good time for RTs given the Cel's needs at that time, preparation for international exams, recovering lessons lost for different reasons, among others.

In 2017, the face-to-face exploratory session took place in February and RTs were again invited to participate along with all willing English teachers. Ten out of 20 RTs attended the workshop. Three are participating actively in the scheme carrying out their EAR projects in their remote lessons. In the scheme, teachers are appointed a mentor, who is a teacher with a background in classroom research and has knowledge and/or experience in a similar context. In the case of this group of RTs, one of their mentors is a former RT and the other is one of BC Uruguay research manager. Collaboration from the RTC and the schools to where they teach has been commendable. In particular, the much needed help from the CTs in obtaining

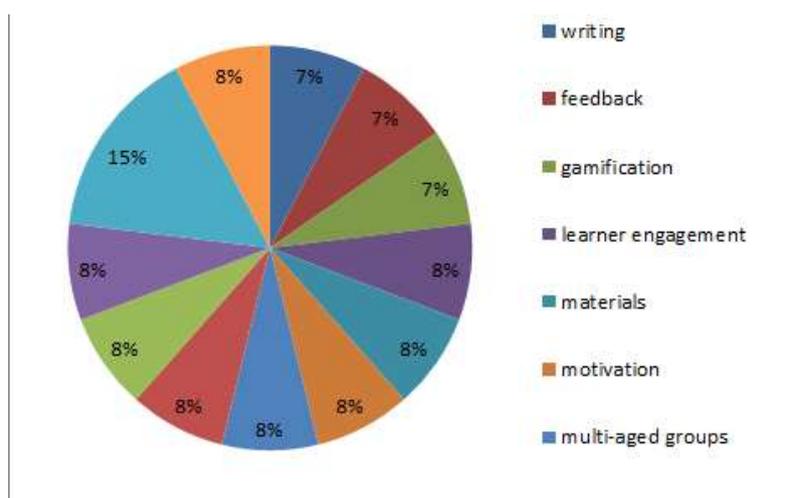
consents for research and in particular, participating as co-researchers in the exploratory phase. At the time of the elaboration of this article, the three RTs were moving towards designing and implementing the action which emerged from their exploratory phase.

In Argentina, new RTs were invited to join the AR team at the beginning of the 2016 second semester. The invitation was sent to all RTs and 17 positive replies were collected. The 2015 team was restructured since some of the RTs decided not to continue. Those who stayed took on a more active role in guiding new RTs into the process of exploration and research in their remote classrooms. In this opportunity, the dynamics for meetings changed completely: meetings were held via web-conferencing software which would allow everyone to join from anywhere. We also implemented a LMS course, to have a place to communicate, share projects, and have access to the recorded meetings. Email communication was avoided and we created a private group on Facebook for RTs to pick dates to meet, share articles, and socialize their projects.

## 5. The projects

Given the novel nature of the Cel, it is only logical that the issues RTs explored vary enormously and respond, to a certain extent, to the particular characteristics of the groups they have been working on. The topics explored are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Themes explored.



The pilot ended with seven RTs on task, working with five different projects. Due to the nature of the projects, four of them decided to work collaboratively. The other three RTs went through their projects individually.

Once the AR cycle was over, the team was ready to share their projects. They were invited to present their outcomes at in-house events during the first term in 2016. This proved to be highly motivating. It also prepared the RTs for possible future presentations. The opportunity to present in front of external audiences came with a CeI event in September 2016, for which five projects were accepted. However, only two RTs felt they were ready to submit their written reports. This is an area that still needs to be explored since writing to share knowledge seems to be a neglected area with teachers in general.

For the second round, both RTCs were able to engage in AR. In Uruguay, the cohort has three members, two of which work collaboratively. The topics being explored are vocabulary development and writing development. Mentors report the hardest issue to deal with during tutorials is facing unpredicted obstacles. RTs get discouraged when CTs refuse to participate or the school denies access. Having to change groups to less suitable ones puts them off. Here is where the intervention of the mentor is much needed to show RTs that this type of research makes sense and will be more beneficial in context where situations are far from ideal.

During the first weeks of lessons, RTs had the chance to diagnose the students' skills in the selected areas in more detail so as to identify the groups in which an intervention was mostly needed. With this diagnostic data is that RTs were able to kick off the exploratory phase. During this phase, the help of the CT has been essential, not only to facilitate contacts but mainly as a qualified informants about the students and the teaching context at large. A data collection webinar was delivered in May 2017 focusing on the tools participating teachers were intending to use. The webinar provided input, examples and a chance to ask questions and get supervision of the tools by the research manager. All RTs have completed the exploratory phase by July 2017 and are in the process of designing the implementation stage which will be carried out in August. An evaluative phase will follow to assess how far the intervention succeeded in achieving its aims. In November 2017, RTs and other participating teacher researchers will present their experiences and conclusions in a face-to-face event where they will receive feedback and further discussion will be encouraged.

For Argentina, the exploration phase took longer than in the pilot. Choosing their topics proved to be a harder task. After three months of reflection, most RTs agreed on working about motivation in the RLT. We found that RTs were inclined to explore topics such as

fostering curiosity in the RLT, teacher's engagement, ways to motivate students in videoconferencing environments, and materials design to boost students' interest. By the end of 2016, most RTs had already chosen the area they wanted to explore, but, the academic year was finishing. The summer turned out to be the time to start reading about their interests and building a very simple, but effective, pool of articles which could be part of their literature reviews. Consolidation of topic exploration was reached in April 2017. At the moment of writing this report, these topics are being explored and change implementation is our step for the next months.

## **6. Lessons learnt so far**

During the pilot two important lessons were identified that would then feed into the planning of subsequent rounds. Working in pairs or small groups proves to be a successful strategy, in particular, to reduce the feeling of non-achievement; thus, reducing the impact of demotivation. This might arise from teachers' lack of self-confidence when facing an area such as research that for most is not part of their usual teaching repertoire. Timing of such a scheme is essential to achieve maximum RT engagement and reduce drop-out. A year-long scheme that accompanies the natural process of group life facilitates the research process and allows RTs to acknowledge that AR or EAR are valuable tools when facing a new course or challenge.

Mentoring is an essential facilitating factor for classroom research. Not only does mentoring provide guidance in terms of research procedures but also mentors become a sympathetic ear when complications arise and help teacher researchers deal with the frustrations that many researchers are faced with in their daily work.

For the participating RTs, AR has provided a chance to look at their remote teaching practices with a different look. On the one hand, they have been able to identify areas of their practices they are concerned about, then explored these areas in detail so as then to take action to improve these practices. At the same time, they have acknowledge that by conducting remote lesson AR, they have developed new skills and learned new tools that then they can apply to learn about other areas of their practices.

The conclusions RTs are drawing have also helped other RTs through the instances in which our RTs have presented their work and conclusions. These participating RTs through their research work are helping build up a better understanding of the particular aspects of

RLT, in particular those areas which are different from face-to-face teaching and that seem to be more challenging for those involved.

We acknowledge that engaging in TR is one way for language professionals to achieve the final stage of the CPD model (integration), where teachers develop an informed practice based on understanding and implementation of change. It is here where authentic knowledge of their practices and contexts is developed. This could only be achieved if they are equipped with the skills needed to enhance their understanding of their contexts and generate knowledge that is relevant and valid for each teaching situation. For this, the schemes that intend to follow this path need to provide teachers with mentoring and support in the form of input so they can develop suitable TR skills.

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### 3 The English language in the military: A study of peacekeepers

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#### 1. Introduction

English is the lingua franca of the international missions in which the Argentine armed forces participate as members of United Nations missions. According to Montesinos (2013, p. 87), “the role of English in the military is fully understood as it is the language of the workplace and ordinary life while in the missions”. For UN peacekeeping forces English is the vehicular language for the military in an international geo-political scenario. It is the operational language of UN missions, that is, the official language that different national contingents use to talk to each other as well as to communicate with headquarters. English is, in Smolorek’s words (2016, p. 189), “the primary language of communication in international military interventions”. This trend is likely to continue as “members of the armed forces of different countries are increasingly deployed on humanitarian assistance, international military and UN peacekeeping operations” (King, Walden, Mellor-Clark and Altamirano, 2004, p.4).

As peacekeepers, Argentine soldiers need the ability to communicate with proficiency in English for achieving the goals of the mission as well as socializing in a multinational and multicultural context in which a “successful communication is vital in a multicultural mission” (Clayton, Issac & Ellender, 2016, p. 3). This effectiveness is particularly acute in a peace-support operation where linguistic misunderstandings risk leading to mistakes, which might, in a worst-case scenario, result in casualties. As Kelly (2012, p. 243) points out, “it is extremely important not to have language barriers in military operations”.

In view of the above, this paper aims to *explore the* role of the English language in the context of peacekeeping operations by analysing different focus groups of Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) who served in the mission of Cyprus between 1993 and 2016. The article draws attention to the real problems that act as barriers to communication in English for the Argentine military in multinational structures, including problems with areas of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) such as attitudes and critical cultural awareness.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

So far, there has been little formal research into the way English is actually used on the different UN missions in which Argentine peacekeepers are involved although anecdotal evidence suggests that officers, non-commissioned officer and soldiers of all ranks face frequent difficulties with the language. As Footitt and Kelly (2012) point out, “language plays a crucial role in armed conflict, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian operations, pre-deployment training of troops and support to refugees”.

The need for effective communication is particularly acute in a peacekeeping operation where linguistic misunderstandings risk leading to mistakes, which might, in a worst-case scenario, result in casualties. To date, it seems that language difficulties have contributed to putting Argentine peacekeepers in embarrassing and even dangerous situations, but have not actually been the cause of any casualties during their tour of duties in Cyprus. This should not, however, be viewed as a reason for complacency. That is why, this paper, which is part of a larger investigation into the formation of Argentine peacekeepers, provides a novel contribution by focusing on the importance of English in the military as there is no prior research in our literature.

However, there are studies carried out in Europe, England and the United States that have focused on language interactions in military multinational and multicultural contexts (e.g. Browne, Febbraro, Mckee, Vliet & Riedel, 2008; Daniel, Williams & Smiths, 2015; Footit & Kelly, 2012; Harzing, Koster & Magner, 2011; Montesino, 2013; O’Regan, 2016; Smolarek, 2016; Watson, 2010, 2016). All these studies focus on the importance of the English language as the vehicular language for the military in their daily tasks.

Since the end of the cold war, the English language has become increasingly important among the armed forces of the world (Crossey, 2005). English is de facto language in a global world in which relations between countries are increasingly important; it is the language of diplomacy and it is also, by international treaty, the official language of maritime and air communications. But what makes this language so important to the military? The reasons, to tell the truth, are many. To begin with, it is vital within the framework of the UN because it constitutes a communication tool for those who are involved in the multilingual and multinational context of a peacekeeping mission.

The need for fluent communication gave the English language a certain global status as it is spoken by hundreds of millions of people around the world. In other words, English is the language used by interactors who do not share the same language (O’Regan, 2016, p. 204). This author also remarks that in 1557 the English naval explorer Francis Drake began his circumnavigation around the world and the men, who accompanied him, formed a

multinational endowment in which the language of communication for all that crew was what the sailors knew as "English". Then after 1945 the language had another relevant push. As stated by the authors Dewey (2007); Dewey and Jenkins (2010); Jenkins (2013); Seidlhofer (2011); O'Regan (2016), the world entered a new era of transformation of international communication product of globalization, decolonization, economic development and cutting-edge technology where communication was necessary to develop in a language. That language is what the authors call the lingua franca of international communication that is emerging, hybrid, plural and deterritorialized. It is also a language that adapts to this new era which is called the "English language".

Crystal (2010) illustrates that "English achieved its status thanks to two factors: colonialism and modernization". According to this author (1997), English has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time in three relevant events in history:

1. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, English was the language of the most important colonial nation, that is, "Great Britain."
2. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, English was the language of the leading country of the industrial revolution which was also "Great Britain"
3. And in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries English was the language of the economic power that established itself as a world leader: "the United States."

In contribution to this author's hypothesis, Singh (2005, p. 140) says "that politics, religion and technology were also useful for the linguistic development of the English language".

The comments made by both authors serve as a parameter to determine the causes that led this language to be the operational lingua franca in the military communication. In Fraser's words (2011), "to communicate fluently in English means on one hand to understand what is said and on the other hand to have the ability to understand the cultural". For Watson (2010), "a good management of this language gives the military the skills to interact with actors from other cultures and to understand operational cultural realities that are extremely important".

To conclude, as Montesino (2013) points out, "English as a lingua franca in military communication helps to facilitate the necessary interconnection between individuals and organizations, between the national and the international, between the local and the global".

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research questions**

Assuming that Argentina as a member of United Nations has undertaken to accept and fulfil the UN Security Council's decisions, and offer assistance to carry out such measures decided by this Council and assuming that Argentine, as a UN troop contributing country, will continue to provide military personnel to the different UN missions. Therefore, based on the literature review and the evidence of the personal experience of the informants of this study the resulting research questions we have to investigate are:

- 1.** Is there a language barrier between Argentine peacekeepers and other members in the mission of UNFICYP and how important is this language barrier?
- 2.** In which context does this barrier occur and what are the possible solutions to resolve this problem?

#### **3.2. Context and participants**

Interviews were conducted with three focus groups, made up of eight, seven and six informants in each group, to explore the communication barriers in the mission of UNFICYP in Cyprus. Participants were officers and non-commissioned officers of the armed forces of different military ranks who served in UNFICYP during 1993-2016. Two focus groups, which had four female informants, were interviewed at the Joint Training Center for Peace Operations (CAECOPAZ) located in Campo de Mayo, province of Buenos Aires during the second half of 2016. These servicemen were under the intensive training before their departure to Cyprus. The remaining focus group, which was made up of six officers only, was conducted at the Military College in Palomar that is an area located in Greater Buenos Aires.

The informants' age was between 20 and 50 and the participating hierarchies were from Corporal, the first rank among non-commissioned officers, to Lieutenant Colonel, which is a senior military rank among officers. During the interview of the focus group, special attention was always given to the peacekeepers' experiences in the mission of UNFICYP related to the miscommunication problems caused by the lack of English proficiency, the multiculturalism of the mission, the situations in which communication barriers occurred, the language mastery between officers and non-commissioned officers, suggestions for future deployments and possible solutions to the problems of communication.

### 3.3. Data collection and analysis

The interview guide was produced in Spanish and the actual interview lasted for about an hour. They were conducted by late August in 2016 in CAECOPAZ and in early September in Palomar. In all the cases, the peacekeepers' information was digitally recorded and later downloaded and transcribed in a computer. The specific questions that were asked for the topic discussed in this paper were: Can you tell us about your experience in the mission of UNFICYP in Cyprus related to English language? Which were the situations that you remember you had language barriers? (Generally, this was asked only after the first more exploratory question, so as to avoid leading the interviewee) What kinds of solutions do you think are necessary to overcome the language barriers?''(Only after language barriers had been identified). The interviewer would let the interviewee expand on issues not covered in the interview where appropriate. However, in principle each focus group was asked the same questions to trigger the peacekeepers' experience in the mission related to the importance of the English language, the language barriers and possible solutions to the problems they encountered.

After transcription all interview transcripts were imported into the technical support of Atlas.ti software (Dowling, 2008) which was used for data analysis.

## 4. Results

The results have produced fundamental findings that fulfil the intentions and objectives established in this work. The information collected shows different aspects to be taken into account. In different ways these features cause interference in the communication and performance of the Argentine military deployed in Cyprus.

### 4.1. Communication problems due to the lack of English proficiency

First of all, informants revealed that the lack of English proficiency is a problem in UNFICYP's mission. In response to this research question, almost all of the respondents (19 of 21) indicated that communication problems actually occurred in the peacekeepers' daily interaction because of the lack of knowledge of this language. It is worth noting that the issue of language, as a barrier that occurs every day, was not only mentioned once in the same interview but in several occasions under different contexts. Remarkable examples were provided by some officers and NCOs with the following comments:

During my experience, there were many officers who did not have the appropriate level of English to communication between the HQ and the Argentine contingent.

The English language for me was a barrier that I had because I could not communicate when an incident occurred" (...).- A Military Police Member-.

Participants' comments are also reinforced by Montesino's words (2013), who emphasises that "the English language in multinational missions is the language of the workplace, the language of the different documents that are read and written in the mission".

#### 4.2. Multiculturalism in UNFICYP

In this regard, the interviewees indicated that it was not only the linguistic differences that caused a barrier in communication, but also the marked multicultural differences existing in the mission. Therefore, "it is important for the peacekeepers to have a further training about the cultural differences between the country of origin and host country" (Cosentino, Azzollini, Depaula & Castillo, 2016, p. 286). While for some Argentine servicemen these cultural differences were taken as a positive aspect, in order to improve language skills, for others cultural differences were really barriers in communication. The following section shows the comment of a non-commissioned officer who served in the Mobile Reserve Force (MFR) and who used the cultural difference to improve his knowledge in the English language:

I have level 5 (...). so I had a friendly relationship with the English soldiers. In my case as I could communicate I offered myself to be on duties in the MFR with an English so I could copied the different accents and pronunciation they had.

Contrary to this comment, another participant argued the following:

(...) there was a Jordanian called Habdulla. At certain time during the day he did not work because he prayed. Then I learned that Muslims pray several times a day. He tried to explain to me but my English was basic.

#### 4.3. English proficiency among officers and non-commissioned officers

The focus groups revealed that communication problems occur between officers and non-commissioned officers, as expressed by the interviewees:

(...) the logistic officer (...) who is crucial in the mission, did not speak English. Another case I remember was the paymaster who had to make deposits and daily business at Nicosia's bank. He did not speak English either.

(...) I was ashamed to talk because my English was very poor...

#### 4.4. Possible solutions to avoid language barriers

The answers provided by all the participants in this point were categorical and coincident. The only solution to avoid language barriers in the mission of UNFICYP is through the specific study of the English language. The following paragraphs show the comments of officers and non-commissioned officers:

(...) for me the solution is to study English. In the case of my Regiment the Regiment Commander hired an English teacher to teach us English previous to come to Buenos Aires.

I think the ideal way to learn it would be to prepare yourself and then of course to receive some formal training during the pre-deployment period.

#### 4.5. Situations in which communication barriers occur

The most important aspect contributed by the interviewees had to do with the different situations where communication problems occur. It is possible to claim in this aspect, that communication barriers in multinational missions arise due to lack of knowledge of the language that is institutionalized. However, authors such as Gass and Varonis (1991), Hammerly (1991), and Scollon and Scollon (1995) agree in their research that fluency does not guarantee accuracy in intercultural communication. For Riedel (2008), "the communication failures in multinational contexts is simply caused by the lack of knowledge of the different idiomatic turns, idioms and accents to communicate with other actors in a mission".

In this regard, ten informants claimed they had language disadvantages in operational situations such as duties, patrols and different military tasks. Five participants stated they had uncomfortable or embarrassed situations when they tried to buy different items in different stores in the local community or when they wanted to socialise by establishing a relationship with another person.

On the other hand, three military had language barriers during their holidays and three blue helmets expressed they had no problem in communicating because they had a fluent

command of the English language. However, these informants claimed to have been highly affected by the distinct accents and pronunciation of some English soldiers and members of the Australian police. They also declared that the most difficult variety of English to be understood is the Scottish accent. The comments that follow, illustrate the content expressed by participants, both staff officers and non-commissioned officers:

Idioms and pronunciation were really a problem, as I said I had problems with the Australian pronunciation.

I think the worst accent or most difficult to understand is the Scottish but after being with them hours and hours, it's like the ear gets used to it and then you start to understand.

## **5. Conclusions**

The main conclusion, according to the results of this research, is that the English language is the cause of communication barriers for the Argentine peacekeepers deployed in the peacekeeping mission of UNFICYP in Cyprus. It is also demonstrated through the theoretical framework, the various investigations reviewed and the qualitative samples taken, that this language is the military lingua franca in multinational, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

The essential role of English as the workplace language makes it vital for communication, particularly in military operations. For this reason, it is essential to understand that the learning of this language, among the Argentine troops, is a key and fundamental aspect for the success in the peacekeeping operation of Cyprus. Therefore, being this language fundamental in peacekeeping operations, it should be avoided having language barriers (Smolarek, 2016). Otherwise, a number of problems are created and restrict the fluid communication among blue helmets of different nationalities and civilians working in the UN mission (Tossi, 2006).

The work also illustrates that both officers and non-commissioned officers are affected in different situations by communication barriers due to lack of knowledge of English. Although the officers tend to have a better preparation in this language, they are the ones who suffer the most interference in communication due to the continuous exposure they have in different working situations such as briefings, meetings, training protocols and socialization (King et al., 2005).

It is evident in this contribution that the peacekeepers not only need to understand the culture and traditions of the host culture, but also the one that belongs to members of the

different civil organisations deployed in the mission (Riedel, 2008). Thus, the understanding of the culture is important due to the frequency in which they must work together with different non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Finally, as possible solutions to the problems of communication, this work emphasizes that it is necessary to reinforce the learning of the English language. To do this, the existing policies in the armed forces, related to the teaching of this language, should be reviewed. As the revised literature states, the success of multinational interventions is not only about cultural interoperability but also about the effectiveness of a good communication that facilitates the interconnection with the different members of the organization where they are.

To conclude, this work had the objective to highlight the shortcomings related to the use of the English language in the Argentine interventions in the mission of UNFICYP. The study surely leaves areas uncovered, since the qualitative sample taken for this study should have been provided more evidences if the number of participants had been greater in number. Despite this fact, striking results were brought to light that will be the subject of future research and will cover the spaces not fulfilled in this work. Whatever the contribution, which is made in the future, they will serve to continue with the further formation of our blue helmets for their future deployments in peacekeeping missions.

To this end, educational mechanisms related to the teaching of language and culture must be promoted to achieve the excellence of future peacekeeping interventions. Only by having a good training will it be possible to have qualified personnel who can handle the different situations in the context of a peacekeeping operation.

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## 4 Creating authenticity in a non-authentic context

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### 1. Introduction

Years ago, reading technical texts in English seemed to be sufficient for engineers to cope with the demands of their academic and professional world. Today, in contrast, the 21st century requires students and graduates who can master all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Those increasing needs include reading specific bibliography, attending courses abroad through mobility programs, applying for scholarships overseas, joining research groups, taking specialization courses, working in local technology-based companies, travelling on business or working remotely.

In light of this reality, the importance of learning English at the School of Engineering at the National University of La Pampa (UNLPam) calls for a radical change of attitude. Teaching in a context where students start college with elementary, if not non-existent level of English, it becomes imperative to find ways to optimize the exposure to the foreign language.

For that purpose, two courses of action have been implemented: (1) a series of motivational talks during the English courses given by students, graduates and professors from the academic community (See Section 3); and (2) common educational experiences in the last years of the degree through interdisciplinary interventions in subjects related to the specific majors (See Section 4). In both cases, the aim is to generate instances of authentic input and thus create a bridge between the class and the real world outside.

In this paper we will first refer to the context where we have been carrying out the experiences for the last three years and we will then describe such courses of actions and share students' feedback and conclusions.

## **2. English at the School of Engineering (UNLPam)**

Students at the School of Engineering (UNLPam) are immersed in a 100 % foreign language setting where there is no English language contact beyond the class. One could walk the streets of our city without ever having the chance to interact in another language. Hence, students in the junior years cannot see the purpose and the importance of learning English for their future careers.

It could be argued that today one does not have to meet someone face to face to have contact with English, but what is true is that you need to have an intrinsic motivation driven by the real need to speak the second language. In their freshman years, students are too busy with foundational courses such as Algebra, Physics or Mathematical Analysis and many of them do not see the great potential the virtual world offers in learning language informally, whether watching a series, playing online games or listening to their favorite band. Just a few students have the necessary level of English to take advantage of informal learning situations outside the classroom. What is more, many students have gone through high school without listening to English from the part of the teachers. Diagnostic tests carried out after university admission reveal that about 60 % of the students do not have the basic contents they should have acquired in secondary school.

