Contemporary Issues in Language Teaching

Edited by
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Introduction

When one uses the word "contemporary" in the title of a book, the reader of the said book must recall the date it was written. Here we are in 2022, most of us having come through a pandemic that changed the way we lived entirely and hence the way we learned and taught. Slowly, we are returning to many of the ways we did things before the pandemic but "contemporary issues" will have the pandemic, at a minimum, as a backdrop to a book written today with a title including "contemporary". Yet we educators are a hardy lot and approach our profession with the responsibility it demands and thus "contemporary" for us, teachers of all ages, also entails taking on the many and varied challenges in society that affect our students and the way we teach them – even while the pandemic puts pressure on every facet of our lives. We do this with a firm grounding in research and best-practice. This book showcases this fact.

The first chapter of the book examines how teachers and students approach the difficult art of writing and the impact of corpora on this. Recent advances in corpora technology means more teachers can use it to guide their students' writing and this chapter offers some ideas on how to do this. It goes further though, in that we gain an insight into the lives and thoughts of students through their reflective writings. The analysis Spier (this volume) brings to their works will, no doubt, lead many teachers of the art of writing to include critical self-reflection in their syllabi if they aren't already doing so. The chapter is a powerful reminder of the beauty and depth both students and teachers can gain from the narrative form.

The second chapter shapes the time-honored stories of past generation's childhood to the contemporary. Fairy tales have always been a part of first language development and, as Stevkovska (this volume) also notes, should be a part of any second language program for young learners, too. She makes a compelling case for their introduction into young learners' learning of second or Foreign Language (FL) learning and outlines numerous ways of doing so in culturally appropriate ways. The added benefits of including them are impressive too, such that all teachers of young learners should consider incorporating

these wonderful stories into their syllabi. The research Stevkovska includes to back up these claims only strengthens the case.

It is difficult to impartially write an introduction to one's own work so I will merely say that the third chapter of the book is important to read for teachers of English who want their students to interact with students in other countries. The project outlined there is one very useful way of ensuring they do so.

Following that, Miftari-Fetishi espouses the importance of feedback and assessment, in a very unpretentious manner, noting the many misunderstandings around these two terms and that they are sometimes left out of the teaching repertoire all together, to the great detriment of students. Miftari-Fetishi's step-by-step guide to ensuring quality feedback is given, and the reasoning behind this, is essential reading for educators starting out in the profession and a timely reminder for those who are experienced, too. Particularly the introduction to peer feedback is important to ensure a comprehensive manner of feedback is maintained. The same can be said of her outline of assessment methods with the many examples of assessment offering both the novice and expert alike numerous ways to improve the way they approach this essential aspect of teaching.

Herrera Ruano outlines developments in Mexico's English language education programs in the next chapter of this book and posits that there is now a blurring of the meaning of EFL and ESL in Mexico as the two terms are now almost interchangeable there. The various reasons for this lead to a fascinating look at how the English language programs developed and the goals each had. Herrera Ruano rightly points out that with the access students now have to English via the internet, the environment they can put themselves in is one that is usually assigned an "ESL" tag and hence the whole concept of the "EFL" tag is perhaps outdated.

The penultimate chapter by Alagjozovska explores the concepts of intercultural understanding and communication within FL learning. Noting that these have become essential components of any foreign language course, Alagjozovska then sets out the core tenets required of teachers in order to foster them and the different models that are used to describe them. The different models are synthesized to produce a list of the main areas both teachers and students need to focus on to develop their intercultural competence.

Idrizi rounds out the book with an important note to foreign language practitioners that their classrooms today are also places where students can acquire essential skills other than the foreign language they are studying. These 21st century skills can be honed in the FL classroom and after defining them, Idrizi offers suggestions on how teachers can ensure these skills are developed.

This volume offers excellent insights into many issues that impact the FL classrooms of the 21st century and is thus essential reading for practitioners of all levels. It will help them understand many of the problems that will be a part of educating students in FL and, more importantly, offer sound solutions to those problems ensuring they can assist their students to become better FL learners and also develop other essential skills they will need to be effective communicators throughout their careers. The book is an excellent addition to the academic field of FL teaching and learning and will assist many practitioners in the years to come.

Eric Hagley

CHAPTER 1

First-Year Composition and ELL Students' Critical Self-Reflections: A Corpus-Driven Approach for Mutual Learning

TROY E. SPIER

"In order to teach don't you have to think about your teaching? And isn't such thinking the same thing as reflecting on your teaching?"
(Zeichner & Liston 1996)

Introduction

While the increasing expansion of technology and global connectivity has resulted in a reconceptualization of many aspects of everyday life, it has also given rise to greater access to and collection of data, which, as Reinsel et al. (2018) note, includes "anything and everything that intersects our business workflows and personal streams of life" (p. 2). It would, thus, be unsurprising to assume that a data-driven approach might be both implemented and beneficial to those in educational settings. In fact, there has been, at least in the North American context, a concerted effort for decades to 'track' students according to abilities and performance on standardized assessments. Nevertheless, given the increased effort invested into student-centered teaching, students' writing offers valuable insights not only into their own performance in and thoughts concerning their classes, but also into the professional praxis of reflective teaching generally.

To this end, the present study critically considers approximately one-hundred critical

self-reflections from English Language Learners (ELLs) during a typical fifteen-week undergraduate semester. In pursuit of this goal, this chapter is divided into five additional parts. Section 2 examines narrative writing and reflective teaching more broadly. Section 3 offers a literature review addressing the two primary uses of corpora within the field of education. Section 4 discusses the classroom setting and accompanying corpus for the present study, and Section 5 offers a content-based analysis from three different dimensions. Finally, Section 6 concludes by offering a synopsis of this chapter and both acknowledges the limitations of the present study and suggests areas for future research.

Narrative Writing and Reflection as Professional Praxis

Narrative writing is perhaps the most natural genre of writing for students to undertake, given that, as David Foster Wallace (2005) reminded his listeners, "There is no experience you have had that you are not the absolute centre of." Thus, to write about what one has experienced firsthand presents an immediacy and deeply personal subjectivity that are, at least in the case of this chapter, quite well suited to a critical self-reflection, but likely less appropriate for written assignments that rely heavily upon other rhetorical modes, e.g. a rhetorical analysis or an argumentative essay. As a result, while narrative-based writing can be implemented or required in educational environments with the primary goal of improving one's writing, such writing also has significant sociological and pedagogical benefits more generally.

For instance, Berry (2014) considers the broader role of narrative writing—and implicitly education—in transforming the lives of the incarcerated, particularly because prisons "[…] are sites in which powerful words and creative expressions are produced" (p. 139), one in which individuals are encouraged through writing to envision themselves critically in the present and gradually unfold an idealized—though not always attainable—future. On the other hand, Charon and Hermann (2012) focus on the professional benefits of reflective writing among those in medical professions, as this type of writing is an "expertise-enhancing metacognitive, tactic process whereby personal experience informs practice" (p. 2, qtd. from Wald et al. 2012). Or, in the case of Corkery (2004, 2005), it becomes clear that narrative writing, especially when manifested through the personal literacy narrative, bridges the gap between academic writing and one's personal

experiences, such that students do not simply improve their ability to write, but also develop greater confidence, as foregrounding one's own lived experiences makes the task less daunting. Consequently, if narrative writing can have such a profoundly positive impact personally and professionally in such different contexts, it would stand to reason that it might have a similar effect in more prototypical academic settings.

However, this is *not* a novel suggestion. In fact, as Charon and Hermann (2012) stated, "Reflection can be understood to be an active interior state that uses cognitive, affective, imaginative, and creative means to perceive, represent in language, and thereby undergo one's lived experience" (p. 3). And because reflective thought is "a complex, rigorous, intellectual, and emotional enterprise that takes time to do well" (Rodgers, 2002, p. 845), it can be interpreted as a process analogous to traditional narrative writing. Consequently, while narrative writing allows students to 'tap' into their innermost thoughts as they access personalized experiences, reflective writing—and reflection more generally—enables educators to remain consistently aware of their successes and areas for growth in the classroom. When students' narrative writing is used as the exigence for reflection by an educator, then, he or she gains access to knowledge that might not have been otherwise as transparent.

Corpora in the Classroom

Although Natural Language Processing (NLP) has been popularly associated with machine translation, automated chat support, consumer-tailored marketing/advertisement, etc., it is worth recognizing that the use of corpora—or "collection[s] of written texts or transcripts of spoken language that can be searched by a computer using specialized software" cf. Brezina 2018:6)—has been attested for a significant number of decades and *not* exclusively among those conducting for-profit business. In fact, McEnery and Wilson (1997) state that the earliest recorded attempt to utilize corpora in the classroom was in 1969 at Aston University. Consequently, this would seem to support their assertion that "[...] corpora have commended themselves as a pedagogical tool to a variety of educators internationally" (p. 6). To this end, there are two primary manners in which corpora have been used in educational settings, the distinction between which foregrounds either a corpus-informed impact on learning or a corpus-informed impact on teaching.

First, educators have introduced corpora to the classroom, so that students can work with and understand inductively what is taking place in their own language usage and in that of others. In fact, there are also extralinguistic benefits, as corpora "can actually facilitate discussion of cultural background, as well as provide more grounded motivation because the text is so obviously a 'real' example of the target language" (O'Keeffe et al., 2007, p. 26). Case studies based on such integration are rooted in the notion of data-driven learning (cf. Johns 1991), i.e. that "the language-learner is also, essentially, a research worker whose learning needs to be driven by access to linguistic data." In fact, the intended outcome is a transformed educational experience where the educator assumes a backgrounded role, so that students command greater responsibility of and toward their own learning, as "the learner's own discovery of grammar [is placed] at the center of language-learning" (Johns, 1991, p. 3). This has been applied, for instance, in contexts of vocabulary expansion (see e.g. Geluso and Yamaguchi 2014 and Barabadi and Khajavi, 2017), sociolinguistic variation and grammatical constructions (see e.g. Braun 2007), syntactic variation (see e.g. Davies 2004), and culturally salient topics for conversation (Poole 2018). Furthermore, Reppen (2010) offers a synthesis of each of the aforementioned, while O'Keeffe (2007) addresses vocabulary expansion, compositional and non-compositional constructions, discourse-pragmatic functions of language usage, and specialized corpora. However, despite the benefits of this approach and attempts to introduce educators to such resources (see e.g. Chen et al. 2019), two major limitations have been identified: teacher apathy and/or resistance (cf. Cortes 2013) and a widespread lack of knowledge about corpora and their possible uses by students (Pérez-Paredes 2020).

Second, educators have compiled corpora based on student data, so that they can generalize what is taking place in the classroom as it concerns students' abilities, viz. their areas for improvement and areas of growth. For example, Crossley et al. (2017) examine lexical and discursive differences among students in different academic disciplines, Aull (2017) utilizes a corpus to pursue a more genre-based study of differential discursive patterns in argumentation and exposition, and Brandenburg-Weeks and Abalkheel (2021) evaluate the approachability of a required text for students on the basis of lexical families attested within the reading. While the results of these studies frequently focus on a small group of students, other attempts at corpus construction have resulted in more viable,

more easily generalizable results, such as those based on the *Michigan Corpus of Spoken Academic English* (MICASE) or the *Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers*. Finally, others emphasize the need for broader curricular examinations to ensure curricular consistency and effective instruction (see e.g. Spier 2021). As Biber et al. (1998) argue, "The findings of corpus-based investigations can be used to inform the presentations in textbooks for ESL students" (p. 80). In fact, Yoon (2005, pp. 41-46) presents an exhaustive literature review of corpus-based case studies that emphasize the lexical and morpho-syntactic differences found at the sentence- and genre-level as informative for classroom pedagogy, the findings from which seem to bolster Bartholomae's (1986) dictum that students "have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse [...]" (p. 4).

While both are valuable in their own right and share many of the same methodological underpinnings in corpus creation, they differ in their intended result: The former encourages students to become more critical thinkers about and users of language, while the latter enables educators to become more effective at their craft through a deeper interrogation and apprehension of students' abilities. As a result, the underlying assumption of this chapter and the present study is that, should the use of corpora in the classroom be beneficial to students, then the usage of corpora of students' writing should be mutually beneficial, given that analysis of said writing will result in data-informed decisions about the efficacy of one's instruction, as "a corpus can provide insights into language use when intuition fails. Corpora show how people use the language and [corpora] provide objective evidence of fresh and authentic language use" (Ma and Mei, 2021, p. 179).

Classroom Setting and Corpus

The present study took place during the 2021-2022 academic year in Ecuador at a private, liberal arts university that enrolls approximately eight-thousand students in eighty undergraduate and graduate programs. While a significant proportion of the university's students come from a relatively high socioeconomic background, this is not the case for all. However, regardless of their academic program, all undergraduate students, almost all of whom are English Language Learners (ELLs), are required to enroll in and successfully complete the equivalent of a fifteen-week first-year composition course. Although the term "first-year composition" is utilized here as a referent to the course more gener-

ally, it should be noted that students rarely fulfill this curricular requirement during their first year, given that English is not their first language and that other unofficial prerequisite courses are offered in Spanish to bolster students' abilities in critical thinking and academic writing before their entrance into first-year composition in English.

Although every instructor presents this course in a different manner (see e.g. Connors 1980, Johnson 2007, and Tate et al. 2014 for more specific pedagogies employed in this type of course), it is necessary to contextualize the curricular content more broadly for the present study. To this end, this first-year composition course is reading- and writing-intensive, and, by the time they were writing their critical self-reflection, the students had completed approximately five-hundred pages of reading and thirty- to thirty-five pages of writing[1]. The major written assignments included a personal literacy narrative, a rhetorical analysis, an annotated bibliography, an argumentative essay, and a semester portfolio; additionally, students completed daily journal responses, almost-daily reading responses, and four peer editing sessions. On the other hand, the readings were carefully selected to support these objectives by offering both more formal discussions of writing as a process, the steps involved in a rhetorical analysis, issues of objectivity vs. subjectivity, argumentation and logical fallacies, etc. and also more creative non-fictional texts that 'played' with many of these more formal topics discussed in class. As Perdigón (2018) reminds the reader, assignments in the first-year composition classroom serve a much wider pedagogical function in that they necessarily engage and encourage students across a variety of academic disciplines.

1 Although this might seem excessive for the typical ELL, the author reconfigured his teaching of first-year composition approximately five years ago in light of the findings of Arum and Roksa (2011), where they suggested that American students are more often than not reading no more than forty pages/week and writing no more than fifteen to twenty pages/semester for their university-level courses, resulting in negligible academic gains. Consequently, while it is understood that students will not understand every trivial detail from the readings, they are able to converse more broadly about the larger issues and to start considering the authorial "moves" found in those readings.

Table 1: *Distribution of Students by Semester*				
	Fall 2021	**Spring 2022**	**Total**	
Female	34	19	53	50.48%
Male	25	27	52	49.52%
Total:	59	46	105	100%

Nonetheless, seven sections containing a total of approximately one-hundred students are represented here, as seen in Table 1 above. Four of these sections are from the Fall 2021 semester; the remaining three, from the Spring 2022 semester. Of these students, only two were non-Ecuadorian, and only one did not speak Spanish as his/her first language. Additionally, all students enrolled in the Fall 2021 semester undertook the course virtually due to continuing regulations related to the COVID-19 Pandemic; on the other hand, all students enrolled in the Spring 2022 semester undertook the course fully face-to-face, though many remained virtual for the first six to seven weeks of the semester until their return was mandated by the university. Furthermore, the gender distribution among the students in the present study mirrors almost identically the distribution at the university more broadly with a negligible difference under one percent. Thus, it is understood that the students' critical self-reflections under consideration here offer a degree of institutional-specific generalizability not often found in similar classroom-based corpus studies.

The parameters for this final written assignment were quite flexible. While all of the previous essays had strict guidelines for *inter alia* formatting and length, the self-reflection required students only to strive for open, honest, mature, critical, reflective evaluation of their own performance, growth, and areas of struggle throughout the semester, regardless of whether these pertained specifically to first-year composition, a different course, and/or events in their personal lives. As such, students were given time to undertake their own brainstorming during class and were encouraged to consider questions specifically related to their reading and writing journey, the learning outcomes of the course, and the more quantitative data concerning precisely how much they had read and written during the course of the fifteen-week semester. These different perspectives from which to view the course were encouraged because, as Fischman and Gardner

(2022) note, students are often "[…] more concerned with the pursuit of *earning* than the process of *learning*" (par. 6, emphasis added).

Table 2: *Overview of Corpus Data*				
	Fall 2021	**Spring 2022**	**Total**	
Female	35,250	18,630	53,880	50.13%
Male	27,125	26,475	53,600	49.87%
Total:	62,375	45,105	107,480	100%

As a result, there was significant variation regarding the overall length, total number of words and paragraphs, etc. of the submissions. For instance, while some students adhered to more traditional paragraph structure for multi-page reflections, the total number of paragraphs ranged from one to fifteen for female students; from one to eleven, for male students. This isn't inherently significant from a discursive perspective but, rather, from a pedagogical one, i.e. instead of focusing attention strictly on whether students structured their responses similarly in the academic model that followed each of the other written assignments, the difference in the total number of paragraphs is more indicative of the stream-of-consciousness that typically accompanies narrative writing produced for *oneself* as opposed to writing produced for others.

Similarly, there was significant variation in the total number of words written: For female students, this ranged from 426-2077 words ($\bar{x}$=1008.68); for male students, from 168-2135 words ($\bar{x}$=1005.39). Nonetheless, as seen in Table 2 above, the corpus contains over 100,000 words and is approximately equally distributed among the female and male students. Despite the fact that a noticeable decrease in total word count was witnessed during the spring semester, this can be explained by both the decrease in total female students and the expected idiosyncracies in writing of this type.

Data and Analysis

Three different approaches to analyzing students' critical self-reflections are offered here: a straightforward frequency distribution of the lexical items and commonly co-occurring trigrams, a sentiment analysis with two different libraries, and a content-based thematic treatment.

The data represented in Table 3 reflect the frequency distribution of the ten most frequently occurring lexical items attested throughout the students' critical self-reflections. In order to ensure consistency and ease of analysis, all stopwords were removed, and derived lexemes were all treated under the same headword. For instance, included under the highest-ranking lexical item are *writing*, *write*, *writer*, *written*, *writings*, *writers*, *writes*, *prewriting*, and *rewrites*, such that inflection, derivation, etc. do not skew the results unnecessarily. Similarly, instances of morphological suppletion are also treated under the same headword, e.g. *good*, *better*, and *best* are all presented as one. Nevertheless, the reader will recognize that there is remarkable consistency in the students' word selection, likely influenced directly by the suggestion that they focus on and evaluate their growth and struggles regarding both reading and writing throughout the semester.

Table 3: *Frequency List of Attested Lexical Items*

Rank	Male	N	%	Female	N	%
1	write	924	1.72%	write	971	1.80%
2	read	813	1.52%	read	813	1.51%
3	class	388	0.72%	class	393	0.73%
4	learn	297	0.55%	learn	324	0.60%
5	good	291	0.54%	good	285	0.53%
6	essay	259	0.48%	essay	210	0.39%
7	semester	201	0.38%	semester	174	0.32%
8	work	173	0.32%	course	135	0.25%
9	course	155	0.29%	different	135	0.25%
10	different	124	0.23%	understand	131	0.24%
		3,625	6.75%		3,571	6.62%

While these lexical items are fairly straightforwardly explained based on the requirements of the writing task, sentiment analysis of the larger texts, on the other hand, has the *potential* to provide additional insights. Sentiment analyzers are generally rule- and/or lexicon-based, where particular lexical items, sequences of lexical items, punctuation usage, non-alphanumeric characters, etc. are considered in determining the affect of a given text (see e.g. AlemánViteri 2021, D'Andrea 2015, Sarkar 2019, Taboada et al. 2011, and Zou 2019). Thus, each sentiment analyzer may present somewhat different results.

As such, although a lexical item might be assigned a positive, negative, or neutral score within a given utterance, these scores generally function at the level of morphosyntax and not discourse. For instance, the exemplar in (1) below, which was found as the very last line in one of the critical self-reflections, was coded as overwhelmingly neutral (0.916), which the reader will see doesn't genuinely reflect the affect of the student:

(1) "I am very grateful to this class and to my teacher, since he has introduced me to this world of reading and writing where you learn a lot, since I can live the colorful, happy, sad, dark, terrifying or magical worlds of other people, and in the same way they can know my world, my mind and my heart."

Instead, this student has recognized the transformative nature of reading, such that s/he can experience a full range of emotions, both positive and negative, by exploring the lived realities of others in the same way that others can experience his/hers. As a result, lexical frequency and sentiment analysis alone cannot account for the full range of student expression in this (or any other) particular type of writing but still enable the instructor to gain surface-level knowledge of students' self-positioning toward the task.

Nevertheless, analysis with TextBlob (cf. Loria 2020) indicated overwhelmingly positive affect (*pos*=0.999, *neg*=7.00e-14), and VADER (cf. Hutto and Gilbert 2014) likewise did (*neg*=0.036, *neut*=0.8479, *pos*=0.1089, *comp*=0.78). Furthermore, affect analysis using NRCLex (cf. Bailey 2016) found extremely high levels of positivity, anticipation, and trust; moderate levels of surprise and joy; and low to no readings for any of the other emotions tested (negativity, sadness, fear, anger, disgust). Although both TextBlob and VADER indicate very low levels of negative affect, they are not identical due to the

difference in size between the lexicons associated with each, as the former contains approximately three-thousand items; the latter, seven-thousand items. Similarly, NRCLex has a different objective in classifying text and contains, according to the creators of the library, somewhere between ten and thirty-thousand items.