This setting poses a big challenge if we consider that, as students, they need English to read subject-specific texts from third year on. If they decide to attend classes in other countries, such as Brazil, English will be the preferred language for test taking and interacting with peers from all over the world. Those who pursue the Industrial Automation orientation spend a semester at Balseiro Institute, where the command of the target language is essential to deal with lectures and reading the latest publications.

Upon graduation UNLPam engineers will also face job interviews in English, do postgraduate studies abroad and use the language in the workplace. The ones who are currently working in local businesses like meat packing plants or software companies use English to deal with customers overseas through email or Skype or to travel to meet clients in person.

Nonetheless, students have two compulsory courses of 80 hours each and two extracurricular ones in the first years of all engineering majors and, in the best-case scenario, they end up with a pre-intermediate level of English. Discouraging as it may look, this situation has called for new proposals in order to raise awareness as to the importance of English, to create genuine instances of learning and to light a spark of enthusiasm. Sections 3 and 4 present two actions that attempt to extend the classroom walls through the use of authentic materials that recreate the outside world.

### 3. Motivational talks

A few years ago we started to invite professors from the local academic community to give talks about topics connected to the units in the English courses. Professors who had made presentations overseas or who had completed their PhD programs in other countries came to talk to students about their experiences in the English II syllabus unit *Travelling abroad*. The students reacted so positively to the inclusion of talks in the classroom that we decided to go further and to incorporate these *motivational talks* on a regular basis not only with professors but with students, graduates and occasional visitors.

The following list details the motivational talks that have been given so far:

- Juan and Emiliano, advanced students in different majors with a good command of the language who talked about their life as university students.
- Eber, one of the students attending classes in Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil, who talked via Skype about his experience there.
- Cecilia, a UNLPam graduate working as an assistant professor at Universidad Politécnica de Madrid who visited the university and talked about her research projects in the areas of robotics and automation.
- Alejandro and María Agustina, university students from UNC (National University of Córdoba) who have developed *E-valorados*, an application for school teachers to help them assess students' progress. This idea was conceived in INCUBATEC, a business incubator initiative in General Pico.
- Eber, a student who travelled to the USA with the Fulbright foreign student program, came to talk to students before and after his trip.
- Martin, a graduate engineer, cofounder and COO of Tecro Ingeniería, a software company in General Pico, who talked about products and services he and his team create focusing on customers' needs.
- Alice, an Italian exchange student who talked about her experience in Argentina and her life as a student in Italy.
- Ariel, a new industrial engineering graduate, who talked about the semester he spent attending classes at Balseiro Institute.
- Marcelo, a systems engineering student who talked about Startup Weekend, a 54-hour weekend event during which groups of developers work on new ideas and is carried out each year at our school.
- Luis, researcher and lecturer from our university, with a PhD in software engineering, talked about his experience in China as a doctoral thesis director.

In all cases we are referring to Gilmore's conceptualisation of authenticity as "real language from real speakers for a real audience with a real message" (2007, p. 6). In this sense, the definition encompasses interactions between teachers-students or students-students, regardless of the fact that they are non-native speakers of English. Students are listening to authentic language in use; it is not native but it is real. It is the language they will most likely face in the future: English spoken by speakers whose first language is not English. Today,

[t]he *native speaker* definition, i.e. that authenticity reflects how L1 speakers use the language, has also lost a lot of ground under the influence of the World Englishes movement, with now more L2 speakers than L1 speakers (Graddol in Pinner, 2013a, p. 45).

The talks demystify the idea that English has to be perfectly spoken in order to communicate. Far from being native, it is fluent English, but will often have grammar and pronunciation errors. It is English from someone who is good enough or better than students. As Vygotsky (1978) indicates, they are learning "in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Lin (2015) goes into detail about that concept:

[w]hen the individual works collaboratively with more capable peers, the potential level of development will be increased. In other words, with the help of an expert, the individual can do more things, and this is referred to as potential development (p. 12).

The talks provide sources of input that engage students in topics connected to their interests and lives; learners work with tasks such as preparing questions previous to the talks and asking them at the end; and finally, the talks generate instances of debate with the speaker and among students. In this way, we are embracing what Pinner (2013b) calls the three domains of authenticity: "authenticity can refer to materials with which the students interact and use as sources of input for language," and it "may also refer to the tasks set by the teacher as a way of engaging with or experiencing this content"; and thirdly, "authenticity is the language in use, which refers to the classroom interactions between learners with their peers and teachers" (pp. 151-152).

More often than not, students watch the speakers in awe. Such was the case with the students who explained how they developed an application or with a peer who participated in a summer exchange program in the USA. Picturing themselves in these situations seemed unimaginable. In this fashion, the talks turn out to be inspiring and undoubtedly, they develop the learner's motivation.

They give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the 'real' language; that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it. (Guariento and Morley, 2001, p. 347)

After the talks students are asked to give their feedback. The following fragments illustrate student's perceptions:

This experience was very interesting because *was different* from other classes. Also, this kind of project motivates us to study and form our own project. I really liked it. We should do it again.

The experience was interesting because they showed que no es necesario hablar perfectamente inglés y de lo importante que es conocer diferentes idiomas. [that it is not necessary to speak English perfectly and how important it is to know different languages.]

It was a nice experience, talk with *another people* who know more than you is always useful, nice for practice.

It was something different from a normal day. It was a motivating talk, because we expect to work and create things like that, and we saw that it is possible.

Su manejo del inglés era muy bueno solo que estaba nerviosa, lo que dijo sobre la importancia del inglés me hizo imaginarme exponiendo un proyecto en el exterior, por lo que me motivó. [Her English was very good, but she was nervous; what she said about the importance of English made me imagine myself presenting a project abroad, that motivated me.]

Como experiencia me resultó muy positiva porque nos muestra lo mucho que nos sirve el inglés para nuestras vidas. Además, una cosa es escuchar un audio ya grabado, y otra escuchar a alguien en vivo... es más interactivo. En otras palabras "atrapa al estudiante" y provoca que preste atención. [It was a very positive experience because it shows us how useful English is in our life. Besides, one thing is listening to recorded audios and another is to watch someone live... it is more

interactive. In other words, it catches the students' attention and makes them pay attention to what the speakers were saying.]

#### **4. Common educational experiences**

For four years we have been implementing a CLIL project through interventions in English in courses taken during the last years of the engineering program. Language teachers and content teachers collaborate and share their expertise to create learning experiences in both content and language (Ramos et al., 2016).

What started as a single project has now become an institutional endeavour through Common Educational Experiences—cross-curricular activities fostered by Higher education policies. To comply with such regulations, we are prompted to integrate contents horizontally and vertically as stated in a Directive Council resolution (Council Resolution 50/2016).

So far, we have carried out interventions in courses such as Engineering Materials, Mechanical Technology, Distributed Systems and Operations Research. In each subject, language teachers and content teachers work together for 2-3 class periods to help students learn specific concepts of their areas while improving their language ability. Teachers from both areas thus work together to create “a learning environment which is linguistically accessible whilst being cognitively demanding - one in which progression in both language and content learning develops systematically” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 67).

In the experiences, students read authentic material in English: book chapters, magazine articles and research papers. They study the material in small groups, ask questions, generate fruitful discussions, prepare PowerPoint slides and finally deliver the presentations to the whole class. This way, they are not learning the language to use it in the future, they are learning as they use and using as they learn (Coyle et al., 2010).

Most student-teacher interactions are in English as those content teachers participating in the activities have a good command of the target language. Needless to say, exchanges in Spanish do occur among students and even though the PowerPoint slides are prepared in English, the presentations are given in English or Spanish, the last one being the preferred choice.

It is important to highlight that these experiences are possible because there is a common belief among engineers in our university community that English is essential for professional development, especially those professors with some degree of proficiency. According to Scott Montgomery (2013) in the area of engineering, English is prevalent for international communication. Today, almost all scientific output uses this language. As Montgomery (2013, p.18) asserts, “English has become the speech of international scientific conferences,

symposia, conventions, colloquia, visiting lectures, workshops, interviews, and more—the oral dimension to global science.”

Regarding authenticity, Pinner (2013b) states that “by using authentic materials it is much easier to motivate students and to encourage them to engage with the materials, as long as exactly what constitutes as ‘authenticity’ is understood” (p. 147). As with the talks, we can identify Pinner's (2013a, 2013 b) three domains of authenticity: the texts used for learning, the tasks designed by the teacher, and the language used in the interactions.

Again, motivation is a key factor here. “If a learner participates voluntarily in learning through the medium of an additional language, it can enhance overall motivation towards the subject itself” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 11). Those same students that might have been reluctant to learn English in the early required courses now appear interested and predisposed to dealing with topics of their majors. These are some of the students’ comments:

Fue muy productivo. [It was very productive];

Desearía tener experiencias similares en otras asignaturas. [I would like to have similar experiences in other subjects];

Sirve para enterarme de los últimos avances en el área de materials. [It is useful to learn about the latest findings in the area of engineering materials]

Actualmente el inglés es esencial para abrir nuevas puertas a los futuros ingenieros. Sería adecuado que se incorpore el inglés en otras asignaturas. [These days English is essential and open new doors for future engineers. It would be useful to incorporate English in other subjects]

## **5. Conclusion**

It is undeniable that English “is the global tongue for this area of globalization” (Montgomery, 2013, p. 18) and, as preparers of future engineers, we must appropriately respond to meet the realities of today’s world. Chances are they will have to publish, attend conferences, read papers and have discussions in English.

The two actions presented in this paper were conceived to create authentic instances of meaningful input. According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), we acquire the language when the topics are interesting or meaningful and when language is used for communicating real ideas. Teachers should

(...) bring the student to the point where he or she can understand language outside the classroom. When this happens, the acquirer can utilize the real world, as well as the classroom, for progress. (Krashen and Terrell, 1983, p. 1)

We cannot ignore the fact that we are facing unfavourable circumstances. On the one hand, we are dealing with low level students. Even when some authors believe that authentic materials should not be used with elementary level learners, some researchers like Miller and McNeil (as cited in Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014) consider that authentic materials can be used with low level students on the condition that “they are used in the classroom in the same context that they were designed for, in the real world” (p. 252). The texts used in one of the interventions, for example, were scientific publications of new trends in the development of engineering materials, and they were used in the classroom to solve open-ended engineering problems, i.e., real or hypothetical situations students will face when dealing with new materials in the future.

On the other hand, time constraints, poor command of the language and fear of being exposed are some of the reasons why not all content teachers are eager to participate in the interventions.

In spite of the limitations, both instances of authentic language exposure have proven to be effective in the sense that students can get a glimpse of themselves in the future; significant, since they are working with meaningful material; and truly motivational, as observed by the students displaying their enthusiasm and participation.

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## 5 Researching into the effects of L1 glosses on undergraduates' reading comprehension

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### 1. Introduction

Reading can be defined as a complex ability which involves component skills such as (1) vocabulary knowledge and sight word recognition; (2) phonetic decoding skills; (3) relational knowledge and prediction from context; and (4) comprehension skills (Hudson, 2007, p. 34). First language (L1) and second language (L2) reading abilities share many component skills. However, there are several ways in which L2 reading differ from L1 reading. Most of these differences focus on the linguistic resources that a reader brings to the act of reading in an L2 (Grabe, 2014, p. 11).

Reading in a foreign language (FL) at university is a wide-ranging skill that involves knowledge of the language, recognition of technical terms, key conceptualizations and other forms of background knowledge. Undergraduates in our local context often arrive ill-prepared for the development of this ability because most of them have the opportunity to learn the basics of English only at secondary school or they study other languages, such as French or Portuguese. In spite of this situation, once in college, students have to deal with specific discourse genres in English, according to their field of knowledge, to fulfill academic requirements.

Undergraduates at Facultad de Ingeniería, Universidad Nacional de Misiones, attend two compulsory levels of English. Each course consists of ninety clock hours, three hours per week during the two semesters.

In *Taller de Inglés 1*, students are expected to:

1. Use linguistic forms by means of the incidental focus-on-form approach which involves the use of communicative tasks designed to elicit general samples of the language rather than specific forms. (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen 2002, p. 421);

2. Interpret popular technical articles from online newspapers or magazines;
3. Write different types of expository one-paragraph-long texts, using process-description, compare-contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution, and for-against organization patterns.

In *Taller de Inglés 2*, students have to:

1. Use different techniques in the translation of texts from English to Spanish ;
2. Develop academic listening skills by using listening strategies and note-taking techniques;
3. Write a scholarship application cover letter;
4. Rehearse situations found in the professional field, such as job hunting, resume writing, job interview and business presentation.

Because the first level of English is offered simultaneously at different study programmes, teachers have decided to choose one subject matter, namely, *environmental issues*, common to all students, to teach English. Another reason for the choice of the topic is that teachers want to contribute to raise environmental awareness in students since their future work will probably affect the environment. Finally, from a pedagogical viewpoint, teachers have chosen to narrow the scope of vocabulary so that students can devote more time to the learning of other aspects of the language, such as, syntax and pragmatics.

To help students improve their reading comprehension performance and, ultimately, to develop their interlanguage, a teaching strategy was adopted; that is, the use of marginal glosses in their L1 (Spanish) in the texts they worked with in class in 2016. To implement this didactic strategy, the literature was reviewed carefully and decisions on methodological aspects were made.

To assess the effects of L1 glosses on reading comprehension, a battery of instruments was designed. First, delayed vocabulary recall tests from the reviewed literature were adapted and administered every two lessons; a last delayed vocabulary recall test with input from all the reading material was also taken. Second, a reading comprehension exam, similar to the ones habitually done at college, was administered at the end of the pedagogical intervention which lasted for two months, three clock hours per week.

The current study investigated whether providing marginal L1 glosses in reading texts could assist undergraduates in interpreting texts, learning new vocabulary and retaining words over time.

## 1. Literature review

Reading comprehension involves abilities to recognize words rapidly and efficiently, develop and use a very large recognition vocabulary, process sentences in order to build comprehension, engage a range of strategic processes and underlying cognitive skills (e.g. setting goals, changing goals flexibly, monitoring comprehension), interpret meaning in relation to background knowledge, interpret and evaluate texts in line with reader goals and purposes, and process texts fluently over an extended period of time.

(Grabe, 2014, p.8)

Learning vocabulary corresponds to lower level processing reading abilities, but this does not mean that they are easier to learn than higher processes. Lower level processes include fast, automatic word recognition skills, automatic lexico-syntactic processing and semantic processing (Grabe, 2014, p. 9).

Learning vocabulary in a foreign language (FL/L2) is a multifaceted task. Learning a word involves, in general terms, knowing its form, meaning and use. From a reading comprehension viewpoint, knowing a word entails, mainly, recognizing a word in its written form, being aware that it may include affixes, and choosing the appropriate meaning according to the particular context in which the word is found (Nation, 2000, p. 41).

Students at university need to increase the number of specific words in English they know to facilitate the reading of texts for their studies. As Medellín Gómez (2008, p.12) states:

The major reason to teach vocabulary is more than add words to the students' mental lexicon; the major reason is to increase their linguistic abilities and offer them tools to comprehend new contexts and express their ideas in new worlds.

Therefore, to achieve this goal, it is necessary to ensure effective instruction by means of different pedagogical tools, such as carefully selected reading material, the design of activities to develop reading strategies and glossing. Nation (2000, p. 272) provides an explanation of glossing: "a gloss is a brief definition or synonym, either in L1 or L2, which is provided with the text." He suggests including glosses near the text of unknown words so as to facilitate reading.

The main reason for the use of glosses is to help students comprehend and learn new words (Vela; 2015, p.306).

According to Nation (in Vela 2015, p. 306), glosses help students comprehend the meaning of low frequency words, that is to say, words that do not occur regularly in everyday-use context of the target language.

Nation (2000, p. 273) lists a series of benefits in the use of glosses to learn vocabulary:

1. Glossing allows texts to be used that may be too difficult for learners to read without glosses;
2. Glossing provides accurate meanings for words that might not be inferred correctly;
3. Glossing provides minimal interruption of the reading process, especially if the glosses appear near the words being glossed. Dictionary use is much more time-consuming;
4. Glossing draws attention to words and thus may encourage learning.

Moreover, Watanabe (in Vela, 2015, p.306) suggests another advantage in using glosses in teaching material, namely, students practise words when they read glossed texts:

1. When students read a text they come up with an unknown word and this is their first input;
2. The next step is looking up at the meaning of the word provided by the gloss in the text (second input);
3. Then, they repeat the word to themselves to see if the given definition fits the meaning in the context (third input).

Vela (2015, p. 306) adds that the use of glosses provides reinforcement by offering rehearsal or several inputs to the same word.

Cheng and Good (2009) investigated the effects of three kinds of glosses in comparison with no gloss condition on reading an English passage to explore whether providing glosses can facilitate reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. The study found that L1 glosses helped subjects learn new words and review learned words. Yet, according to their findings, reading comprehension did not improve significantly.

Hashemian and Fadaei (2013) conducted research to find out whether L1/L2 glossing differed in their effectiveness on L2 reading and listening. The results revealed that the class receiving L1 glossing (Persian) outperformed the class receiving L2 glossing (English) in both reading and listening comprehension.

Vela (2015) carried out research to study the effects of L1/L2 glosses on incidental vocabulary acquisition. Subjects were divided in three groups and were assigned a text with highlighted low frequency words. One group had L1 glosses (Macedonian) to consult the

meaning of words; another group had L2 glosses (English) and the control group had no glosses. After reading their text, participants were given a vocabulary test to identify how many target words they remembered. Results indicated that both experimental groups outperformed the control group and that low proficiency students benefited from L1 glosses while high proficiency students profited from both gloss conditions.

Finally, Choi (2016) researched into the effects of L1 and L2 glosses on incidental vocabulary acquisition and lexical representations. To carry out the study he used three kinds of gloss conditions, L1 (Korean) or L2 (English), and no gloss. The results suggested that lexical processing and storage mechanisms could vary significantly depending on the gloss type. The L1 group outperformed the L2 group in the long-term retention of words.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Participants**

The study began with all the students (around 200) who attended their first level of English at FI-UNaM in 2016. However, only those who completed all phases, including the four delayed vocabulary recall tests and the reading comprehension exam, were counted. As a result, a total of 81 participants remained in the study (the experimental group). The participant researchers were experienced teachers.

### **2.2. Instruments**

Reading comprehension exams administered during 2015 were transformed into didactic material and marginal notes were added in the left margin of the texts, following the recommendation of the reviewed literature (Nation 2000, p.274). The glossed words were related to environmental issues. The reading material was designed to teach and practise reading strategies, namely, predicting; skimming; scanning; making inferences; vocabulary; and reference. Each text was meant to practice one strategy at a time. Six texts of about 450-500 words were used. The texts were retrieved from online newspapers and then adapted to suit the teaching purpose.

To assess the effects of L1 glosses on interpreting texts, learning new vocabulary and retaining words over time, four delayed vocabulary recall tests, and a reading comprehension exam were administered (See Appendices 1 & 2).

### **2.3. Procedures**

Students read the glossed text, and then the lesson was carried out in the usual way. Every two classes a test was administered to evaluate the learning of the glossed vocabulary,

following the procedure suggested in Meara (2010). Each test contained 60 words; 40 real words and 20 imaginary words. It took approximately about 5 minutes to administer the test. Following Meara's practice, the researchers took the number of real words that the student claimed to know and the number of imaginary words that the students claimed to know. These two figures went into a formula which estimated the actual number of words the student knew on that test. Students who guessed or who wrote *yes* when they were not sure got penalized by the formula and ended up with a lower score than those who wrote *yes* when they were sure they knew the meaning of the words in the test (p. 10).

A fourth test with inputs from the previous tests was taken at the end of the reading lessons.

Lastly, a reading comprehension exam was administered at the end of the teaching unit. It had a multiple-choice format. The text used for the exam did not contain glossed words; students had to recall the words learnt during the classes. The scores obtained by the subjects were compared and contrasted with the scores of the students from the previous year (the control group).

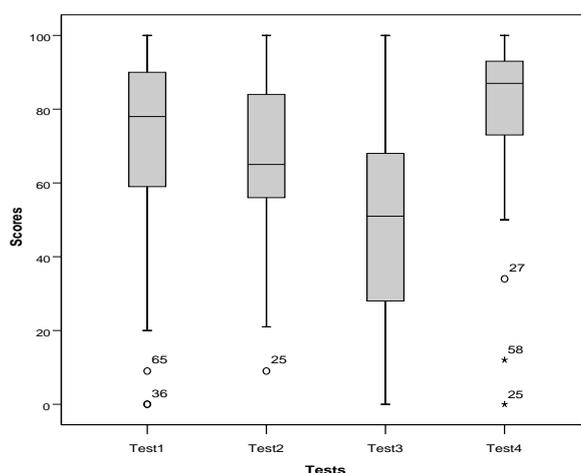
#### 2.4. Data treatment

The data obtained from the assessment instruments (the delayed vocabulary recall tests and the reading comprehension exams) were processed and analysed by means of descriptive statistics tools. To represent the results of the vocabulary test, four box plots were utilized. To show the results of the reading comprehension exams (2015-2016), histograms and box plots were used.

### 3. Results and discussion

Figure 1 shows four box plots, one for each vocabulary test taken. It can be seen that the mean of the scores decreased from the first to the third test with a wide dispersion in the latter. However, the mean increased considerably in test 4, in which the highest value was achieved and dispersion was reduced.

**Figure 1. Students' performance on the four vocabulary tests along the study.**



From the results observed in the box plots, it can be inferred that motivation played an important role in the outcome. Data was processed after finishing each test and it could be seen that performance decreased significantly from the first to the third test. To encourage students to do better, an extra score was offered to add to the mark of the reading comprehension exam, which was part of the course credits, if they got 60% in test 4. The motivational strategy used in this occasion was the reward.

[...] in an ideal world students would need no external incentives such as rewards because they would be driven by their inborn curiosity and the joy they gain from the learning process itself. However, we are not living (or at least teaching) in an ideal world and, in fact, many classrooms are becoming less and less ideal. This being the case, I think that rewards can constitute powerful motivational tools which would be a real luxury to ignore. (Dörnyei, 2001, p.129)

Students' response to this motivational strategy was positive. As can be seen in the diagram, far better results were achieved in test 4. When students lost interest in the new teaching strategy, achievement declined because they did not have any short-term gains; conversely, their performance increased noticeably after they were offered a concrete incentive.

Figure 2 shows the graphic representation of frequencies which was drawn with the scores obtained by a group of 121 students in a reading comprehension exam in 2015 (the control group). The histogram was created to analyze the degree of sample symmetry. The scores are presented in the horizontal line and the frequency of their occurrence in the vertical line. It can be observed that the most frequent score was 70. The number of students who scored below, as well as, above 70 decreased. The mean was 69.6 and the standard deviation was 13.1.

**Figure 2. Frequency distribution of the reading comprehension exam in 2015.**

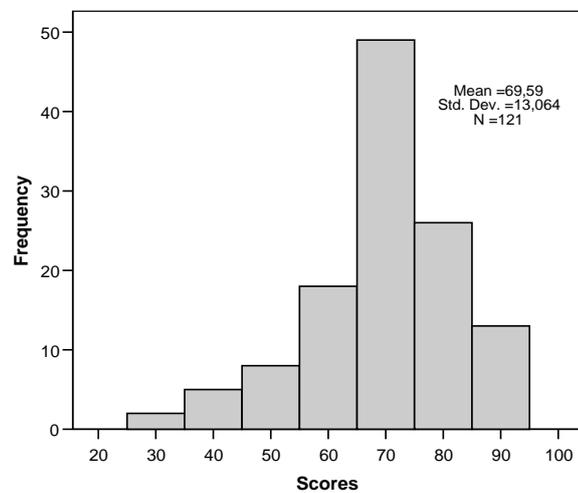
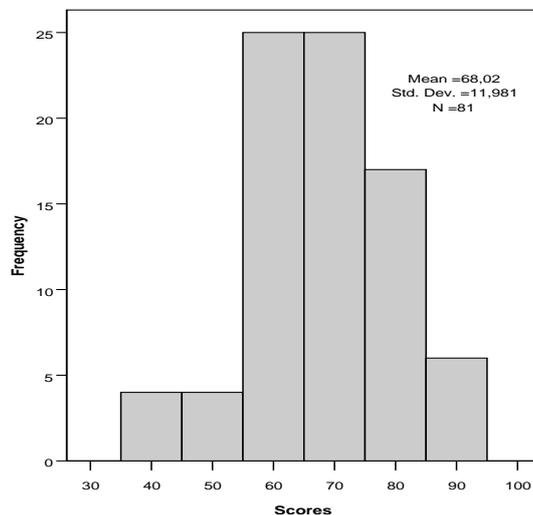


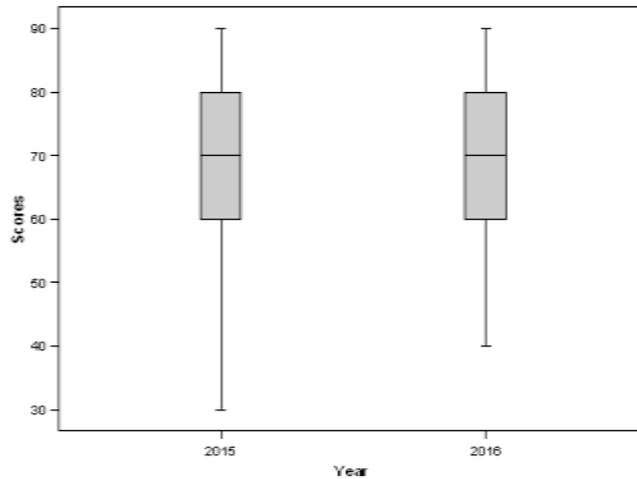
Figure 3 shows the frequency distribution of 81 students' performance on a reading comprehension exam in 2016, the one taken after the pedagogical intervention (the experimental group). The mean was of 68 and the standard deviation was 11.9.

**Figure 3. Frequency distribution of the reading comprehension exam in 2016.**



Finally, Figure 4 shows parallel box plots which compare the behaviour of both samples. The box plot on the left represents the scores that the control group got in 2015; the one on the right corresponds to the scores obtained by the experimental group in 2016. A significant mean difference cannot be observed; however, it can be seen, due to the length of the whiskers, that dispersion was less in the scores obtained by the experimental group.

**Figure 4. Comparison of students' performance on the reading comprehension exams.**



Results show that, even when the differences in the scores were not significant, the experimental group started with a higher level of performance; students' lowest scores were higher in the experimental group (40) than in the control group (30). In addition, there was less dispersion in the experimental group, i.e., a larger number of students achieved higher scores.

These findings are consistent with results of previous studies (Cheng & Good, 2009; Hashemian & Fadaei, 2013; Vela, 2015) that showed that students aided with glosses in their reading texts outperformed those without them.

Moreover, when it comes to word retention, and in line with Cheng and Good (2009) and Choi (2016), using L1 glosses had a positive effect on learning and retention as demonstrated by the results of the reading comprehension exam in 2016, as the exam did not have a glossed text, but students had to retrieve the meaning of words from their mental lexicon.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings for the research question investigated in this study are summarized as follows:

1. Although a significant mean difference could not be observed, students aided with L1 glosses interpreted the reading text at the exam better as a larger number of students reached higher levels of achievement.

2. L1 glosses facilitated the learning of new words as shown by the results of the reading comprehension exam. Regarding the vocabulary tests, performance improved considerably after the use of a motivational strategy.
3. L1 glosses helped students retain words over time since the text used for the exam did not have glosses to assist them, but they had to retrieve the meaning of words from their mental lexicon.

In conclusion, it may be stated that L1 glosses could assist students in interpreting texts, learning new words and retaining words over time.

As an implication of the study, a decision was made to include motivational strategies together with L1 glosses in future reading lessons. If basic motivational conditions are created, and motivation is generated, maintained and protected, students will learn more specific words. That might lead to the enhancement of their reading abilities, and thus—they may advance in the development of their interlanguage.

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## Appendix 1

### A Sample of Glossed Reading Texts Used in Class

#### Text 6

#### Second-generation biofuels can reduce emissions

<p>biocombustible de 2da generación          pastos          metas          tierra de cultivo</p> <p>más limpio          biológicas          modelo          matriz</p> <p>perenne          trabaja la tierra          fertilizante          suelo          etanol</p> <p>gases de efecto invernadero          sumidero          tierra de cultivo          bajo rendimiento          pasturas</p> <p>convertir          ahorros</p> <p>tierra marginal</p> <p>surge          galón (3,78 litros)          caída          rebote</p> <p>descuento tributario          eliminado gradualmente          ventaja</p> <p>política</p>	<p>According to a new study, <u>second-generation biofuel</u> crops like the perennial <u>grasses</u> miscanthus and switchgrass can efficiently meet emission reduction <u>goals</u> without significantly displacing <u>cropland</u> used for food production. Researchers from the University of Illinois and collaborators published their findings in the inaugural edition of the journal <i>Nature Energy</i>.</p> <p>Second-generation biofuels are much <u>cleaner</u> than corn ethanol thanks to a number of <u>biological</u> characteristics. In a 2011 study, DeLucia, a researcher from the university, used a <u>model</u> to show what would happen if the land which is being used to <u>grow corn</u> for ethanol production was instead converted to miscanthus and switchgrass. Since both of those plants are <u>perennial</u>, you do not <u>till</u> every year, so you release less carbon to the atmosphere. The grasses also require less <u>fertilizer</u>, which is a source of nitrous oxide, and they store more carbon in the <u>ground</u> than corn.</p> <p>Switching from using 40 percent of the corn crop for <u>ethanol</u> production to using the same land to grow biofuel <u>grasses</u> changes the entire scenario from a net source of <u>greenhouse gas</u> emissions to the atmosphere, to a net <u>sink</u> for CO<sub>2</sub>. It is assumed that farmers will not take their most productive <u>farmland</u> and use it for bioenergy crops, but they may use <u>low-yielding</u> land -- for example, low-quality <u>pastures</u> which already host perennial grasses.</p> <p>The new approach addresses a frequent complaint about second-generation bioenergy crops. If biofuel crops replace food crops, farmers around the world would be encouraged to indirectly <u>convert</u> new land into production. The carbon emitted from that process would lessen any <u>savings</u> from greenhouse gas reduction. By changing the land that is being used to grow biofuel crops from cropland to <u>marginal land</u>, the researchers say that the indirect land-use change effect becomes very small.</p> <p>However, another economic effect <u>arises</u> involving the global oil market, and could reduce a part of the <u>greenhouse gas</u> savings achieved by biofuels. Adding these billions of <u>gallons</u> of biofuel to the market could lead to a <u>fall</u> in the price of oil, and that could lead people to drive more. That fuel <u>rebound</u> effect could be significant. It all just depends on how OPEC and the price of oil respond to biofuel, and it is very uncertain.</p> <p>By giving second-generation biofuel producers a <u>tax credit</u>, the researchers say, corn ethanol could eventually be <u>phased out</u>, because it gives second-generation biofuels an <u>advantage</u>. Before that happens, two things need to take place: The market for biofuel needs to grow, meaning, the number of cars that can take biofuel needs to increase, and biofuel producers need to be certain that the <u>policy</u> will stay intact. We need a continuity of policies so that this effort does not stop.</p>
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<http://www.sciencedaily.com/>

## Appendix 2

### Text used for the Reading Comprehension Exam in 2016

FACULTAD DE INGENIERIA

NAME:

DATE:

STUDY PROGRAM:

#### A Reading Comprehension Exam

#### Gasification of oil palm biomass to produce clean producer gas for heat & power generation

Circle the best option to complete each exercise in sections 1 – 5

#### 1. Predicting (5)

According to the cues provided, what is the text about?

- Gasification of biomass to produce hydrogen for heat & power generation
- Gasification of biomass to produce clean gas for heat & power generation
- Gasification of biomass to produce oxygen for heat & power generation
- Gasification of biomass to produce chemicals for heat & power generation



August 7th, 2014

[http://www.mpoc.org.my/The\\_Oil\\_Palm\\_Tree](http://www.mpoc.org.my/The_Oil_Palm_Tree)

5 The process of burning fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The effect of this carbon dioxide emission into our atmosphere contributes to global warming. It is crucial to develop alternative renewable fuel sources which are sustainable, cost effective and environmentally friendly. Renewable resources would increase fuel sustainability, security and reduce the adverse effects related to fuel combustion. Biomass based fuels are gaining popularity as an alternative to fossil fuels.

10 A research team led by Professor Mohamad Asadullah, at MARA University of Technology in Malaysia, has embarked on a project related to gasification of biomass to produce clean producer gas. This gas mixture can be used as a fuel for internal combustion engines, turbines and fuel cells for power generation. The novelty of this technology is that, it can simultaneously remove impurities and can produce clean gas for heat and power generation.

15 The technology developed in this project utilizes waste biomass as a feedstock, especially oil palm biomass, and produces value added products such as fuels and chemicals. Palm oil mills generate abundant quantity of biomass waste especially empty fruit bunches (EFB) and surplus fiber/shell which face a problem of disposal unless they are utilized for mulching or used for generating electricity in the oil palm industry through gasification system.

20 Biomass gasification is a thermal conversion technology, where the solid fuel is converted into combustible gas with a limited supply of oxygen. The producer gas is a mixture of combustible (CO, H<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>) and non-combustible gases (CO<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>). A gasification system basically consists of a gasifier unit, purification system and energy converters either for feeding directly to boilers or gas engines. The gasification of solid fuel is accomplished in an air sealed, close chamber, under slight suction or pressure relative to ambient temperature. There are four different processes in the gasification unit, namely drying, pyrolysis, oxidation and reduction.

25 Currently, available gasification technologies and processes produce gas with unusually high concentration of impurities such as tar, dust and acidic gases which render it difficult to be used widely. This technology can simultaneously remove impurities and produce clean gas for heat and power generation from waste biomass. There is a huge commercial potential for this technology to be utilized in countries that produce large amounts of biomass, especially oil palm biomass which is suitable to be used in renewable energy production.

30 Adapted from: <http://www.sciencedaily.com>  
<http://palmoilis.mpob.gov.my/publications/TOT/TT-229.pdf>

## 6 Effect of pre-writing activities through online forums on writing tasks

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### 1. Introduction

Authenticity and meaningful pedagogical practices acquire new dimensions in a world where digital technologies have become an integral part of everyday life and have introduced new elements to social interaction (Dussel & Quevedo, 2010). In this scenario, meaningful English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching can neither ignore the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) nor fail to incorporate issues related to online learning. However, there is still little systematic evidence of the gains of web-based language learning (WBLL) in higher education (Ngo, 2016; Tri & Nguyen, 2014). Given the need to focus on meaningful uses of ICTs and their impact on the development of language learning skills, the purpose of this paper is to analyse the effect of pre-writing activities through online forum debates on writing tasks carried out in the virtual classroom of an English Language II course at Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba. This will help us to determine whether the collaborative construction of knowledge evidenced in students' contributions to the forum during the first stage of this project is also reflected in their productions (Dalla Costa & Gava, 2016). The specific objectives are: a) to analyse the effects of the online pre-writing activities through collaborative forum debates on students' writing tasks, and b) to compare them to the results of a survey carried out to obtain the students' perceptions of the online activity. To this end, we review prior research on ICTs and language teaching focusing on the usefulness of digital technologies for the development of EFL writing skills. We develop a pedagogical approach to collaborative learning and communicative language teaching, and a conceptual framework based on Bloom's (1971) taxonomy of cognitive skills for the construction of knowledge. We also describe the methodology used for the analysis of students' written

productions. Finally, we present the results and limitations of this study, its pedagogical applications and future lines of research.

## **2. Theoretical framework and literature review**

Changes in the production and access to information generated by ICTs offer cognitive and social opportunities for the construction of knowledge and collaborative learning and require new skills and practices. As a consequence, new literacy teaching models are required. In fact, as Area and Pessoa (2012) suggest, “appropriation of meaning and multimedia expression are the new terms for the old concepts of reading and writing” (p. 17). In this context, literacy in general and writing in EFL, in particular, imply developing not only instrumental skills to use digital technologies, but also cognitive and social skills to interact with information and transform it into knowledge in a collaborative manner. Even though online learning has increased in popularity, meaningful applications of WBLL have not been matched by research in higher education (Dalla Costa & Gava, 2009, 2016; Gava & Anglada, 2015; García, González & Ramos, 2010; Sun & Chang, 2012). However, digital technologies play an important educational role as they provide cognitive and social affordances for the construction of knowledge and collaborative learning, which are two competences included in digital literacy, also called *multiliteracy* and *new literacy* since literacy requires more complex processes than just the instrumental use of technology (Area & Pessoa, 2012).

The cognitive affordance of ICTs, the construction of knowledge, is not a new concept. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) already referred to the difference between *knowledge telling* and *knowledge construction*, that is, transforming information critically. This difference is particularly relevant in today's society. According to Area and Pessoa (2012), it becomes necessary to distinguish between information and knowledge as the possibility to access large amounts of data alone does not reflect the capacity to use them meaningfully. Then, from this point of view, literacy represents the appropriation of cognitive abilities to interact with information and transform it into knowledge in a critical way.

As a conceptual framework for this study, the classification of intellectual abilities for the construction of knowledge proposed by Bloom (1971) was adopted. He identified six cognitive levels: *knowledge*, *comprehension*, *application*, *analysis*, *synthesis* and *evaluation*. Each of these levels is based on the previous ones and represents a higher order thinking skill. Assuming that the development of critical thinking can be facilitated by the collaborative construction of knowledge by means of forum debates, we use Bloom's taxonomy to describe the levels of cognitive abilities evidenced in students' contributions to the debate.

The social affordance of ICTs, collaborative learning, is not a new concept either, but research in this area is still scarce (Gava & Anglada, 2015; Juárez de Perona, 2007; Zheng, Warschauer & Farkas, 2013). Educational environments in which cooperation is fostered were already present in Piaget's (1970) and Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist approaches. These theorists put emphasis on transforming information into knowledge by means of a relational process. Therefore, knowledge is not transmitted but constructed through interaction with others. In conclusion, the cognitive and social opportunities for the collaborative construction of knowledge that technological changes have generated have important implications for the teaching of EFL.

The forum debate constitutes a pedagogical tool that can enrich the teaching and learning processes. It reflects constructivist concepts since it enables students: "to use technologies for experiential learning tasks, carry out tasks in collaboration with others, reflect on the process (...), and increase control over their own learning." (Bikowski & Kessler, 2002, p. 28). These factors help increase students' motivation and engagement. Studies suggest that forums constitute one of the most cooperative virtual learning environments to develop language skills and have a potential that should be exploited.

At a national level, Davis, Fernández and Mailhes (2013) investigated the construction of knowledge by means of virtual forums in EFL teaching at UNLaM. The results revealed a positive attitude towards the forum as it enabled students to exchange messages in a cooperative way. Such communication led to the development of writing skills. In the context of this study, Gava (2012) also studied the collaborative construction of knowledge by means of forums. The results led to a taxonomy of collaboration in forum debates. The author concludes that this tool fosters collaboration and higher order skills relevant to EFL learning.

Salmons (2008, p.4) proposes a taxonomy of online collaboration that provides a framework to understand the levels of collaboration in virtual learning environments. These include: (1) dialogue (participants exchange points of view), (2) peer feedback (students exchange comments to create a task), (3) parallel collaboration (each participant completes a component of a task that is combined in a collective product), (4) sequential collaboration (participants work over prior contributions and these are combined), and (5) synergic collaboration (a final product is created mixing individual contributions). Thus, even if students complete a project independently, if they integrate their efforts to obtain a result, we can describe their work as collaborative, which offers opportunities to construct knowledge.

### **3. Research design**

This study was carried out in the virtual classroom of an English Language II course belonging to the second year of the English Language Teaching, Translation and Licentiate programmes. The participants were 32 students belonging to two groups of the course and two teachers.

This project constitutes a quasi-experimental study based on quantitative and qualitative methods. For data collection, questions for the forum debate and a student survey were designed. Before the debate, training in the types of collaboration and levels of cognitive abilities for the construction of knowledge in virtual environments was provided. During the debate, which was open for three weeks, the teachers published a question related to the syllabus unit *Leisure and Holidays* as a pre-writing activity. The teachers' role was to moderate the debate and summarise students' contributions. Finally, a topic for an expository essay in which students could use the knowledge constructed in the debate was uploaded. Once the debate had finished, the analysis of students' contributions was carried out to determine the levels of collaboration and cognitive abilities used. After the students had submitted their essays, a post-study survey was carried out to obtain their perceptions of this activity.

To examine the effects of the online pre-writing activities through the forum debates on students' writing tasks, the references made in the essays to information previously discussed in the forum were classified. A table was designed to tabulate data related to the type of information included (i.e. reference to short stories, background readings and audiovisual materials), the section of the essay in which the information was presented (e.g. introduction, body, conclusion) and the levels of higher order skills evidenced, namely, *knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis* and *evaluation* (Bloom, 1971). Later, these results were compared to the results of a survey carried out to obtain the students' perceptions of the online activity and determine whether the collaborative construction of knowledge evidenced in the students' contributions to the forum during the first stage of this project was also reflected in the analysis of their productions in this second stage.

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1. The effects of online forum debates on the students' writing tasks**

The analysis of the forum during the first stage of this project showed that students' contributions to the debate were indicative of collaboration by means of online dialogue—the first level of collaboration identified by Salmons (2008). Besides, the six levels of higher order skills in Bloom's (1971) taxonomy were applied. This, in turn, was reflected in the types of information included in the different sections of the essay, which also evidenced higher order skills.

Ninety per cent of the essays written by students who had participated in the forum included information previously discussed in the forum. As regards the types of information included in the essays as a result of the online debate, most students included information from audiovisual materials. For example, they made reference to *El Sistema*, a social programme to help poor children in Venezuela:

A great example of this is the amazing children's orchestra in Venezuela called El Sistema where a group of people keep kids away from the streets and vices teaching them how to play instruments and also values. (Supporting detail in a body paragraph)

Some students also related this programme to the short story "The Legacy" by Virginia Wolf:

Like Angela, in the short story "The Legacy", you can participate in institutions that help people in need such as El Sistema in Venezuela, an organization that educates people through music. (Supporting detail in a body paragraph)

Most students referred to the short story "Roman Fever" as this example shows:

Although everybody is free to choose what to do, I think that just sitting without doing anything productive as the two main characters of Roman Fever do at the beginning of the story is not the best thing to do when one has some time to kill. (Introductory paragraph)

Many students also mentioned background reading materials such as "The Use of Free Time":

In conclusion, these different leisure activities let us produce the goods of the soul, spirit and intellect, which makes a life worth living, as Mortimer Adler holds in "The Use of Free Time". (Concluding paragraph)

In relation to the section of the essay in which information from the forum debate was included, most essays presented such information in the supporting details of body paragraphs where they included examples from audiovisual materials such as *El Sistema* or short stories such as "The Legacy" as shown above, and in the introductory paragraph where they mainly made reference to the short story "Roman Fever" and the article "The Use of Free Time":

According to Aristotle, there are two kinds of serious activities in which a person can engage. Over the years, most people have dedicated themselves to that kind of work

that only provides money, in other words, the one from which you make a living. However, there is another type of work which produces not the goods of the body but the goods of the spirit, and is called leisure work. There are three productive and creative leisure activities by which people can grow morally, intellectually or spiritually. (Introduction)

With regard to the levels of higher order skills evidenced in the information from forum debates included in the essays, the six levels of cognitive abilities in Bloom's (1971) taxonomy were achieved. *Knowledge* and *comprehension* of the topic and *application* of background knowledge to develop main ideas are evidenced in this excerpt that shows how a student developed the idea of helping others dealt with in the materials by applying it to her knowledge:

Moreover, helping others is another popular leisure activity and it is considered one of the most rewarding ones. Although it generally involves long hours, research has shown that those who are involved in different projects to help people in need tend to be the happiest. A good example of this could be the people who take part in volunteering programs abroad during their holidays.

In addition, students' contributions show instances of *synthesis, analysis and evaluation*—the other three higher order skills. As the following excerpts show, students analysed specific examples by making connections between reading and audiovisual materials and summarising them. The level of evaluation becomes evident as students assessed the value of leisure activities that contribute to intellectual and spiritual growth.

One of the leisure activities which fills people's soul is being engaged in cultural pursuits, as they provide artistic and collective feelings. (...) In addition to art and entertainment, participating in social programmes such as El Sistema and political affairs is important to reflect upon the society we want to live in and the kind of person we want to be.

As can be seen, the effects of pre-writing activities through collaborative forum debates on the students' writing tasks are evident in the types of information included in the different sections of the essays, which showed different levels of higher order skills. The analysis of students' essays shows that this online task appears to have been conducive to the collaborative construction of knowledge by means of the meaningful negotiation of ideas

through dialogue in the forum and the application of higher order skills to the subsequent essay writing task.

#### 4.2 Students' perceptions of the online activity

Once the project was completed, a post-study survey with closed- and open-ended questions was administered. The students' answers show that 59% of the participants were familiar with the use of online forums although 94% had not used them as a pre-writing activity. In spite of this, many students referred to the advantages of the forum. For instance, most of them said that it was very useful to learn from their classmates' contributions and improve their writing skills. They also maintained that this debate was beneficial since there were no time or space constraints. Some students expressed that they could learn more about digital technology. Some pointed out that this online environment was suitable for those who do not participate in face-to-face classes. Interestingly, 72% of the participants admitted that the forum was conducive to the development of the skills of analysis and synthesis. In general, students stressed the benefits of using the virtual classroom, of the guiding role of the teachers, and of developing group work skills (Dalla Costa & Gava, 2016). The comparison of the effects of the online pre-writing activities through the collaborative forum debates on students' writing tasks with the students' perceptions of this online activity enables us to state that the usefulness of the forum for the collaborative construction of knowledge evidenced in the survey during the first stage of this project is also reflected in their productions in this second stage.

### 5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that the cognitive and interactional affordances of the online forum seem to favour the collaborative construction of knowledge for the development of EFL writing skills in the context of this study.

One of the limitations of this project is the twofold role of the teachers as researchers and participants, which may influence the interpretation of results owing to subjective perceptions of students' performance. In order to have an additional instrument to triangulate results, the student survey was carried out, which enabled us to corroborate the information obtained from the analysis of the essays.

As to the pedagogical implications of this study, it is necessary to analyse the changes that ICTs are producing in education and rethink the new competences required. This implies teacher training that includes not only an instrumental but also a pedagogic approach to ICTs. Moreover, as these EFL students will communicate using the Internet in their profession, it is necessary for them to develop online writing skills so they can successfully participate in these

communicative scenarios. In fact, the incorporation of Internet tools, such as forum debates, to education is no longer an option but a necessity.

A future line of research could determine whether the collaborative construction of knowledge is possible in other contexts, for example, other courses in the same institution, and whether the application of higher order abilities increases with students' proficiency.

Given the advances of technology and the resources available, the metaphor of the kaleidoscope proposed by the Argentinean author Carina Lion (2015) to account for the new relationships among technology, innovation, motivation and meaningful learning seems appropriate. It offers a new perspective that challenges us to leave our comfort zone to promote digital citizenship through educational change.

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## 7 Developing quality education through imaginative understanding using literature

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### 1. Introduction

This article describes a literature workshop carried out in 2016 in higher education with future teachers/translators of English. It introduced an intercultural citizenship and human rights perspective in a regular language course through the reading of specific novels, short stories and films. It rests on the notion of the ecological university (Barnett, 2011), which links the learning that takes place in higher education with the community, in this case through the development of democratic values and competences and also by encouraging learners to take social or civic action beyond the classroom. This vision of the university resonates with an educational orientation in language learning in higher education beyond the purely instrumental (Byram, 2008; Byram, Golubeva, Han & Wagner, 2017) that encompasses citizenship and human rights perspectives (Osler & Starkey, 2010). Building on new conceptualisations of reading in the digital age (Allington & Pihlaj, 2016), the workshop combined critical thinking, imaginative understanding, and intercultural citizenship to provide “quality education” (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 385).