This does not, of course, mean that the analysis can or even should conclude here, though, as situated language usage frequently resists such straightforward computational classification. For instance, Garner et al. (2019) note that examination of the presence of *n*-grams can shed light on students' writing proficiency in a second or foreign language, and Geluso and Yamaguchi (2014) suggest that formulaic language might also present greater metacognitive awareness of where students are currently 'at' with regard to their writing abilities and engagement with the assignment. For this reason, presented below in Table 4 are the most frequent verbal and non-verbal trigrams (three co-occurring lexical items), which suggest students' willingness to foreground consistently their own development throughout the semester, evinced not only through the regular presence of the first-person, singular pronoun and accompanying verbs, but also through a clear indication that students are focusing upon the course itself and their role in it.

Table 4: *Most Frequent Verbal and Non-Verbal Trigrams*

Rank	Verbal	Non-Verbal
1	*I think that*	*a lot of*
2	*I have learned*	*as a writer*
3	*I learned that*	*writing and rhetoric*
4	*I have to*	*of the readings*
5	*I was able*	*the writing process*
6	*helped me to.*	*of the semester*
7	*I need to*	*at the beginning*
8	*I realized that*	*reading and writing*
9	*I want to*	*the amount of*
10	*I would do*	*discussion board posts*

As a result, closer discourse-level inspection of the critical self-reflections reveals commonly recurring topics or themes of discussion, including the act of self-discovery and socioemotional learning, escapism and greater awareness through reading, differing expectations concerning the amount of coursework or rigor of the class, recognition of writing as a *process* as opposed to a *product*, and evaluative comments, each of which is treated below and accompanied by three or four student exemplars for each as a representative sample for the readers' consideration.

The Act of Self-Discovery and Socioemotional Learning

Because life doesn't simply stop when entering the classroom, students also frequently find their university assignments to be more or less difficult due to factors outside of the classroom, including e.g. failed or struggling friendships and romantic relationships, family tragedies, financial issues, etc. In the case of the student in (2) below, his/her grandfather, who had served as a paternal figure for him/her during childhood, was diagnosed with cancer, negatively affecting this student's ability to focus specifically upon university obligations. While completely understandable, these types of situations are not always communicated by students to their professors who, as the student notes, do not want to be perceived as a victim, i.e. despite needing socioemotional support, they will sometimes struggle in silence as a face-saving act (cf. Goffman 1955).

(2) "A few weeks after the beginning of the semester, we received the awful news that my grandfather had colon cancer… And I was just too hard to swallow; I literally felt that my heart was squished really hard […] I've also dealt with the fear of losing*[sic]* him, and the realization that life's not a joke, life's not for granted, and anyone can die at any unexpected moment (I hope this doesn't sound too depressing). This taught me to value more my life and the people whom I love. All these feelings have made college even harder and demanding than it already is, but from the day that my grandfather left, I took the firm decision to not act as the victim, and instead fight my way through what comes, without bottling up my feelings, which is something that I struggle with, for my loved ones, and for my beloved grandfather and the love he has and gives me until his day comes."

Although many of the undergraduate students come from more fortuitous economic backgrounds, there are still students whose background and/or present socioeconomic conditions are less conducive for academic studies. For instance, the student in (3) below notes that s/he found the semester to be particularly difficult due to the need to balance employment and school. Nonetheless, s/he has departed the course with a more optimistic outlook, recognizing not only that s/he has the capability to succeed, but also having understood the value of the course itself. Similarly, the exemplar in (4) indicates that the student has realized not only that the course was perhaps even more difficult than originally anticipated, but also that s/he received a different, more important lesson in humility, such that the world of reading and writing enables us to recognize the synchronic limitations and gaps in our extant knowledge.

(3) "Again I want to emphasize that it was very difficult for me to do this class in the best way since this last semester for me has been very exhausting and stressful, studying and working at the same time is not easy, but after all the bad, I feel that I learned many valuable things in this class, and above all, I am leaving with a lot of desire to improve and develop my English."

(4) "I must say that I was humbled, the course totally overpassed my demanding and difficult expectations of it, but it made me realize that there is always something new to be learned and that we should be open to it more often."

Furthermore, although high school students are oftentimes reminded of the necessity of and 'funneled' into post-secondary education, this is not always the most appropriate path for everyone. To this end, the exemplar in (5) demonstrates the internal struggle that some (many?) students have, viz. deciding whether studying at university is a personal objective (i.e. intrinsically motivated) or one imposed from an external source (i.e. extrinsically motivated). Of course, undergraduate students do not yet have the full benefit of hindsight in reflecting upon the value of their education, but this student has voiced frustration with the very nature of instruction and has expressed cognitive dissonance regarding the future that s/he imagines as opposed to the one that s/he is currently living.

"Everything is so confusing, when I had online classes, I wanted to have face-to-face classes. Now I want to have online classes, I feel so tired of college I just want to spend at home. This problem started in the middle of the semester, I just felt like I didn't fit in, nothing was going right, and everything was so repetitive. When I read the last readings of the course, which dealt with the education system, I had a million questions and if it was necessary and healthy to continue in college. These last few weeks, I felt the same way; I felt like I was still in school with the pressure of passing the course and having to study things that I was not passionate about. I can say that I still have that feeling of not knowing if I am doing the right thing, whether to continue or just drop out. Most likely this will remain the same, me with a smile on my face, while at night I imagine a different future."

Escapism and Greater Awareness through Readings

Literature has long served a sociopsychological function for readers, as it retains the unique ability for readers to escape "the drudgery of the situation he finds himself in; an attempt to provide himself with a personal utopia" (Young, 1976, p. 377). Granted, not every student is genuinely attempting to create and/or enter into a "personal utopia," but the worlds represented may present an alternative set of circumstances that evoke different feelings or encourage a different mode of thinking, as the students in (6) and (7) remark. In fact, if the in-class discussions serve as any indication, this was the first time that many students critically considered both individual and societal complicity in (unfortunately) commonplace issues like homelessness, discrimination, abuse, personal identity, etc.

(6) "But I firmly believe that these subjects are a small escape from what we study, they are a way to build ourselves as human beings."

(7) "With this knowledge, I think I am a prepared writer who is ready to transmit information, messages, feelings, thoughts, ideas, among others. I also learned that writing is my escape from life and the problems in it because it

helps me deal with stress, sadness, and anxiety. I started to write more often in my journals because of this class, and sometimes I even write in English now."

Moreover, the exemplars in (8) and (9) also show that certain readings encouraged students to relate the authors' experiences to their own, ultimately concluding that satisfaction toward one's personal identity and the respectful treatment of others are paramount. Because the readings stressed not only major issues but also the frustration and banality of everyday adult life, the student in (8) has learned an important lesson about cultural relativity. Additionally, despite using the incorrect word, the student who wrote (9) acknowledges that it is actually through such readings that the expression of sympathy and solidarity with unknown others becomes a reality, thus enriching the students' own positionality in and toward the world and the struggles it presents for many people, particularly those outside of their own socioeconomic class.

(8) "Also, the most important and powerful things that I learned with the readings were that I have to be very proud of who I am and from where I become, because this is what builds my identity and my personality and if I want to hide that or change that, I will end up losing my essence. I learned that people around the world can have many different opinions, traditions and ways of being and we have to respect that and be well informed so we don't hurt their feelings or made them feel unrespected."

(9) "Discrimination was also a main topic in the readings since many of the texts were created by immigrants who had to face stereotypes, prejudices, violence, and idiom [language] barriers. The read[ing]s opened my eyes: increased my empathy for other ones, and the texts showed me how cruel but beautiful our world can be."

Differing Curricular Expectations

It is not uncommon for students to struggle upon entrance at the university, as they arrive oftentimes from markedly different personal and academic backgrounds. Consequently, this frequently leads to mismatched expectations about what their courses will require both in terms of the time commitment and the rigor of assignments, how formal and informal evaluation of their performance will be undertaken, etc. For many of the students in the present study, however, this is also complicated by the fact that a significant proportion have spent years receiving bilingual instruction at the primary and secondary levels; thus, upon entrance into the first-year composition course, many believe that they already have the ability to engage in sustained, effective, critical reading and writing, a perception that is summarily dismissed through the first week of instruction. For instance, instead of simply reading short texts for surface-level details, they are required to examine authorial 'moves,' e.g. to contemplate the selection of individual words as a matter of rhetorical choice. As the author of this chapter regularly remarks during these initial sessions, there is a reason that a writer has chosen a particular word instead of another, as there does exist a difference between being *content* or *happy*, *downtrodden* or *sad*, *furious* or *angry*, etc.

This is, as a result, an area that students must navigate individually and collectively to ensure their academic transformation, and some students were more successful than others in this regard. For instance, the exemplar in (10) shows that the student in question recognized the different nature of this course, ultimately having modified his or her behavior, as the tongue-in-cheek comment indicates, to earn not only a passing grade but, rather, the highest possible awarded grade.

(10) "This was the most demanding class of my semester, and I am hoping to get an A (please?). Anyways, I do think that the amount of writing done helped my craft. I believe that this follows the same principle of hard work pays off, and that practice makes perfect."

Similarly, the exemplar in (11) shows that another student has considered not only the level of rigor in this particular course, but also that in the corresponding course in

Spanish, deciding that this one was more difficult yet also one about which s/he could feel proud, i.e. for having completed almost all of the assignments. Although the difficulty that s/he describes seems superficially concerned with the amount of work, other contributing factors—described in the rest of the reflection—foreground the fact that this student is also further along in his or her academic career and, thus, taking courses that generally require much more effort and field-specific knowledge, such that taking an academic writing course in a foreign language compounds the overall commitment to university-level assignments.

(11) "At the beginning I didn't think that this class was going to be so demanding. I thought that it was going to be like escritura academica which is the equivalent class but in Spanish. When I had escritura academica I finished the semester completely tired and didn't want to write or read anymore, I put a lot of effort in that class to finish with an A. This is why I took two semesters to take this class, but it appeared to be more demanding than the first. Now that I am ending the semester, I can say that I am proud of myself for having done almost all the work assigned in this class, as it was a lot."

Finally, there were students who expressed difficulties transitioning from coursework almost exclusively in Spanish to a course that was taught entirely in English and which required readings to be completed, assignments to be written, and in-class conversations to be undertaken exclusively in English, as the student in (12) describes. This would seem to indicate that greater scaffolding is necessary both before and during this first-year composition course. Interestingly, students may have historically utilized a dictionary to determine the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, yet students in the twenty-first century have access to a greater range of technological devices, which can serve either as a beneficial aid or as a crutch in the classroom, as the student relates.

(12) "I always had several problems with literature in general, both reading and writing made it very difficult for me. On the other hand, I don't consider myself bad at English, but speaking it in public is definitely not my strong point. Associating these things in the class was initially difficult. I never

had face-to-face classes entirely in English, I had to use various methods to learn correctly. One of them and of which I am not very proud was using the telephone in class to translate some things that I did not understand."

Writing as 'Process'

Because one of the central tenets of first-year composition is the notion that writing should be approached as a process, students will frequently be required to produce multiple drafts of a single work, engaging in each step of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing, before (ideally) publishing the work. In the case of the university-level classroom specifically, this final step is typically manifested through submission for formal evaluation by the instructor; however, this does not mean that the submission is without fault and immediately ready for public consumption. Instead, students will frequently undertake revisions of the same piece after receiving the initial score/grade—if for no other reason than to earn back missing points. Nevertheless, this also means that students will necessarily revisit the same piece multiple times, which is oftentimes directly contrasted with the more product-focused approach in coursework specific to their major(s).

Toward this goal, students become much more cognizant of their role in the commonplace act of writing and also in their ability to improve through extensive revision. For instance, the exemplar in (13) shows that this student has reflected—quite honestly—on the quality of his/her work at the initial stage of drafting while simultaneously recognizing that s/he, as Andrea Lunsford says, "profit[s…] from continuous trial-and-error writing" (qtd. in Connors, 1980, p. 2).

(13) "In this class also I have learned that my writing was truly terrible. A hideous thing to the eye but with effort and time to practice I managed to get a little bit better. The moment in which I realized the improvement that I had made was in the revision of my rhetorical analysis essay. In this revision, I witnessed all the mistakes that I made and had a feeling of improvement throughout this course."

Similarly, those who have not regularly invested the time necessary to follow the writing process are also those who are subsequently surprised at the benefits that this may offer, as the student in (14) indicates below, including greater access to one's own creativity, the normalization of undertaking writing following this heuristic, and the assistance that other fledgling and/or experienced writers can offer to them during peer editing.

(14) "For me the writing process now has become a kind of ritual. I have learned to make drafts and outlines that express my ideas long before I even want to start writing an essay. This practice has made my creativity and development much more fluid. Also, spending a certain number of hours reading different topics in English, although it was tedious, helped me understand different forms of writing and styles. As a writer I have learned that to achieve a good job you have to rewrite the same idea many times until you reach a desired goal. Another thing that I have learned as a writer during this time is that feedback and comments from other writers will always be one of the best ways to enrich my work."

Finally, even though many students are initially quite apprehensive about writing in a second or foreign language, the writing process encourages students to accept that mistakes are simply part of the journey—something to be learned from, not simply to be feared. To embrace this encourages students to take risks, knowing that they will have an opportunity to explore and make revisions. In the case of the student in (15), s/he acknowledges and justifies this fear but also concedes that there existed an internal author the entire time, albeit one who was only free to exist upon embracing the process-based nature of writing.

(15) "Throughout the semester, I have encountered my inner little writer that had always been hidden away from people's possible criticism and judgment of a future failure. When I was in school, I had a tough time getting to write in English class since I never felt confident enough in my language skills to redact even a single page. That was till the beginning of this semester, as I had to accept the fact that I had to overcome my fear of writing in English if I wanted to pass this class without the help of my school classmates."

Evaluative Comments

Despite the fact that students were instructed to evaluate neither the course nor the instructor in their critical self-reflection, quite a few did take advantage of the opportunity to include evaluative remarks at the end, likely a decision made either under the assumption of improving one's overall grade or as a way of extolling honestly the value of the instructor. Although these would generally not be included in a chapter of this nature, the author decided that such evaluative comments, particularly given the fact that his name was invoked over fifty times, might actually be more beneficial toward his own reflective teaching, given the numerous issues associated with traditional student evaluations (see e.g. Adams et al. 2022, Clayson2009, Heffernan 2021, Hornstein 2017, and Zabaleta 2007). Nonetheless, students consistently indicated that their experience and/or growth this semester was aided by the instructor's willingness to meet outside of the classroom, as in (16); to demonstrate a passion and positive attitude for the subject, as in (17) and (18); and to provide concrete suggestions while building positive rapport, as in (19), even if students do not initially perceive the benefits of more rigorous or stricter evaluation, for example.

(16) "To conclude, I want to thank you Tahir, because setting aside W&R you are one of the coolest and wonderful people that I met (and I'm not telling you this to fill the length, but I really feel it). I would never forget the last talk that we have in our zoom meeting, it could change drastically my life in a good way! Thank you for being that hard the whole semester because that make me a more dedicated person. I would love to have a talk with you anytime soon, thanks for all!"

(17) "PS: Tahir, I just wanted to thank you for your time, patience and mainly your positive attitude in and outside class, during office hours. You made me feel like a true writer from day one and by giving me this confidence I really improved my skills. I have learned a lot from you, but the most important thing is that you always transmit your love for reading and writing to us. I guess it is true that it only takes one good teacher to make you enjoy a class. See you soon at campus!"

(18) "In general, I feel that there were many positive things within the class, I really liked Tahir's attitude and passion at the time of teaching his class, it is easy to see that he likes his profession a lot and thanks to that, the class feels very solid because he has the knowledge to do it well."

(19) "Just as some extra reflection, I would want to tell you about my thoughts about you (that changed during the semester). At first, I hated you, as easy as that. I thought that you had something against me, as I never thought I would have that Attendance & Participation grade at the half part of the semester. But I decided to try to understand you and asked for an explanation, and as you told me as advice that I should try to sit in the front of the class, I have to admit it was a great idea. That helped me a lot with my concentration and involvement in the class and helped me feel the class was not as boring as I thought. Your way of being has always felt like friendship for me and my friends as you may have seen outside class. Thank you for everything Tahir, you are an excellent teacher and above all an excellent person."

Conversely, students also indicated a preference for fewer readings, less writing, etc., given their other time commitments, as in (20), inability to see the larger purpose of the task, as in (20) and (21); or lack of recognition of the relevance of the readings, as in (22). Such feedback from students, which did *not* later appear in the formal student evaluations, insinuates that they felt much more comfortable—regardless of the fact that a grade would be assigned—sharing such feedback through a low-stakes form of writing. Although first-year composition courses generally focus on and motivate students to consider a variety of topics, this feedback introduces an opportunity for the instructor—in this case, the author of this chapter—to reflect more deeply upon the selection of texts and the way in which they are presented to students to ensure effective engagement and retention.

(20) "Sometimes, I felt that the readings were too long, and we had too many for a topic that could be discussed with just one complete and concise reading. "

(21) "The quantity I have been asked to produce in terms of writing was in my opinion too much, especially the discussion board posts. This is why I purposely chose to not fully focus on these, as it was taking too much time for, in my opinion, no useful reason."

(22) "My goal regarding the college writing assignments was to finish them correctly and on time. I did not put so much effort on them because the topics were irrelevant for me, and they did not motivate me. That is why I did not pay too much attention to what I was investigating about, and the homework became an obligation instead of something I enjoyed or liked. This made me leave aside my passion for writing, which was very sad."

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a broad overview on a data-driven (i.e. corpus-based) study of the critical self-reflections of students, all of whom are ELLs working toward completion of an undergraduate degree at a private university in Ecuador. In pursuit of this goal, a corpus of 105 pieces of student writing from two successive semesters in a first-year composition classroom were organized and lightly cleaned up to ensure computational analysis, from which three dimensions of analysis were undertaken. The first included a straightforward frequency list of the most commonly occurring lexical items and trigrams; the second, a sentiment analysis using two different Python-based libraries that considered basic and complex emotions as represented in text; and the third, a content-based treatment of the most salient themes that arose in the critical self-reflections. As a result, the present study has offered the first examination of undergraduate narrative-based writing at an Ecuadorian post-secondary institution.

There are, however, a few ways in which this study and/or our knowledge of the field could be improved. First, although the results shared here do constitute a representative sample of the undergraduate population at this particular institution, very little emphasis was placed on demographic factors that might have influenced both the content of the critical self-reflection and/or the correlation between said content and students' final

grades. For example, although gender is introduced here as a topic worthy of consideration, space simply did not permit an in-depth investigation into how or if this contributed to the topics discussed and statements made. Similarly, although students' socioeconomic status was mentioned briefly, this was also not an area truly under consideration here. Second, this particular written assignment was associated with a grade—in fact, it was the final grade of the semester—and this may have influenced some of what students wrote. Although the instructor did gain valuable insight into students' current reading and writing abilities at the end of the semester, in addition to advice concerning the students' perception of the instruction itself, a power dynamic still remained, such that they may not have felt as comfortable sharing as they otherwise might have with an activity like an exit ticket. Consequently, although there are still noteworthy areas for future research, this chapter has demonstrated that a data-driven approach to students' work is mutually beneficial to both parties.

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CHAPTER 2

Using Fairytales in the Language Classroom with Generation Alpha

Marija Stevkovska

Introduction

Fairy tales have always been present in EFL course books intended for young learners. Their benefits are manifold: they develop children's creativity, language and creative thinking skills, as well as their emotional competencies. Book authors often modify their content as it is not always age or culture appropriate. Several factors need to be taken into account when implementing fairy tales in lesson plans for pre-school and primary school children: language level, content, and the characteristics of young learners. In addition to the third factor, language teachers should also consider the fact that today's young learners belong to Generation Alpha, i.e. "children born between 2010 and 2024" (McCrindle et al., 2021:2). These children were born with technology, which is an integral part of their life in every aspect of their education, entertainment and communication. Therefore, the activities and materials have to be in line with the latest technological advancements in the field of internet, social media, and interactive computer games.

In this chapter, I discuss the use of fairy tales in the EFL classroom in order to meet the needs of Generation Alpha. I begin by defining the term Generation Alpha and how (and whether) these children differ from the previous generations. I then continue to argue that despite all the technological improvement children will always remain to be social beings. This Aristotelian view of human nature is the milestone to be reached by every educator. Fairytales help EFL learners learn about universal values and ethics beyond different cultures. It is therefore crucial to choose appropriate stories that promote

contemporary values so that children can identify with them and eventually learn certain facts of life and improve their English along the way. Lesson plans based on fairy tales should have a structure that correlates with children's nature. To this end, the results of a survey with students and English teachers are presented. The obtained data provide insight into the way in which teachers choose and use fairy tales, and how students perceive the fairy tales embedded in their English classes. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to provide EFL teachers with practical advice on how to implement fairy tales in EFL lessons for young learners who belong to Generation Alpha.

Generation Alpha

'Generation Alpha' is a relatively new term coined by Mark McCrindle, an Australian generational researcher. Other terms that refer to children born between 2010 and 2024 are Generation Glass, Upagers, The Alphas, Global Gen, and Multi-modals. These children have more access to technology, virtual reality and online information than any other generation before them, and at a much younger age. The oldest of them are as old as Instagram.

According to an Arab proverb 'People resemble their times more than they resemble their parents.' From a scientific point of view 'people are significantly influenced by the socio-historical environment' (Mannheim, 1952). To what extent are these children being shaped by 'the increasingly digital and global world?' (McCrindle et al., 2021:2) Is this generation different from Generation Z? If so, to what extent? These are the crucial questions to be answered in order to provide English teachers with practical advice on how to design lesson plans for Generation Alpha.

Based on Mannheim's theory of generations there are three criteria to be met in order for an age group to be considered a generation: cohesion, shared experiences, and common attitudes and forms of behavior. According to Strauss and Howe's model (1991), a generation change occurs approximately every 20 years, with certain features pervading throughout the previous and the following generations. This chapter does not aim to argue whether the term Generation Alpha is primarily created for marketing reasons, although there is lack of scientific research to prove that Generation Alpha is significantly different from generation Z. The term is used solely for temporal reference to young learners nowadays.

To what extent are these children being shaped by 'the increasingly digital and global world?

The most important event in their life so far has been the COVID-19 pandemic, the consequences of which are far-reaching in terms of their education and face-to-face interaction. Even before the pandemic, generation Alpha was not only consuming but also generating digital content on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or Facebook to communicate with their friends and family (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017). Children nowadays play games with virtual pets, have digital coloring books and online puzzles. Their digital literacy surpasses their literacy and speech in the first few years of their life. The shorter attention span is a result of the instant nature of the social media and the digital tools they are using. Screen time has replaced outdoor activities that develop children's life skills. To conclude, Generation Alpha has many benefits of living in 'increasingly technologically integrated times', but it will also face some unique challenges as to developing interpersonal and essential life and work skills.

Is this generation different from Generation Z? If so, to what extent?

Generation Z has been affected by globalization and digitalization in the same way as Generation Alpha. In a post-pandemic world, this generation resembles Generation Alpha in all aspects of life. Their experience with online and hybrid education does not differ from that of Generation Alpha. Social media and other digital content is consumed and generated in the same way. Generation Z is in fact beginning their careers now and thus paving the way for Generation Alpha as the new job market poses certain challenges regarding working-from-home and maintaining effective communication. Both, Generation Z and Generation Alpha need to develop leadership skills that would help them thrive in a world of robotics and rapid technological development.

Some members of Generation Z are about to become novice teachers and start educating Generation Alpha students, although most of the teachers of Generation Alpha are millennials or generation Y, born between 1980 and 1996. Both generations find technology an integral part of their lives. The main difference between Generation Z and Generation Alpha is that the latter is much more exposed to English from birth onwards, since smart phones started to be widely used after 2010s (Reisinger, 2012). Nevertheless,

the need for physical contact and face-to-face communication remain core to human experience of all generations. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, as much as it is convenient to work from home and have online classes, face-to-face human interaction cannot be completely substituted by machine-assisted communication.

Finally, the fact remains that Generation Alpha students are young learners. The term refers to learners "aged between five and twelve years old" (Cameron, 200: xi). The prominent characteristics of this age group do not change, regardless of the generation. According to Pinter (2006) young learners have a) a holistic approach towards language; b) low self- and learning awareness; c) limited reading and writing skills, both in their mother tongue and in English; d) lack of awareness of others and their viewpoints; e) limited knowledge about the world around them; and most importantly, they enjoy imagination, fantasy and kinesthetic movement (Pinter, 2006). Teachers face the following challenges when teaching young learners: cognitive development, motivation, attention, multi-level groups, and assessment (Nunan, 2010). An alleviating circumstance for EFL teachers is that the border between EFL and ESL for generation Alpha is becoming blurred. Considering the amount of time generation Alpha spends listening and reading in English, the exposure to English as L2 very often equals or surpasses L1 exposure, particularly in developing countries, which do not produce sufficient amount of children TV shows and educational programs in L1. Many studies have confirmed that children's screen time is continuously rising, and the pandemic has contributed to this even further (Zhang et al., 2022; Eirich et al., 2022). This leads us to the next question: How much should teachers change the way they teach young learners nowadays? The answer will be provided in the following sections of this chapter.

Using fairy tales in the EFL classroom

A review of English course books for young learners reveals that fairytales are present in many of them. They are teaching materials that integrate both engaging content and rich linguistic input (Mattheoudakis et al., 2014; Xolmurodova, 2021). Authors justify this by emphasizing the main features of fairy tales that make them appropriate teaching materials for young learners: they are based on repetitive language, full of rhythm and melody; provide visual learning input, have short plots with concentrated action; have

characters with one outstanding quality, which makes them easy for the students to identify with; begin and end with set phrases ("Once upon a time" and "They lived happily ever after."); and always have happy endings (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 1996).

Children are curious by nature and like asking questions. They do not, however, expect lengthy and complicated responses, but rather short and simple answers. "Not everything can be said for children, not everything can be explained to them. But once it is not clogged up by hesitation and pretension almost anything can be told to them as a story" (Hunt, 1994:132).

The linguistic benefits of using fairy tales in EFL classes with young learners are numerous, as several authors have reported. Frequency is a key factor in acquiring new vocabulary (Schmitt, 2010). People need to hear/read a word 8-12 times to remember it (Lemoine et al. 1993). Key words are frequently reiterated in short stories. Even if they are not, fairy tales are included in at least two consecutive lesson plans, which enables students to hear/read a word many times and thus store it in their long-term memory. Another advantage of fairy tales for language learners who are literate is the extensive reading of authentic books, which enhances both the acquisition of vocabulary and narrative skills (Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2012). Finally, according to the Jungian interpretation, fairy tales promote children's psychological well-being and growth as they teach them how to resolve basic human issues and conflicts, and how to approach their desires and relationships in a healthy way (Jung, 1964). Furthermore, over the years, fairy tales have been conceived, developed and eventually altered to "instill hope in its youthful and mature audiences so that no matter how bad their lives are, they can still believe that they can live happily ever after" (Zipes, 2011:7). Fairy tales can be used in five different formats in the English classroom:

a) graded readers

New graded ELT readers for young learners are constantly being published by the major ELT publishers. They include both classical and Disney stories, and are typically divided into 3 or 6 levels, beginning with level 1 and 200 high-frequency words. The books have colorful illustrations that appeal to children. Most of the graded readers have audio books so that pre-school children may listen to them. As CDs are becoming obso-

lete, graded readers now have videos on YouTube where children can look at the pages of the book and listen to a native speaker reading out the story.

b) authentic fairy tale books

These are intended for native speakers of English. Therefore, they often contain long sentences, narrative tenses, complex constructions and low-frequency words.

Consider the following examples taken from a) an authentic book for children aged 2 to 5 and b) from a graded reader, level 2:

example a)	***example b)***
He was looking forward to having fun with the little mermaid. *"I wish I knew", Ariel said with a giggle.* *Ariel couldn't stop laughing as the dizzy octopus tried to swim straight.*	*Ariel is a mermaid. She loves human things. One day Ariel sees a boat … and a Prince on the boat.* *Suddenly there is a storm. Can Ariel help the Prince?*
Ariel Is My Babysitter (Disney Princess) (Little Golden Book) by Andrea Posner-Sanchez	Level 2: Disney Princess The Little Mermaid by Kathryn Harper

The comparison between the two types of books reveals significant differences in language complexity. Although graded readers are more preferred for students who can read and write, authentic fairy tale books may be used with very young learners (aged 2 to 5). The familiarity with the plot, the context and the characters will help learners understand the story. Furthermore, they will be exposed to complex language they might not otherwise encounter during their EFL classes. The repetitive nature of the language will eventually help learners memorize whole language chunks, without further analyzing them since they are in the pre-operational stage and cannot do so (Piaget, 1957). Learners will later use those chunks to produce language, which will in turn enhance their fluency.

c) adapted fairy tales in EFL course books for young learners

Authors of course books modify existing fairy tales in terms of their content and language before including them in language course books for young learners. They simplify the language and change or remove the frightening elements. One such example is the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" and the scary character of the Big Bad Wolf. In the course book *Fairyland 1* the wolf is presented as timid and rather clumsy. He eventually gets hit by a falling branch and does not manage to find and devour Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother (Dooley & Evans, 2012).

d) animated fairy tales

These may also be used as additional materials to hard copy books. There are various videos of animated tales to be found on YouTube. The videos are short (between 5 and 15 minutes) and contain simple language with a lot of repetition.

f) modern computer-animated movies

Animation is the omnipresent pictorial form of the modern era (Paul, 2005). The appearance of *Toy Story* in 1995, the first 3D animated film, marked the beginning of a new era in animated stories. American animation companies like Pixar, Disney, DreamWorks and Blue Sky Studios have been releasing box office hits aimed at viewers of all ages. Remakes of classical fairytales such as *Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, but also new fairy tales like *Shrek, Moana, Hotel Transylvania, The Incredible, Ice Age,* or *Encanto* are appealing to both children and adults. What is typical of the remakes is the inclusion of new characters, such as cute animals or witty servants, who serve to entertain adults with their comments alluding to contemporary issues that children may not be aware of. The new fairy tales, on the other hand, are a true reflection of modern society and cultural values of the 21st century, as they treat issues such as race tolerance, women's emancipation and respecting differences. There are characters of various races (Moana, Mirabel, Mulan), ethnicities and religions, and they are not judged by their appearance. A striking difference is noticeable in the way women are presented. Namely, girls and young women are no longer depicted as passive, obedient and dependent on men, whose only goal in life is to marry a handsome prince and then live happily ever after. On the

contrary, there are now characters like Princess Fiona, Elsa, Mrs. Incredible, Ladybug, Mulan, or Maribel, who do not always match the ideal of a physically attractive woman, but they are adventurous, curious, independent and self-confident. Male characters are also presented more realistically, mirroring "societal shifts in masculinity" (Shenattah, 2020: 200). They do not necessarily have to be fearless, self-confident leaders who rescue girls from wicked witches. Characters like Shrek, Johny Loughran and Count Dracula from *Hotel Transylvania* deviate from the stereotypical image of an Alpha male in that they are depicted as supportive, timid, vulnerable and dependent on others (women). The failures they occasionally experience render them realistic characters. Due to their significant length (more than an hour), individual scenes from animated movies may be watched in class with pre-viewing, while viewing and post-viewing activities.

Choosing appropriate fairytales for Generation Alpha

There are four key factors to consider when using fairytales in EFL classes for Generation Alpha:

a. language level;

b. content and values that they promote;

c. the latest trends in technology, with particular emphasis on animated children stories; and

d. the increasing demands for more social interaction and development of interpersonal and other 21st century skills.

Wright (2003) claims that the language level should be based on "what the children are expected to *DO* in the activity and not on the complexity of the language in the story" (Wright, 2003:7). Interest, appeal and relevance of stories are just as important as the language itself as they can help young learners "overcome enthusiastically linguistic obstacles" (Collie & Slater, 1987:6-7). This supports EFL teachers in selecting authentic fairy tale books. However, using a graded reader or an adapted story from a course book is more practical for teachers, as it provides access to ready-made lesson plans with an array of teaching materials and ideas (flash cards, videos, songs, handouts, character finger puppets, crafting ideas, play scripts for staging the fairy tales, etc.)

The content of fairy tales to be used in class should be close to the age group, and not too scary or brutal. In addition, educators should be aware of hidden messages and stereotypes that are present in many fairy tales and could influence children's perceptions and behavior at a very young age (Zipes, 2011). These messages can be delivered explicitly or implicitly, and they may be either educational (Baranova, 2014) or harmful and distorted (Coye & Whitehead, 2008).

Concerning values and stereotypes in fairy tales it is frequently the case that beauty equals goodness and conversely, the ugly characters in the stories are inherently bad or evil. In all classical tales princesses and princes are physically attractive, witches are ugly, characters turn ugly upon committing evil deeds, while enchanted frogs and beasts turn into handsome princes once the spell has been broken. There is a noticeable shift in the way beauty is perceived in modern fairy tales, mainly in the American animated movies. Starting in 2001, with the release of the first *Shrek* animated film, the audience is presented with a new perspective on the changing roles of both men and women in today's society. Physical appearance does not define characters as good or bad. The ideal of a beautiful tall slim long-haired princess is replaced with an average-looking women or girl. Regarding the appropriateness of the contents and values they promote, the main challenge for English teachers is choosing adequate fairytales that raise significant questions about topical issues such as personal identity, gender and social (in)equality. Due to globalization, the moral values of the Western world and its rules of etiquette are widely advertised in the animated films. Modern stories are either based on the modification of classical fairy tales according to contemporary viewpoints as to what is appropriate for the young audiences, or new fantastic stories are created that question the very notion of morality in language and behavior (Bottingheimer, 2010).

When choosing fairy tales like *Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood*, or *the Wolf and the Seven Little Goats* teachers would have to be careful about the elements of violence and brutality. No child would like to hear that his/her parents are capable of leaving their child alone in the woods and abandoning him/her because they have no money to live on. Nor would they feel pleasant if they were to act out a story in which they have to tear the wolf's stomach apart or devour a little girl and her grandmother. The horror elements in such stories can be extremely distressing to young learners and should be

avoided. This is clearly done in course books that contain adaptations of fairy tales, as previously mentioned in the example from the course book *Fairyland 1*.

A brief overview of the history of fairy tales reveals that different elements have often been added or removed in order to meet the needs of the audience. Charles Perrault, a courtly French author from the 17th century, made his tales wittier and more aristocratic, editing out any offensive elements, so as to make them more appealing to the members of the French court, who looked for amusement and entertainment from the stories (Sale, 1978). On the other hand, the tales of the Grimm brothers contained excessive violence because of their hidden agenda – to establish the German national identity in the 19th century. Unlike them, Disney fairy tales do not contain any violence or sexual allusions because the ultimate goal of the company is to attract as large audiences as possible, in order to increase its profits. They also evolve over time, supporting current trends of today's views of women (and men) and expectations of tolerance of those with differences.

Teaching Generation Alpha entails the use of technology, by which we mean the latest trends in digitalization, with particular emphasis on animated children stories and the abundance of additional materials and tools provided in an online format. Regardless of the format of the fairy tale, pre-listening/reading and post-listening/reading activities should include digital tools that young learners are familiar with since they use them on a daily basis. Those include educational games with fairy tale characters that can be download from Play Store or App Store; online interactive games and quizzes; memory and vocabulary games, to name but a few. No scientific research is necessary to confirm that Generation Alpha is used to playing such games and they expect to meet their favorite characters outside the classroom, as they are merely a click away from their internet devices.

Despite all the latest rapid advancements in technology, there is the increasing demand for developing 21st century skills. Binkley et al. (2012) have organized the skills into four groupings: *ways of thinkin*g (creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, learning to learn), *ways of working* (communication, teamwork), *tools for working* (information literacy, ICT literacy), and *living in the world* (global and local citizenship, life and career, personal and social responsibility) (Binkley et al., 2012:18-19). Using technology to teach fairytales as part of EFL classes incorporates all of the above-mentioned educational and life skills.

According to Polette (2005), fairy tales improve the 'elasticity of mind' and the thinking skills that can be taught through the use of fairy tales include: abstract, associative, creative, critical, deductive, metaphorical, logical, perceptual and symbolic thinking (Polette, 2005:v-vi). Teachers could prepare post-listening/reading/watching activities that include attribute listing (e.g. *What is Elsa/Ana like*), classifying/categorizing (e.g. *Which word denotes an animal in the Jungle Book?*), comparing and contrasting *(e.g. Compare the character of Snow White and the evil queen)*, decision-making *(e.g. What kind of a house would you build if you were one of the three little pigs?)*, or elaboration *(e.g. What could the seven little goats do to make sure they do not open the door to the hungry wolf?)*

Collaboration and teamwork can be practiced through fairy tales. Several studies indicate improvement in children's behavior after using fairy tales in the classroom (Sayer et al., 2018; Mardianto, 2015; Connery et al., 2010). Sayer et al. (2018) note that after working for four days with the fairy tales "Working Ants" and "The Grasshopper and the ants", their 3-4 year- old students were very enthusiastic to work together and cooperate when they were asked to put away their toys and books, tidy up the classroom, or throw away the garbage. Furthermore, the children's parents also reported a positive change in their behavior, in that their children became more cooperative. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) advocate the use of literature as it plays a vital role in children's social development, and not only 'in the development of language'. (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990:28). Most importantly, developing students' emotional intelligence through fairy tales is 'one of the most convincing reasons for using literature in the language classroom" (Puskás, 2018:98).

Implementing technology in EFL classes has been made particularly easy because of the increasingly digitalized forms of fairy tales and other educational supplementary materials. It has become normal for Generation Alpha to use their smart phones and smart TVs, as well as their tablets to watch animated cartoons and movies. This way of interaction with the digital content of fairy tales leaves young learners with no choice but to become computer literate.

Practical experience with fairy tales

A survey with 25 EFL teachers from North Macedonia and 60 students, aged 7-10, was conducted in order to gain more insight into the use of fairy tales in the English

classroom and learners' attitudes towards fairy tales. The teachers work in primary state schools and private language schools in the cities of Skopje, Tetovo and Ohrid, and the students they teach participated in the student survey. Both surveys consisted of multiple-choice questions and the results indicated the following:

a) Teacher survey

- Most EFL teachers use fairytales in the English classroom;

- Over 50% associate the word fairy tale with a cautionary tale;

- The majority of the respondents describe fairy tales as "magical", "unrealistic", and "cautionary;

- When choosing a fairytale, two thirds of the teachers think that language and values are the most important features to be taken into consideration;

- Regarding students' attitudes towards the effects of fairy tales, most of the teachers believe their students are happy when evil characters are punished. They also think that scary events have a negative influence on students, as punishments in fairy tales are often brutal and violent.

- Concerning the types of fairy tales 80% of the teachers prefer modern retellings of fairy tales;

- When asked about the selection process, teachers choose fairy tales with happy endings and ones that do not have scary or distressing themes. They also select tales that have little or no violence, and stories they think the students would find entertaining. It is equally important for the teachers that the stories they use in class teach students valuable moral lessons. Surprisingly, two respondents select tales randomly.

- The last question was open-ended. It referred to the possible positive/negative influence of fairy tales on Generation Alpha. One major similarity among the responses was that in order to avoid any negative influence on their young learners, teachers choose fairy tales that do not contain elements of physical violence. Teachers also agreed that the fairy tales that are entertaining and promote positive moral values have a positive impact on their students. Furthermore, 4 teachers emphasized the fact that fairy tales should not

promote obsolete concepts and ideas, such as associating ugly characters with being bad or evil, or gaining victory through violence. Finally, most teachers agreed that fairy tales have a positive impact on students as they stimulate them to think more creatively. On the other hand, there was one teacher who reported that her students were often confused by fairy tales, because they could not identify the hidden messages and meaning of the stories, or because they failed to distinguish the stories from reality.

b) Student survey

- Surprisingly, two thirds of the students in both classes stated that they enjoyed listening to or being read fairy tales.

- The majority of the students agreed that fairy tales make learning more fun.

- In both classes, the majority of students agreed that fairy tales make them feel excited and motivated to learn English. There were, however, several students who said that tales leave them confused or they often make them feel scared.

- Regarding their preferences, students prefer fairy tales with happy endings, and many of them enjoy the amusing aspects of fairy tales, such as magical creatures, whimsical characters and funny occurrences.

The last question was about their favorite fairy tale. This was an open-ended question and the most popular choice was "Frozen", an animated film from 2013, followed by the classic tale of Cinderella, and then "Shrek.

The results indicate that fairytales are used in EFL classrooms with young learners and teachers typically choose modern fairy tales with a happy ending and tales that do not contain any violence. Another important criterion is the moral lessons stories offer to their students. The results obtained from the student survey second the opinions of the teachers. The most popular fairy tale among the students was "Frozen", which is a modern animated movie, with no violence, a positive message and a happy ending. Most importantly, the use of fairy tales in their English classes motivates them to learn the language. It can be argued that teachers are too cautious when choosing appropriate fairytales for their young learners. If the classroom is to reflect real life, occasional elements of harsh reality should be included in the fairy tales used in EFL classes. In this

way, students would become more aware of the dangers that life brings, and learn how to overcome them or learn to live them. Unfortunately, our lives are not always fairy tales in which everyone lives 'happily ever after', nor are villains invariably punished for their evil deeds.

The findings of the study are limited by the relatively small number of participants. General conclusions cannot be drawn because both the teachers and the students come from an urban area, which is the country's capital. Further research could be done with children of rural areas to study whether globalization and technology have a similar effect on child population in such a setting as it does on children living in big cities.

It can be concluded that generation Alpha finds the use of fairy tales in their English classes both amusing and stimulating, as it motivates them to be more engaged in the lesson and learn English.

Implementing fairytales in EFL lessons

The teachers of Generation Alpha are either Millennials (Generation Y) or Generation Z novice teachers. Regardless of the generation they belong to, EFL teachers need to adapt to the needs of today's young learners. This might be more difficult for some of the generation Y teachers who do not follow the life-long learning maxim. In order to better understand generation Alpha, teachers should keep abreast of the latest educational technology. It is of paramount importance that they stay open-minded and plan in the long run. The way English is taught nowadays should not only resemble the present state of affairs but it should prepare students for life and work conditions in the 2040's. Therefore, fairy tales in EFL classes could be used in a variety of ways, but they all need to follow two primary guidelines:

1) The use of technology is inevitable; and

2) EFL lesson plans should include the following stages:

   a) warm-up activities, brainstorming;
   b) watch/read/listen to the story;
   c) post-watching activities; and
   d) calm-down activities (Marosi, 2020:122)

Since generation Alpha knows no life without technology, EFL teachers should employ engaging, visual, multimodal and hands-on methods. If we take the example of "Frozen", a possible 40-minute lesson plan for a group of 6-8-year olds could consist of the following activities:

age group: 6-8 years old level: A1-A2					
stage	***aim***	***activity***	***interaction***	***timing***	***materials***
a) warm-up:	To prepare students for watching the movie scene by helping them become familiar with the characters	https://www.memozor.com/memory-games/for-kids/frozen Online memory card game with Frozen characters	Individual or pair work	5-7 minutes	a smart device with internet access
b) watching activity	To develop students' listening and speaking skills	Students watch a 3-minute scene from the animated movie "Frozen", since all of them have already watched the entire movie. First, they watch it with sound and try to memorize the lines. The second time they watch the scene it is with the sound turned off while trying to dub it.	Individual and group work	15 minutes	A smart device, LCD projector

c) post-watching activities	learn the spelling of vocabulary related to winter	https://www.baamboozle.com/game/44945 Students write the word describing the picture	Individual work	5-7 minutes	Smart devices and/or an LCD projector
	Practice the spelling of vocabulary related to winter	Students play the game Hangman, first as a whole-class activity and then in pairs	Group and pair work	5 minutes	Notebooks and pencils
	Practice forming sentences in Present simple and continuous tense	Students produce sentences with the vocabulary from the previous exercise by playing the sentence chain game. The teacher says one word and then every student repeats the previous word(s) and adds one word per sentence. There could be a prize for the winner.	Group work	5 minutes	No materials needed
d) calm-down activities	to settle down and summarize what they have learned during the lesson	The teacher plays relaxing music while the students draw a picture of a scene from the *Frozen* movie and write several words or sentences underneath their drawing that best describe it.	Individual work	5-7 minutes	A smart device and speakers, white sheets of paper, crayons

Homework assignment:

Students prepare finger puppets with the *Frozen* characters. They record themselves acting out a dialogue with two finger puppets similar to the scene they watched in class. They can share the video if the class has a group on the social media, or they can upload it if the school is using a certain learning platform.