We begin by outlining some key features of literature, in particular the narrative genre, related to the intercultural dimension of language learning. After that, we link this framework with the notion of narrative imagination proposed by Nussbaum (2006) and articulate how it contributes to the development of democratic values and competences. This development represents an ecological conceptualization of higher education (Barnett, 2011). We then describe the workshop, designed as case study, and present our findings.

## **1. Literary reading and the narrative genre**

Because this project is a literature workshop which is part of an ordinary language course, we state our assumptions around literary reading. We acknowledge that there exists extensive literature on the psychological, textual and other processes involved in reading literature and also that no literary text can be seen as simply related to a specific cultural context. Furthermore, “the reading of literature is determined by the learners’ response as social actors with specific cultural identities. Thus, each learner individualizes the learning experience and comes to very different conclusions about the meaning of a common text” (Byram & Grundy, 2002, p. 194). Consequently, “there can never be any definitive interpretation” (Widdowson, 1992, p. 24; 2003). Widdowson (2011, personal communication) explains: “[W]ith literary texts authorial intention is, even when known, of little if any relevance. Such texts also tend to be thematically complex (...) literary texts are of their nature subject to variable and unregulated interpretation: what is significant for one reader may be very different from what is significant for another, depending (...) on a range of individual and social associations (...) With literary texts, readers can engage in creative appropriation and open-ended interpretation.” More recently, Belsey (2014), Green, Chatham and Sestir (2012), Janssen, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam and van den Bergh (2012), Janssen, Braaksma and Couzijn (2009), Simpson (2014) and others have shown the consensus in the field regarding the centrality of reader flexibility in literary reading. Finally, following Allington and Swann (2009), literary reading can be seen as social practice, and can also be studied as social practice. One way in which this can be done is by engaging in analyses of understanding by real or actual readers as we do in this study.

The narrative genre was chosen because it is a course requirement and the literary focus was chosen because literature is a key pillar in language education with an intercultural orientation (Burwitz Melzer, 2001; Byram & Grundy, 2002). Literary texts foster self-awareness but also transform individual experience in collective experience through the exploration of what motivates characters, how different characters interact, and how their objectives and ways of reaching them conflict, for instance (Bruner, 2002). Moreover, stories are always told from a particular perspective or standpoint, which allows for intercultural understanding because the uncovering of a certain perspective simultaneously reveals another one (Bruner, 2002). Narratives allow readers to become aware of alternative perspectives and to de-centre their own thinking by placing themselves in somebody else’s shoes and therefore to critically examine, and understand, the reality of this ‘other’. De-centring and perspective-taking are two essential skills in intercultural citizenship (Byram et al., 2017). Literature provides “this imaginative leap that will enable learners to imagine cultures different from their own”

(Kramersch, 1995, p. 85) and can therefore “be used to develop an understanding of otherness” (Burwitz Melzer, 2001, p. 29; Matos, 2005).

## **2. Culture, literature and imagination**

Literature then is one key pillar in language learning together with culture and imagination “for it is literature that opens up ‘reality beyond realism’ and that enables readers to live other lives – by proxy” (Kramersch, 1995, p. 85). Emotion and affect are a key aspect in this imaginative dimension of culture (Dewaele, 2013). The argument is not new and twenty years ago Shanahan (1997) pointed out the need to foreground imagery, emotion and affect in language learning through literature: “The cultural features of literature represent a powerful merging of language, affect, and intercultural encounters and often provide the exposure to living language that a FL student lacks” (Shanahan, 1997, p. 168). More recently, Carter (2010, p. 116) referred to “the primary authenticity of literary texts and of the fact that more imaginative and representational uses of language could be embedded alongside more referentially utilitarian output.”

## **3. Narrative imagination to develop democratic competences in higher education**

In language education, Byram (2008; Byram et al., 2017) proposed an educational orientation beyond the purely instrumental that encompasses citizenship and human rights perspectives (Osler & Starkey, 2010). In higher education, this perspective (described as ‘intercultural citizenship’) resonates with the notion of the ecological university (Barnett, 2011), which links the learning that takes place in higher education with the local community and the wider world, in this case through the development of democratic values and competences and also by encouraging learners to take social or civic action beyond the classroom. Attitudes of curiosity and openness to otherness, criticality, and the skills of de-centring and perspective-taking, are essential in this conceptualisation.

In the field of education, Nussbaum (2006) proposed that higher education can and should contribute to the development of democratic values and competences by focusing on three dimensions in the classroom: critical thinking, imaginative understanding and world citizenship. In this way, “quality education” (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 385) is provided. Criticality involves analysis and reflection on oneself and others, and dialogue to bridge difference. World citizenship (what Byram calls intercultural citizenship) involves the ability to see oneself as member of a global community (beyond particular groups and local communities) with a sense of humanness that brings people together. Finally, imaginative understanding or narrative imagination, best cultivated through the arts and literature, “means the ability to

think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have" (Nussbaum, 2006, pp. 390-91). These capacities are central in intercultural citizenship in language education (Byram, 2008; Byram et al., 2017) and Nussbaum (2006) herself recognises language learning, literature and the arts as powerful vehicles in the provision of quality education understood in this way.

#### **4. The case**

The workshop was designed as case study, planned as a task and theme based project within the language course, and addressed human rights concerns.

Participants were 45 second year students, aged 18-22, with a B2/C1 level of English according to the CEFR. Data include teacher field notes, multimodal representations of the literary works, descriptive logs of each representation, and final individual reflection logs. Data were analysed using content analysis (Mertens, 2015).

A multimodal representation is an adaptation of a visual representation (Porto & Byram, 2017) in which students transform a text using multiple and varied semiotic systems in order to provide a personal interpretation or perspective. This representation involves bending, a form of reader response for the digital age. More specifically, "bending is one form of restorying, a process by which people reshape narratives to represent a diversity of perspectives and experiences that are often missing or silenced in mainstream texts, media, and popular discourse" (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 313). Restorying involves imagination, empathy and understanding of otherness, and can have aesthetic purposes (e.g. pleasure) but also activist purposes (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016). Here we understand 'activist' as a form of political engagement where political does not mean adopting a certain ideology but working in collaboration with others to take action in the world (Byram, 2008). There is then an explicit link here with intercultural citizenship theory in language education (Byram et al., 2017), with imaginative understanding and world citizenship in education (Nussbaum, 2006) and with a human rights perspective in education as students relate to and reflect upon themes of concern for humanity (Osler & Starkey, 2010).

#### **5. Findings and discussion**

Data were analysed qualitatively focusing on content analysis (Mertens, 2015). Particular attention was given to the three capacities that lead to quality education in higher education, namely, critical thinking, imaginative understanding and world citizenship. Findings show that

students engaged in critical imaginative understanding, an essential capacity in the development of democratic citizenship (Nussbaum, 2006).

There were 45 multimodal representations, one per student, which can all be categorised under one form of bending called transmedia storytelling (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016). It means transforming a written story to art work and in this case it comprised a variety of options such as drawings, paintings, cartoons, collages, comparative charts, acrostics, quotes from famous people, and quotes from characters in the novels, films or short stories read. Students used varied materials including paper, cardboard, cotton, glitter, pencils, colour pencils, watercolours and canvas. They resorted to several techniques leading to several outcomes such as handmade painting, handmade art crafts, digital artwork, details in 3D, black and white artwork, and flyers.

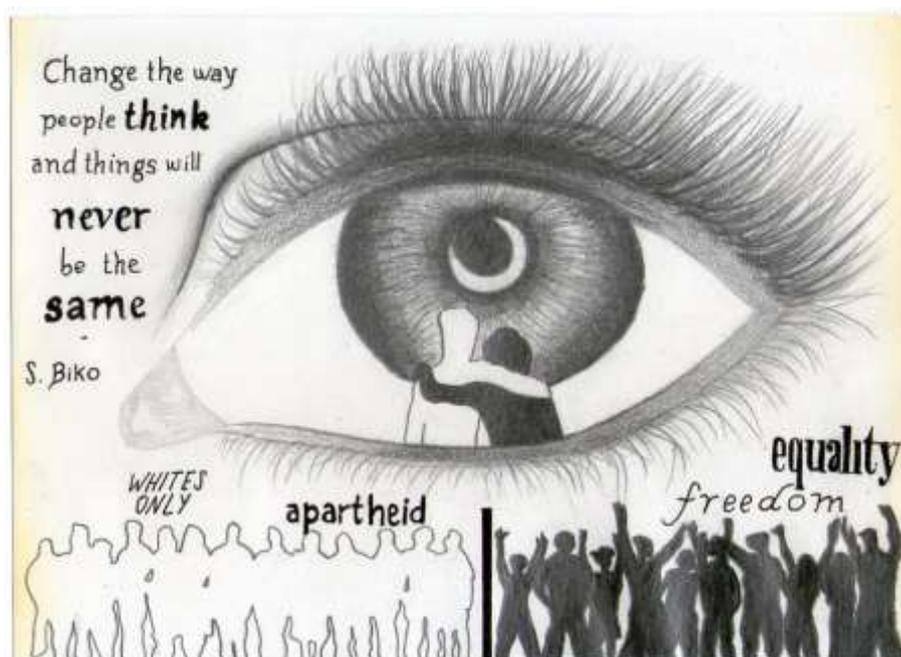
The comparative perspective, essential to allow self-awareness and awareness of otherness, was pervasive and this perspective is a key element in intercultural citizenship theory in the language classroom (Byram, 2008), in the development of citizenship competences in students as it stimulates criticality (Nussbaum, 2006) and also in human rights education as here there is, among other things, a continuous and critical examination of the ways in which human rights are respected or violated in different contexts (Osler & Starkey, 2010). For instance, on the basis of *Cry Freedom*, one student created a collage using a picture of a character, a quote and headlines from American newspapers of the time. Another one designed a collage of pictures of South Africa from 1952 to 1978. Yet another one made a comparative chart involving a sign from those times (“White area-Blanke gebied”) and a current controversial tweet by South African singer and songwriter Steve Hofmeyr stating that “Blacks were the architects of Apartheid” (2016). In the descriptive log accompanying this representation, the student expressed that “It seems that *some people believe* there is no such discrimination against black people *because* apartheid ended in 1994 and *that’s not true*. For example, Steve Hofmeyr, the South African singer, claims black people caused the apartheid”. The italicised expressions are indicative of this student’s capacity for criticality, i.e. her ability to observe reality (‘apartheid ended in 1994’), critically reflect on a perspective (‘some people believe’), challenge it (‘that’s not true’) and support it (‘for example’). Similarly, another student juxtaposed a photo of an adolescent in 1960 holding a sign that reads “We won’t go to school with negroes” and a current photo of a banner in a street demonstration with the slogan “murdered by police” and showing 27 images of black people who have lost their lives in police incidents in the US. In her descriptive log, she stated her conclusion: “The picture shows us that discrimination, segregation and violence against black people remains in 2016”.

In their representations, the students transformed text (novels, short stories, and films) through mode as shown before (e.g. to art work), but also in terms of time and place (juxtaposing the past narrated in the texts and their own present times, for instance in the example of Steve Hofmeyr and the current demonstrations in the US against the police due to racial prejudice), perspective and identity (by taking the side of slaves or blacks in absolutely all representations and bringing to their art work their own identifications with what matters in their view (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016).

To do this, students needed to engage in imaginative understanding or narrative understanding (Nussbaum, 2006), i.e. the ability to place oneself in somebody else's shoes and see through their eyes. This ability is essential in intercultural citizenship education in the language classroom (Byram, 2008) and involves the skills of de-centring (i.e. moving away from one's own positions and perspectives) and perspective-taking (i.e. see through new lenses). In the descriptive logs, this ability is shown not only in the fact that students portrayed the perspectives of slaves or blacks but also in the sense of empathy that they developed. Linguistically, this is revealed for instance through the use of adjectives and expressions reflecting the harshness, cruelty and injustice the characters were undergoing: "the *cruel* way they were treated", "all the *spilled blood* of that black people", "the chains mean the *feeling of imprisonment* of the last ones [the powerless]". In imaginative understanding (Nussbaum, 2006) and intercultural understanding (Byram, 2008), emotion and affect play a key role in this process of 'imagining' the 'other' (Dewaele, 2013; Kramsch, 1995).

Finally, the third capacity for democratic citizenship that we observed is world citizenship, defined as "an ability to see themselves [students] as not simply citizens of some local region or group, but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 389). All 45 students departed from the texts but moved beyond by reflecting on humankind in general. For example, in the following representation (Figure 1), this student set out from a quote by Biko in *Cry Freedom* in order to contrast segregation and violation of rights in the Apartheid and the values of equality and freedom. She represented these values in the image of the two characters, Biko and Woods, hugging in unity and "they are inside the eye as something that, by then, is just an illusion since they live in Apartheid" (descriptive log).

Figure 1. Multimodal representation based on *Cry Freedom*.



This student closed her descriptive log with a message that restores the humanness that she sees as missing in the film (captured by the illusion suggested by the eye): “this thing of racism and people thinking in terms of superiority is seen everywhere (...) I think that if people could see things in a kinder way, EVERYTHING would be different in a lot of aspects” (her emphasis).

In the representations, some students portrayed the message they wished to transmit resorting to signs (“End racism thru unity”, Figure 2; “[Stop] Racism”; “integration not segregation”, Figure 3) and the use of imperatives indicates that they were addressing a general audience with the aim of instilling change by raising the awareness of people today about the values that matter in a democratic society.

Figure 2. Awareness-raising multimodal representation

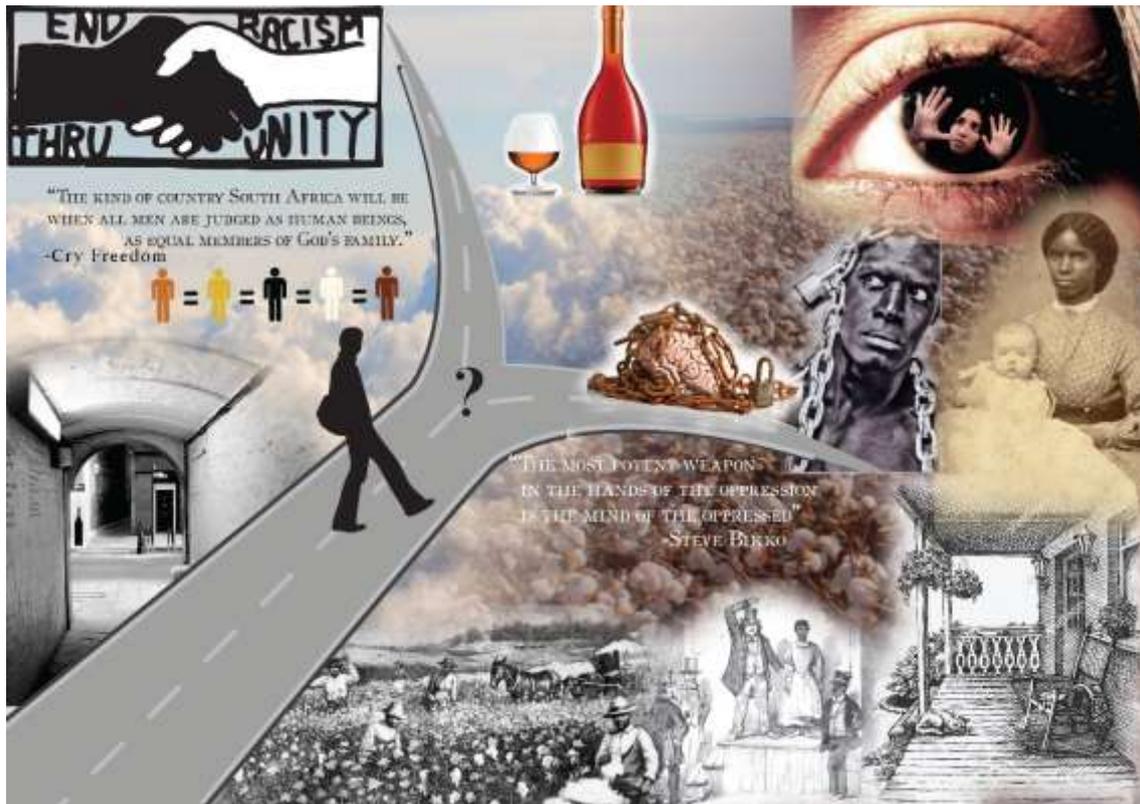


Figure 3. Multimodal representation with a call for unity



Overall, our study contradicts Thomas and Stornaiuolo's (2016, p. 330) observation that "there is little emphasis on the creative capacities of making meaning beyond the limitations of the four corners of the text" as this project revealed "the ways young people engage in

reading practices that position them at the centre of their literate worlds (p. 318). In our project, the three capacities for the development of democratic values and competences that lead to quality education in higher education, namely criticality, imaginative understanding and world citizenship (Nussbaum, 2006), were embodied in a pedagogy that frame[d] teaching and learning as centrally concerned with nurturing the language, literacy, and cultural practices youth bring with them, moving beyond the four corners of texts to explore the intersections between identities, contexts, and author/reader/text transactions” (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 330). This is the “creative appropriation and open-ended interpretation” referred to by Widdowson (2011, personal communication).

Finally, Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016, p. 323) “characterize bending as agentive reader responses” that might have activist purposes. Activism here is a form of political engagement through which students, working in collaboration with others, take some civic or social action in the world (Byram, 2008). In this project, this action in the world was materialized in the multimodal representations that students created, which were intended to raise the awareness of people today about human rights violations in the past and at present. At this point, Byram’s (2014) educational view of language teaching (beyond the instrumental) explicitly links with Barnett’s (2011) ecological conceptualisation of higher education that bridges the university with the community. The students took part in *Circo Poético*, a poetry exhibition and fair organized for the first time by their university in 2016 with the aim of building bridges between poetry and art (understood as performative and multimodal) and the local community. The representations and descriptive logs were displayed in a special corner of the students’ building at the School of Humanities and Sciences of Education on November 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Students welcomed peers, teachers and the community in general and shared their project. In so doing, they contributed to restoring the humanness lost in the novels, short stories and films they had read as part of their language course by addressing issues of human rights both locally and globally, across perspectives, times and places, in a variety of modes.

## **6. Conclusion**

This literature workshop introduced an intercultural citizenship and human rights perspective within a regular language course for future teachers/translators of English at a local university in 2016. Designed as a task and theme based project and case study, findings show that students engaged in critical imaginative understanding, an essential capacity in the development of democratic citizenship and the provision of quality education in higher education.

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## 8 Designing authentic activities for a university course: An eclectic approach

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### 1. Introduction

The design of authentic activities is a central element of most current approaches to language teaching. This paper aims at showing how we have designed authentic activities for *English Language I* students at the School of Languages, UNC following an eclectic approach. *English Language I* is a first-year subject of the English Language Teaching, Translation and Licentiate programmes. Its goal is to help students reach an intermediate level of English using current methods and approaches. As Nunan (1989) maintains, there is a symbiotic relationship between the approaches to teaching and the materials chosen to apply them. Consequently, we have designed materials following the main tenets of the approaches and methods adopted using authentic texts (Gilmore, 2007). Since the use of authentic texts in non-authentic ways “limits the potential of the materials as resources of language learning” (Gannio, Labate & Lineares, 2016, p.84), this eclectic approach has guided the design of authentic language activities. The criteria for the selection of authentic texts to cater for students' needs will be specified and examples will be provided.

### 2. Theoretical framework

#### 2.1. An eclectic approach

After searching for the method that would solve the problems of language teaching, English language teaching has shifted its focus away from methods and entered what some have called the “post-methods era” (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p.247). This period is characterized

by an eclectic approach to language teaching and learning that enables teachers to make informed choices to select the right methods to cope with classroom issues (Bell, 2007; Brown, 2007). This is the approach that has been employed to design the *English Language I* syllabus at the School of Languages, UNC. The level students are expected to achieve is intermediate (Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Council of Europe, 2001).

At this level, it is necessary for students to develop communicative competence. Therefore, this syllabus is based on the principles of the communicative approach and attempts to develop the different components of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972): linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic. Linguistic competence includes lexical, phonological, syntactic and semantic knowledge of the language as a system. Sociolinguistic competence refers to sociocultural rules of language use, that is, social and cultural aspects of the language that determine whether the message is appropriate in different contexts. Discursive competence is related to the mechanisms through which textual coherence and cohesion are achieved whereas strategic competence implies the ability to learn how to learn and discover a new language and culture.

Within the communicative approach, integrated skills instruction based on the four macroskills of the language is provided as proposed by Scarcella & Oxford (1992), and the two models for integrated teaching are followed: Content-Based Instruction (Snow, Met & Genesee, 1989) and Task-Based Instruction (Nunan, 2004; Willis, 1996). The former combines language learning with the learning of academic contents, i.e., topics based on EFL students' academic needs. This approach is in line with English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). In fact, content-based instruction has a strong orientation towards English for Academic Purposes (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), one of the branches of ESP which prepares students for the academic requirements at university. As a consequence, the latter model, Task-Based Instruction, encourages students to learn by means of communicative tasks in which meaning is central and learners interact to solve problems related to their real life.

Moreover, the Constructivist Approach proposed by Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (1978) is also considered in the syllabus. This approach emphasizes social interaction for the construction of knowledge and collaborative learning. In view of this, Learner-Centered and explicit Strategy-Based Instruction is promoted so that students develop cognitive, metacognitive and social-affective learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1986; Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990). Such strategies are essential for the development of

autonomy (Benson, 2001; Wenden, 1992). In this way, students develop language skills taking responsibility for their own learning.

The underlying principle of the Lexical Approach (Lewis 1993, 1997) is that language acquisition takes place when students develop the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases or chunks as unanalysed wholes. These chunks in turn will feed students' perception of language patterns. Thus, *English Language I* students develop their language proficiency through activities that focus their attention on lexical items (words, collocations, and fixed expressions) as “much of what we say and a significant proportion of what we write consists of pre-fabricated multi-word items” (Lewis, 1997, p.11)

Finally, the syllabus of *English Language I* fosters the development of critical thinking, an essential component of critical literacy and critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1990; Freire, 1970). In fact, critical thinking is a fundamental aspect of the competences developed in this course, is closely linked to autonomy and fosters students' empowerment and emancipation.

Therefore, it is expected that the process of teaching and learning *English Language I* develops students' communicative competence by means of Integrated-Skills, Content-, Task-, Strategy-Based and Learner-Centered Instruction, a Constructivist Approach, the Lexical Approach, autonomy and critical thinking. By means of these methodological choices, we intend to achieve an eclecticism based on decisions informed by theory and research in EFL.

## 2.2 The design of authentic activities

The use of authentic materials in foreign language learning has a long tradition. During the 20th century, prevailing linguistic theories and methods imposed carefully structured materials. The issue of authenticity reappeared in the 1970s as Hymes (1972) led to the realisation that communicative competence involved much more than knowledge of language structures. This led to Communicative Language Teaching and paved the way for the reintroduction of authentic texts which were valued for the ideas they communicated rather than the linguistic forms they illustrated. Although movements in this direction have been slow, the development of large corpora and the access to online materials has aided authenticity in the EFL classroom (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014).

As Nunan (1989) maintained, there is a symbiotic relationship between the approaches to teaching and the materials chosen to apply them. Consequently, the materials for *English Language I* have been designed following the main tenets of the approaches and methods discussed above and using authentic texts and activities. In fact, the design of

authentic activities is highly recommended nowadays. Nevertheless, there are several meanings associated with authenticity and, therefore, the term remains ambiguous. Gilmore (2007) suggests that there are at least eight possible meanings for this term in the literature. Authenticity relates to: (1) the language produced by native speakers for native speakers, (2) the language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience, (3) the qualities assigned to a text by the receiver, (4) the interaction between students and teachers, (5) the task chosen, (6) the social situation, (7) assessment, and (8) culture and the ability to behave or think like a target language group in order to be recognized by them. From these meanings, it becomes evident that the concept of authenticity can be found in the text, the participants, the social situation, or a combination of these. However, the author limits the concept to objective criteria and defines authenticity in this way: "An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort." (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98). Using these criteria enables us to state whether a text is authentic or not by referring to its source and context of production.