Optional: Students could bring realia with Frozen characters such as stickers, bottles, cups, mugs, T-shirts, bags, costumes, and school objects. They could organize a charity event to sell some of the objects and raise money they would donate to someone in need. Alternatively, students could donate the things to an orphanage or any other similar institution.

As the lesson plan shows the activities included in it are short and various, there are different types of interaction (individual, pair and group work) and various skills are practiced (listening, speaking and writing). The lesson is designed in this way in order to keep the attention of the young learners and make the lesson dynamic. The lesson plan is staged in three sections, with the main part (watching and post-watching activities) taking most of the time. The final activity allows children to wind down by drawing, which is something most children find enjoyable. The educational language component here is having the students produce written language by writing words or sentences to describe their drawings.

The aims of the lesson are versatile as they include developing both students' vocabulary (words related to winter) and grammar (the use of present simple and continuous tense). The rationale behind it is to develop students' listening, speaking and writing skills by engaging the learners in a story they are all familiar with.

The choice of an authentic teaching material for the main stage of the lesson (an animated movie) has been made because the target audience of the movie is primarily young learners of Generation Alpha. The main principle when choosing appropriate fairy tales for EFL classes should not be selecting a story based on the simplicity of the language. Any activity based on the same material could be simplified or enhanced to meet the language needs of the learners. The second activity in the lesson could easily be adapted for pre-intermediate or higher-level students if students watch the video with subtitles or listen and write the actual words.

Concerning teacher preparation, the lesson plan clearly emphasizes the characteristics of the 21st century (language) classroom. Prior to the lesson, the teacher has to prepare the necessary materials (paper sheets and a whiteboard) as well as to have a smart device with a stable internet connection, functional loudspeakers and an LCD projector. The key feature of every lesson for generation Alpha is to have a balanced combination of technology and students' need for movement and touch.

The homework also corresponds to the lesson contents, students' age, and the use of technology in their everyday lives and education. The assignment could be used as a warm-up activity in the following lesson. As mentioned earlier, even though Generation Alpha was with technology, these children remain to have the same human needs as all other generations before them. Preparing finger puppets provokes children's tactile sensations and stimulates their crafting creativity. On the other hand, the filming of the video relates the manual experience with their virtual reality. If feasible, the optional assignment would raise students' awareness of social responsibility and caring for others.

Conclusion

The legitimacy of fairy tales in foreign language education has been proven by many researchers and studies. They are widely used as EFL teaching materials because they correspond to the needs of young learners of Generation Alpha in regards to their emotional and cognitive development, short attention span and child-oriented themes.

The term 'Generation Alpha' was introduced by Mark McCrindle in 2008 and refers to children born between 2010 and 2024. Generation Alpha is being raised in a fully digitalized world. Their entertainment and education are dominated by smart devices, with the COVID-19 pandemic being a significant event in their lives. The two main questions that concern teachers are: *"To what extent are these children being shaped by 'the increasingly digital and global world?'* and *"Is this generation different from Generation Z?"* Generation Alpha uses various social media to communicate with friends and family. Furthermore, these children are able to generate digital content that they later upload on Instagram or TikTok. As a result, their attention span decreases and children expect instant access to digital content and a variety of colors and sensations. Ultimately, this leads to children's dependence on technology and lack of basic life skills. Concerning any

possible differences between generation Alpha and generation Z, it may be concluded that both generations have been equally influenced and shaped by the advancements in technology and digitalization. The main difference is that Generation Alpha has more exposure to English as an L2 from birth onwards because of the invention of smart phones. Nevertheless, both groups remain to have the same timeless human needs for "acceptance, community and belonging" (McCrindle et al., 2021: 19).

Teaching English through fairytales to generation Alpha entails selecting an appropriate format, including oral, literary, audio, or electronic forms of the fairy tale. Tales could be used in their original form, as books or animated movies, or educational, adapted or simplified versions of fairytales. The appropriateness of fairytales in the EFL classroom lies in the 'functional purposes of context-embedded language, liveliness, and sensory aids' (Fitzgibbon & Wilhelm, 1998). Their language is repetitive, which enables EFL teachers to 'introduce or review new vocabulary items or sentence structures in more memorable and familiar contexts.' (Dujmovic,2006:78)

There are four elements to be taken into consideration when choosing appropriate fairytales for young EFL learners: language level, content, values corresponding with today's viewpoint, educational trends in technology and 21st century skills.

The pedagogical power of fairy tales is acknowledged by both educators and students alike, as shown by the results of the survey which included 25 EFL teachers and 60 young learners from North Macedonia. The majority of teachers choose fairy tales with a happy ending or fairy tales without scary, negative, inappropriate, or distressing themes. This also correlates with the students' answers. Teachers' and students' experience with fairytales is generally positive. The former implement them in their EFL classes, while the latter enjoy watching or listening to fairytales in class. The most popular fairy tale among the young learners was *Frozen*, followed by *Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood* and *Winnie the Pooh*. Based on the survey results generation Alpha prefer modern fairy tales, which should be taken into consideration when designing lessons.

Lessons for generation Alpha should aim at improving students' language and social skills such as empathy, collaboration, problem-solving and decision making. These lessons should be organized in stages and include engaging, visual, multimodal and hands-on activities.

To conclude, the popular genre of fairy tales has its right place in the curriculum and the EFL classroom with Generation Alpha students. Special emphasis should be placed on students' language skills and their personality development. Technology is omnipresent and should be included in all classes with Generation Alpha. While this generation will inevitably encounter drastic changes in educational technologies, it is vital to recognize that Generation Alpha will still crave human contact, belonging, support and confidence. These needs may be communicated in a different manner over time, but they will continue to be the 'key drivers for Generation Alpha' and are important for educators to focus on "as they lead Generation Alpha through the next decade and into adulthood" (McCrindle et al., 2021:19).

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CHAPTER 3

Bringing ELF to life via Virtual Exchange – The IVEProject

Eric Hagley

Introduction

This chapter outlines the rise of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the international community and the effect this has had on English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) teaching and learning. It shows how Virtual Exchange (VE) has become a unique and powerful method of teaching EFL/ESL. A comparison is made between common types of VE: dual-language (sometimes called eTandem) and Lingua Franca VE (LFVE) noting the benefits and drawbacks of both. By focusing on one particular VE, the International Virtual Exchange Project (IVEProject), the current chapter scrutinizes the incorporation of ELF to bring students from around the world into an international setting where they can use the language they are studying to discover the cultures and lifestyles of peers in multiple different countries. A discussion of ways in which different educational settings have incorporated VE into their EFL/ESL curricula will entail.

Throughout the history of Foreign Language (FL) teaching certainly much research has been carried out into the best teaching methods and the "nuts and bolts" of the language being taught. This research has brought into focus ideas on how we learn the FL. Yet, if you ask someone who has had no training in FL teaching how they would teach it, they would very likely say "you need to learn the words (input) and practice using them (output) with others (negotiate meaning)" or something along those lines. This is not to trivialize the field but unlike some other fields that require a great deal of study to understand even the basics, the core concepts of FL learning are understood by even the

lay person. However, two areas of FL research carried out over the last 70 years that have truly changed the way students today learn FL are not so well-known to the lay person but should be understood and applied by FL educators. Both of these developed due to technology's influence. The first of these is corpus linguistics which offers a concrete understanding of exactly what the most commonly used words are, in addition to many other aspects of language. From this research came graded reading, better understanding of collocation and "chunking" and a host of other data that gave teachers a greater understanding of what they were teaching and ideas on how to better teach it. These have had a hugely positive influence on FL teaching and learning. The more recent of the two and just as, or even more, important is Virtual Exchange (VE).

VE is "an action that is an integral part of everyday FL instruction where, under the tutelage of a teacher, students, either by themselves or in groups, interact via the internet with student peers in other countries as part of their foreign/second language or culture class. It is different and separate from Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) which incorporates online exchanges into the syllabi of various majors such as engineering, business and other subjects" (Hagley & Green, 2022). Others have given more in-depth descriptions of VE (Helm, 2018, p. 1; Háhn, 2021) but these incorporate many other elements of online exchange outside the FL field. Another group that has done much to clarify an understanding of VE is the Stevens Initiative.

In the field of FL teaching, VE began as soon as the Internet became reliable and useable in whole classrooms. This was in the 1990's, and since then a great volume of research has been carried out on different aspects of VE as can be seen by the 325 (at the time of writing) additions to the UniCollaboration Zotero collection. This collection has, understandably, a very strong European focus but there are many more papers written by scholars in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and recently Africa too that outline various applications and implementations of VE (Hirotani & Fujii, 2019; Machwate et. al. 2021; Mai, Wiest, Nguyen, 2020). This is just a very small sample of the diverse range of research being carried out. It is clear that the field is expanding, with VE becoming an essential part of FL learning around the world.

In FL contexts, VE generally takes one of two forms – Dual Language VE (DLVE) or Lingua Franca VE (LFVE). DLVE are when students in different countries study the lan-

guage of their partner country, for example when students studying Japanese in Australia might help students in Japan studying English with their FL development and vice-versa. LFVE, as the name suggests, is where only one language is used for communication between students from different countries who are studying the FL, for example in the most recent iteration of the IVEProject some 5,000 students from 21 different countries all interacted in groups, in English, learning about each other's cultures and lifestyles. There are benefits and drawbacks to both types of VE but with the ubiquity of English in the globalized environment in which we live, English as a LFVE, or ELFVE, has become the main VE used.

The Rise of English as a Lingua Franca

Many reasons can be cited as being the cause of English supplanting French as the international language. The expansion of the British Empire, the result of conflicts during the 20th century, the rise of the U.S., the manner in which American and British universities became the leading institutions of learning in the world and the power of the U.S. dollar and its influence on international business are all factors that have resulted in English becoming the most powerful language today. Of course, many of those factors are not ones that engender a universal love of the language. Indeed, many people are upset at the present situation due to the reasons behind English becoming the LF and they have good reason to be so. Nevertheless, English has become the international language and hence is the one most studied around the world. There are now more students studying English as a second or foreign language than there are native speakers of the language (Knagg, 2014).

In this situation it is common for EFL classrooms to have become places where the language of instruction and communication is English only, however it is often forced and not natural. As an example, in a classroom with only Japanese or Colombian nationals where the teacher is also a Japanese or Colombian national, though the ideal may be for only English to be used, it quite often is not. Students don't feel the necessity to do so when they can easily communicate in their native language with peers in the classroom. Without regular practice using the language they are studying, the chances of language acquisition decrease so teachers rightly encourage their students to use English in the

classroom. Making that use more natural and necessary would be an obvious benefit. VE allows this to happen. The question then becomes which type of VE to incorporate into the classroom.

Dual Language Vs Lingua Franca Virtual Exchanges

The benefits of the DLVE model are numerous. As the author (2020, p. 234) has noted previously, the term DLVE more closely describes what happens in such exchanges than the term "eTandem" and will therefore use the term DLVE. Students feel they are helping each other with language learning in this model so a cooperative dynamic can develop between them. Students also have access to a native speaker of the language they are learning and what they may feel is an "ideal" to which to aspire. There is far less chance of leaning non-standard language or being exposed to mistaken use of it. In DLVE settings in which the author has taught, students have been observed stating "my partner's Japanese is better than my English. I have to work harder to improve." This competitive aspect of DLVE can also be beneficial to learning outcomes.

There are also drawbacks to DLVE. Possibly the biggest is finding a partner class to do one. There are many apps and companies offering to match individual students but for class-based learning it is obviously better to have a partner class. This is not as easy as it sounds. Ideally the class sizes should be similar as to the time of year in which to do the VE. It is somewhat surprising how different countries are when it comes to the dates their academic years follow and when holidays are held. Finding six to eight-week windows (the most common time length for VE as is noted in the Stevens Initiative (2021 Survey of the Virtual Exchange Field Report), in which to carry out an exchange is difficult due to the different term and semester schedules. There will never be as many students from which to choose partners either. As noted, there are many more students studying English than there are studying, for example, Japanese. Hence not everyone who wants to carry out a DLVE can find such a partner class. Students can also feel intimidated when having to perform in the language of their DLVE partner as the power imbalance between a native speaker and a learner is large. Another factor is the narrowness of the interaction. Students are usually partnered to just one or two students from only one school in one area of a single country. Such a situation may not engender a very broad appreciation for foreign culture.

ELFVE also has numerous benefits. One that is particularly helpful for teachers is that there will always be an ELFVE available which can easily be incorporated into syllabi. There are other ELFVE like the IVEProject but for the purposes of this paper it can be used as an example. A teacher can contact the organizer and, after completing some simple training, be guaranteed a place with as many students as the teacher wants to participate. Some universities have made it a part of the university-wide curriculum. There are a number of different time slots throughout the year from which to choose from which makes organization particularly easy. Another advantage of ELFVE is that students interact with peers from multiple different cultures. In the most recent IVEProject, as noted above, students from 21 different countries participated. The breadth of intercultural interaction is therefore another strength of this type of VE. Students note that they feel more confident interacting with non-native speakers as there is a camaraderie built on the basis of "we are in this together – yes we are all making mistakes so let's learn from each other" (as one student wrote.) Yet another positive of this type of VE is the exposure students receive to non-standard English varieties. As most students will, in their future employment, very likely be interacting with non-native speakers of English, having such exposure is useful practice.

As with DLVE, ELFVE also has what some may consider drawbacks. The one that some teachers have used as an excuse to not join such VE is the lack of native speaker involvement and hence the possibility of mistakes becoming entrenched. One would hope teachers would be able to ensure major mistakes are corrected but the concern needs to be addressed to assuage the fears of this happening. Some teachers have stated they feel there is less "depth" to the ELFVE too. They feel their students don't go into enough detail in interactions. More research would have to be done to see if there is a difference, but the experience the author has had with both types of VE does not corroborate this.

Individual teachers may develop a preference for one type over the other but, as may be evident already in the way the two types have been described above, the author sees more benefits in ELFVE and would encourage teachers to incorporate it into their syllabi. The ease of implementation, ability to communicate with people from multiple different cultural backgrounds and to gain access to non-standard varieties of English result in an environment ideal to developing students' intercultural understanding and, from that, competence.

Evolution of the IVEProject

VE should now be an essential component of EFL syllabi but they are yet to be so. One reason is there is a lack of VE that teachers can easily access. In an ideal situation an EFL teacher should receive their class list and be able to tell the students they will participate in a VE as part of their learning. For such a situation to become a reality large-scale VE will be required. What model is ideal is yet to be fully understood so examining the evolution of different models would be advantageous for a clearer appreciation of what aspects of VE function well and which ones do not.

One ELFVE that has become an integral part of many syllabi around the world is the IVEProject. This project started in 2004 as a class to class VE between the author and a teacher in The National Training Service (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje – SENA) of Colombia. Its evolution is an interesting study in itself which has involved some constants but also many changes. Class to class VE make up the large majority of those researched in UniCollaboration's Virtual Exchange and Telecollaboration Zotero Library. Class to class VE are often excellent but for VE to become a part of curriculum such VE are limiting. If partner teachers leave then the VE may not be able to continue. This was the fear the author had and so wanted to set up a VE that could become a part of any EFL curriculum worldwide and would never be in doubt as to whether it would eventuate or not.

With funding from a Japanese government Kaken grant in 2015, server space was gained and the IVEProject became large-scale. The author had presented on his VE at a number of conferences around the world and many teachers became interested in participating in it. The author contacted many of them and asked them to join. He also worked with the SENA to expand their participation from one class in one of the centers to include numerous classes from 20 centers. In 2015 some 700 students participated in class to class VE. The platform on which the VE took place was Moodle. Each of the partner classes were put into Moodle "groups" with a minimum of two classes from different countries participating. Sometimes three or four classes from different countries were put in groups to interact in the Moodle forums. Teachers could sign up their class and be guaranteed a class-to-class VE.

The positive aspects of this format were that teachers had some autonomy with planning the VE if they agreed with their partner teacher to do a particular activity. The chances for individual students to form strong online relationships were also greater as they were always interacting with the same partner class. However, this format had many problems too. Foremost was that different expectations for online engagement eventuated and many teachers were disappointed with what they considered unsatisfactory participation levels from their partner class. The organizers created a sign-up system that tried to match teachers with those that had similar expectations but this did not always work so a new system was created.

In the northern hemisphere's fall of 2019, rather than do the class to class groups that had been carried out twice a year since 2015, students were placed in unique groups by the organizers. Each student was in a group with students from other countries but not with students from their own class. The group makeup was such that one, two or three students from different parts of a participating country were in groups of between 12 to 15 students. There were 120 of these focused groups with students from 7 different countries in that VE, though the differing participating numbers from each country meant that each group had students from only 3 or 4 countries. A new forum was open every two weeks with a different topic showing. There was also an "open" forum where all students could interact.

This format was well received by most teachers even though they had to give up some of their autonomy. The focused group forum topics were specified by the organizers so all students would interact on those four topics (Introduce yourself in weeks one and two, Events in our lives in weeks three and four; The culture around me in weeks five and six and a reflective topic on what was learned for the final two weeks). The benefits of this format were that students began to be exposed to more cultures and also different aspects of their own culture. Students in the south of Japan, for example, learnt about the culture of those from the north as there were usually 3 or 4 students from different parts of Japan in each group as to students from different parts of Colombia and other countries. For many students it was a revelation to see the different ways the national culture manifested itself in different parts of the country which was another powerful learning experience. 49 teachers participated in this VE and many of them presented on the results at

conferences around the world. Word of the IVEProject spread and in the following year 157 teachers from 12 countries participated with over 4,000 students.

In order for teachers to easily access their students' interactions and other data, students were in class groups in addition to being in the focused groups, too. Moodle is an open-source platform that can be customized easily. In order for teachers to quickly and easily ascertain what each of their students was doing in the IVEProject a report was created so that teachers could access their class group's data. Via this forum report, teachers could see how many posts their students made, how many replies, how many words were used and were given a link to each student's full report. The forum report was later further enhanced to include the amount of multimedia each student used, the number of days each student was active in the VE, and how many times they viewed forum posts. The data from these reports was also useful for those doing research on the VE. Being able to access such data is important to ensure teachers are not over-worked. One area of VE that is mentioned as a deterrent to teachers incorporating it into their syllabi is the extra work involved in assessing it. The forum report and another report, the forum metrics report, which was developed recently has greatly reduced the amount of work required by teachers.

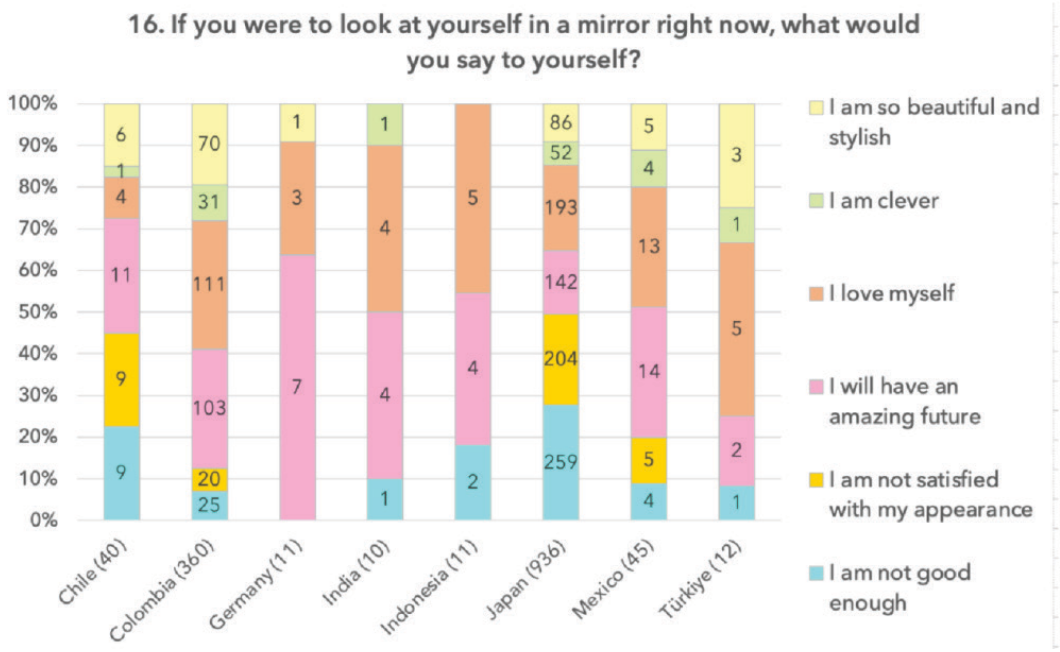
Another area that has evolved is the manner in which students have interacted with the forums. Many students in the first large-scale IVEProject would post to the forum and wait for a reply. This would result in forums with many posts and no replies which would, of course, mean little or no interaction taking place. The organizers encouraged teachers to give more detailed instructions to their students but there were still problems. The organizers changed the method students interacted with the posts in 2018 and set up forums so that students were forced to reply to one "seen" post and hence have to interact with each other within that one forum thread. This increased interaction but also resulted in some very long and relatively difficult-to-follow forum threads. The number of replies in each thread of the forum would sometimes exceed 150. This became too unwieldy such that in 2021 the organizers reverted back to allowing students to start their own forum posts but the instructions in the forum were far more explicit and stated "Only start a new discussion if there are no other posts about your topic." This part of the instruction was highlighted in large bold text in a different color to the rest of the in-

structions. As part of teacher training, the organizers also stress the importance of replies and encourage them to be given greater weight than initial posts for assessment, too. The results to date have been encouraging with almost no timely posts going without replies and thus interaction. The manner in which students interact in a forum is one of many contemporary issues in language teaching and the way it has evolved in the IVEProject is insightful. The content of students' forum posts is also.