In a review of the main issues in research studies related to authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning, Gilmore (2007) discusses four important areas of concern: the gap between authentic and textbook discourse, the English-as-a-world-language debate, authenticity and motivation, text difficulty and task design and their effects on language acquisition. The author concludes by referring to the resistance to change in curriculum and materials design. He suggests that there are a number of possible reasons for this: (1) teachers' reluctance to embrace new trends, (2) poor communication between researchers and teachers, so findings from research do not reach the classroom, (3) reluctance of publishers to take risks with innovative materials, (4) practical difficulties that discourage teachers or institutions from abandoning textbooks in favour of authentic materials as finding authentic texts and designing tasks can be time-consuming, and (5) testing learners' progress becomes more complicated once a discrete-point syllabus is abandoned. In spite of this, Gilmore notes a growing dissatisfaction with current practices and suggests that there are signs of a paradigm shift although there is little consensus as to what we should shift to. Some possibilities are a text-driven approach which, rather than starting from a list of lexicogrammatical items, focuses on teachers selecting authentic materials appropriate to their own contexts, and using task-based instruction. Another alternative is to employ the principles of the communicative approach and the models of communicative competence to structure the syllabus, an approach that favours authentic materials because of their ability to illustrate a broader range of competences.

Buendgens-Kosten (2014) refers to the benefits of authenticity in ELT: authentic texts, or “genuine” texts as Widdowson (1978) calls them, provide rich linguistic models and authentic activities are associated with “engagement, meaningfulness and authentication by learners” (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014, p. 458). Since the use of authentic texts in non-authentic ways “limits the potential of the materials as resources of language learning” (Gannio, Labate & Lineares, 2016, p. 84), the eclectic approach adopted has guided the design of authentic language activities. Such activities are defined by Herrington, Oliver & Reeves (2003) as tasks that provide the conditions for bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world. These authors have proposed ten characteristics of authentic activities or tasks that, when used as guidelines for materials design, provide the conditions for bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world. Authentic tasks:

- 1) have real world relevance,
- 2) are ill-defined and require students to define sub-tasks to complete the activity,
- 3) comprise complex tasks investigated by students over a sustained period of time,
- 4) provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives,
- 5) provide the opportunity to collaborate,
- 6) provide the opportunity to reflect,
- 7) are integrated across different subjects and lead beyond domain specific outcomes,
- 8) are integrated with assessment,
- 9) create products valuable on their own rather than as preparation for something else,
- 10) allow different solutions and outcomes.

Other authors (Tuttle, 2007; Rivers, 2010) have defined authentic tasks focusing on activities that are fun, engaging and achievable in a classroom context. In general, designing authentic tasks aims at closing the gap between the real world and the classroom.

### **3. Sample activities**

In order to design the four handbooks of *English Language I*, we have adopted a syllabus-driven and a text-driven approach to materials development (Tomlinson, 2011). Thus, we have designed activities to cover the four units of the course considering the main tenets of the methods and approaches included in the eclectic syllabus described above. The approach to materials development adopted will be illustrated in this section by means of sample activities that meet the criteria for the selection of authentic texts and the design of authentic tasks described in the theoretical framework.

### 3.1. The communicative approach

Authentic texts have been selected and authentic activities have been designed to engage students in meaningful communicative tasks. For example, in the section Types of Dwellings of the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice: House and Home* (Spataro, Martinez, Moyetta & Schander, 2017), students are asked to read about typical English houses by looking at a chart containing information taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Argentina/Housing>) and then talk about housing in Argentina (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Communicative activity.

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**SPEAKING**

**2.8. HOUSING IN ARGENTINA:** Use the following notes and your own ideas to talk about the style, location, size, features and cost of typical houses in Argentina.

<b>Type</b>	<b>High-rise flats</b>	<b>Terraced / town / row house</b>
<b>Style</b>	modern / old	modern, traditional
<b>Location</b>	Buenos Aires and large cities	suburbs
<b>Size</b>	1/2 bedroomed, small, medium	small/medium/big
<b>Features</b>	balcony, lift, central heating, security, garage, CCTV, leisure facilities (pool, multipurpose room)	1/2 storeys, garage, utility room, patio/small garden
<b>Cost</b>	low / high priced	reasonable, competitively priced
<b>Type</b>	<b>Duplex / semi-detached house</b>	<b>Detached house</b>
<b>Style</b>	modern	modern, ranch-style, tiled roof
<b>Location</b>	suburbs, country	residential areas, gated neighbourhood
<b>Size</b>	2/3 bedroomed, family sized	spacious rooms
<b>Features</b>	garage, garden	family room, games room, central heating, double garage, big garden, pool
<b>Cost</b>	reasonable, competitively priced	costly

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In the section Teleworking of the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice: Technology and Telecommunications* (Morchio, Cad, Dalla Costa, Granata, Massa & Spataro, 2017), students develop their linguistic competence by acting out two possible situations that they may encounter in the future as translators or teachers of English (Figure 2). Students also develop their sociolinguistic and discursive competence by watching a funny video about email netiquette (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXlgOX95Q0U>). Then, they learn typical ways

of writing formal and informal emails which they can use when writing emails to their teachers or participating in the VLE forums.

Figure 2. Communicative activity.



3.49. ROLEPLAY: With a partner, act out one of the following roleplays.

SITUATION A

Student A: You are a translator working from home. You are negotiating with another colleague to set up a translation company and work from home. Convince your partner of the advantages of teleworking.

Student B: You are a translator working in-house. Your colleague wants to set up a translation company with you but you are against teleworking. Convince your partner of the advantages of office work.

SITUATION B

Student A: You are a remote English teacher working from home. Your distance learning project needs more teachers and you are negotiating with another colleague about it. Convince your partner of the advantages of teleworking.

Student B: You are a teacher working at a school. Your colleague wants you to join a distance learning project but you are against teleworking. Convince your partner of the advantages of working in a traditional classroom.

### 3.2. Integrated skills instruction

In all the *English Language I* handbooks, activities are designed to help students develop the four macroskills of the language in an integrated manner. For instance, in the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice: Money and Shopping* (Martínez, Schander & Spataro, 2015), students are asked to watch a short video featuring Mr Bean at a department store ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=St5D3Ue\\_sy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=St5D3Ue_sy)). Then they write the definition of shopping centres and department stores, talk about department stores with a classmate and, finally, read an article from VisitLondon.com about famous department stores in London (<http://www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/activities/shopping/department-store/top-10-london-department-stores>) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Integrated skills.

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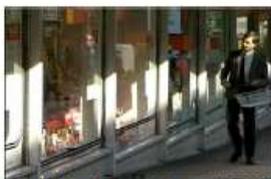
## SHOPPING CENTRES / DEPARTMENT STORES

<b>Main objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ To learn about shopping centres and department stores</li> <li>→ To learn how and when to use the strategy <i>guessing intelligently</i></li> <li>→ To learn how to shop at a department store</li> </ul>
<b>Sections</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warm up</li> <li>2. Famous department stores in London</li> <li>3. At a department store</li> <li>4. Writing assignment</li> <li>5. Consolidation</li> </ol>

**1. WARM UP**

 **VIDEO WATCHING**

a. Watch this clip of *Mr. Bean* and try to complete the chart below. Check your answers with the class.



Retrieved on 14/03/14 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3523Ue\\_yY0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3523Ue_yY0)

type of shop:
method of payment:
item(s) bought:
place where item(s) is/are bought:
problems when shopping:

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Culture note: *Mr. Bean* is a famous British sitcom starring Rowan Atkinson. The *Mr. Bean* series, broadcast from 1990 to 1995, features how *Mr. Bean*, a character who rarely speaks, solves everyday problems in an unusual way. *Mr. Bean* is well-known worldwide and appeared at the London 2012 Summer Olympics opening ceremony.

Adapted from <http://www.visitlondon.com>

b. What is the difference between a shopping centre and a department store? In small groups, try to come up with a clear and complete definition of both. Compare them with the rest of the class and with monolingual dictionaries. Which definition was the best one?

Shopping centre: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Department store: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. FAMOUS DEPARTMENT STORES IN LONDON**

 **SPEAKING**

a. *Mr. Bean* goes shopping at *Allders*, a famous London department store that closed down in 2012. With a classmate, try to answer the following questions about department stores in London.

Do you know famous department stores in London?  
Which ones? What are they like? What do they mainly sell?  
What would you like to know about the famous department stores in London? Why?

 **READING**

b. Skim this article taken from *Visitlondon.com*, an official visitor guide, and find out about the most famous department stores in London.

### 3.3. Content-based instruction

Another approach that informs the design of materials is content-based instruction, more specifically, the theme-based model. For example, in the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice: House and Home* (Spataro et al., 2017), students learn to use English to talk about castles by watching the trailer of the series *Secrets of Great British Castles* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Q7TAudR6Q>) and doing a listening for perception activity (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Content-based instruction.

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**CASTLES**

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**VIDEO WATCHING**

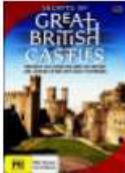
2.20. In pairs, come up with a definition of castle. You can use your monolingual dictionaries for help.

Castle: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.21. Watch the trailer of *Secrets of Great British Castles*, a new series where Historian Dan Jones explores the history behind some of Britain's most famous castles. Note down the definition he gives of a castle. Is it similar to yours?

Secrets of Great British Castles (Trailer)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDQ7TAudR6Q>

Castle: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.22. Watch the trailer again and circle the word Dan says.

1. For dearly/nearly a thousand years, castles have shaped/named Britain's famous landscape.
2. These magnificent buildings have been hope/home to some of the greatest heroes and villains/villas in our national history.
3. And many of their/them still stand proudly/loudly today, bursting with incredible stones of warfares/warfare, treachery, intrigue and even further/murder.
4. Join/Jo me, Dan Jones, as I uncover the history/stories of/behind six great British castles.

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### 3.4. Constructivism

The constructivist approach considers learners as active participants in the construction of knowledge through their interaction with their peers and the teacher. Thus, the material presents activities in which students are asked to work in pairs and groups so as to contribute to their peers' language learning process and boost their language skills. In the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice House and Home* (Spataro et al., 2017), students do a websearch about a famous/unusual house they are interested in and find information about the house location, construction, number of rooms and interesting features. They then prepare a presentation about the house to share the information with the class. (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Constructivist activity.



WEB SEARCH

2.26. Browse the web and look for a famous or unusual house, palace or castle that you would like to visit. You can find out about your famous celebrity's house, the giant seashell house in Mexico, the White House in the USA, Buckingham Palace in the UK, the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul or any house you are interested in! Complete the following chart with information about the house and prepare a two-minute talk to share your finding with the rest of the class. You can show pictures to illustrate and aid your oral presentation.

Based on their own experience with the VLE of *English Language I*, in the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice: Technology and Telecommunications* (Morchio et al., 2017), students have to work in pairs to write down the advantages and disadvantages of using a virtual classroom. Then, with the help of the teacher, they have to decide if they use the VLE as a case of “blended” or “distance” learning (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Constructivist activity.



WARM UP ACTIVITY

3.51. With a classmate, think about your own experience with the VLE and jot down some ideas related to its pros and cons.

PROS	CONS

3.52. Is using the VLE a case of distance learning or blended learning?

### 3.5. Strategy-based instruction

In order to teach and foster the use of language learning strategies, all the handbooks include “Strategy Training” boxes with a short and simple explanation of a language strategy that can be used to carry out a specific task adapted from Oxford (1990). Figure 7 shows how the use of the strategy self-monitoring can help students realise which are the reading strategies they have used in two texts of the *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice: Food and Health* (Spataro, Dalla Costa & Bersano, 2015).

**Figure 7. Strategy-based instruction.**

Strategies	Texts: <i>A Healthy Diet for Everyone</i> <i>Junk Food</i>
I read the title and/or the introduction <u>previewing</u> the text and trying to <u>predict</u> what the reading will be about.	
I <u>use my prior knowledge</u> to understand the text.	
As I read, I <u>notice</u> interesting vocabulary and structures.	
As I read, I <u>use linguistic and non-linguistic clues to infer</u> the meaning of new words and expressions.	
I <u>skim</u> the text to identify and <u>underline</u> main ideas.	
I <u>connect</u> main ideas and details.	
I <u>summarise</u> the reading in my own words.	
I <u>reflect</u> critically about the text connecting it to other material I have read and my own experience.	
Other strategies:	

 **STRATEGY TRAINING**

**SELF-MONITORING**

It is very useful, from time to time, to consciously check the strategies that you are using. Self-monitoring allows you to realize which strategies are easy to use, which are useful and which need to be further practised. It is not very easy to self-monitor as it is a metacognitive strategy: you have to think about your own learning and that is why using a check-list is the best way to self-monitor your use of learning strategies!

### 3.6. The lexical approach

Our class materials offer students activities that focus on lexical items, words often confused or misused, collocations, word families and idiomatic expressions related to the content units (Figure 8). In this way, students not only expand their lexicon but they also improve their language skills. These activities are often followed by others that enable them to use those lexical items in a communicative context. For instance, in *Handbook of Language Learning and Practice House and Home* (Spataro et al., 2017), students have to learn vocabulary and collocations related to the lexical field problems around the house. Then, in the speaking section, students are provided with a communicative context in which they have to put the newly acquired vocabulary into use.

Figure 8. The lexical approach.

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5.19. Both houses were in "terrible/bad condition." The following words also describe the condition of a building. Use your monolingual dictionaries to check their meanings and place them in the right column.

in a good state of repair • in need of repair • falling apart/down  
well-kept • in a bad state of repair • neglected • well-preserved  
run down • undamaged • badly kept • as new • intact • dilapidated  
virtually derelict

IN GOOD CONDITION	IN BAD CONDITION

5.20. COLLOCATIONS: Both the Kings and the Frasers came across many problems around the house. Match each object with its problem.

<p><b>NOUN</b></p> <p>tap (BrE) faucet (AmE) tiles ceiling/roof/pipe/radiator light bulb wallpaper/gutter paint doors</p> <p><b>ADJECTIVE</b></p> <p>stained/torn/worn/ragged/frayed witted/withered damp/cracked stuck broken blocked rotten/splintered</p>	<p><b>VERB</b></p> <p>peel/flake off come/hang down leak slip off the roof hang off their hinges drip burn out/die</p> <p><b>NOUN</b></p> <p>pane/window/ light switch curtain/carpet floorboard window/door wall sink/drain/pipe plants</p>
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Taken from: Oxford collocations dictionary for students of English (2009).

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5.21. WORDS OFTEN CONFUSED: Use your monolingual dictionaries to find the difference among these often confused words.

**derelict – dilapidated – abandoned**  
**work – function**  
**repair – fix – mend – see to**

5.22. PHRASAL VERBS: Use your monolingual dictionaries to fill in the gaps with the right particle.

- They wanted payment in cash for **doing** \_\_\_\_\_ the kitchen of one of his cottages.
- Don't worry about that. I'll **see** \_\_\_\_\_ it immediately.
- The paint was **flaking** \_\_\_\_\_.
- All the wallpaper is **coming** \_\_\_\_\_.
- If you don't like the fireplace, you can **take it** \_\_\_\_\_.
- The removal men won't **take** \_\_\_\_\_ electrical fittings if wired up to the mains.
- Follow this step-by-step DIY guide to **taking** \_\_\_\_\_ floorboards.
- They **threw** \_\_\_\_\_ the old furniture.
- I had central heating **put** \_\_\_\_\_.
- Before we move in, we want to **put** new carpets \_\_\_\_\_.
- We'll **put** \_\_\_\_\_ a shelf there.
- They have to **patch** \_\_\_\_\_ the walls that the rains have battered.

Taken from: Collins Cobuild phrasal verbs dictionary (2002).

 **SPEAKING**

5.23. PROBLEMS AROUND THE HOUSE: In pairs, analyse the problems this house has and suggest possible solutions using "need + gerund" and "have something done."

e.g.

The tiles have come off. They **need replacing**.

The tiles have come off. They **need to be replaced**.

The light switches don't work / There's something wrong with the light switches.  
The owner needs to **have the light switches replaced**.

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### 3.7. Critical thinking, Literacy and language awareness

The handbooks offer different activities to help students become critical of the authentic materials used to design activities. Thus, students are asked to read and explain quotes, watch YouTube videos or read newspaper articles about the contents of the course and reflect on them and react to the information in them. The use of images and cartoons with a Creative Commons License has also been instrumental to elicit students' critical responses. In addition, "Culture notes" are used to give students background knowledge and help them develop their critical thinking skills and sociocultural competence after reading comprehension activities (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Critical thinking skills.

**6.3. CRITICAL THINKING: Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.**

1. What is the difference between being watched and being watched over?
2. How can parents track their children's movements?
3. Why do people have less privacy in their own homes these days?
4. Why does the reading mention Google's virtual maps?

**Culture note: Big Brother is Watching You!** The idea of *Big Brother* comes from a book called *1984* written by the English author George Orwell in 1948. The book describes a society where the government collects information about what everyone is doing and saying and where people are continually anxious that they may be arrested by the *Thought Police* for saying something that the government doesn't agree with. If there is one person who is controlling this, his real identity is kept secret. People are only told that he is their *Big Brother*. When people discuss the latest forms of surveillance (i.e. the techniques used to monitor what people do and say), it is very common to refer back to this figure of *Big Brother*.

Taken from: [http://www.orwell.ru/library/novels/1984/english/en\\_p\\_1](http://www.orwell.ru/library/novels/1984/english/en_p_1)

#### 4. Conclusion

The difficulty and complexity of selecting authentic texts and designing real life tasks is often disregarded. As a result, the knowledge gathered in the classroom through decontextualised activities often remains inert and, thus, learners cannot transfer their knowledge of the target language to new contexts. This paper has attempted to show how a syllabus-driven and text-driven approach to materials development can be used to design authentic activities using authentic texts.

We believe that the characteristics of authentic texts and activities described can be applied to the selection and design of materials in order to achieve authenticity in the EFL classroom instead of employing tasks that do not mirror real life activities and may have negative effects on students' language development.

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## 9 Creating technology- enhanced language learning materials

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### 1. Introduction

In many classrooms today, teachers try to use digital materials to supplement language materials. However, they tend to substitute print materials for ready-made digital ones which do not always suit their students' needs nor meet their teaching aims. Cultural awareness issues and the intertwined concepts of global and local play an important role as well. In this paper, we will explore ways of developing materials for language learning with technology in meaningful and creative ways.

First, we will introduce the principles which led us to write these materials: the SAMR (Substitution/Augmentation/Modification/Redefinition) model by Puentedura, the Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios de Lenguas Extranjeras (NAP) from Ministerio de Educación y Deportes de la Nación and the Digital Competence Framework outlined by Plan Nacional Integral de Educación Digital (PLANIED) from Ministerio de Educación y Deportes de la Nación.

Then, we will present the contextual and pedagogical realisation of the materials. We will explore cultural awareness issues, the concepts of global and local and the roles they play in the materials writing process. Furthermore, we will show how authentic materials and authentic tasks can be set up even with lower level learners and, alternatively, how they can be adapted to maximize their appropriacy in context. Sample activities which best illustrate the principles previously mentioned will be presented throughout this paper.

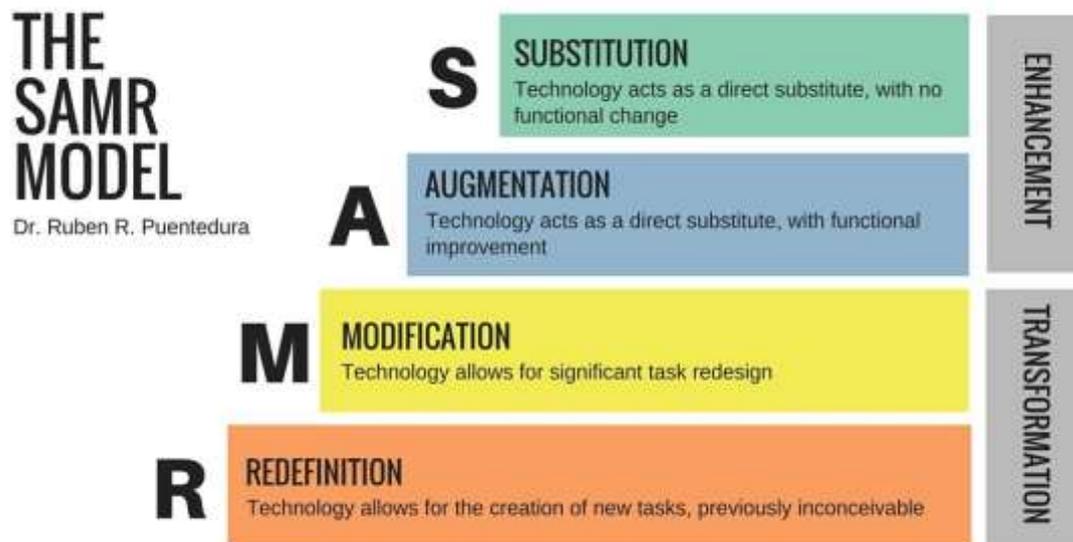
## 2. Principles for the creation of digital materials

In the following section, some principles for the development of contextualised technology-enhanced materials in Argentina will be presented. These involve a technology integration model such as the SAMR model, the NAP and a Digital Competence Framework such as the one designed by PLANIED.

### 2.1 SAMR model

One way of looking at technology integration is the SAMR model by Ruben Puentedura (Puentedura, 2006). This model looks at technology integration from the perspective of the tools used by both teachers and students and aims at helping teachers integrate technology effectively. It analyses the way in which technology tools can be simple replacements of traditional procedures or whether they can enhance or transform the educational tasks as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The SAMR model.



Puentedura (2006) sees this model as a four-step ladder, in which the first step is S for substitution, the second step is A for augmentation, the third step is M for modification and the last step is R for redefinition. In the Substitution level, technology acts as a direct tool substitute, with no functional change. An example would be using a word processor to type, instead of a typewriter, or using the Internet to access information, instead of going to a

library. In the Augmentation level, technology acts as a direct tool substitute but with some functional improvement. For example, adding images and using the spell checker in a word processor. In the Modification level, technology allows for significant task redesign, such as combining audio, video and text. Finally, in the Redefinition level, technology allows for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable. An example of this stage would be the creation of collaborative mind maps online or using virtual reality apps to create new interactive content.

Puentedura (2006) further describes the first two steps as an Enhancement phase and the last two steps as a Transformation phase, and argues that a meaningful use of technology should aim at achieving the last two stages within the Transformation phase which involves Modification and Redefinition levels. However, teachers need some time to reach those levels as it is important for them to feel comfortable with the tools they use.

## 2.2. NAP

The so-called Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios de Lenguas Extranjeras (NAP) are the core learning priorities that were set up by the Ministry of Education in order to establish the main principles to be applied to teaching an additional language both in private and state schools in Argentina. These principles emphasise the formative dimensions of language teaching from an intercultural and multilingual perspective (Consejo Federal de Educación, 2012). This means that the core principles focus on linguistic education, cognitive development and sociocultural identity of primary and secondary school students in Argentina. Thus, each province needs to consider the NAP framework when designing their course curriculum. So, “while schools can progress past the NAPs, they must achieve at least what is set out in the basic framework” (British Council, 2015).

According to the NAP, there are six main areas around which the guidelines for language teaching are arranged. These areas include listening comprehension, oral production, reading comprehension, written production, language awareness and intercultural reflection (Porto, 2016). For the design of technology-enhanced language materials, each of the areas has to be considered.

When dealing with listening comprehension, teachers may encourage students to focus on the comprehension and construction of meaning of the oral text, using different strategies such as the use of visual aids to contextualise listening by carefully selecting authentic listening

materials in both audio format and video format. Moreover, learners can also focus on the comprehension of oral instructions in the additional language, such as those included in some digital games, which are usually supported by visual icons and other sources. As regards reading comprehension, teachers may consider tasks based on the online texts from authentic web pages and resort to different strategies to foster the construction of meaning. In addition, when dealing with oral production, tasks may engage students in producing talking images, as well as students' participation and use of brief oral exchanges in the class forums, based on prompts to solve communicative tasks. Besides, with reference to writing tasks, teachers may guide students to approach a gradual and progressive production of brief written texts with the purpose of authentic communication, such as writing short messages in the class forum or using "text-speak" to create dialogues that simulate whatsapp messages in a [fake whatsapp generator](#). Furthermore, the need to reflect on the target language is also required to comply with the NAP. In most cases students reflect on some aspects of the additional language based on the teacher's guidance and for a better understanding. Finally, regarding intercultural reflection, the different tasks may be linked to other areas of the curriculum so as to broaden students' cultural universe as they learn about other cultures.

### 2.3 Digital competence framework

In 2015 the Ministry of Education developed a Digital Competence Framework as part of PLANIED which aims at promoting digital literacy in the school system. Six dimensions were identified in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be digitally competent in today's society. The first one, creativity and innovation, requires students to create and construct knowledge using ICT tools, such as producing their talking avatar to introduce themselves. The second one, communication and sharing, involves communicating through online tools respecting differences, taking into account e-safety issues and netiquette and sharing online work with a wider audience. An example of the second dimension may be publishing students' work on a blog. The third one, information management, focuses on locating, retrieving, selecting and organising information. For example, this can be identified when students look for online information and select relevant content to complete an online chart in a collaborative document. The fourth dimension is participation in a responsible way so that students make a safe use of the Internet and interact in a sensible way. This is present in the way students interact in chat sessions and online forums in virtual classrooms. The fifth dimension proposes the use of critical thinking skills in a digital environment which covers

problem-solving, developing projects and making informed decisions when using online resources. For example, simulation games such as [Challenge: robots](#) which challenge students to take the role of an engineer and create a robot to solve a real-world environmental problem. The last dimension is autonomous use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and covers the way students use technology in everyday life. This means that students transfer the skills learnt in different contexts.

### **3. Contextual and pedagogical realisation**

#### **3.1. Local and localised materials**

Global language materials intended to be used in any part of the world, such as companion websites for textbooks, may need to be adapted in order to lead to greater appropriacy and suit a specific context. As stated by McDonough & Shaw (2013), localising takes into account the international geography of English language teaching and recognizes that what may work well in a place may not do so in another part of the world. In the same line, López Barrios, Villanueva de Debat and Tavella (2008) refer to localised materials to global language materials adapted to specific situations and local materials for the ones specifically produced for a country or region. Furthermore, López Barrios and Villanueva de Debat (2014) express the need to produce context-sensitive teaching materials and identify contextualisation, linguistic contrasts, intercultural reflection and facilitation of learning as four distinguishing aspects from local and localised materials.

In this respect, teachers may find the need to write technology-enhanced language learning materials context-sensitive to their local cultures, to their particular teaching and learning context and to the curricular demands of Argentina. Furthermore, they may start integrating technology at the substitution level, incorporating tools to improve their teaching practice and when they are confident enough they may move to the modification or redefinition level in which students become content creators and complete tasks inconceivable without technology. These materials can be shared online through a Learning Management System (LMS), such as Schoology, Edmodo, or Moodle, published on the class blog or class website or uploaded in a Facebook closed group, to mention some options.

When developing local and localised materials there are two distinctive features that can be taken into consideration: contextualisation and intercultural reflection.

The first one involves personalisation which implies "increasing the relevance of content in relation to learners' interests and their academic, educational or professional needs" (McDonough & Shaw, 2013, p. 69). For example, the video "[This is Britain- School!](#)" presents a typical school day in England told by a child which can be used as an opportunity for learners to talk about their own school day and routine apart from learning about the child's routine. Teachers may ask their students to type a paragraph on a computer or complete an online quiz based on the video. Both examples belong to the first stages of the SAMR model which can be improved by transforming the way technology is used. For instance, teachers can develop a collaborative project in which students share their school routine with children from another school via Skype. This represents an enriching experience for both teachers and students and allows the possibility of communicating online in a meaningful way as mentioned in the second dimension of PLANIED's Digital Competence Framework.

Contextualising also refers to the inclusion of local references in teaching materials such as tourist landmarks in Argentina. Google Maps allows the possibility of giving detailed information of geographical regions which offers the opportunity of navigating through horizontal and vertical panoramic street level images, identifying a location on a map and adding relevant information about places. If teachers feel comfortable with this geolocation tool, they may use it when teaching following and giving directions as students can look for their neighbourhood and identify how to get to different known places. Moreover, they can pin their maps and add multimedia content in order to create a city/town guide which can then be shared online with other students. As it is shown, this example presents a creative and meaningful use of technology which leads to the Redefinition level in the SAMR model.

Another characteristic of contextualisation is content subject matter, which is related to the inclusion of topics sensitive to the sociocultural norms of the society where the materials are implemented (López Barrios & Villanueva de Debat, 2014, p. 41). The internet offers a rich source of materials related to any topic. For example, digital games which focus on how to protect one's online privacy such as *Tad's Profile Panic* in which Tad wants to protect his personal information and needs help from students in order to clean up his profile before his classmates share all his personal information or websites about bullying and cyberbullying, such as the article [What is Bullying?](#), in which learners can learn and discuss emotional and physical online behaviour in English. These online sources are related to participating in online spaces in a responsible way as stated by the fourth dimension of PLANIED's Digital Competence Framework.

Another distinctive feature from local and localised materials is intercultural reflection, which is present in the Core Learning Priorities (NAP) and includes education for citizenship and human rights. This means that language educators can make a contribution to promoting greater social justice and increasing a deeper understanding of otherness (Porto, 2015, p. 139). In this regard, teachers can break stereotypes by developing language teaching materials which promote global awareness and understanding. They need to develop information literacy as suggested by PLANIED's Digital Competence Framework in order to look for online resources and information critically. There are several photo galleries and multimedia resources which open the window to other realities and show how different and similar we are in the world.

For instance, photographer Gabriele Galimberti travelled around the world to make portraits of children with their favourite toys. Teachers can encourage students to select and describe some toys from the photo gallery, compare to theirs and express their feelings towards the importance of play in their life as addressed by article N° 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, as part of a technology-enhanced project, students can create a digital book about their favourite toys, add their voice describing their toys and some pictures. This digital book can then be shared online with the school community. Following the same line, photographer Julian Germain visited schools around the world and portrayed different classroom styles in the 21st century. Teachers can use these photographs with students to talk about other schools and to value their own and the importance of studying in any context. This can be done in class face-to-face and/or in the class online forum.

As presented by Wilson (2017), while some language teachers may regard themselves as mere providers of language, some others may see themselves as educators who want their students to be critical thinkers able to challenge the status quo and want to select, adapt and design their teaching materials accordingly.

### 3.2. Authentic texts and authentic tasks for lower level learners

As it was mentioned before, the Internet offers a rich source of authentic materials such as multimedia materials, online texts and audios which teachers can use when developing technology-enhanced materials. As defined by Tomlinson (2012) "an authentic text is one that is produced to communicate rather than to teach, and an authentic task is one which involves

the learners in communication in order to achieve an outcome, rather than practice the language” (p.162). This means that teachers can use online texts as input sources to create authentic tasks which encourage students to develop communicative competences in English. However, this is quite challenging for many teachers, as they find it difficult to deal with the gap between students’ linguistic ability and the input they can get from texts not designed for language learners. As a result, teachers select online materials which present language through contrived examples and design online tasks which focus on practising specific features of the target language such as an online drill practice. This is a clear example of the Substitution level in the SAMR model as it shows that the use of technology adds no functional change to the task.

If teachers want to use technology in meaningful and creative ways, they need to select authentic texts and design technology-enhanced tasks in which learners develop language and real-life skills. In doing so they should follow a principled approach and the local curriculum so that they can think through the whys and hows before planning their lessons.

For example, an online text or video such as the ones mentioned before can be selected as the enriched input—so that teachers can design tasks through authoring tools provided by LMS. These tasks can be divided into “before reading or watching” activities, usually done offline with the whole group of students or in small groups, “while reading or watching” and “after reading or watching” activities, which are carried out online in the classroom or at home. Some tasks are usually designed to check general comprehension through closed-ended and open-ended online questions based on the language that students can hear and the visual stimuli that they receive. Although some of these tasks belong to the Substitution and Augmentation level in the SAMR model, they serve as a starting point for teachers to design their own online quizzes. Other tasks include identification of vocabulary, completing simple sentences, true or false or multiple choice online activities. In follow-up activities students can use language to communicate in different formats by creating digital posters, recording audios and producing multimedia products. These technology-enhanced activities offer students opportunities to use language in creative ways and connect the classroom to the real world. Some of these follow-up activities can be done using free online tools with no registration required, and the final product can be shared on the class forum, on the class blog or as an online task in the virtual classroom to promote interactions among students and a sense of ownership.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

In the past decades, the Internet has become the go-to place to look for resources and tools that can be used with language learners. The “increasingly commonplace use of digital and internet-enabled devices means that digital language learning tools and materials can potentially support individual and collaborative learning in any physical location” (Kiddle, 2009, p. 192). However, this selection of resources and tools, requires a responsible attitude on the teachers’ part in terms of the need to adapt them to local contexts by following the principles outlined throughout the paper. That is to say, teachers need to question how and when to integrate technology and be able to adapt their materials to their specific context following a principled approach which includes developing digital skills and following a technology integration model and the curriculum design guidelines. In other words, the creation of technology-enhanced language learning materials has been enabled by the technological advances, but it needs to be carried out with a solid pedagogical and cultural awareness background to ensure a successful integration.

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## 10 Productive skills development: Moving towards authentic meaning making

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### 1. Introduction

The development of the productive skills in limited-time, oversized EFL classes poses a challenge to even the most experienced teacher. The teaching contexts language learning takes place still seem to favor the use of controlled activities so that the class can be delivered and the contents taught – not always learned – later on tested. However, nowadays demands in terms of foreign language competence calls for a different kind of class in which there is a movement from controlled to authentic language use.

This movement needs to be produced in two directions that are worth exploring. On the one hand, beyond the fact that the production of language is a natural dimension in the communicative continuum, language output has a direct impact on the interlanguage restructuring processes leading to language acquisition. Therefore, the class should be a place where the learners maximize the opportunities for language production. On the other hand, every language exchange triggered by the tasks prepared by the teacher should provide the context for communication to take place with the use of some common ground elements as the basis for the completion of the task but, at the same time, allowing learners to explore other communicative competence dimensions according to their own level of interlanguage and communication needs. This freedom in terms of the language used to express personal content leads to a language class understood as an authentic meaning making experience.

The aim of this paper is to lay out the principles that underlie our proposal, grounded in concepts that come from different theoretical frameworks. Both Swain's Output Hypothesis Theory and authenticity in language use provide the basis for the need to include productive activities throughout the class. Studies in the relevance of formal instruction and interaction in

the classroom as well as the role of technologies in today's social and teaching contexts will be explored.

## **2. The class as an authentic meaning making experience: A working definition**

It is Saturday night and a group of young people gets together to eat pizza. As they sit at the table, information starts circulating in countless directions. There are references to situations experienced at work or while driving home; there are updates connected with people they know or gossip about someone they do not know; there are different references to content shared on social media, which may trigger on-the-spot responses to pictures posted or a complaint brought against somebody. There are moments when they all speak at once and some others in which one holds the floor for a while. They listen to a song or watch a short video. They laugh and get serious in a split second. And they eat pizza. The idea behind the proposal is to generate these same social movements in the classroom, with information, contents, feelings, media, perceptions and opinions circulating in every possible direction, sometimes using words and sometimes evoking a sound, a smell or a feeling. As a result, personal content is generated in this situation. And they learn the language.

With a constructivist view of learning and a communicative language teaching approach to language teaching in mind as the basis for the proposal, the English class has come to be viewed as participants in social interactions which are conducive to some kind of language learning gain by means of an authentic meaning making experience. In order to fully understand this view, it is necessary to analyze each component in detail.

The participants, i.e. the learners, are understood as whole entities that come to the situation as *emotional/subjective beings*, with preconceptions about the language, the learning situation and expectations about themselves as learners; as *cognitive beings*, whose information processing and assimilation capacity at a specific moment in the learning situation is limited (Skehan, 2008); as *historical beings*, whose personal trajectories cannot be overlooked since they represent the basis upon which more learning can take place; as *political beings*, with rights and obligations which determine the kind of decisions they make; as *individual beings*, whose learning itinerary is planned according their own aims; as *social beings*, who learn from and with others; and as *complex beings*, who need all of their dimensions to be taken account in a single situation for meaningful learning to take place (Yugdar Tófalo, 2015).

Within the proposal, the concept of interactions is preferred over communication given its more encompassing nature. Defined as “an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other” by the Cambridge Dictionary (2017), the term

clearly reflects the kind of communicative phenomena pursued in class. The activities developed seek to foster content that is translated both as communication and as reactions (i.e. feelings in a particular situation) to face-to-face situations as well as the world of pictures, memes, sounds, and moving images. It is precisely this communication/reaction combination that guarantees that the communicative events that take place in the classroom produce meaningful changes in the learners since the cognitive and emotional/subjective dimensions of the learners are at stake.

The idea of *some language learning gain* has to do with the view of language that underlies the proposal. In tune with the complex nature of the participants in the learning situation, different moments in the class will call for a view of language as *communicative competence*, which enables speakers not just to make sense out of the communicative situation but to develop the necessary tools to manage the challenges of the interactions; as a *linguistic system* to be interpreted, analyzed and studied; as *learner language* (i.e. Selinker's interlanguage concept), to embrace learner differences and build upon them; as a *representational system*, which allows surrounding world sense making; as a *tool* to achieve different personal and social purposes; as a *lingua franca*, which facilitates communication among different cultures and that goes beyond the linguistic characteristics of any particular kind of English; as a *critical eye* through which our own culture can be criticized and valued; or, most importantly within this approach, as an *internal voice* that may help in the construction and regulation of the Self (Yugdar Tófaló, 2015).

The whole learning situation becomes 'an experience' in the sense that the classes are designed to make participants go through a life experience by coming into contact with one of the language dimensions described above in interactions that make any of the individual's dimensions flourish. Once the content discussed – brought to learners through different media and channels – is experimented at different levels of cognition and emotion, it becomes part of their system, their nature. This content transforms learners in some way; it is imprinted on their psyche because it is content that either comes from or makes sense to them by tapping into one of the individual's dimensions described before.

This experience, then, is about authentic meaning making. According to Gilmore (2007), the term authenticity has been widely used in the literature over the years to cover at least eight possible meanings which "can be situated in the text itself, in the participants, [in the tasks], in the social or cultural situation and purposes of the communicative act, or some combination of these" (p. 4). To this summary of the multiple meanings of the word authentic it is important to add the concept of authenticity that permeates the present proposal: authenticity connected with the personal content that is generated in each learner as a result

of having participated in interactions with the class. This authenticity has to do with emotions and thought processes that are triggered by means of a word, an image, a dialog or an article, which are meaningful to each participant in a unique way. It can be stated that authentic meaning making is produced in the learning moment only if the interactions between the participants, the tasks devised, the materials used and the content that circulates through different media produce such a profound impact on learners that the class becomes a subjective experience that happens to be in the English language. Thus, authenticity in terms of personal content generated is what maximizes language learning.

This view of the learning moment allows for different movements to take place in a class. At some points, learners may be called to act as political beings, taking a responsible standpoint with regard to an issue, which in turn broadens their views on the way that a particular topic is approached by the foreign culture as well as their own. At some other times, the learners' interlanguage is at the center of the stage and all the resources will point to the provision of rich input and output that will give them the necessary material to confirm or discard hypotheses about the language they may have been testing for a while. Through significant movements aimed at engaging the learners in the interactional situation, the different dimensions interplay to make the class an authentic meaning making experience that will lead to the creation of personal content, which is at the core of the proposal.

### **3. Key principles underlying the proposal**

There are some central issues connected with the learning situation that need to be analyzed for this proposal to come to life. Firstly, the dynamics of the class need to be changed. Although the importance of input within the language acquisition process is by no means downplayed, central to this proposal is the production of language not just as a distinct moment in the class but as the core of it.

Swain's Output Theory Hypothesis (Skehan, 2008) holds that output impacts learners in many ways. Firstly, learners' own output gives hints to the interlocutor as to the kind of input they need, thus generating improved input from which to obtain language information. Secondly, when learners know they are required to speak or write, they pay more attention to the grammar patterns in the language they hear, enhancing syntactic processing in this way. The constant production of language gives learners plenty of opportunities to try new language patterns and test hypotheses they may want to confirm or reject. As well as this, productive activities help learners develop automaticity and discourse skills to keep a conversation going, following the rules involved in the negotiation of meaning. Finally, and most importantly within the present proposal, output fosters the development of a personal

voice in learners by giving them the opportunity to express their own views or decide on the course of a conversation according to the speaker's interests and intentions.

Apart from the central role of output, authenticity as the personal content that emerges from interaction is another key aspect to delve into. This conception of authenticity carries direct implications for the classroom: the materials used together with the tasks proposed and the variety of personal content that may emerge. A crime scene investigation situation with learners playing the victim, witness, killer and policeman roles may pave the way for more authentic content than a text printed off the New York Times related to a feasible plan to forever salvage Argentina from economic hardship. As the learners play the different roles, they recall a CSI episode, remember an Agatha Christie's book chapter, think of a relative who is actually in prison or just wish they never have to go through a similar situation, activating thought processes and emotions. Each learner relates the socially created meaning to a particular authentic personal content, which can only become known if the participants want to share it. That is, the language, materials and activities do not necessarily have to be authentic in one of the most common senses of the word (i.e. language produced by native speakers for native speakers) to generate authentic meaning and the same activity may trigger personal content that varies from learner to learner.

Another aspect of great relevance in this proposal has to do with the role technology plays. Just like the friends in the pizza get-together, the participants in a class make use of social networks and the Web in general not only to share or comment on materials that circulate but also to make use of these networks to interact with their classmates, especially when they are at home. If the English language class is to be an authentic meaning making experience, technology cannot be out of the scenario for it is present everywhere else.

Communication in general takes place among technologies, which have changed the world not only in terms of connectedness and speed of information delivery but also in relation to how new patterns of online communication are also visible in a face-to-face encounter. Different discourse patterns which have emerged on social networks, characterized by a combination of images, sounds, words, texts and symbols – all together creating discourse irrespective of the medium source, is also taken to off-line encounters. It is not uncommon to put a title to a situation that is being witnessed as if it were a meme. As well as this, there are many off-line heated conversations that are brought to an end by means of catchy phrases, reference to a viral video or acting of a picture with worldwide circulation like the "Success Kid" (i.e. the fist-pumping toddler).

Technologies also mediate subjectivity and culture. It is a fact that children, adolescents and young adults seem to have been born with a brain device that makes them technology-

oriented. Their life revolves around social networks: while some of them showcase every aspect of their personal life in search of an identity, others are conspicuous by their absence in the eyes of their peers. Even those who do not belong to the 2.0 generation are also impacted by technologies, even though it has meant becoming used to a new context of communication, with different cultural meanings that circulate in it. Then, technologies take part in individuals' construction of the Self at the same time they allow for shared social patterns of behaviors and beliefs to be developed. The impact technologies have had may have to do with the fact that technologies function simultaneously as tools and environments for information to circulate and for personal as well as cultural content to be created making the boundaries between the creators of this content and the devices that allow for this phenomenon to happen difficult to establish (Kap, 2014).

Cognition is also permeated by technologies. If these are central to communication and the development of both individual and cultural meanings it is because they also have an impact at a cognitive level. Barbero (2009) states that computers triggered a new way of information processing by which symbols and abstractions are the raw materials to form a new alloy between information and the brain. As well as this, digital technologies activate a new way of thinking by mingling spaces and temporalities together with sounds, images and hypertexts. This heterogeneous and multidimensional interaction of elements has made the two sides of the brain – the rational and the emotional/ expressive – become indissoluble in a single cognitive activity (Barbero, 2009).

Although this technological phenomenon can be a matter of debate in terms of its positive or negative effects- which is outside the scope of the present discussion-, the fact is that technologies are already happening. The inclusion of the new cultural patterns of communication, construction of the Self and cognition mediated by technologies in education means bringing into the classroom walls what is already taking place outside them and this can lead to “potent teaching” (Maggio, 2012, our translation). In this sense, Barbero (2009) states that a model of school communication cannot be disconnected from what happens in society at large and ask learners to leave [outside school] their body and soul, their sensitivities, their experiences and cultures, these being sound-related, visual, musical, narrative or spiritual (p.23, our translation).

A last aspect of the proposal that needs to be analyzed has to do with the role of instruction in the classroom. Studies in second language acquisition do not seem to come to a single view on the role of instruction within the second language acquisition process (Ellis, 2008). However, there is evidence for the benefit of teaching of formulaic expressions and rule-based competence within an approach that is rich in input and output opportunities,

based on tasks and meaning in the semantic and pragmatic sense of the word (Ellis, 2008). Ellis also states that while meaning connections are always at the center of stage, instruction should provide learners with opportunities to focus on the forms that underlie the different pragmatic meanings. Although explicit knowledge is to be developed, implicit knowledge is the final aim of instruction for it is this kind of knowledge that facilitates fluency. Instruction should also take into account learner differences, especially in terms of their built-in syllabus.

Even though the proposal aims at generating authentic personal content, instruction -not to be confused with grammar teaching only- does have a place in the class, but it is not a central one. The teacher plans a moment in the class when some kind of instruction will take place but it may come before, during or after the generation and development of personal content. Thus, with personal content at the center of the class, instruction is perceived by the learners as the element that facilitates the communication of that personal content generated in the class.

#### **4. The principles in action toward an authentic meaning making experience**

How can the principles become the basis for an English as a Foreign Language class? Based on the purpose of the course the contents are selected and the tasks are prepared for personal content to be developed. Even though the work done in class allows for the use of any linguistic forms available to the learners, each class does target specific characteristics of language in terms of the dimensions described earlier. However, the focused elements are not the *only* elements discussed and the tasks invite learners to use any resources available. This allows for different levels of communicative competence in the learners to co-exist, with each learner performing the tasks with the resources they possess. Although there is a common ground upon which each class is built, what has been termed as the 'floor' within this proposal, the ceiling is set by each learner according to their own built-in syllabus.

Every class is a great opportunity to introduce language elements incidentally, which will be later on systematized if necessary. By the time a language dimension is focused on, learners have had plenty of encounters with these elements, incorporating different aspects each time they are introduced, with each learner absorbing the elements in the input they are ready to take in at a specific moment in the acquisition continuum.

A key element in these classes is the use of materials designed by the teacher for the class. Even though textbooks are a great guide and time-saving instruments for teachers, they are not appropriate within the present proposal for meanings are pre-established and language use pre-determined. With the collaboration of learners who take materials to the classroom or post some on Facebook, classes are characterized by multimodality in terms of

both content and medium so as to elicit different reactions and responses from learners and in this way, allow for authentic meaningful personal content to be elaborated.

## 5. Conclusion

The present proposal means moving towards an approach to language teaching whose only structure is a set of guiding principles which have to be adjusted according the communicative needs of each group of learners. While this approach embraces individual learner differences making a direct impact on each learner's language development, it is also true that the dynamics of the class impose great demands on the teacher before, during and after the teaching moment so that it can truly build upon and maximize authentic personal content. However, the English language learning moment becomes a memorable experience and, in this way, an indissoluble link between the foreign language and the personal content developed is created.

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## 11 Authenticity in an ESP course: Building communities of practice

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Perhaps one of the main authentic activities within a language classroom is communication about how best to learn to communicate. (Breen, 1985)

### 1. Introduction

English, the world's major language for the communication of research findings, plays a key role in academic settings. Thus, if we want to help students in higher education to become full members of the international academic world, we must focus on teaching them to understand and effectively master the ways in which information and knowledge are organized and communicated in their target discourse community (Swales, 1990). Consequently, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers are challenged to use authentic materials and to develop activities to cater for these needs in order to promote learning by means of tasks involving real communication.