As technology develops, what is included in online interactions changes too. In the early days of the Internet, text was all that could be exchanged. This was the case in the very early IVEProject between the author's class and the class in Colombia. However, as the internet became more robust the variety of what could be posted increased. Firstly, came pictures, then audio and then video. The ease of which these could be added also improved. Student-created audio and video are excellent means for students to practice using the language they are studying in ways other than the passive skills of reading and writing. These are now much more easily incorporated into the VE. The IVEProject is primarily an asynchronous VE as its international nature does not lend itself to synchronous exchange due to the multiple different time zones in which the participants live. However, once-a-week synchronous sessions have been carried out in recent iterations. Different tools have been used for this facet of the project. Skype, BigBlueButton (BBB), Zoom and, most recently, Jitsi have all been used. Jitsi and BBB's ease of integration with Moodle means they have become the tools of choice for the foreseeable future in the IVEProject. Ensuring teachers take part in the synchronous exchanges is important. One of the main "selling" points of the IVEProject is its safety aspect. No individuals can sign up - only those under the care of a teacher are able to participate - so there is little chance of improper content being posted. This needs to be the case for synchronous activities as well so that teacher involvement is essential.

In addition to forum interaction, which is a required part of the project, and occasional synchronous communication, the IVEProject also has what are termed "side quests". These optional extras include a student-created cookbook database, Karaoke database of students' self-recorded English songs and a student-generated survey. Since the cookbook inception, each time more than 200 entries have been added with students entering the name of the dish, the ingredients, the cooking method and a picture

of the dish in addition to any notes on its importance or other information. Students can comment on each entry. Similarly, the Karaoke database is where students upload a recording of themselves singing a song and students can comment on the recording. The final side-quest is the Student-Generated Survey (SGS). This is where students submit to their teacher a question they would like to ask all participants in the IVEProject. The questions are collated and voted on by teachers with the 10 to 15 most-highly voted questions transferred to a Moodle questionnaire that is created based on country groups so that results from the SGS can be viewed by country. Some of the questions students have created in the past have generated fascinating results. As an example, a student submitted the following question that was added to the survey: *"If you were to look at yourself in a mirror right now, what would you say to yourself?"* with the following options to choose from *"I am so beautiful and stylish; I am clever; I love myself; I will have an amazing future; I am not satisfied with my appearance; I am not good enough."* The results were tabulated and are shown in the following format.



A discussion of results is also encouraged in the forum but such results have also become a class discussion topic in many classrooms around the world. Not all participating students answered the question as the SGS is an optional activity and data was only shown when 10 or more students from a particular country answered.

The evolution of the IVEProject has seen it change quite dramatically from the outset where students simply exchanged text messages to today when students can send audio, video and other multimedia to each other and interact in real-time too. The types of forum posts have also developed as to the methods of group formation. These changes have all been based on data analyzed by the organizers and on feedback from teachers and students. At the end of every IVEProject surveys are carried out to glean information on how to improve the project. This is ongoing.

Continuing to bring ELF to life – the IVEProject today

In the most recent iteration of the 8-week IVEProject, which started in early May, 2022 and finished the first week of July, more than 5,000 students and 212 teachers from 21 countries participated. More than 3 million words were posted by students and some12GB of multimedia uploaded in addition to thousands of links to YouTube videos. 90% of surveyed students answered in the affirmative to the statement *"All students should participate in this kind of project."* As a platform on which EFL students can practice using the language they are studying to interact with peers in other countries, the IVEProject continues to excel. Students from countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, North, South and Central America participated but surprisingly few from Europe, though numbers from Türkiye have been steadily rising. There is no cost to participate in the project so that is not a reason for non-participation. More than likely it is the multi-cultural nature of the EU today that means students already are exposed to peers from multiple cultures and teachers might not see a need for the IVEProject. Certainly, teachers and students from Europe would be welcome but some teachers in Europe have given the reason they feel the topics covered in the IVEProject are too simple, though there is scope for advanced questions and discussion to take place and this happens often.

The next IVEProject begins in October of this year. As with past years, a link to a sign-up form was sent by email to teachers who had previously participated or who expressed interest and disseminated via social media and mailing lists too. At the time of the cutoff, teachers have written that some 10,000 students from 21 different countries will participate however if numbers follow previous IVEProject signup processes then the actual number will be approximately 8,500 students as there have always been more students "promised" than actual registration. Based on feedback from teachers and students in the previous IVEProject, there will be some more changes in the upcoming IVEProject.

In the May to July 2022 IVEProject there were 300 focused groups with approximately 25 students from 7 to 8 different countries registered in each group. The vast majority of these groups produced active discussions but one in ten groups were considered not very active. This is where students from only one or two countries actively participated in the group discussion. This can be due to a myriad of factors. When we asked the teachers of students in the non-participating groups what the problems were the following were given as reasons for students not being active: students had been adversely affected by Covid; their socio-economic situation was such that they couldn't access the internet; the students who'd signed up had since withdrawn from the course; the students were being lazy; the teacher was not actively promoting the VE in their class or the students had experienced some kind of shock/sickness. With 25 students in each group the organizers had thought there would be enough to cover these various eventuations but that was not the case. When one in ten students is not having an ideal experience change needs to be considered. To try and ensure that all actively participating students have a good experience, the next IVEProject will start with all 5 forums open from the start and all are open to every participant to participate rather than have focused groups. The forums will be more diverse in their type: one will be focused on students producing self-created audio and video; one will focus on the exchange and discussion of pictures and drawings; another will have discussion topics that are set by the organizers; another will be for upper intermediate students and a final one will be open to all forms of discussion. In weeks three and four we will ask the students to try and form their own groups to have focused discussion in the latter half of the VE but if some students can't join a group they will still have the open forums in which to participate. We hope this will ensure no student feels like they are not able to interact. Side-quests will be available and an SGS forum will be

created to discuss results from the survey too. Teachers have already joined the site and are discussing methods of how they will assess their students. This is the first time we have asked teachers to join before their students to participate in discussions. We hope this will provide them with more and better ideas on how to use the VE in their classrooms.

Incorporating the IVEProject into your FL teaching environment

VE has been shown to be advantageous to the development of the skills required for FL learning to take place (Canals, 2020; Choi, 2008; Godwin-Jones, 2019; Schenker, 2013). Recent work on how to assess VE in FL settings also ensures VE can be used with confidence (Czura & Dooly, 2022). At the time of writing, a total of 18 papers have been written on different aspects of the IVEProject and can be accessed from the research page on the IVEProject site. In addition to this important research, it is basic intuition that really drives FL practitioners to apply VE to their classroom settings. If one is studying a FL one wants to use it to communicate with foreigners and VE is the conduit for this to happen. The importance of having an authentic audience in FL learning is obvious (Stark, 1996; Chen & Brown, 2011) and VE gives students such an audience with whom they need to use the language they are studying in order to communicate. Teachers can then incorporate tasks, projects and other activities for students participating in the VE to complete, as they would in a standard FL class but, through the VE, offer students a real audience. Roarty and Hagley (2021) have outlined a number of ways the IVEProject can be incorporated into FL classrooms to encourage students' practice of the different skills required to master the FL. Discussions in the teacher forums of IVEProjects past and present also offer many ideas for teachers to use.

The ability to incorporate intercultural communication into the FL classroom through VE is possibly the greatest benefit students gain. There are many ways in which this can be done when using a VE such as the IVEProject. Prior to starting the VE, teachers should encourage their students to think about the content they create from an intercultural perspective. Is the greeting they are doing in class appropriate in a multicultural environment? What other communication strategies could be considered in such an environment? What should you be aware of when participating in international communi-

cation? These are just some of the questions whose answers become vitally important for students who know they are going to have to interact with students from very different cultures in the VE and encourages them to think more deeply about the way they are using language and the purpose for which they use it. Teachers can also pose questions in the IVEProject forums to encourage students to discuss issues they may not consider without teacher intervention. Replies come from very different cultures hence a broader view of the issues can be attained. As has been noted above, the SGS is another means of encouraging students to consider how their peers in other countries think, believe and behave in ways that may be different to their own cultural assumptions.

Post-exchange, students in classes that have participated in the IVEProject have created posters and other materials they present to local groups in their towns, as students in Colombia and Japan have done, complete reflective journals and participate in in-class discussions on what has been learnt. The author has included students' participation in assessment by asking students to take on the persona of someone they interacted with in the IVEProject and use that persona in a role-play. The role-play is recorded and assessed based on a rubric. Students are told about this side of the assessment at the beginning of the project so now they have to learn about at least one individual in the exchange in detail to complete the final assessment task. What has become clear is that VE complements all activities, tasks and learning in FL classrooms and should therefore be a part of all FL classrooms. As has already been noted above, institutions that care about the FL teaching and learning, are responsible for implementing and making VE part of their institution-wide curriculum. Its importance is such that it cannot be delivered ad-hoc by individual teachers that have a passing interest in VE. More projects such as the IVEProject need to be created to enable all FL classrooms easy access to VE – this is a critical issue that needs to be addressed in contemporary language teaching.

Conclusion

Of all the issues confronting FL instructors around the world today, the most pressing is how to ensure that VE can be easily incorporated into curricula effectively. VE has so many benefits that it would be remiss of modern FL teachers to not include it in some form in syllabi. Whether it be DLVE or LFVE or a combination of these, institutions

need to have programs in place that teachers can access. The workload involved is such that teachers should not have to organize VE themselves but rather be able to access ready-made VE that the teacher's students then access. Students can then interact with peers in other countries practicing the language they are studying and, in doing so, develop intercultural understanding.

The IVEProject is one such VE that could become a template for others. Certainly, there is more that can be done to improve the IVEProject in its present form. As this paper has shown, the project continues to evolve and develop. What is becoming apparent is that individual VE can become unwieldy if there are too many students in them, therefore research needs to be done to discover the optimal number of students and countries to be participating in any single VE and once this has been established, the model can be replicated ensuring VE can be used in all FL classrooms. Funding for this should be shared between institutions with developed countries assisting institutions from developing ones. As the number of these projects increases, more research on the activities and tasks that are successful can be disseminated and included in future template courses achieving the goal of having VE as an integral part of EFL curricula everywhere.

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CHAPTER 4

New trends in feedback and assessment

Igballe Miftari-Fetishi

Introduction

The terms feedback and assessment are not new. As concepts, we are introduced to them at the beginnings of our teaching careers. Namely, we are taught that they are very important elements of teaching and learning and that they are an ongoing cycle, just as learning teaching and teaching learning are for teachers their whole lives. Whether they are tied together or act on their own is a matter of ones' teaching methodology. One might choose to omit them in the process (however impossible this may sound). I do not refer here to the issue of choice, though refer to the "unconscious choice" of misinterpretation or mis implementation of the terms. A very important question that arises is: to what degree do we actually fully understand the importance of feedback and assessment and to what degree do we implement them in our everyday teaching? Throughout this chapter, I will present both concepts and explain their usage. I will also argue that as much as they are similar, they are also distinct. To the larger extent, their importance is not clear to teachers, to others, their implementation requires too much effort and demotivates them. To the reader, this might seem as if I am intentionally blaming teachers, and this of course is not the case. I rather wish to make teachers and the readers aware of the weight and value that reflection and self-reflection have in the process and that feedback, testing and assessment are crucial measures that should be used properly. I will also provide insights on what to do and how and provide examples of such, either from literature or from personal experience. At the beginning and at the end, I will provide the reader with tasks, with the intention of checking comprehension and awareness of the features of both terms.

I hope that to a certain extent, the information provided will help teachers of English understand the relevance of feedback and assessment and the purpose that they have in the process of teaching and learning and of course, in the process of gathering information regarding our teaching, the actual learning and all that occurs in between.

Introductory Task 1

To the reader,

Before reading this chapter, take a moment to think of and consider the following statements. On a scale of **agree-disagree-strongly agree**, choose which one implies to you and your teacher theory.

Table 1. Teacher Personal Theory (author made)

	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Feedback among others, is intended to provide learner autonomy.			
Effective feedback is a combination of the positive and the negative.			
Peer feedback is more effective than teacher feedback.			
Assessment is not testing.			
Formative assessment is more accurate than summative assessment.			
Assessment refers to record keeping and monitoring.			

If you have agreed with most statements, chances are, you understand the concepts and have an idea of what each one represents. However, another thing that should be taken into consideration is the *"why?"* i.e. *Why do you agree with most statements or disagree? Or strongly agree? How do you understand each statement and what do you add to it?*

Effective teaching equals effective feedback

Throughout the years of teaching (an approximate 16 years of teaching English at higher education), I have come to the point of concluding that most teachers and not only English teachers focus more on the process than on the product i.e. more on the teaching and less on the learning. We spend an enormous amount of time on the actual planning and on the process of tasks and their order of appearance, that we tend to neglect the most important part of teaching, namely that of feedback and assessment. Who do we blame? Maybe the generation of teachers who only taught us the methodology of teaching? Or the instructional time that is limited for teaching? Or the large groups of students that make it impossible to monitor learners every second of our lectures? To some extent, all are to blame. At some point, even teacher burnout is to blame. Whatever the reason be, it is more than necessary to actually focus on the product and on the effectiveness in our everyday teaching, for the sake of record-keeping and keeping a balance among the content material, the methodology and the provided feedback. In the general context of education, feedback, according to Ur (1991), is information that is provided to the student about how well they performed a learning task, typically with the intention of helping them perform better (1991, pg. 242). Accordingly, the degree of how much we actually know our learners, their effort and level of knowledge is crucial in the process. Usually, teachers are focused on the methodology of teaching, in making instruction both enjoyable and effective and with this, less time is provided for feedback. In some cases, feedback is even misunderstood by the learners themselves, due to it not being a random classroom activity. Therefore, in my opinion, learners should be made aware of certain language learning "acceptances" i.e. they should be aware of the nature of language learning and that it is a process of mistakes and errors, which are normal; that teacher feedback is provided with the intention of surpassing these difficulties and achieving overall success and that any form of mistake in language learning comes due to a learners attempt and that the attempt to learn is more than appreciated (even with mistakes). This form of feedback is regarded as crucial because it is rarely applicable in classroom instruction at a time when teachers focus is on the teaching (Hyland, 2006).

Alongside, teachers should specifically point out what skill they will be focusing on in the feedback session, maintaining easier cooperation among teachers and learners and also should assert both the wrongs and the rights of the learners (even though the term is

usually understood and used as a form of correction of mistakes). I strongly believe that with correct usage of feedback, learners learn to accept and appreciate the help of the teacher. It is the teacher who needs to find the right balance of both praise and correction when providing feedback or "giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher…it can take a number of forms: giving praise and encouragement; correcting; setting regular tests; having discussions about how the group as a whole is doing; giving individual tutorials etc. (Gower, Phillips, Walters, 2005, pg. 163).

Therefore, throughout the term, teachers must set a criterion of expectations and distribute the same among the learners.

The role of feedback in the learning process

As previously discussed, the role of effective feedback in the process is inevitable. Feedback provides learners with the idea of how they performed in a task, it implies what needs to be practiced and points out the most common mistakes. Feedback also provides learners with positive input. In this regard, feedback is nevertheless seen as both positive and negative by the learners. In cases when the teacher praises, feedback is regarded as positive and on the contrary, when the teacher points out mistakes or corrects, it is seen as negative input. Accordingly, there are many important points that teachers should bear in mind. A first and foremost issue is the teacher-learner rapport i.e. the individual learner perspective. With this, teachers are aware of the fact that different learners have a different perspective on the feedback, hence they are different as individuals- some with more self-confidence than others, some with lower levels of comprehension than others etc. Another matter to consider is the focus of an activity in providing feedback, whether it is immediate or postponed feedback and why. The distinction lies in the type of activity-based feedback. When a certain activity is focused on the accuracy (such as grammar tasks), feedback should be immediate (to prevent fossilization[2]). On the contrary, when the given task is fluency based, the feedback provided should be postponed (as to not interrupt the flow of speech). The cultural factor is also as important. Depending on the culture of the learners in the class, feedback is provided. In some cultures, feedback is not expected, in others, feedback is much appreciated.

2 Fossilization- refers to the process in which incorrect language becomes a habit and cannot easily be corrected. Teaching English, The British Council.

Gibbs and Simpson (2005) provide the following reasons for feedback:

- correct errors;
- develop understanding through explanations;
- generate more learning by suggesting further specific study tasks;
- promote the development of generic skills by focusing on the evidence of the use of skills rather than on the content;
- promote meta-cognition by encouraging students' reflection and awareness of learning processes involved in the assignment;
- encourage students to continue studying. (Gibbs and Simpson, 2005, p.19-20)

As so, learner awareness regarding teacher input or peer feedback should be presented very early in the learning process and as so, should be practiced alongside the teaching.

The first phase: setting the criteria of feedback

Before applying feedback on certain tasks, the teacher should divide the different stages of the activity in advance. I refer to the first stage as the **setup stage**, in which the teacher not only introduces the task and skill but also makes the learners aware of the WH-questions: *WHY* they are doing the task, *WHAT* the expected outcomes are, *WHAT* the teachers' expectations are, what will be monitored and *How* they will complete the task (the procedure of events). This phase is also regarded as preparation, in which the learners plan the teaching activity and as such, will be examined further in the text. (See appendices) In the second stage, which I refer to as the **activation stage**, students are actively involved in the task and the teacher moves around in order to provide feedback, assistance and also in order to monitor learners' skills, their cooperative skills and of course, the level of language use. This is presented as *peer teaching* in this chapter and is also further discussed below. In the last stage, referred to here as the **wrap up stage,** the teacher gathers conclusions, suggestions and remarks regarding the task, both positive and negative from the learners' perspective and also provides input and feedback. This is

seen as the peer observation, peer reflection, self-reflection and the exit ticket. The procedure and order of events is discussed in the ***four-step feedback*** below.

When providing feedback, teachers should be very careful as to not lower learners' self-confidence and cause anxiety. The provided feedback should also follow a procedure. I refer to this as the **sandwich feedback**. At the beginning, it is normally preferable to provide the learner with positive remarks and praise in order to give learners a dose of satisfaction. This should be pointed out in the top bun of the sandwich. The second form of feedback (the meat) consists of critical thinking i.e. the learner is asked to think about what could have been done differently and why? At this point, the learners are reflecting on their mistakes and are referring to peers' responses (which are usually taken as examples of what they would include next time for. E.g. *"I think that X group did a better job than we did when they read their story aloud. I like their character more than ours, and of course the storyline was better managed etc.)* This as you may notice, includes peer feedback and praise and hence, from a form of inquiry- based feedback (which not only intends to inquire but to also point out learners' mistakes) turns into a form of peer praise and positive remark. The last part, namely the second bun consists of the supportive feedback and continues with the *"if I were to re-do this assignment, I would do this…"* and *"why?"* Usually when the procedure has finished, the learners know what they did wrong and what needs improvement. They also have examples from their peers as to what should change and why. Accordingly, "besides language input, learners also need feedback in the form of questions, comments, repetitions, confirmation checks, requests for clarifications, and reformulations. These types of feedback are also important strategies in the process of negotiation for meaning (Goh & Burns, 2012, p.18).

The student-centered approach: Reporting back versus feedback

There is a distinction on how teachers choose to provide learners with feedback (intentionally or even unintentionally) at times. This varies alongside the methodology and the approach. In the traditional approach, the teacher would usually point out the "rights and wrongs" of an activity or task. In the student-centered approach however, it is the peer that provides the learner with feedback. While discussing the issue with a colleague of mine, who is a CELTA trainer and a language professor at the same time, she put

emphasis on the type of feedback that is provided, referring to the stage of the lesson (task) and to the approach. Due to feedback being the most important measurement technique, she mentioned that teachers should additionally set time for feedback to be successfully implemented. During time constraints or large groups, teachers tend to report back to students on what they have done i.e. by reporting back, the teacher provides the learner with very fast yet short input for e.g. for any correct response on a reading comprehension question, the teacher would simply say "well done" or "correct" instead of focusing on whether or not the learner actually understands what he/she has said or focusing on the form of response etc. With the student-centered approach, the teacher informs and guides learners in the direction of the task, by making sure that the learners have understood instructions and the teachers' focus in the task i.e. since language learning consists of 4 skills, the teacher must point out the skill which the task focuses on for e.g. "*in this task, I will focus on correct pronunciation of the words and correct responses. I will point out any mistakes in the process, but only after you have finished the task.*" With the peer teaching task, I usually point out the areas of importance, namely the presentation of activities, the flow, the materials used, peer teacher self-confidence, learner engagement in tasks etc. Such instructional feedback is quite important for the flow of activities as well as the effectiveness of the task itself. Learners' know what aspects of language will be monitored and they focus on the correct output and the language that they produce. At the same time, it is easier for the teacher to focus on one specific language item and provide feedback on the same.

Monitoring

The chapter introduces a new trend in feedback and assessment, nevertheless, we must understand that the teachers' participation in the process is inevitable. The main difference between traditional teaching and feedback lies in the amount of monitoring that is applied, namely, the degree to which teachers monitor the learning, the circumstances set for learning to take place and the outcome. According to Hedge (2000), "in the social setting of the classroom, teachers' and learners' expectations about what are appropriate functions in the various learning tasks will determine the roles that each performs and these will be culturally influenced" (2000, pg. 26).

Gower et al. (2005) state that "monitoring what the students are doing is just as important a skill as teaching…giving the students appropriate tasks, knowing how and when to leave them alone and providing suitable follow-up requires sensitivity, intelligence and confidence" (2005, pg. 49).