In this sense, there has been considerable debate among researchers about the concept of text and task authenticity in the area of ELT at large (Breen, 1985; McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, 2013; Mishan, 2005; Pinner, 2012, 2014), and in relation to the notion of ESP (Basturkmen, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

In this article we will review the concept of text and task authenticity and, by analysing the work undertaken by our students in English II belonging to the 3rd year of both the Bioinformatics and Bioengineering curricula at the Facultad de Ingeniería, Universidad Nacional de Entre Ríos (FIUNER), we will elaborate on the notion of authenticity as a means to validate the main design for our course, as well as learner outcomes, while acknowledging the elusive nature of the concept.

## **2. English II at FIUNER**

Bioengineering and Bioinformatics at FIUNER are programmes that, among other main goals, attempt to prepare learners to:

- acquire sound knowledge of basic sciences, basic technologies, and applied technologies
- use such knowledge for the design, development, and utilization of medical products
- design solutions to problems of technical, scientific, or societal importance
- communicate effectively relevant biomedical engineering problems to be solved across the engineering, life sciences, and medical disciplines, and
- lead and manage projects that involve multidisciplinary teams.

Students are provided with a customized curriculum devised to prepare them to develop the necessary organization and management skills that will allow them to participate in the production of goods and services, and function creatively and independently in industry, research and development, government, or academia. All this involves the effective communication of scientific and engineering data and ideas, both orally and in writing.

Keeping on a par with these main aims, and taking into account that Hutchinson and Waters (1987) stress that the purpose of an ESP course is to enable learners to function adequately in a previously identified target situation, we specially designed the English syllabus to cater for a number of related needs. Thus, English covers two annual compulsory courses, namely English I and II, which students take in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of studies, respectively. To help our learners become successful members of their corresponding communities of practice (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and in line with the guidelines of the Federal Council of Engineering Deans of Argentina (CONFEDI, 2014), we contend that their initial education must necessarily involve the development of a series of skills, both in the L1 and the L2. These include: a) reading comprehension of career-related texts in English; b) writing short texts in Spanish on the basis of their reading; c) getting acquainted with the main conventions for giving L1 oral presentations in career-related events such as conferences, and d) becoming familiar with the more entrepreneurial side of their future professional careers.

The students who take English II will become Bioengineers or work in the field of Bioinformatics. Generally speaking, a broad analysis of their academic and professional needs indicates that these students will use English to engage in a series of tasks peculiar to their communities of practice, either during their studies or once they graduate. For example, they

will need to read and write certain academic and professional genres, give presentations in conferences using slides or posters, design projects, among others.

We have thus formulated a series of overarching goals for our course, which include knowing the defining characteristics of academic, scientific, and professional discourse, developing the linguistic, sociolinguistic, metacognitive, and discursive competences necessary for reading and understanding texts in the L2, and facilitating academic interdisciplinarity. In addition, we encourage our learners to adopt a reflective approach to the L1 and to regard the L2 as a valuable tool for professional development.

In order to meet these objectives, we have adopted an eclectic genre-based approach to the teaching of ESP, which draws upon Swales' analysis of rhetorical moves (1990, 2004), and the most salient representatives of the North American New Rhetoric (Freedman and Medway, 1994; Miller, 1984, 1994) including the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement led by Bazerman et al. (2009), together with a growing body of research on academic literacies conducted in the Latin American context (Carlino, 2003, 2005, 2013; Natale, 2012; Navarro, 2016). By means of this approach, we focus on the teaching of specific genres and explore the complex relations between textual features and rhetorical situations. Consequently, we adhere to the notion of genres as communicative events that bring into play the values and rhetorical purposes of the discourse community in which they were produced (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010).

### **3. The concept of authenticity to validate our didactic project**

In his review of the concept, Gilmore (2007) underscores the difficulty encompassed in unambiguously defining authenticity. This author acknowledges the existence of "(...) a considerable range of meanings associated with authenticity" (p. 3), which render lengthy debate of the topic somewhat pointless.

For the purposes of this article, we concur with Pinner's view that authenticity is "partly a socially constructed shared experience and partly a sense of validity which comes from the individual self about the teaching/learning situation" (Pinner, 2014, p. 23). We here specifically discuss text and task authenticity by examining the interplay between them, both in relation to content and classroom interaction, and in an attempt to validate our didactic decisions. Drawing upon the work of Breen (1985), Mishan (2005), Gilmore (2007), defining authenticity will involve a consideration of text, task, and the academic context.

a. Authenticity and texts

One of the key distinguishing features separating authentic materials from non-authentic ones is their non-edited nature; in other words, authentic materials are taken from *the real world* and they have not been specifically designed for the language classroom (van Lier 1996, p. 13). Morrow states: "An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (Morrow, 1977, p. 13). Similarly, Widdowson claims that the notion of authenticity "can be used to refer to actually attested language produced by native speakers for a normal communicative purpose" (Widdowson, 1983, p. 30). However, this author contends that the term can also *legitimately* be used to refer to the "communicative activity of the language user, to the engagement of interpretative procedures for making sense" (p. 30) or, as Mishan explains, "authenticity may be something that is realised in the act of interpretation, and may be judged in terms of the degree of participation of the learner" (Mishan, 2005, p. 15).

We will here refer to *text* authenticity as the use of written material that has been produced for the purposes of communication, irrespective of whether its authors are native or non-native speakers of English, agreeing with Breen's view that

(W)e should be willing to welcome into the classroom any text which will serve the primary purpose of helping the learner to develop authentic interpretations. That is, any text which engages the learner's effort to communicate with it, thereby drawing out of the learner the use and discovery of those conventions of communication which the text exploits.  
(Breen, 1985, p. 63)

An issue related to the nature of authentic texts concerns learner motivation. The claim that authentic texts are inherently more interesting given their communicative nature finds many supporters (Brinton, 2003; Brosnan, Brown & Hood, 1984; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Nunan (2004) emphasizes the richness and variety that authentic texts bring into the classroom context, while arguing that such material is usually suitable to meet the needs and interests of the students (p. 51), which is especially relevant in the context of an ESP course.

In English II, students read mostly research articles and patents, retrieved from reliable scientific journals, and not necessarily written by native speakers. The reading topics selected are expected to meet the students' specific needs and to establish a link between English and other areas of study in the two programmes involved. Although in the introductory stages of

the course, the reading materials are selected by the teachers, as the year progresses, learners become more and more engaged in text selection. We believe that, by allowing our students to choose both the topic and the articles and patents they would like to read and base their oral presentations on, we help them develop, in Nunan's words, "a feel for scientific discourse" (2004, p. 52). In this sense, we once again agree with Breen's suggestion that learner participation in text selection is justified and valuable (Nunan, 1985, p. 63), and that by allowing learners to choose their own reading materials, we are contributing to their discovery of the conventions inherent to the different genres approached and to their own interpretations of the texts selected (Breen, 1985, p. 68).

### 3.1. Authenticity and tasks

The use of authentic texts does not necessarily lead to task authenticity. In order for the whole activity to be authentic, it is also necessary that the tasks associated with a given text mirror those tasks that take place in the real world (Brinton, 2003). Or, as Pinner explains: "authenticity is not purely just about the materials but rather about the task and the language production from the student" (Pinner, 2012, p. 32).

Thus, a distinctive feature of our course is the fact that our learners read texts of specificity in English but complete most of the related tasks in Spanish. Based on their readings, students are asked to produce three written genres in the L1: slide and poster presentations, and abstracts. In addition, they are expected to prepare and give oral presentations to a scientific or professional forum, presentations which are also performed in the mother tongue (see Monzón, Soto & Waigandt, 2016; Waigandt, Soto & Monzón, 2016).

Keeping on a par with the relevant literature (see e.g. Estaire & Zanón, 1994; Nunan, 1989, 1991, 2004; Willis, 1996, among others), tasks are here defined as activities with a specific pedagogic purpose, involving the use of language for understanding, producing and interacting in class, and that prioritize meaning over form – aspects that, according to Willis (1996), replicate what happens in the real world.

Authenticity, therefore, relates to the *types of task chosen* (Breen, 1983). That is, the tasks we select and design for our course are authentic in the sense that they "involve the learners not only in authentic communication with texts and with others in the classroom, but also about learning and for the purpose of learning" (Breen, 1985, p. 66). In this regard, we would like to argue that if, as Guariento and Morley (2001) claim, "one of the crucial aspects of task authenticity is whether real communication takes place", then, the tasks our learners engage in fulfil the requirement, even if the language used is the mother tongue.

Indeed, it could here be argued that the use of the L1 might even contribute to task

authenticity given that this faithfully reflects what actually happens within the learners' community of practice where, undoubtedly, professionals must process much input in English in order to fulfil tasks in Spanish. In other words, as Long and Crookes (1991) claim, the classroom-based tasks that our learners engage in constitute *complex approximations* of real-life target tasks (p. 22), and as they establish a clear relationship with real-world academic and professional needs, they can therefore be considered authentic.

### 3.2. Authenticity and the building of communities of practice

The concept of authenticity might also relate to the social situation of the classroom (Breen 1985; Guariento & Morley 2001). In this sense, we understand our classroom as *a community of practice* (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), where both teachers and learners are real people interacting in an authentic real-life academic setting.

This would fit within Carver's definitions of *orientation towards purpose* and *purpose related orientation* for ESP classrooms. In other words, in the first case, we understand that our classroom is authentic given that our learners have "actual or simulated purposes related to the real world" (Carver, 1983, p. 133). In the second, through the preparation of oral presentations of career-related themes, we help our learners place themselves right in the centre of their communities of practice, by engaging them in a series of tasks proper to that community, such as reading, notetaking, and writing, apart from the presentations themselves.

Similarly, Mishan (2005) argues that working with authentic tasks and texts that represent realistic language-use requires in depth learner participation and input (Mishan, 2005, p. 37). In this sense, English II at FIUNER aims at providing learners with "the opportunity for public and interpersonal sharing of the content of language learning" (Breen, 1985, p. 66). That is, the contents, texts, and tasks that we have selected for inclusion in our syllabus for English II aim at reflecting those that belong to the context that our learners will most likely encounter within their academic and professional communities at present and in their future lives as graduates (Gilmore, 2007). In other words, the course has been designed to expose students to the English language in the same way in which they will be using the language in their professional and academic lives.

## 4. Authenticity: Validating our ESP course

Breen claims that authenticity is a relative matter (1985, pp. 60-61). That is, authenticity is here relative to the purposes of our course and to the points of view of the different participants in our classroom. Our answer to the question concerning what we are trying to

achieve through the selection of authentic classroom materials and authentic tasks for English II at FIUNER is that our goal is to help our learners to successfully understand the discourse produced by a particular speech community, to convey ideas clearly, and to become communicatively competent in their mother tongue.

Drawing upon Arnold (1991), we can conclude that these goals are met given that:

- a) Task preparation and report assume a genuine purpose: students read articles that are of personal interest, interact in twos to prepare a summary of the article, plan, and design slide presentations.
- b) Our students select the topics and the texts they want to delve into. These are authentic in the sense that they belong to and have been produced by members of the specific discourse community of practice our students belong to.
- c) The texts are obtained from authentic sources (scientific journals) and are used in authentic contexts (university).
- d) The students create their own L1 texts, on the basis of their L2 readings.
- e) The students give their L1 oral presentations to a real audience in a real academic setting, thus engaging in authentic interaction with their teachers and classmates, or even an extended audience including other Faculty members.
- f) Inputs are related to outputs. The students know what they want to do with the answers they find; they can use them as a basis for further questions, display the answers, or take further steps based on their knowledge.
- g) Projects can be related to what the learners are doing in other areas of their programmes of study. Thus, they can involve collaboration between subjects and teachers as well.
- h) The activities are open-ended. No one is sure where this kind of communication will lead. It may even lead to job / academic offers.

Clearly, the notion of authenticity in language learning is multifaceted and goes beyond the mere discussion of the nature of the materials brought into the classroom. Authenticity is connected to the learners' active participation in the classroom as "an originator, actor and author of his/her learning." (Kohonen, 2009, p. 11).

We believe that through the implementation of the didactic project described in this article we are contributing to learners' development of an *emotional ownership* of their language learning (Kohonen, 2009, p. 11), which involves finding their personal voice and identity as a user of English in a given academic and professional community of practice. Although there is still much room for improvement, we could assume that our outcomes allow

for validation of the didactic decisions we have taken for our course.

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## 12 How EFL teachers teach vocabulary: do the beliefs and the actions match?

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### 1. Introduction

The vocabulary teaching practices of EFL teachers are guided by their beliefs, assumptions and knowledge about what they consider to be sound teaching and learning. These constitute a construct that Woods (1996, in Woods & Cakir, 2011) identified as the BAK systems. Considering these factors is of utmost importance because they have a strong impact on the decisions and actions taken when planning lessons (Borg, 2006; Woods & Cakir, 2011).

In vocabulary teaching, the BAK systems of foreign language educators define their plans, decisions and actions regarding the treatment given to lexical items, for example, the intensity and kind of explanations given, or the amount of new vocabulary felt to be amenable to presentation or recycling. The influence of BAK on vocabulary teaching is especially observable in the use made of teaching materials in class and in the resources deployed by the teachers. For example, the treatment given to the vocabulary contained in a reading text may be approached differently depending on the teacher's knowledge of reading processes as well as on their beliefs about the amount of vocabulary to be taught and the techniques of meaning familiarization used.

This paper reports partial findings of a research project under way (López Barrios & Boldrini, 2016) that focuses on the relationship between EFL teachers' practices captured through class observations and their self-reported beliefs about vocabulary learning and teaching obtained through a questionnaire. The observed aspects include a) the amount of vocabulary presented and/or recycled, b) the kind of teaching (incidental / deliberate), as well as c), the techniques used to this end. Since the observations were carried out in two different

contexts, secondary schools and adult education, the mentioned aspects will also be analyzed considering these contexts. After the description of the theoretical background and the data collection instruments, we report the results related to the three aspects (a, b and c) focusing on the consistency of the observation with the self-reported beliefs.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

Given the multidisciplinary nature of foreign language teaching, this paper draws on insights from Teacher Education, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Methodology.

### **2.1. Teacher cognition**

The concept of teacher cognition encompasses “what language teachers think, know and believe” (Borg, 2006, p. 1). Knowledge is viewed by Woods and Cakir (2011) as a continuum with pedagogical knowledge one end and beliefs at the other. Assumptions, “a non-demonstrable proposition ‘which we are taking as true for the time being [...]’” (Medgyes, 1997, p. 403), lie between the two poles of the continuum. In this view, pedagogical knowledge is not considered as opposed to beliefs, but rather as different degrees of knowledge that is based on theory or on intuition. Theory-based knowledge is shared by the scientific community and is validated by empirical proof until it can be refuted, whereas beliefs represent a personal dimension of teacher knowledge that are more individual and based on opinion (Woods & Cakir, 2011).

The three next sections deal with aspects of vocabulary teaching and learning that were the object of observation in EFL classes: the distinction between deliberate and incidental teaching, the vocabulary content of the lesson, and the techniques teachers use to convey lexical information.

### **2.2. Deliberate vs. incidental teaching**

Vocabulary teaching is a part of planned classwork, but in virtually every class there are instances of spontaneous, unplanned teaching of lexical items. In explicit or deliberate teaching presenting new words is a part of the planned activities, whereas unplanned, incidental teaching refers to vocabulary items that are contingently presented, for example, when one learner asks the teacher for an L2 word needed to express an idea.

Vocabulary teaching involves dealing with one or several of the aspects of vocabulary knowledge - form, meaning and/or use - proposed by Nation (2013). *Form* entails both the spoken and written form of the lexical item, as well as its word parts (affixes), *meaning*

involves mapping a meaning to a form, awareness of the referents, and sense relations (synonyms, antonyms, etc.), and *use* implies knowledge of the grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use imposed by register, frequency, context, etc.

In our research, we characterize vocabulary teaching as *deliberate* when a word's meaning is clarified, or a lexical item is provided at the request of a learner, and these actions are addressed to and perceived by the group of learners. In contrast, when either a clarification of meaning or the provision of a word are directed at one learner, a pair, or a small group, as opposed to the whole class, we consider the teaching to be *incidental*. Additionally, the distinction between deliberate and incidental teaching refers to the intensity of the treatment given to the lexical item by the teacher. This implies that the more aspects of vocabulary knowledge mentioned above are involved in the instruction, the more deliberate the teaching will be.

### 2.3 Vocabulary input from class materials

There is not much research regarding the amount of vocabulary that coursebooks introduce and recycle in every lesson, and the overall results suggest an average of between four and twelve lexical items taught per class hour. Two of the sources of this information are general guidelines given by Gairns and Redman (1986), who suggest around 8 to 12 words for productive use as a reasonable amount to be presented in a 60-minute class, and Thornbury (2002) mentions a tendency for coursebooks to introduce about a dozen lexical items per lesson. The other source that allows an interpretation of the vocabulary content of foreign language classes is constituted by the results of empirical studies into different aspects of vocabulary learning and teaching. One such study is Milton and Meara's (1998) with British school learners of French having taken a standardized test of vocabulary breadth. The results allow an interpretation that an average between 3.8 and 4.3 words are learned per class hour, thus providing support for the lower figure mentioned above. The upper number of twelve vocabulary items per class can be deduced from a study of the vocabulary content of a French coursebook series for British school learners by Tschichold (2008) (as cited in Milton, 2009, p. 200). In the study, the vocabulary load of the four volumes of the series was calculated and an average of new types (every single vocabulary item counted once) introduced per contact hour was worked out. In contrast, a study of the vocabulary load of several EFL coursebooks by Scholfield (1993, as cited in Milton, 2009, p. 200) suggests the introduction of an average of 20 words per classroom hour, a much higher figure than that provided by Gairns and Redman (1986) and Thornbury (2002) and supported by the empirical research of Milton and Meara (1998) and Tschichold (2008, as cited in Milton, 2009). Studies of the vocabulary content of

foreign language coursebooks like those of Schichold and Scholfield (both cited by Milton, 2006) are scarce; nevertheless, their results provide some points of reference that can benefit both teachers in planning lessons and coursebook authors in the design of materials.

#### 2.4. Meaning familiarization techniques

Teachers make use of different techniques to make learners familiar with the meaning of lexical items. The choice of technique is highly dependent on several contextual factors, among which Thornbury (2002) lists the learners' proficiency level, familiarity with the word (first encounter or recycling), difficulty of the word in terms of its concreteness or complexity in spelling, pronunciation or use, and purpose of learning (for production, for recognition). Regarding the third factor, the degree of concreteness or abstraction of the lexical item to be taught, many techniques exist that allow teachers to make learners familiar with the meaning aspect of vocabulary knowledge. Overall, the typologies included by different authors (Hedge, 2000; Nation, 2013; Thornbury, 2002; Ur, 1996) suggest roughly the same categories of meaning familiarization techniques. These include the use of visual means such as real objects, pictures or mimes, and verbal means such as translation, definition, examples, and recourse to sense relations such as synonyms, antonyms or hyponyms. In our study, we have resorted to the following labels to refer to the meaning familiarization techniques used by the teachers observed: pictures; real objects (realia); mimes, gestures, demonstration; translation, explanation; example; sense relations.

### 3. Methodology

For this study, the participants involved were teachers at four different institutions in the city of Córdoba: two secondary schools (a private one (S1) and a state-run (S2) one, and two university language centres, one offering extensive, 2-hour weekly courses (LC1), and the other, intensive, 6-hour weekly (LC2) courses. Classes observed at the secondary schools lasted forty minutes each, whereas those at the language schools lasted one hour. The LCs admit learners from 16 years old onwards. Both LCs and S2 are centrally located and S1 is in an upper middle-class area. Coursebooks are used in the adult classes and the private school, whereas S2 uses materials compiled by the teachers. Three of the teachers observed have between seventeen and twenty years of experience, whereas the teacher at LC2 had 4 years of expertise.

To collect data, two instruments were used: an online survey answered by each teacher observed and three class observations carried out in each institution. The survey consists of 27 Likert-type items and four multiple-choice items. In the survey, teachers express their degree

of agreement with statements expressing different vocabulary teaching and learning beliefs, whereas the multiple-choice items require teachers to select the practices considered to match their own ones.

In the following section, selected answers from the questionnaire will be analysed and the findings will be later compared with data from the observations.

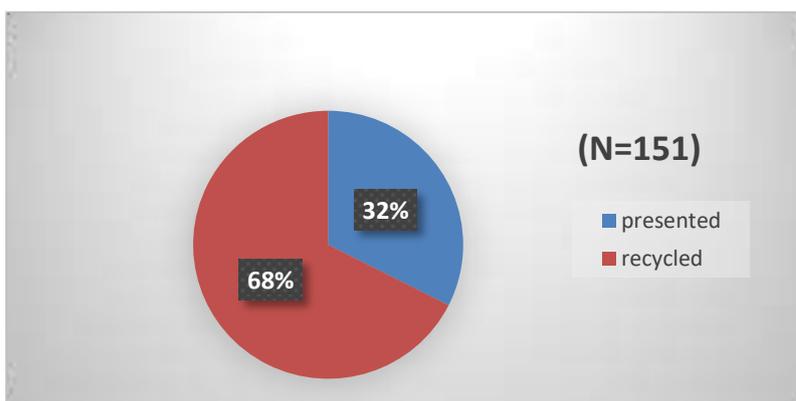
## 4. Results

### 4.1. Observation data analysis

In this section, the data collected from the observations carried out in the different institutions will be analysed considering a) the amount of vocabulary presented and / or recycled, b) the kind of teaching (deliberate or incidental), and c) the kind of technique used by the teacher to convey the meaning of the words taught.

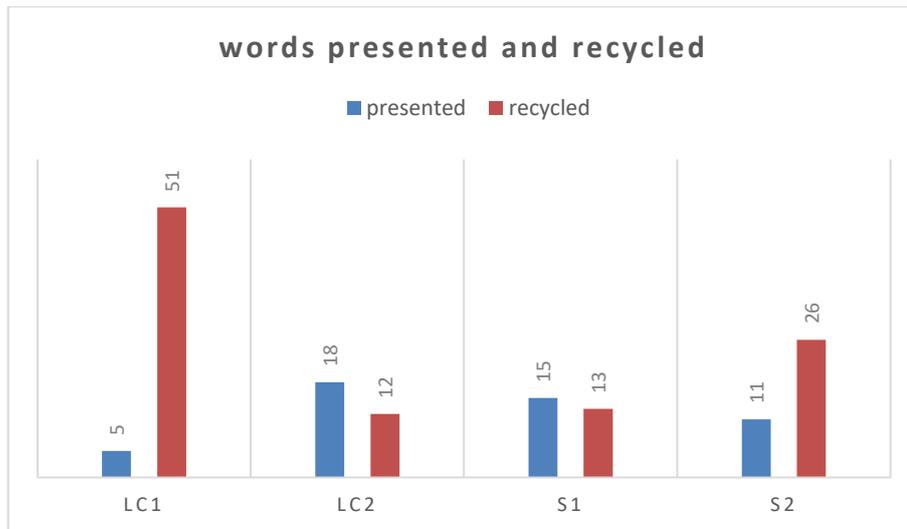
#### 4.1.1. Vocabulary presented and recycled

**Figure 1. Words presented and recycled.**



The overall count (Figure 1) indicates that many more words are recycled than presented in the lessons observed. However, notable differences emerge when the data is analysed in the context of each classroom.

**Figure 2. Words presented in recycled. Four cases.**



In general, a more even proportion of words presented can be appreciated in the four cases (Figure 2), with a greater discrepancy regarding the amount of words recycled, which accounts for exceptional circumstances arising in the classes observed. In LC1, two of the lessons observed took place before a term test, explaining the reason for the high number of recycled words. In LC2, the three lessons observed focused on reading tasks, which could account for the more similar numbers of words introduced and recycled.

Likewise, in both secondary schools, the number of vocabulary items involved varied depending on the activities students solved. At S1 a predominance of speaking tasks in pairs could be the reason for the similar number of words presented and recycled, whereas at S2 these numbers changed according to the focus of the class taught. In the first and second classes, there were eleven words presented, while in the third one there were no words presented and thirteen words recycled since the latter was a revision class.