The term "to monitor" therefore means to closely examine or to check learners' competencies (accuracy and fluency), to see whether tasks are going as planned and whether learners are on task.[3] It is also referred to as a manner of keeping track of student learning, either for providing feedback on their process or by gaining insights on the course content.[4]

There are different types of monitoring techniques that can be used by teachers according to the circumstances. This depends on the manner of learner work, whether it is individual work, group work or pair work. A different approach is used by teachers in these activities. When monitoring groupwork, the teacher might choose to stand back, quickly check and not interrupt the flow, in pair work, the teacher might choose to interrupt learners and provide help due to it not being as time consuming as the prior: "differences between monitoring pairs and groups are that a pair is more likely to stop work when you approach than a group, and in pair work it is easier for you to take one half of the activity for a part of the time to show the students what it is about" (Gower et al. 2005, pg. 52). With individual work, knowing that learners are with different levels, speeds and competences, attention should be provided to all, even if this means a *Well done!* remark by the teacher or jotting down something in a notebook to get back to at the end (a classroom observation checklist is added in Appendices). With this, monitoring learners' overall achievement on a daily basis provides us not only with feedback but is also considered as a form of ongoing assessment by which teachers gather information not only on the learners' performance but also on the task and activities, on their effectiveness or even on their further modification. Throughout the course, monitoring is a very useful technique that provides information on how things are going on in class, starting from the flow of activities, their effectiveness and the overall process of teaching and learning.

3 Ret. From https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk › article › monitoring

4 Monitoring Student Learning in the Classroom by Kathleen Cotton

The transition- from teacher to learner feedback

It is very important to implement peer feedback very early in the process. At the beginning of the school years, children usually are taught to only accept feedback provided to them by the teacher, the teacher being the parent figure. This attitude follows them along the older years afterwards, thus making it very difficult for the teacher to allow for peer intervention. I once taught private English courses to a group of fourth graders. It was unimaginable at the time the level of dependency they had on me as their teacher. At the beginning, I was the only one who could provide feedback or correction and the only one who could offer them help. They would not accept it from their peers, not even from their friends. The moment another learner would imply something, the learner answering would turn to me and say *"teacher, could you please help me out?"* asserting that "I only ask the teacher and no one else for help." At times, the learner who helped would have the same response as I would and this made an even tougher situation to handle (i.e. the prior would start grinning, implying that he/she was right, making things even odder). At this exact moment, I knew that if I do not intervene, the course would turn into a "he said/she said" fiasco and that the shy learners would be the intimidated party, of course. I began setting some codes of conduct and inserted "The helping hand" on the list. (See Fig. 1 below) I would provide time for "peer feedback" but on a set of game-like terms. Namely, I would provide the learners with activities and with a hand in which each one wrote how they helped their friend i.e. *my friend asked me and I helped him/her with*…to *I asked my friend…and he/she said*…and *the one thing I liked best about what you said is…* We would read them aloud afterwards and sometimes an award was given to the learner who helped the most. In this form of "competitive assistance" I introduced a different form of feedback, one which was not yet introduced to them previously. The effect was magnificent. The learners improved a whole lot in their language competencies and the bond was greater among them. As a unified group afterwards, any type of activity and challenge was accepted and completed very fast. At BA however and with a different group of learners (with learners that namely knew the language but were preparing to teach it to others (ELT), I introduced feedback at a different level, one that was more challenging and required more reflective feedback. This, along with the process of tasks will be provided further in the chapter.

Fig. 1. The helping hand (Hand image from:iHeartCraftyThings.com)

The Four-step feedback

When it comes to feedback, there is usually an inconsistency in the order of events i.e. some may provide feedback at the beginning of a task, others at the end; there is a difference between the feedback provided for accuracy-based tasks vs fluency based (immediate vs. postponed) and there is a difference among learner-level feedback. There is also a difference in the amount of reflection required and critical thinking. With the younger learners as mentioned previously, the helping hand proved to be very effective. With BA leveled students, that strategy would of course, not work. A strategy that I usually implement with the latter is that of the **four-step feedback** which consists of**: peer observation, peer feedback, self-reflection and the exit ticket. (See table 1 below)**

Table 1. The Four step feedback

Peer observation	Peer feedback	Self-reflection	Exit Ticket
What I see?	What I like(d)	1st phase: What I wish to accomplish? How?	The teaching experience taught me the following…
How I am engaged?	What I noticed needs change.	2nd phase: What I actually accomplished? Why?	
What needs improvement?	My suggestion to you is…	3rd phase: What I need to improve?	If I were to re-do the same activity, I would change the following…

The course in which I implement this strategy is entitled teaching young learners. It is dedicated to future English teachers, namely, students of ELT. Students are given a teaching task. They are provided with the specific skill, the learners' age and level and the lesson plan. They have one week in advance for planning the activities intended for the specific group of learners (i.e. young learners). During their instructional time, they are observed by their peers and by me. Their peers not only observe and report their feedback, but also partake in the planned activities that are prepared by the peer teacher[5]. The peer teacher continues with all that is planned and at the end expects the feedback which will be provided by the others. However, an additional type of feedback is also required, namely *self-reflection* (see below) Learners are taught to think critically about their teaching, the skills and all of the issues they encountered. Usually, the most random issues are technical, managerial, strategic and cooperative. However, for the unprofessional peer teacher who is yet at the beginning of forming the theory of teaching, thinking about the obstacles, reflecting on them and re-designing activities is crucial. Therefore, the essence of the whole process of feedback lies in the details and learners are taught to think "out of the box" not only when learning the language, but also when "teaching bits of it" to others.

5 A peer-teacher is referred to as the learner presenter, who acts as the teacher during the task.

Self-Reflection Student sample

It was a big chance for me to present again in a classroom environment. I am saying again because this was my second time being in a role of a teacher. I believe that experiences like these give me more confidence, and we as students also have the benefits of these activities.

I think I've done a good job, but I'm sure I can do better. For example, I asked them some questions but they were very simple, I could have made them more fun. Another idea is that I showed them pictures from my presentation but to be more realistic I could bring toy cars from my house, or a book and ask them to open any page and read it for me. And I could ask them to write the sentence they have read on whiteboard.

Also, I could have given them other activities, but since we had 10 minutes to finish, I chose short and concise activities. Alejna J.

Another very important fact to be mentioned here is the shift from teacher feedback to peer feedback and then to learner feedback (self-reflection). The teacher simply agrees to the provided feedback from the learners and adds additional guidance. It turns from the individual perspective to the group perspective, by this forming a different form of *cooperative feedback.* Hence, this form of feedback can be implemented at any stage and with any group, be it language learning or learning language teaching, so long as mistakes (in both language and content) are seen as normal in the process and feedback as positive, reflective thinking.

Introducing Assessment

The feedback-assessment relationship

In the introduction, I mention testing, evaluation and assessment among others. I also continuously argue that teachers' focus more on the process than on the product. I base this upon random free talks and discussions with colleagues and base it on my personal experience as well. How much do we actually provide feedback and how often do we assess our learners? Only during midterms and exams? Or continuously, on an everyday basis? Since learning is a process, there should be an ongoing systematic approach to feedback and assessment. Watkins (2014) states that "assessment is essentially that part of teaching in which we collect information about the degree of learning that is

taking place. Teachers can then use that information to make further planning decisions-to speed up, to review, to change the balance of the course, to provide extra practice or support for a particular individual and so on" (2014, pg. 128). Namely, during this phase of monitoring and collecting information, the teacher is focused on different aspects of the language, both on language competence and performance i.e. on the language usage and on the distribution of tasks (as in the example above). In order to asses, different methods can be used, moving from the pen and pencil tests to monitoring the everyday activities; from reading and writing to actual presentation, from groupwork to individual work (e.g. peer teaching). According to Brown (2004):

> "Assessment, on the other hand, is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Whenever a student responds to a question, offers a comment, or tries out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student's performance. Written work-from a jotted-down phrase to a formal essay-is performance that ultimately is assessed by self, teacher, and possibly other students." (Brown, 2004, pg. 4)

Different components are part of the everyday assessment because assessment according to my personal theory is "the ongoing process of events, the learning, skills and competences, correct language usage, performance, cooperation etc. and all that goes on during class. Assessment is not an end of the semester test, nor is it an end of the course midterm; it is the individual growth of the learner in the everyday accomplishments of tasks, be they oral, written, essay form or presentation(s). As so and according to Watkins (2014):

> "Assessment need not be a formal process. Indeed, teachers will make some kind of assessment every time a learner speaks, performs a task or does homework, so in some cases all that is needed for assessment of learning is careful, attentive monitoring of learners as they work in class and complete tasks." (Watkins, 2014, pg. 128)

Feedback is the result of the process and can therefore be used for many purposes. It can be used as self-feedback and reflection, course feedback and teaching feedback. It can serve as an indicator of overall success and achievement and can of course be used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the course itself, the materials used and the methodology. Hence, teachers who assess receive feedback on multi-dimensions, on their teaching and on the learners' learning and language development. Assessment is therefore the process of monitoring, evaluating, testing and grading and noticing how the learners have progressed and feedback is the overall result of each item. Assessment is the process of events and feedback is the product. They go hand in hand but are yet distinct. Accordingly, assessment is continuous and inseparable from instruction. It is an interactive and collaborative process in which information is collected in natural classroom instructional encounters (individual, small group and whole group) (Tierney et al.1991, pgs. 35-7).

There are two types of assessment, namely: formative and summative. Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, "provides information about student achievement which allows teaching and learning activities to be changed in response to the needs of the learner and recognizes the huge benefits that feedback can have on learning" (Bloxham & Boyd 2007, pg. 15). This type of assessment therefore allows for teachers to monitor the overall success of learners in activities, during learning etc. and provides them with the feedback of either changing the plan or continuing with the same. Summative assessment, also known as assessment of learning, "involves making judgements about students' summative achievements for purposes of selection and certification and it also acts as a focus for accountability and certification" (Bloxham & Boyd 2007, pg. 15). This type of assessment is provided at the end, by which learners are provided with a grade. This serves as a summary of the whole process. As so, both types of assessment are inevitable. They both provide information, either on the course or on the learners' achievement. In both cases, there is always space for "correction" and "change", be it in our teaching methodology, materials and content or in the overall success.

Performance-based assessment

As the name itself implies, this form of assessment is based on the overall performance of the learner, namely, it usually includes all four skills, an observable task and

oral (linguistic) competence. According to Brown (2004), "performance-based assessment implies productive, observable skills, such as speaking and writing, of content valid tasks. Such performance usually but not always brings with it an air of authenticity-real world tasks that students have had time to develop…" (2004, pg. 255).

The activity shared previously (i.e. the four-step feedback) consists of a form of performance-based assessment because it provides both the learners and the teacher with evidence of content knowledge and skills needed for teaching. The task itself displays the strengths and weaknesses of learners, both in linguistic competence and performance and not only; it shows the knowledge, creativity and motivation for teaching English to others, it provides teachers with lesson plans that have been designed by the learners, which can be further compared to "what was actually achieved." According to O'Malley and Valdez (1996), the following are characteristics of performance assessment:

1. Students make a constructed response;
2. They engage in higher-order thinking with open-ended tasks;
3. Tasks are meaningful, engaging and authentic;
4. Tasks call for the integration of language skills;
5. Both process and product are assessed;
6. Depth of a student's mastery is emphasized over breadth. (1996, pg. 5)

These noticeable features distinguish many aspects of learning-teaching, as they similarly display language, context and competence. One very important detail that we should keep in mind is that performance-based assessment as well as observation are still part of "a test" and as so should be treated with caution. Teachers should plan in advance the areas of assessment and observation for each performed task, namely, teachers should: *state the overall goal of the performance, specify the objectives (criteria) of the performance in detail, prepare students for performance in stepwise progressions, use a reliable evaluation form, checklist or rating sheet, treat performances as opportunities for giving feedback and provide that feedback systematically and if possible, utilize self and peer assessments judiciously"* (Brown, 2004, pg. 255).

Because performance-based assessment is very broad and can be used in any type of activity, a distinction is made regarding the focus, namely, product-focused, performance focused, process focused. (see below table 2). As you may notice, the teaching/presentation activity falls into all three categories, namely in product focused as a project, in performance focused as an oral presentation and in process focused in both observation and reflection.

Table 2. Performance-Based Assessment Format

Product-focused	**Performance-focused**	**Process-focused**
Essay	***Oral presentation***	***Observation***
Story/play/poem	Dramatic reading	***Reflection***
Portfolio	Role play	Journal
Report	Debate	Learning log
Video/audiotape	Interview	
Poster session	Online chats	
Project		

Performance based-assessment (based on McTighe and Ferrara, 1998)

Classroom observation as part of both

In order to introduce the relevance of both feedback and assessment and also, in order to provide insights on the same, I chose to share different forms of such in my courses, namely, I provided some aspects of monitoring and observation that can be part of our everyday teaching. Regarding classroom observation, it is an everyday activity. We are observed by our learners, by our peers or even by the institution. This form of feedback refers to the issues we encounter, the advantages and disadvantages of a chosen material or approach. It provides us with the needed changes and areas of improvement. Accordingly, Genesee and Upshur (1996) provide some useful guidelines for planning classroom observation:

1. Why do you want to observe and what decisions do you want to make as a result of your observations?
2. What aspects of teaching or learning that are appropriate to these decisions do you want to make?
3. Do you want to observe individual students, small groups of students or the whole class?
4. Will you observe students engaged in specific, pre-arranged activities or during routine class activities?
5. Will you observe on one occasion or repeatedly?
6. Will you incorporate non-linguistic content from the students' other classes or from outside class?
7. How will you record your observations? (Genesee and Upshur 1996, pg. 83)

The following (see table 3) is a student sample of observational feedback, referred to as *peer- feedback*, which is added for the purpose of task clarification. In written form, it provides the learner with positive comments, suggestions and the individual perspective of the observer. As you will notice, many attributes of professional teaching are emphasized, such as the calmness, positive energy, effort and professionalism that was shown by the peer teacher. In addition, the focus moves in the direction of the peer learners that partook in the activities, the atmosphere in the class, the support, the praise, the empathy that was shown towards them etc. In both regards, the image that one receives is on two perspectives: on a very well-planned peer teacher, who is motivated and has self-confidence in achieving her goal of becoming an English teacher (the observe) to the peer observer, who has content knowledge in identifying the most important basic elements that an English teacher should have, either in teaching qualities, management or self-confidence and empathy.

Table 3. Observation Template Sample (Student sample)

Lesson Subject area: **Number of participants:**	**Student feedback**
How did the teacher's manner influence the classroom atmosphere?	*She was really calm, professional and happy that this opportunity was given to her. As we all know, she is the perfect person for working with young learners, due to her positive, genial and sympathetic approach. She had everything under control.*
What had the teacher prepared before the lesson and how did it contribute to its success?	*She was well prepared, and it was obvious that she had put a lot of effort and thought into her preparation. She had one of the best kids-friendly songs, that children adore; props, pictures, found a suitable text for them (which they liked).*
How were the pupils organised for learning?	*The main focus was on individual work, they all had to do the tasks by themselves, with her support and guidance. There was no sitting arrangement, students could choose their spot which made them feel comfortable. All the instructions were clear enough and the tutor checked if everything was in order, from time to time.*
What teaching strategies were used? (explanation, demonstration, discussion, questioning, etc?)	*She used few strategies while conducting the class like: demonstration (she had pictures and props for every family member), which is the best teaching strategy for kids. Furthermore, she asked a lot of questions and made them talk as much as possible. She also drew a family tree on the white board and they had to stick pictures next to the proper words.*
How was the learning of the pupils monitored?	*That was probably the best part because she was empathetic, and she showed a lot of interest. The teacher was praising the students all the time which was genuinely effective, observing and helping whenever needed.*

Table Adapted from: Anna Baker-Jones

Future trends of feedback and assessment

Throughout the chapter, different aspects of feedback and assessment have been discussed. The issue regarding the degree of actual usage and implementation of both in our everyday teaching differs for each individual teacher. Whether we choose to monitor and provide feedback as an everyday random activity or provide it occasionally, the truth is, it is time consuming and needs prior planning. Feedback and assessment are part of testing, because we check different aspects of language learning, competence and performance, however, the focus is wider. The process is ongoing and not the "pen and pencil" test we are used to. Just as teaching is an ongoing process, so is learning; the difference lies in the teacher-learner position. As so, both should be assessed: the teacher should gather feedback on the methodology of teaching and the effectiveness, for better management and change in content when needed, and the learner on the other hand, should be made aware of competencies and future improvements. The whole process of gathering input in the form of feedback is from general to specific and vice versa. The presented four step feedback process unfolds planning, teaching, observation and peer feedback and self-reflection. It takes up weeks of precise planning for the teacher, in accordance to the time constraints, number of students in a group, time for re-doing the assignment (taking into consideration peer feedback and self-reflection). It takes precise planning of the areas of focus for the teacher, on the specifics of the items of observation, on how feedback will be provided, on the percentage and credit points for each part and their distribution etc. The more we actually think about it, the more we come to realize that in fact, feedback and assessment cover much more than the actual teaching that we do. They cover the planning, the teaching, the grading and all that occurs during the instructional time.

Performance-based assessment as so, takes up a wider horizon of activities and items, which can be distributed afterwards into points and grades. As much as I argue that testing is more artificial than assessment due to the grade at the end, the truth is, the grade or point average does in fact stimulate the individual learner to succeed. The feedback, together with the points serve as a prize for the work that was accomplished, but also as an indicator of what is yet lacking. In terms of peer teaching and observation, the burden of grading and testing is divided among all the participants, be it teachers, peer teachers or peer learners. This thus makes a better classroom atmosphere and transforms the

random language classrooms into more energetic classrooms, where all are part of the learning but also of the teaching.

Everything goes hand in hand and in coordination, it simply requires a plan, a strategy and much space for feedback and assessment. If we wish to make changes, we should begin by implementing them ourselves, by practicing and showing their importance to our learners. Together better scores are achieved and together better learning is produced. In this way, it is not only the process but also the product that we receive that actually matters.

Task 2

The aim of this task is to give you an opportunity to critically examine the feedback methods that you use in your lessons.

1. Think about the lessons that you have taught during this week. List the different methods that you have used to get your learners' feedback on activities e.g. 'After completing an exercise from the course book, I check the answers with the class orally.'

2. Read your list. Consider the following questions:

• Is there sufficient variety in your feedback methods?

• Do they provide opportunities for your learners to self-check their work? Give and receive peer feedback on their work? Listen to each other, agree or disagree with one another, explain or justify their answers?

• Improve the work done during the tasks set? *(adopted from Richardson, S. 2019, Cambridge University Press and Cambridge Assessment English)*

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Appendices

Lesson plan template

1. Lesson plan information	Name:
Subject/course	Date:
Grade/Level	Time:
Topic:	Length of period:

2. Expectations
What I wish to achieve:
Learning skills/activities:

3. Content
What do I want learners to know and/or be able to do? Today, learners will…

4. Assessment
How will I know students have learned what I intended? How will I check it?

5. Learning context
a. The learners- what prior experiences, knowledge and skills do the learners bring with them to this learning experience?
b. The learning environment
c. Resources/Materials

Classroom Observation Checklist

Name of Techer : _____

Name of Observer : _____

Subject : _____ Length of Lesson: _____

Topic : _____

Legends: 3 – Strong 2 – Apparent 3 – Not Displayed

	3	2	1
1. The teacher plans effectively and sets clear objectives that are understood.			
a. Objectives are communicated clearly at the start of the lesson.			
b. Materials are ready.			
c. There is structure of the lesson.			
d. The lesson is reviewed at the end.			
2. The teacher shows knowledge and understanding.			
a. Teacher gas throrough knowledge of th subject content covered in the lesson.			
b. Instructional Materials were approriate for the lesson.			
c. Knowledge is made relevant and interesting for pupils.			
3. Teaching methods used enable all students to learn effectively.			
a. The lesson is link to previous teaching or learning.			
b. The ideas and experiences of the students are drawn upon.			
c. A variety of activity and questioning techniques are used.			
d. Instructions and explainations are clear and specific.			
e. The teacher involves all the students, listen to them and responds appropriately.			
f. High standard of efforts, accuracy and presentation are encouraged.			
4. Students are well Managed and high standards of behavior are insisted upon.			
a. Student's are praised regularly for their effort and achievement.			
b. Prompt action is taken to address poor behavior.			
c. All students are treated fairly			
5. Pupils work is assesed thoroughly.			
a. Student's understanding is assessed througout the lesson by use of teacher's questions.			
b. Mistakes and misconceptions are recognized and used constructively to facilitate learning.			
c. Pupils written work are assesed regularly and accurately.			
6. Homework is used effectively to reinforce and extend learning.			
a. Homework is appropriate.			
b. Homework is followed up if it is set previously.			
7. Medium of Instructions.			
a. The teacher integrated ICT device in the lesson.			
b. The instructional materials used capture the interest of the students.			

CHAPTER 5

Teaching English in Mexico: EFL or ESL?

Jesahe Herrera Ruano

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the interpretation and use of the acronyms EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) in the Mexican educational system. I confront the validity of these tags to the reality of language diversity and language understanding in a globalized and 'superdiverse' world, a complex reality resulted from major geopolitical changes and the accelerated evolution of communication technology over the last decades (Giddens, 1990; Parkin, 2018; Vertovec, 2007). I argue how the tags of ESL and EFL are difficult to sustain under new studies and understanding of language and society that question the dominance of societal monolingualism and calling for the necessity to turn the attention to multilingualism and multilingual speakers (see Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2016; Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Canagarajah, 2013; Castells, 2009; García, Flores, & Spotti, 2017; García & Wei, 2014; May, 2014a; Pennycook, 2007; Rigoni & Saitta, 2012). Finally, I describe some of my personal experiences as an English teacher in Mexico, as well as mention previous research work that support my arguments.

An overview of English teaching in Mexico

English language has had and continues to have an important role in several areas in Mexico (e.g. education, professional activities, tourism, science, industry, among others) as a consequence of the sociohistorical context of the country, as well as its geographical proximity and political-economical relation to the United States (Hidalgo, Cifuentes, & Flores, 2011).

After the Spanish colony (1521-1821), when the Mexican nation was born, even with the existence of a vast linguistic diversity, because of the presence of different Mexican indigenous communities, and European and non-European immigrants in the country (e.g. Italians, Portuguese, African slaves, etc.), Spanish became the most spoken language in Mexico and it was imposed as the official language of the country (Hidalgo et al., 2011; Terborg, García Landa, & Moore, 2007). Consequently, education in Spanish was used for sociocultural integration. Spanish was the medium of instruction at Mexican schools, where teaching materials, content and methods were designed and used to preserve Spanish as the dominant language (Hamel, 2008).

The Mexican educational system is formed by basic education (preschool, primary school, and secondary school), preparatory school, higher education, and postgraduate education. Basic education and preparatory school are mandatory. The basic principles of Mexican education are established in the Mexican Constitution, and include that Mexican education has non-clerical character, it is accessible and of free scholarship (Zhizhko, 2015). The management of basic education and preparatory school is under the Department of the Ministry of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*) with the support of other state and civic organizations; universities and higher education institutions are governed by their specific laws, but they also receive support from the government (Zhizhko, 2015).

Regarding the introduction of language teaching into the Mexican educational system, in the nineteenth century, the study of English and French as foreign languages (FL) was introduced in Mexican public education, mostly because their position in the academic world, where scientific and political ideas were usually published in these languages (Hidalgo et al., 2011). In the early twentieth century, in 1913, the first elementary and secondary bilingual school, the English School for Boys, was founded in Mexico city, the instruction was entirely in English and acknowledged as such by the British Consulate (Hidalgo et al., 2011).

Between World War I and World War II, Mexico started a process of modernization under the growing of American economy and its industrial expansion, commercial relations between both countries arose a new interest for English teaching in public education in Mexico (Hidalgo et al., 2011). As a result, teaching a foreign language in Mexican

public education became mandatory; in secondary and preparatory, and French was replaced by English in the curricula starting to be taught nationwide in public schools (Hidalgo et al., 2011).

However, even when English has been taught in Mexican public schools since at least 1954, as described above, this action has not had the results expected, and the quality of English teaching in Mexico has been questioned regarded its poor results, because even when most high school graduates studied English for at least six years, they have minimal abilities to communicate in English (Hidalgo et al., 2011; Ramírez-Romero, Sayer, & Irogoyen, 2014). Only those who have studied abroad or in private language schools have developed English language skills that allow them to get better jobs or better economic positions, something that is seen like social inequality and that has impulse the development of new policies where more Mexicans could study and learn English (Ramírez-Romero et al., 2014).

The idea of the necessity to acquire good language skills in English was reinforced by international organizations that started to promote the idea of globalization and the integration of countries in global markets (see section 3 for more discussion), where English language was promoted as the language of the globalized world (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Crystal, 2006). Consequently, in 1992, Mexican state governors began English programs in primary schools, particularly states bordering the U.S., as well as industrial states. Each state regulated and managed their own programs, so there were differences in curriculum guidelines, teachers recruitment, approaches and methodologies (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016).

In 2003, as part of a new national program that used special designed software and multimedia resources for teaching, the *Inglés Enciclomedia* was introduced for sixth grade students in 13 Mexican states (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2006). The goal of the program was that students have an initial contact with English language in two class sessions per week; however, there were no English teachers for the classes, and the regular primary teachers had to use the materials and teach English even if they did not have any English knowledge, it was expected that both, teachers and students, learn English together (Ramírez-Romero et al., 2014).

After these previous efforts, in 2009, the Mexican Ministry of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*) began the National English Program in Basic Education (*Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica, PNIEB*) with the purpose of providing English classes from kindergarten to sixth grade and then continue to expand the study of English through all educational levels (Ramírez-Romero et al., 2014). With the introduction of PNIEB, English classes in the curricula changed from been called 'foreign language' to 'second language'(Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011). The program was divided into two stages that span four Cycles; the first stage, that takes place in Cycle 1 (3rd year of preschool, 1st and 2nd year of elementary school), focuses on contact and familiarization with English language. The second stage, in Cycles 2, 3 and 4 (from 3rd year of elementary school to last year of secondary school), focuses on the formative teaching of English language. The time frames allocated to each cycle were determined by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) (British Council, 2015). The program represented a significant effort by federal government to improve English education in Mexico, nevertheless it faced diverse challenges like the shorted number of trained teachers, teachers with low English proficiency, and limited budgets (O'Donoghe, 2015; Ramírez-Romero et al., 2014; Sayer, 2015; Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011).

In 2013, PNIEB was replaced by the initiative *Apoyo para los procesos de estudio de una segunda lengua (inglés)*, as part of a new federal initiative called 'the S246 Program to Strengthen the Quality of Basic Education (*Programa S246 Fortalecimiento de la Calidad en Educación Básica)* (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2014).The program coincided with the change of political parties in federal government (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). The program had national coverage, but the main change was that government states decided to participate on it "voluntarily" with the support of the federation, who provided the framework and the budget for materials and salaries (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016; Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2014). Teachers essentially continued working with the same curricula and materials from PNIEB, but there were several administrative problems in the program implementation, and in different states the program was suspended or reduced (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016).

In 2015, the federal government introduced a new English program, the National English Program (*Programa Nacional de Inglés, PRONI)* (DOF, 2015). The program aims to support the implementation of second language (English) courses in elementary public schools, like in PNIEB, and it also brings back some aims proposed in the S246 Program to Strengthen the Quality of Basic Education (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). The program is still in effect (DOF, 2021).

Although, as described above, the Mexican government has made great efforts to make English language teaching more equitable and available to all Mexicans by proposing educational programs in public education, research shows several problems in the implementation and monitoring of these programs. Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016) point out that changing from one program to another has not given a chance that a complete generation of students participate completely in one of the programs; moreover, programs have not been evaluated, so changes are not based on their results, they seem to be more related to political interests (2016, p. 10). Other research on the topic also report that English programs face different challenges, like the shortage of teachers, teachers training, teachers' knowledge of the curriculum, teachers' competence in English, complex curriculum for students, materials that are not contextualized to Mexican environment, rural areas and schools that are not able to implement the programs, among others (Izquierdo, Zúñiga, & Martínez, 2021; Librado & Santos, 2020; Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016; Ramírez-Romero et al., 2014; Sayer, 2015).

The construction and interpretation of EFL and ESL

As a result of the spread of English around the world there have been several attempts to classify and categorize the English varieties and their use in societies. One of the most traditional categorization is the Three Circles classification model of Englishes, that divides countries accordingly to the status of the English language in their territory (Kachru, 1985). The inner circle includes those countries who are considered as native English (ENL) countries; the outer circle includes the countries where English is not spoken natively, but maintains an important status as a resource of communication, giving way to the term English as a Second Language (ESL); finally, the expanding circle refers to the countries where the language does not have historical or governmental importance and it has the status of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Kachru, 1985).

On the basis of the above classification Nayar (1997) explains that the expression *English as a Foreign Language* is used to refer to English language use and learning outside English speaking countries, while *English as a Second Language* was first used to describe English language learning in countries under the British Empire and it has been evolving through time. The term of second language evolved under the development of structural linguistics and the establishment of other terms like L1 for native/first language, and L2 for target/second language; in addition, after World War II and the resulted waves of polyglot immigrants around the world, some countries, like the U.S., required the acquisition of its official language for naturalization, and they adopted the term *second language* for the situation (Nayar, 1997).

Although the term EFL has been well established and is consistent with other proposed taxonomies, for non-English using countries, Nayar (1997) argues that there is less agreement in the understanding of ESL, and he describes three different perceptions and interpretations for the term. In the first interpretation of ESL (ESL1), the situation is described in the following way: English is not accepted as a native language of the country, there are some people that use English as a medium of communication in a variety of domains like education, administration, and commerce; there is some environmental support, like media use; English has social prestige and has some official national status; but communication with native speakers is not the objective of learning English (p. 15). For the second interpretation (ESL2), the situation is as follows: English is acquired in a native environment or by native-speaking teachers; the goal of learning English is to interact and communicate with native speakers and eventually integrate into the native community; acquisition of English also brings socioeconomic respectability and upward mobility (p. 17). Finally, the third interpretation (ESL3) describes a situation where English has no official status or intranational use, but it has a high profile in education, in this sense, every educated person in the country can communicate with English native speakers or other contexts where English is used (p. 18).

Despite these differences, the terms EFL and ESL are commonly used ambivalently in the literature and discourse (Nayar, 1997), as if they had the same meaning. However, within English language teaching, there is also a generalized idea that teaching English as ESL implies a native environment or support from native English language teachers,

highlighting the context as the main difference between both terms. Additionally, according to these descriptions proposed by Nayar, we can argue that the construction and interpretation of both terms, EFL and ESL, are more political and ideological, always explained from the English speaker' point of view and limited to a monolingual perspective (Nayar, 1997). According to May (2014a), this "monolingual bias" is inherent in second language acquisition (SLA) research, that has been framed in relation to the norms of monolingual speakers (p. 7).

On the other hand, seeking to examine the differences between the EFL and ESL contexts, Serrano, Llanes, and Mestres (2011) analyzed the written and oral performance of three groups of Spanish speakers, one group was spending time in the UK, and the other two groups where in intensive courses of English in Spain. After an equivalent period of exposure to English in the two contexts, the study showed that while students who were in an ESL context performed better in fluency and lexical complexity; but their general performance in writing and oral activities was similar to the students who took the intensive course in the EFL context. Other studies support this claim that students in SL contexts develop more fluency and increase their vocabulary (DeKeyser, 1991; Freed, 1995; Ife, Vives, & Meara, 2000; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009), nevertheless their development in other areas is not superior to students in FL programs (Collentine, 2004; Mora, 2008; Serrano et al., 2011).

Finally, there is another position that sustains EFL and ESL should be viewed as a continuum, with many categories in between corresponding to a variety of learning contexts (Gilquin & Granger, 2011). This position is more open to the idea that context is not only the language situation in the country where language is taught, there could be other factors that influence the context, like the teacher, the institution, hours of study, the syllabus, among others. In addition, it is important to point out that the results of language teaching do not depend only on the type of program or the context where it is developed, however, this topic will not be discussed in depth in this chapter.

Nowadays linguistic reality around the world is also questioning the maintenance of these categories and taxonomies for languages, language teaching and learning, as well as the dominance of monolingualism and the category of 'native speaker' as the basis for language learning. These ideas will be discussed below.

Globalization, language and superdiversity

Globalization is a term used to describe the interconnection of the world, idealizing a world integration in an interdependency relation, where any change in any location will have a consequence in other places at different levels (Giddens, 1990; Yeldan, 2012). Major geopolitical changes in the last forty years, like the end of the Cold War, the fragmentation of the Soviet communist bloc, India's economic reforms, among others; as well as the expanding mobility of products and people, change and increase of migration patterns, and the development of communication technology, as part of globalization processes, have resulted in the intensification of diversity at every level in societies: social, ethnic, cultural, and economic (Blommaert, 2010; Parkin, 2018; Vertovec, 2007). To describe this diversity of diversity, Vertovec (2007) has coined the term 'superdiversity'.

'Superdiversity' has transformed communities, and the living experiences of people at different degrees, bringing such complexity and social transformation that our assumptions and understanding of society are no longer sufficient to explain or to analyze this new reality (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016). In the study of language in society 'superdiversity' has intensified the revision on fundamental ideas about languages, language groups and speakers, and communication, questioning the dominance of monolingualism, homogeneity, stability, and boundedness in the different areas of language study (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016). For example, the traditional idea of language as a system linked to bounded communities and territory is difficult to sustain under new migration patterns.

In this sense, May (2014b) describes how globalization and 'superdiversity' have turned the attention to multilingual speakers, and to multilingualism as the new norm for linguistic analysis in applied linguistic and sociolinguistics (p.1). Specifically, for the area of SLA and TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of Other Languages), May (2014a) describes how this "multilingual turn" can give more value to bilingualism and multilingualism and have a positive impact on language teaching and learning, where bilingual and multilingual students are commonly treated as deficient. However, May (2014b) also highlights that despite this new and increasing interest in multilingualism, there is some resistance from those working in these areas, because it implies changes in classification and framing of knowledge, and it is feared that this could affect the perceived scientific status of the linguistic discipline (Block, 2003; May, 2014a).

Beyond the maintenance of a status in the academia, and in the domain of scientific knowledge, what seems to be the biggest obstacle to overcome by this paradigm shift in language studies is the link of the notion of language to the nationalist ideology (Auer, 2007; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; May, 2012). The nationalist ideology accepts and legitimates the imposition of a linguistic form as the norm in a territory (Bourdieu, 1991) and it permeates the idea that languages, communities and territories are bounded. For example, Spanish language served to form the Mexican nation, even with the presence of other linguistic groups, and it is now linked to the national identity, it is expected that those who live in Mexico and speak other languages learn and communicate in Spanish, too.

According to Blommaert (2010), the continued use of frames derived from the nationalist ideology, and language assumptions of uniformity, categorizability, fixedness, and so on, transform language and discourse in a tool to divide and discriminate. It is necessary to avoid the separation of speakers and languages under different categories to analyze the links and incompatibilities between language use and learning reality and formal language teaching and learning contexts (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016).

EFL or ESL for English teaching in Mexico?

As described above, Mexico is a linguistic diverse country that has been constructed under the nationalistic ideology of "one language- one nation- one territory". Among other languages, English language teaching has been a priority for Mexican governments, on one hand because of its political and economic relation with the U.S., and on the other hand because the country has looked its integration to the globalized world through international organizations that have established the English language as a first necessity for global citizens.

As a result, over the years Mexico's government has created and established different English teaching programs for public education, and it has sought various strategies for its citizens to access and learn English. Beyond the success or failure of these programs, if we focus on the terminology used for language teaching, we can observe how it changed from EFL to ESL from one moment to another. However, the interchangeable use of these terms does not seem to change the way of teaching in the programs.

As it has been discussed before, the term EFL is used in non-English-speaking countries, and since Mexico is a Spanish-speaking country, we can think this is the correct tag for English language teaching in this country. However, when the first national English program (PNIEB) was introduced, English classes started to use the tag ESL. This action can be related to the interpretation of ESL3 proposed by Nayar (1997), where even when English language is not used in the country, it has a high profile in education, since the goal of the program was that everyone can communicate in English.

Another aspect to consider is that there is a generalized idea that EFL implies that the student has no other contact with the language he/she is learning outside the classroom, while ESL implies a native environment outside the classroom or support from native English language teachers. This means that ESL would bring more opportunities to be exposed to English through different media, and it will also bring more opportunities to practice what is learned in class, while students in EFL classes only have the class to be exposed and to practice English. This aspect might lead to the use of different teaching and learning activities for each situation (Tarnopolsky, 2000).

Although, it seems there are more conditions to characterize English teaching in Mexico as an EFL, this label does not seem to be relevant for the design and application of national English programs, since as described above, English teaching and learning in Mexico face other major challenges.

In addition, the terms EFL and ESL are difficult to sustain under the changes that globalization and 'superdiversity' have brought to society and language use. For example, although Spanish is the *de facto* official language in Mexico (Terborg et al., 2007), English has been present in the country since its origin. There have been and still are English-speaking communities in Mexico, and in the border between Mexico and the U.S. English, Spanish or both languages are typically used for communication(Cortéz & Jaúregui, 2004). Moreover, migration between Mexico and the United States is not a new phenomenon, there are always people coming and going from one country to another. Nevertheless, in recent years the number of people returning to Mexico is much higher in contrast to the number of people migrating to the United States, this means there could be more people that have acquired English resources entering the country (Ramírez García & Meza González, 2011).With all this evidence, it is difficult to sustain that in Mexico, English is a foreign language.

Furthermore, how is it possible to ensure that English language learners have no other contact with English outside the classroom? Thanks to the development of information and communication technologies, people who can access them can be in contact with other people from other countries, and speakers of other languages; they can watch programs in other languages, use apps in other languages, play video games in other languages such as English, and acquire linguistic resources in this and in any other languages. For these reasons, it is difficult to sustain that students in Mexico only have contact with English in their classes.

In the next section, I describe some of my experience as an English teacher in Mexico to give an approximation of how these characteristics of Mexican population, as well as changes in the world resulted from globalization processes, are reflected in the classrooms, and do not represent specific EFL or ESL situations.

An approximation to English language teaching and learning reality in Mexico

My professional background

I received formal education in English since secondary school, and when I was studying at the university, I took English courses in a private language school. When I finished my courses, I started to teach English.

I have been an English teacher for more than fifteen years. When I started, the only experience I had was the English classes I took, and I used to do what my teachers did in their classes. In the first two years of teaching, I had the opportunity to take a teaching methodology course for one month in the U.S., with a Fulbright-García Robles Scholarship. This curse did not only introduce me to a more formal knowledge of English teaching and learning, but it also gave me the opportunity to meet other English teachers from around Mexico and learn about their experience, too.

I used to teach high school level when I started, and I had to manage large classes. Even when I faced different challenges, I fell in love with the profession, and I decided to study a master's degree in Applied Linguistics. My masters focused on English teaching, so it was everything I expected and much more. It also introduced me to sociolinguistics, the area where I mostly do my research work nowadays.

When I was still studying my master, I was invited to work at university level in the new BA program in Applied Linguistics, focused on the formation of language teachers. I have been working in this BA program for about 10 years.

During my trajectory I have had the opportunity to keep training myself in English teaching and learning through different courses and certifications. But mostly, year by year, I have learned from my students, their personalities, their differences, and their linguistic backgrounds. When I started teaching, I just expected to enter a class, full of students, all Mexicans, Spanish speakers, sitting there just ready to learn English. However, I usually had students who already knew English, and they wanted to skip the class; I had students who were studying English in a private language school; students from indigenous communities who had never taken English classes, students who refused to study other language, among others. Reality is never close to what you study or read in books, and I realized there was not an only and correct path that you should follow to teach. I guess this happens to most of the teachers, but this changed my perspective about theories, methodologies, and materials. Questioning myself about what I knew, and the constant reflection about my practice, has led me to research more on the topic, as shown below.

Research

Six years ago, I started a research project with two colleagues. We focused on linguistic needs of transnational students, students with educational experiences in Mexico and the U.S. (Zuñiga & Hamann, 2009; Zuñiga & Saucedo, 2019). The objective of the research was to develop a program to support these students in their linguistic needs in English and Spanish.

However, while we were working, we were introduced to the new trends in language studies and we decided to change our perspective. Our first publication is centered on the linguistic trajectories, linguistic repertories and linguistic competences of three students at the university where I work (Herrera Ruano, Nelson, & Zepeda, 2021). Theoretically, our work is based on the proposal of Blommaert and Backus (2013) on the construction of individual linguistic repertoires. These authors argue that linguistic repertoires are best understood as a collection of resources that are not bound to a community, they

are personal and dependent on our life experiences. We used this idea to sustain that in a globalized and superdiverse world each individual trajectory is diverse and subjective, and the transnational students are a good example of this (Herrera Ruano et al., 2021).

We continued working on the topic, but then we focused on families, and their family language policy (FLP). Our next study analyzed the relationship between family language policy and the development of individual linguistic repertoires in three transnational families within the context of Mexico-US immigration and return migration (Nelson, Herrera Ruano, & Zepeda, 2022). Our work allows us to demonstrate that although all members of these families have had the same experience of living in another country, this fact does not have the same results for the repertoire of each individual. This continues supporting the idea proposed by Blommaert and Backus (2013) about individual and subjective linguistic repertoires.

From this research also came the idea of questioning Mexican educational policies and how they deal with the linguistic diversity in the country, in the schools and in the classrooms. I developed this work with another colleague. Our work focuses on bilingual and intercultural education in Mexico that is designed for indigenous communities. We describe how globalization and 'superdiversity' is reflected in the diverse origin of students. This means that even when this type of education is addressed to indigenous students, there are not only indigenous students in the classrooms, and the indigenous students are not always monolingual (Indigenous language or Spanish) or bilingual (Indigenous language-Spanish), so their particular linguistic trajectories challenge the scheme of the Mexican educational system (Herrera Ruano & Parra Gutiérrez, 2022).

Classroom reality

My personal experience as an English teacher and my research work with my colleagues have given me the idea of this chapter that has led me to the questions: why do we teach English under EFL and ESL tags in Mexico? Is this still valid in a globalized and 'superdiverse' world?

Students in Mexican classrooms bring with them different linguistic resources that have been acquired through their lifespan and life experiences that are commonly unique

and different from each other. If we look closer at the students, we will discover that even when they can have similar backgrounds, their experiences can be completely different. For example, transnational students: some of them were taken to the U.S. when they were babies, others were born in the U.S.; some acquire Spanish resources at home while they are living in the U.S.; some of them learned how to read and write in English when they went to school in the U.S.; and some maintain and continue developing those resources in English, but others stop using them when they come to live in Mexico (Herrera Ruano et al., 2021; Nelson et al., 2022).

Something similar happens with students from indigenous communities, where we, as teachers, sometimes assume that they speak an indigenous language only because of their origin, or that they can speak in an indigenous language and Spanish. Moreover, since we tend to bound language and territories, we assume that only certain languages are spoken in some regions without considering mobility (Herrera Ruano & Parra Gutiérrez, 2022).

On the other hand, we must consider that globalization has been accompanied by the development of communication technology, and students are usually in contact with other linguistic resources and communication forms through technology. For example, I usually have students that have never been in an English class, but they have acquired linguistic resources to communicate in this language playing videogames, using apps, or watching videos and movies.

Discussion and conclusion

I decided to write this chapter to discuss the interpretation of the acronyms EFL and ESL in the Mexican educational system, since I am an English teacher in Mexico and due to the fact that I work in a BA program of Applied Linguistics focused on the formation of language teachers.

When I describe an overview of English language teaching in Mexico, I want to highlight the following:

1. English is relevant in Mexican education for two main reasons: 1) the economic and political relation of Mexico with the U.S., and 2) because English has been

promoted as the language of the globalized world.