The higher number of words noticed at the language centres (eighty-six words at the language schools vs. sixty-five at the secondary schools) could be related to class length as well as to the focus of the classes and the influence of the teachers' BAK.

#### 4.1.2. Kind of teaching (incidental / deliberate)

Figures 3 & 4. Comparisons between groups.

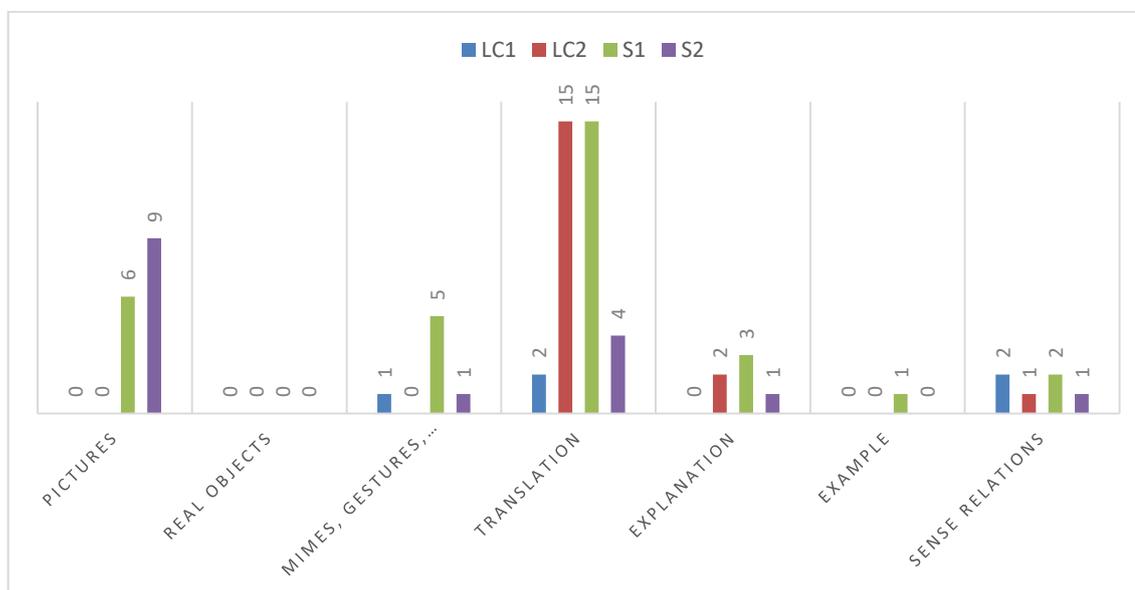


Again, when considering the total figures, a homogenous picture emerges regarding the proportion of words taught deliberately and incidentally, so that it is necessary to consider the contextual factors that account for the hidden differences (Figures 3 & 4).

In LC1, out of the total of five words presented, four were taught deliberately and one incidentally. Deliberate teaching occurred when the teacher exposed students to the meaning of the words and then had students carry out an activity using the word. Incidental teaching took place as a result of a student's question. In LC2, the number of words presented incidentally and deliberately is more even, a fact which was sustained in all classes. At S1, the nine words presented incidentally emerged in the context of a speaking task in which students asked the teacher for specific vocabulary they needed. The six words that were deliberately introduced belonged to the course material so that the explanation was targeted at the whole class. In S2, six words were explained deliberately in a class including several aspects of the words such as spelling, pronunciation, collocations and grammatical features. The words presented incidentally were provided at the request of individual learners in the context of production activities.

#### 4.1.3. Meaning familiarization techniques used

**Figure 5. Meaning familiarization techniques.**



Teachers and researchers recommend using diverse techniques (Figure 5) to present lexical items. However, in the classes observed the techniques employed differ in type and quantity.

In general, translating was the most frequent technique followed by pictorial and verbal techniques such as pictures, explanations and establishing sense relations, as well as paralinguistic techniques like mimes, gestures and demonstration. No use of realia was observed, and only once an example was given.

When considering each institution individually, the techniques employed and their frequency of use differ even from one class to the other. In LC2, the most predominant technique was translation which was used fifteen times, whereas only two other techniques were used. On the other hand, the teachers in the two schools deployed the greatest diversity of meaning familiarization techniques, six in S1 and five in S2.

Translation also ranked prominently in S1, with the same degree of use as in LC2. The use of this technique, often recommended as the last resort in order to favour L2 input, was in general suitable, save for a few occasions when it was used to explain “villain” or “discuss” (S1), two highly transparent words for Spanish-speaking learners. The lack of use of realia can be explained by examining the words presented and the availability of these items in the class. Lastly, in some cases more than one technique was employed, notably by the teachers in both schools. For example, to explain “cut” and “slice”, the teacher in S1 used gestures, explanation

and translation. This use of multiple techniques was not very frequent in the sample of 151 words presented.

#### 4.2. Survey analysis

In what follows, the BAK systems of teachers will be compared with the actions observed in class to estimate the consistency between both. For the present analysis, 15 out of the 31 items contained in the survey were considered since they relate directly to the three main aspects dealt with in this paper: a) presentation and recycling of vocabulary, b) incidental and deliberate teaching, and c) meaning familiarization techniques employed.

##### 4.2.1. Questions related to the presentation and recycling of vocabulary

Helping students build an extensive word stock is commonly associated to the belief that learning large amounts of vocabulary leads to an efficient learning of English. Surprisingly, all the teachers reacted differently to this belief so that there is no regular pattern in their answers, since one agrees (LC2) or totally agrees (S2) and two are either unsure (S1) or totally disagree (LC1). Related to this belief is the number of vocabulary items teachers introduce in each lesson. In the survey, the majority state they generally present between six and eleven words, and only one (S1) claims to introduce more than fifteen words. The answers largely coincide with the observations: the teacher at LC1 presented the fewest words whereas the rest of the teachers presented about three times as many. Regarding the recycling of words, all teachers either agree or totally agree, a tendency also mirrored in the classes, especially in LC1 and S2, where familiar vocabulary was intensively activated.

The beliefs selected show that lexical learning implies ample opportunities to recognize word meanings, to retrieve them and to actively use the words. In the classes observed, familiar words are retrieved and frequently used in sentences, but unfamiliar words tend to be introduced in response to an individual need, so that only the learner involved uses it, or, when taught in the context of a reading, these are not further consolidated through active use. A mismatch between the belief and the actual classroom practice is noticeable here.

##### 4.2.2. Questions related to deliberate and incidental vocabulary teaching

In 2.2 we characterize what is implied in deliberate vocabulary teaching. Most of the teachers (LC1, LC2, S1) express the belief that when teaching new vocabulary there should be not only focus on meaning, but also on other aspects such as collocations (all teachers), synonyms and antonyms, pronunciation and spelling (3 of the teachers). There is less agreement on teaching other meanings of the word, grammatical aspects or register, mentioned by 2 and 1 subjects.

These beliefs are largely consistent with the practices, as the mentioned aspects are frequently found in the observations, especially in the case of deliberate teaching. As regards the consolidation of vocabulary, there is disagreement with the belief of the effectiveness of written and oral repetition, as two subjects are in favour (LC1, S1), one is unsure (LC2) and one disagrees (S2). In any case, this belief could not be observed in the classes, since oral repetition is completely absent. The majority of the teachers (LC1, LC2, S2) also consider it is relevant to keep a record of words including at least some of the three aspects of word knowledge (meaning, form and use), which could be found to different degrees in the observations. A mismatch is noticed in the teacher of S1, who disagrees with this belief, but tends to write the L1 equivalents of the unfamiliar words on the board.

#### 4.2.3. Questions related to the meaning familiarization techniques

All teachers totally agree (LC1, S1, S2) or agree (LC2) with the importance of establishing semantic connections among the words students learn, and totally agree (LC1, S2) or agree (LC1, S1) with the belief that associating a word with a picture makes learning more memorable. These beliefs are partially correlated with the observed practices. In the first case, no attempts to connect words with others belonging to a common semantic field were found in the classes observed, whereas in the second, the teachers in the language centres did not make use of pictures or realia to clarify word meanings, but the teacher in LC2 resorted more to translation.

Two teachers (LC1, S1) consider translation to be convenient, while the other two (LC2, S2) are not sure about this belief. As said above, this belief is found in the practices of the teacher of S1, so that there is consistency, but this is less definite in the teacher of LC2.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper we attempt to inquire into the vocabulary teaching practices of four teachers in different educational contexts and to establish a relationship with their beliefs. The results show partial coincidence between the beliefs and the practices, and further validate the hypothesis. Making the teachers aware of these discrepancies could help them redirect their classroom practices, for example, familiarization with the value of the three areas of word knowledge could result in more aspects being involved when deliberately teaching new lexical items. Meanwhile, awareness regarding the role of repetition both orally as in writing could enable consolidation in the mental lexicon and foster stronger connections among related lexical items.

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## 13 How authentic is the vocabulary dealt with in class?

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### 1. Introduction

This paper reports on advances of an ongoing research project on the development of learners' lexical competence and the ability to use lexical items to communicate in a foreign language. It is based on data collected from observations carried out in classes of adult and adolescent learners in public and private institutions. We aim to analyse whether the vocabulary items presented or recycled in class are selected by the teacher or the learners, their relevance to the topic of the lesson and to the activities proposed. We believe this will allow us to estimate the degree of authentication of learner-required lexis inasmuch as it responds to the communicative needs of the learners.

Our work is divided into three main parts. First, we discuss various conceptualizations of *authenticity*, then we briefly describe the research project and methodological aspects such as the instruments of data collection used, and finally we concentrate on a working definition of *learner authentication* to use as a measure for the analysis of the partial findings of our research, which suggest that there are strong conceptual links between authenticity and motivation in terms of learners' need to communicate (Pinner 2014, p. 16) and that authenticity does not relate strictly to the origin of the texts, but that, as Lee (1994, p. 323) states, it depends in part on the learner's responses to the materials.

Finally, we stress the importance of an understanding of the different factors involved in vocabulary teaching and learning and the pedagogical implications of designing activities with a potential for learner authentication of language in general and lexis in particular, which inevitably leads to rethinking teaching training courses - in that a new approach to authenticity would prepare teachers to create situations that allow students to request, use and produce vocabulary to authenticate it themselves.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Much of the theoretical support for our study draws upon Gilmore's research and the eight different meanings of authenticity he finds emerging from the literature (2007). These eight inter-related definitions emphasize different aspects such as (1) the *native* quality of texts produced by native speakers for a native speaker community; (2) the *realness* of a message produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience; (3) the investment of the *self* of the reader or listener to make a text authentic rather than an inherent authenticity in the texts; (4) the *interactional* nature of authenticity resulting from the classroom interaction between teachers and students; (5) the *task* factor that suggests that authenticity is not in the texts we use in class but in the way we use them; (6) the *social* situation of the classroom; (7) the *assessment* value as measured by the correspondence between test tasks and real world uses; and (8) the *cultural* competence that allows the learner to act or think so that they can be recognised and validated by the target language group.

Despite the elusiveness of and overlapping in the concept of authenticity, we will attempt to narrow some of the discussion down to those aspects that seem to be most relevant to our study. Guariento and Morley (2001) address the question of text and task authenticity, considering that, though there are advantages to the use of real texts in that they help to "bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world" (p. 348) and have a positive impact on affective factors as they are "a way of maintaining or increasing students' motivation for learning" (p. 347), there is still the problem of the difficulty of authentic texts, which can lead to lack of understanding, frustration and demotivation, especially at lower proficiency levels, thus cancelling out one of the reasons for using them. To the alternative of doctoring texts by simplifying them, we could turn our attention to task authenticity and what we require our students to do with the texts.

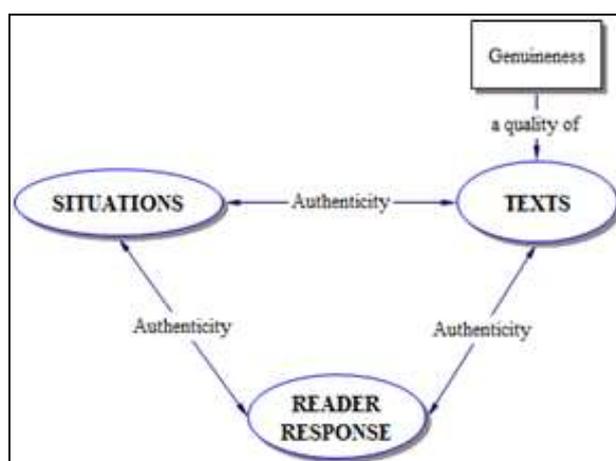
Breen (1985, p. 61) claims that in any language classroom, a teacher is usually concerned with four types of authenticity:

1. Authenticity of the texts which we may use as input data for our learners.
2. Authenticity of the learners' own interpretations of such texts.
3. Authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning.
4. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom.

Breen poses these factors as questions – “What is an authentic text?, For whom is it authentic?, For what authentic purposes?, What is authentic to the social situation of the classroom?” (*op. cit.* p. 61) – and with them he provides us with a useful tool to analyse to what extent we can consider that the language used in class could be authentic, or – as we explain in this paper – *authenticated* by students. While these four types of authenticity at constant interplay may produce tension in the language classroom, Breen finds all four should be addressed, but especially the one concerning for whom the texts might be authentic.

Other authors like Widdowson (1978), in discussing the *authentic* extracts of larger discourse units teachers present their students with for reading comprehension, highlighted the fact that though the texts may be ‘genuine’ samples of language use, learners respond to the texts in ways that are not usually authentic, concluding that “Genuineness is a characteristic of the passage itself and is an absolute quality. Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response” (p. 80). Tatsuki (2006) interprets Widdowson’s distinction as a claim “that texts themselves can actually be intrinsically “genuine” but that authenticity itself is a social construct. In other words, authenticity is created through the interaction of users, situations and the texts” (p. 80), with the point being illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Interaction of users, situations and texts in authenticity (based on Widdowson, 1978; Tatsuki, 2006)**



Guariento and Morley (2001) focus their attention on the notion of task authenticity, and maintain that what is important is not only the input learners receive but also what is expected from them in terms of performance and development of strategic competencies. They identify four schools of thought with respect to task authenticity:

1. Authenticity through a genuine purpose, as we would have it when learners engage in real communication through ‘tasks’ – as understood by Willis (1996) – rather than through activities;
2. Authenticity through real world targets, by means of pedagogic tasks that seek to simulate the tasks learners are likely to be performing in real life and previously identified through;
3. Authenticity through classroom interaction, as proposed by Breen (1985) who considers that what results from classroom interaction and negotiation provides “sufficient potential for communication” (p. 67);
4. Authenticity through engagement, which focuses on the learners’ response to text, on whether they are actually engaged and interested in the tasks proposed, and find them relevant. For example, teachers could ‘authenticate’ tasks to learners by explaining their rationale.

Along the same line as Widdowson, Lee (2005) argues that “‘text authenticity’ is defined in terms of the origin of the materials, while ‘learner authenticity’ refers to the learner’s interaction with them, in terms of appropriate responses and positive psychological reaction” (p. 323). Lee elaborates on the concept of learner-authentic materials as those that are learner-centred, arouse interest in language learning and can be used to develop learner competencies as well as to raise awareness of discourse conventions leading to appropriateness in use in a variety of contexts (p. 324). To the four aspects that Breen (1985) finds – and which Lee defines as text factor (materials selection), learner factor (individual differences), task factor (task design), and learner setting factor (learning environment) – she adds a fifth one, the teacher’s attitude and teaching approach (p. 325). These five interrelated factors contribute to learner authenticity with the needs of the users of the materials (the learners) playing a central role, so that, among other features, learner authentic materials will not only have communicative potential but also be relevant to learners’ experiences and communicative needs (Lee, 2005, Shomoossi & Ketabi, 2007).

Concerning the teacher factor, Shomoossi and Ketabi (2007, p. 154) present the concept of *authenticating teacher*, stressing the role of teachers in 'giving' authenticity to materials, instead of considering materials authentic or not in themselves. In this paper, we draw a parallelism with this idea, and propose the concept of *authenticating learners*, which explains how language (vocabulary, in this case) can be *authenticated* by learners when they express their need of using it with communicative and learning purposes in classroom situations. This working definition is also related to Pinner's idea of authenticity as a motivational force in language teaching, which bestows a sense of validity that comes from the individual self about the teaching/learning situation (2016).

### **3. Description of the project**

As it has already been mentioned, our paper is based on a research project entitled *Foreign Language vocabulary learning: teacher cognition and its relationship with teaching and learning* being carried out at the Facultad de Lenguas, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, which focuses on the development of learners' lexical competence. More specifically, the project's aim is to discover and analyse EFL teachers' cognition, beliefs, and preconceived ideas about what constitutes effective teaching and learning of vocabulary, and how these shape teachers' vocabulary instructional practices and materialize in the classroom.

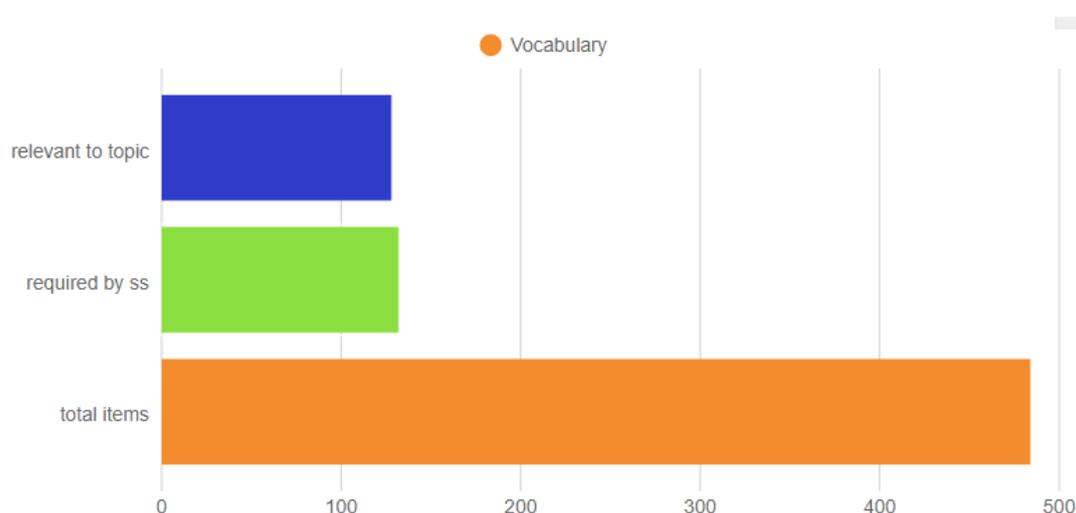
The study is being carried out at public and private institutions in Cordoba City in both formal (secondary schools) and non-formal (adult education) contexts. As regards methodology, the research project is descriptive and follows a mixed-methods approach including instruments such as questionnaires and interviews, as well as data obtained from class observations, class materials and samples of progress tests.

In this paper, we are particularly interested in examining class observations, which were registered in structured observation grids created for this purpose. In these grids, we can observe exactly which items of vocabulary were presented or recycled in each class and, also, we can scrutinize how much of that vocabulary was required by students - as opposed to vocabulary previously selected for presentation and/or practice by the teacher - and whether it was relevant to the class topic or not. We believe that this instrument provides us with information that can be very useful to analyse and establish the degree of authenticity of the lexis dealt with in class, as determined by the students requiring said lexis in their need to complete an activity.

#### 4. Analysis of partial findings

By closely examining the classroom observation grids -which give us information about vocabulary that was dealt with in class both as part of the teacher’s plan and spontaneously- we could find that from a total number of 484 vocabulary items, 132 were required by students. Of those 132, up to 128 were items relevant to the topic of the class (as shown in Figure 2), which means that 97% of the vocabulary that learners asked for responded to a need to complete a certain activity or task.

Figure 2. Vocabulary items required by learners and their relevance to the topic.



This implies that even though students’ interventions are much more limited in number than those of the teacher, close to 100% of them arises from what could be considered as engagement, both with the topic and with the activities being carried out. We acknowledge this data as showing “engagement” because we believe it reveals that students don’t digress from the topic; on the contrary, they require the language with the purpose of working on their assignments, thus fulfilling a communicative aim. It is important to mention that in the research study, we did not consider all language used or worked on; we only focused on “vocabulary items”, and, as such, we considered not only isolated words but also lexical chunks and set expressions that were introduced or reviewed at any stage of the class observed.

In this sense, and based on Guariento and Morley’s definition of authenticity *through engagement* (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p.350; emphasis ours), we can say that almost all (97%) of the vocabulary that was dealt with in class that emerged from students’ requirements

could be regarded as authentic, as it was determined by the engagement that arises from the need to complete the activity at hand. We can furthermore analyse these results in the light of Breen's suggestions, as revised by Lee (1995, p. 325), concerning the four factors involved in establishing text and learner authenticity and previously mentioned in this paper: text, learner, task, and learner setting factors, and the fifth one Lee adds, the teacher factor. We understand that the vocabulary that learners needed and demanded, served an authentic purpose in the context - completion of a task - and that this constitutes authentic discourse (Gilmore, 2004, p.5) as it is natural and necessary in the classroom situation and in the interaction taking place during the teaching and learning process.

## **5. Discussion**

In this paper, we have revolved around the concept of authenticity from different writers' points of view, and it has been made clear that it constitutes a complex construct from which several lines of discussion can be drawn. As we have already mentioned, we are particularly interested in focusing on Shomoossi and Ketabi's idea that the teacher can be the one 'giving' authenticity to materials (2007, p. 154).

After exploring this notion of an *authenticating teacher* in opposition to what the research study shows and the wide range of aspects concerning authenticity, we can introduce the idea of an *authenticating learner*, which implies – following many of the authors presented in this paper in the theoretical section – that there is no such thing as intrinsic authenticity, but that it is a property conferred by the students when they use or require the language they are learning in their need to fulfil a communicative purpose. Therefore, the role of the learners and their relationship with the language is fundamental, as it is through their interaction and responses that language is authenticated.

We can say, then, that although the vocabulary that was required by students is less than half than that selected by teachers, we believe that it can have great educational value, as it adjusts to the practical concept of "fitness to the learning purpose" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 7) and is, hence, made authentic by the learners themselves.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has explored the notion of authenticity and its various aspects to further show the complexity the concept involves and the many definitions available and factors that can be taken into account. We agree with the idea of considering authenticity as a quality that does not only belong to the materials but also to all discourse produced in class (Gilmore, 2007, p. 5), and that teachers are not the only ones who can authenticate materials and classroom discourse and interaction but that students are the main agents in authenticating any particular instance of language use, as they use and/or require it for communicative purposes during interaction in a host of teaching/learning contexts.

We have also compared these ideas with some of the partial results of an ongoing research on vocabulary learning and reached some conclusions as regards the authenticity of the vocabulary dealt with in class. Essentially, our paper exposes how most -almost all- of the vocabulary that is not presented by the teacher but required by students, can be considered authentic because learners authenticate it themselves by conferring it a meaningful aim. However, we have also noticed that most vocabulary is presented or proposed by the teacher. This led us to believe that there is a need to start promoting an approach in which we put an emphasis on learner-authenticated language instead of giving a central role to teacher-selected language. Furthermore, we understand that this conclusion could become an important factor to take into account in the future and we expect that it will be a valuable contribution to the field of foreign language teaching. On the one hand, it could be of great importance in materials design, in that activities that promote learners' use and requirements of language would trigger authentic - thus more meaningful and memorable - use of language in general and of lexis in particular, and, on the other hand, in teacher training courses, as a new approach to authenticity would prepare teachers to create situations that allow students to request, use and produce vocabulary they have authenticated themselves.

Finally, from the analysis of the data collected we could also detect some patterns regarding the context in which the instances of language occurred. This has to do with the type of tasks and activities that were being carried out during which the higher number of relevant vocabulary required by students took place. We regard this as being an imperative factor that could be investigated and analysed in our future work and which could have pedagogical implications as regards authenticity, because "in other words, [authenticity] is a factor of the learner's involvement with the task." (Mishan, 2005, p.70)

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