2. Language and educational policies in Mexico are guided by nationalist ideologies and particular political interest of those in power.
3. The implementation of the different English programs has not considered aspects like budget, human resources, and materials previously, something that has led them to great challenges.
4. EFL and ESL are used indistinctly.

Moreover, examining the basis of the distinction between EFL and ESL, and how these two terms have been constructed under a monolingual English speaker point of view, I consider they can be part of what is known as the English imperialism (Martínez Mendoza, 2002). It is necessary to reflect on the implications of the relation between language and power (see Fairclough, 2013), and how the imposition of one language does not only have effects on other languages, but also in other levels of society (social, economic, political, etc.)

Accurately, more recent research work on linguistics has questioned the dominance of monolingualism in language studies and its influence in language education, like in this case, in the creation of the acronyms of EFL and ESL. In addition, globalization processes and 'superdiversity' have started a paradigm change in language studies and society, questioning existing terms and categories that can no longer be sustained. Using some evidence of the linguistic reality in Mexico, and the description of how communication technology influences people's life I question how it is difficult to sustain that English in Mexico must be considered a foreign language or a second language. These ideas are also supported by my personal experience as an English teacher, my research work, and the reality that I confront in the classroom.

With all of the above, I can conclude that in Mexico we teach English under the labels of EFL and ESL because:

1. the country has been constructed under the nationalist ideology of "one language- one nation- one territory", so any other language must be treated as foreign;
2. the development of linguistics and the academic position of SLA has influenced language teaching all over the world;

3. the high priority that Mexican government has given to English teaching in the national education; and
4. the role of English as the language of globalization.

Moreover, I can also say that under 'superdiversity' and globalization processes, any categorization for language teaching, and language students is difficult to sustain.

Finally, since this chapter is based only in theoretical knowledge and personal experience, I consider that other personal experiences and perceptions can expand the discussion on the topic. Moreover, the discussion in the chapter has demonstrated the necessity of the reflection on language teaching and the non-linguistic factors that influence it, specifically for English language teaching and learning around the world.

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CHAPTER 6

Intercultural Communication in English Language Teaching: Perceptions, Models, Concepts and Theories

Natka Jankova Alagjozovska

Introduction

Intercultural communication is becoming an essential part of the education system nowadays because of globalization, immigration and the multicultural work environments. The need for training, knowledge and research in this field is increasing because of the recent trends in education. Intercultural communication as a complex term should be explored from different perspectives in order to define it. For that reason, the terms culture and communication which are in relation to intercultural communication are to be explored further.

There are numerous definitions of culture amongst which a very interesting one is by Tylor who wrote in 1871 stating that culture is something complex- incorporating knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs and all shared customs which are shared by the social surrounding. It is difficult to define culture and it is not strange that this word has also been described as one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. A very famous scholar in this field Hofstede (2001) also essentially defined it as a kind of programming of the mind of the people who are members of a group or society. However, in his book Culture's Consequences (1980), he introduces the use of the concept of dimensions of culture: basic problems to which different national societies have over time developed different answers. National culture is what distinguishes one country from another. It is what every individual belonging to that culture is indoctrinat-

ed with. In one of his interviews, Hofstede makes the claim that the acquisition of one's national culture is an unconscious process, because we are born into a certain culture and by the age of nine or ten, we have already acquired all of the elements, language, behaviors, values, history and organizations of that culture (October 10, 2011). This is done subconsciously simply because that particular culture is the only culture we know and we are exposed to. Consequently, one is so thoroughly imbued with all the elements typical of their own culture that while growing up it becomes almost impossible to comprehend how anyone else's culture could be any different from theirs. The second level of culture defined by Hofstede is the culture we encounter as part of the working world i.e. organizational culture. The definition of this cultural subtype can be embedded in Hofstede's definition of national culture by simply replacing the terms group or category of people with organization or the programming of the mind as mentioned previously. Cultural awareness is very important when it comes to communication with people from different cultures. The reason is that people observe, assess and interpret things in another manner. Sometimes, cultural misunderstandings make the business harder to expand, develop or even make it impossible. It is by every mean essential to increase cultural awareness and knowledge of intercultural communication because of the different aspects of people's lives and this can help people further increase the awareness of their own culture. The etymology of the word "communication" can be explained with the Latin word "communicare" and its meaning is "to share/make common" (Weekley, 1967). Since communication is a process which involves the sender and the receiver of information, what is essential in communication is also meaning and understanding. In our case, the center of communication is the relationship that involves interaction between participants coming from different ethnic backgrounds which gives the definition of Intercultural Communication.

Intercultural Communication Perspectives: Cultural Identity

Intercultural communication is interdisciplinary and integrates disciplines such as: anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, history, geography, arts, music etc. Intercultural communication can be understood as interactions with members of other cultures in which an individual strives to understand the cultural values, beliefs and

norms of other parties and is able to achieve successful communication with the other by understanding the differences (Sadri & Flammia, 2013, p. 26). When people have mutual experiences, it leads to deeper understandings of the group. It is not surprising that the idioms, proverbs and non-verbal gestures are very often misunderstood by people who are outside the group i.e. from a different culture. In order to communicate, if people are from a different culture, they do not just need a mutual language, but they should also try to understand the culture. No matter the fact that English language and its use as a means of communication cannot remove the need for cultural understanding between people from different cultures. Communication, as an element of culture is a symbolic process by which people pass the information to each other and create shared meanings. (Gydikunst, 2002, p. 27).

When communicating interculturally, it is very important to recognize people's identity and how identity affects the communication in a multicultural setting. When entering a conversation in such settings, the members of the particular cultural group share the same values, traditions, signs and meanings. Hortobágyi (2009) states that in communication and daily interactions people define who they are and negotiate their identities with people who are similar to them or different from them (p. 259). Within intercultural communication, the participants are part of a different communication system and very often the differences may lead to conflicts in a verbal or non-verbal manner. Whether we speak about undesired discrimination or making improper gestures, frustrating situations easily occur. Even though a lot of definitions about identity are found within literature, it is still difficult to find the proper definition. According to Fearon (1999), identity can be social and personal, whereas the first one refers to a social category and the second one to the personal identity which is something unique for a person who feels proud about its identity and is less changeable in connection to the previous one. Thus, identity has a double meaning in this definition i.e. refers to the categories of the society and the individual's dignity or national pride. Identity can refer to personal features in terms of social category and the idea of the social category which is bound up with the individual self-respect. According to Luoma (2005), most individuals experience personal and cultural change in order to establish mutual understanding with people from other cultures. Cultures also change in this process, because social, political, economic and historical influences affect cultural and intercultural interactions.

Discussing identities during the English language lessons using various authentic materials is very important since students can share their beliefs, values, traditions from their cultural point of view. "Knowledge about other groups is not isolated factual knowledge, but rather "relational", it is something acquired due to socialization with different and their own social groups and often compared to the essential characteristics of one's national group and identity" (Byram, 1997).

With the recent methodology of ELT, teachers are now the facilitators in learning the foreign language and students are more autonomous and are involved in the process of learning by setting their own goals, doing their tasks and self-checking their progress and acquiring the cultural awareness by interacting with students from different ethnic backgrounds. Galante (2015) confirms that the recent pedagogy entails the use of foreign language in order to criticize worldviews and to construct and reconstruct knowledge through social relations of cultures, race, ethnicity, gender, and identities. In connection to this, Foncha (2014) concludes that during social interaction, students collaborate between each other and develop critical thinking skills by observing, analyzing and evaluating information.

When the students are engaged and involved in the lesson all the time, then the classroom activities are the best way of learning the new language along with the intercultural communication competence. Task-based activities which are engaging for students and keep them active throughout the whole lesson appear to be the best way of fostering language and achieving the intercultural competence aim. Corbett (2010) points out that "typical intercultural activities combine language tasks with ethnography and critical thinking. For many language learners today, intercultural exploration blends internet research and chat room discussion with a fresh, systematic, reflective investigation into familiar aspects of one's own culture". By doing this, students appear to create awareness towards their own language and culture and to the others. Consequently, commitment, cooperation and support can be seen as an important aim in language learning and intercultural communication competence.

In today's so-called global village of the digitalized world, the differences should be negotiated and the identities would be set free from prejudice and communication without boundaries should be accomplished. Identities can be seen as kinds of projects which

consist of people´s self-told stories of themselves reflecting to their past, present and future" (Romo, 2015, p. 9). The development of multiethnic identities has been dynamic in the course of recent decades. However, teachers everywhere in the world need to create radical pedagogical ways of teaching and learning through which they will give students the chance to use their own identities and in order to accomplish successful oral and written intercultural communication. Further, during English lessons students should be able to express and reflect on their own identity, their views of culture and learn to respect the others' linguistic and cultural diversity.

Intercultural Communication in English Language Teaching

Foreign language teaching and learning has gone through major changes over the past years. Replacing the old grammar-translation approach with the communicative and audio-lingual method and the practices of real-life situations, most of the educators have moved from pedagogy to language acquisition and learning. According to the theory of Stephen Krashen (1988), the unconscious development of the target language system happens because of the usage of the language for real communication (p. 1). From here, learning should be oriented towards the natural acquisition of grammar and processes which are not spontaneous. Therefore, students who are readers of literature books can achieve better results in regard to their communicative and linguistic competence. Speaking about English language teaching, students become aware of certain culture very often through literature texts. As Corbett stated in 2003, the most essential aim of the English teacher is to be able to persuade the students to read in order to understand different contexts, improve their vocabulary and to be able to implement their knowledge in different cultural contexts i.e. cultural situations.

In the *Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence,* Byram (1997) puts emphasis on the attitude and uses words such as being open and curious enough to explain his opinion that one individual must be open about learning new beliefs, values and views of the world in order to have relationships of equality (Moeller and Nugent, 2014). Because culture is who we are and how we live and this process is changeable, those changes bring new challenges in the society. Globalization, migration and the mingling of cultures in one place or community has made this world highly multicultural. Global-

ization brings the need to interact and have different kinds of relationships with people from different cultures. It creates a new challenge for people who are to cross the borders of the countries altogether with their cultural boundaries. English language is studied in primary schools starting from the first grade today. This was not the case ten or twenty years ago. Students started studying English from their fifth, then from their fourth grade of primary school studies; some classes were experimental and now, even children who do not go to school start learning it.

According to Byram, there are different viewpoints of studying languages: "Employers see language learning as one of the essential skills in international trade – and almost all trade is now international – and parents see the acquisition of languages, particularly English, as an important way of investing in their children and giving them the social and cultural capital they will carry forward into future generations" (Byram, p. 77). The ultimate goal of the so-called intercultural approach is not the 'native speaker competence' but the intercultural communicative competence and this means to be able to understand the language and behavior of the target community and the ability to share it with members of the 'home' community. This competence can teach learners to be diplomats i.e. able to view different cultures from a perspective of informed understanding and this aim displaces the long-standing objective of ELT – to attain 'native speaker proficiency'. According to Livermore (1998, p. 10), the intercultural competence of the teacher means to be able to facilitate the learning in cognitive, emotional and behavioral settings among students from different cultures than their own. This scholar points out the main competencies that the teacher should develop for effective learning atmosphere when teaching students from different cultures than his/her own:

a) knowledge - even though it is widely denied the meaning of theory and practice, the effectiveness of the teacher depends on his/her theoretical knowledge in the following areas: interculturalism: meaning, importance, cultural misunderstandings, conflicts, factors for effective intercultural communication, symbiosis of learning and culture; models of assessment, the needs of the students and ways of learning; even though every teacher knows his/her field very well, the broadness and profoundness in that field is very important because of the needed cultural adaptation and it must be clear what is included in the curriculum speaking about culture and interculturalism in education.

b) skills - the skills of the teacher will transform his/her knowledge in effective results which will be justified in a successful project:

- planning and design: the key word is the grade of the students as a group (behavior, history, context) of the cultural behavior they can attain during the lessons

- accomplishment: what is being planned it must be done. There should be a variety of the content especially in the methods and instruments of learning. The progress should be monitored and summative and formative assessment should be used

c) Attitude - this is a very subjective competence but it has an important meaning:

- tolerance for ambiguity: each educational element has some level of ambiguity which is raised especially in multicultural settings. If the teacher is not so open-minded and follows the lesson planning and does not allow unexpected changes and is frustrated by the students than this teacher is not effective

- maintain personal cultural identity - the biggest mistake of the teacher when having contacts with students from another culture is to become as them without staying as he/she is and rely on his/her own cultural identity.

- patience is very important about teachers. By having contacts with students from different ethnic backgrounds there are always barriers in communication and some answers on the behalf of the teacher can isolate the students or motivate them or in the worst case turn it into a barrier of communication.

- enthusiasm which turns into a powerful factor in intercultural education

- interpersonal communication: though more important among some cultures than others, strong interpersonal skills are essential for intercultural education

- being interested in the students - the openness considering their problems, life, perspectives which should be real and not only symbolic

- empathy - understanding the feelings of the students considering learning and their own cultural orientations

- sense of humor - is precious when solving problems and lowering the pressure as a whole.

d) Behavior. A sign of acquired intercultural competence can be found in the high standard the teacher sets - career and professional development, understanding the needs of the students, sharing knowledge and experience with the colleagues, self-reflexivity and self-criticism, improving knowledge in their field and acquiring stimulus learning environment. (Livermore, 1998, p. 10).

Intercultural competence is essential when learning any foreign language and it cannot be denied that by learning a language one can only become interculturally competent. Moreover, learning any foreign language is the most effective way to understand and learn more about how the language shapes the worldview of the other and this comes to be the central aim of intercultural competence. Finally, it can be concluded that teaching any foreign language is much more than improving the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary without learning the culture explicitly. As Byram (1989) points out, culture has become a necessary tool in teaching a foreign language having in mind the following elements: raising awareness of one's identity and of the existence of difference, enhancing understanding of self and others and fostering appreciation of otherness (p. 25).

Intercultural Communication Models, Concepts and Theories

Intercultural communication competence means to be able to communicate in an effective and appropriate way with people from different cultures. In order to achieve appropriate and effective communication, one must value rules, norms of the other culture which can be fulfilled by having a more developed sense for intercultural communication. Intercultural communication cognition of English language teachers would mean the ability of teachers to incorporate intercultural communication knowledge, attitudes and awareness towards other cultures. Chen and Starosta (1999) define intercultural communication competence as effective and appropriate communication of people with different behaviors that discuss their different cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment" (p. 28). They mention three components of intercultural communication competence: intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness and intercultural adroitness which are actually the verbal and nonverbal skills which are needed for effective intercultural communication. In order to go into details of ICC, four models are to be explained in details below along with one theory and one concept:

1.Process Model (D. Deardorff)

D. Deardorff's model of ICC is named Process Model of ICC. This model explains the process of how to become interculturally competent. The main elements needed to achieve ICC are attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal or external outcomes. If attitude means the way you feel or think about someone and one of the key attitudes are respect, openness, curiosity and discovery, then these are needed to move further for successful intercultural communication. Knowledge of culture and sociolinguistic awareness is also needed to achieve successful intercultural interaction. In connection to this are the skills to process the knowledge such as observation, listening, analyzing and interpreting. All these lead to the internal outcome which includes flexibility, adaptability and empathy. Finally, empathy plays an important role for achieving the wanted external outcomes i.e. do not do to others what you do not want to be done and vice versa i.e. the acceptable behavior and communication in different situations that are considered intercultural. Furthermore, Deardorff (2006) suggests that this model is open and allows individuals to enter at any point and they can move freely between categories, sometimes moving ahead, and at other times returning to delve deeper into a concept previously encountered:

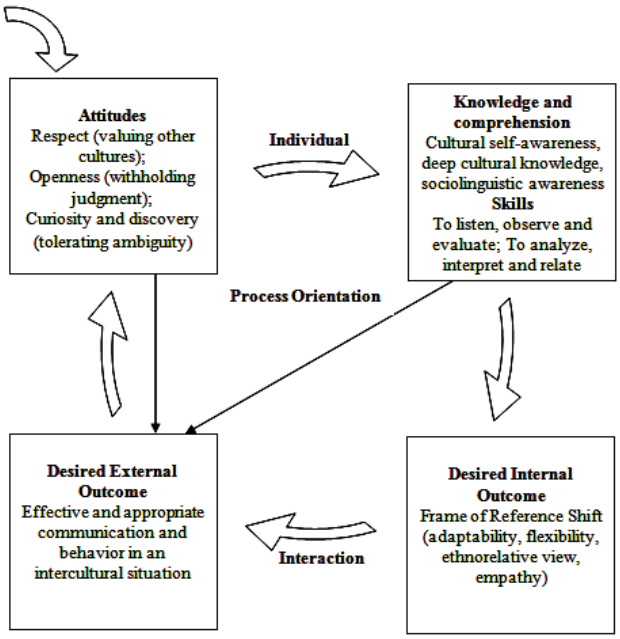

Figure 1 – D. C. Deardorff Process Model of ICC

This model proves that if an individual has the needed attitudes and the minimal acceptable behavior and style of communication it is possible to achieve the desired outcome. If the person possesses the knowledge and skills he/she will be more effective in the intercultural interaction. This model shows that ICC is not a finalized process. One cannot become completely interculturally competent because this is a lifelong process. However, language is not the only needed skill for ICC but it is only a bridge to move on and develop more and more skills and understand the others.

2. Byram's model

Byram's model in ICC whose concept is in accordance with linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence adds detailed intercultural dimension in order to move away from the native speaker model of communication. (Han & Song, 176). It also combines knowledge, skills and discovery and interaction, intercultural attitudes and cultural awareness which is considered critical into a system of intercultural competence. Thus, the role of the language is to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as it is to develop knowledge of a particular culture or country (Byram, 2008).

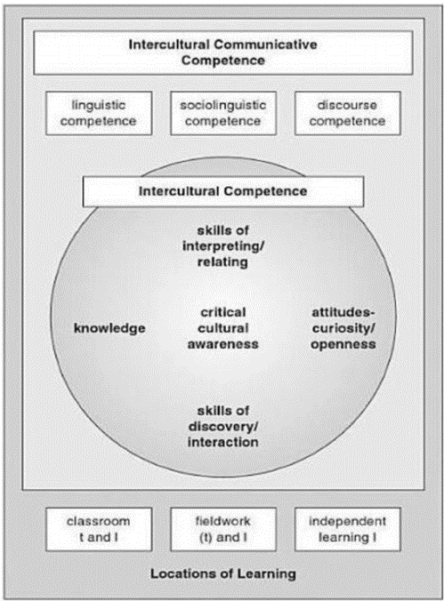

Figure 2 – Byram's Model of ICC

According to Byram's model as shown in Figure 2 above, intercultural competence is made of knowledge, skills and attitudes and all these are accompanied by five values: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2002). Byram gives explanation of ICC consisting of interaction with the "other" using the one's native language or interpretation of documents that have been translated into one's native language. Hence ICC is about combining the ideas of self-awareness when communicating in a foreign language as a needed component to the intercultural case.

3. Bennet's model

A very important approach connected to this issue is Bennet's model of cultural competence. According to Bennet (1993), "Cultural competence is the process by which people learn to value and respond respectfully to people of all cultures." (p. 245). It is crucial for teachers to develop intercultural communication competence which has two prerequisites:

- intercultural communication awareness
- intercultural communication sensitivity

According to Bennett's model (Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity) individuals with intercultural sensitivity tend to transform themselves from the ethnocentric stage to the ethno-relative stage. Bennett's model known as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) consists of a continuum of six stages moving from "ethnocentrism" to "ethno-relativism." From one hand, the ethnocentric stages are denial, defense, and minimization. On the other hand, the ethno-relative stages such as acceptance, adaptation, and integration are distinguished. This model is organized in six levels identifying the cognitive orientations of individuals in understanding cultural difference. Each level describes the perception of the cultural difference which is connected to the experiences of other cultures. By identifying the certain differences in culture and perceiving the attitudes and habits what can be easily done is the development of an intercultural model of education.

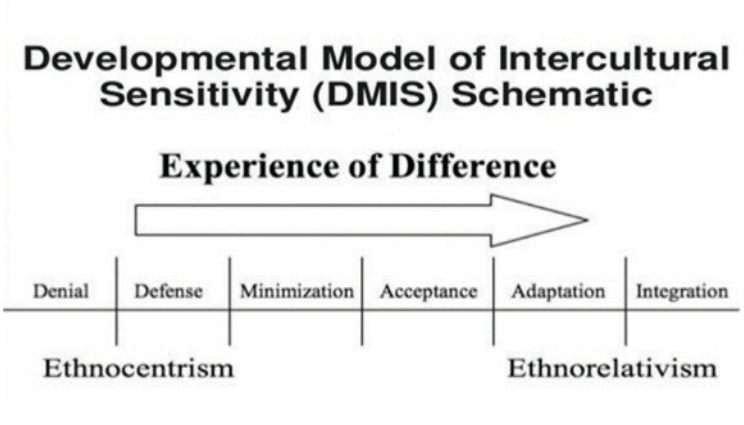

Figure 3 – Bennet's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The figure shows how moving from "ethnocentrism" i.e. the feeling that your individual culture is central in reality, towards "ethno-relativism" which means that the individual's culture has experienced the context of other cultures by acceptance, adaptation and integration. The six stages will be explained in details below:

i. Denial

This stage represents the lowest rate of openness for other cultures. In this stage the individual is not aware of the existence of the other culture and it happens due to physical and social isolation from such differences. This kind of a person is the ultimate ethnocentric one and as such, the state of mind of this person has a limited degree of contact with different cultures (Bennet, 1986). At some point they are even not aware that the other cultures exist, and their own vision of the world is not challenged to see other cultures as they are.

ii. Defense

In this stage the person perceives the different cultures as threatening by forming negative stereotypes and different types of discrimination such as race, gender as a form of denigration of a particular group of people. According to Jenkins and Morgan (2002) this phase strengthens the relationships between the members of a certain group and

establishes a 'boundary' between the two seemingly opposing categories. Sometimes it can be about cultural superiority assuming that the culture of your own is better than any other according to some evolutionary projections. Or in the ultimate stage of defense it is about feeling that "the other cultures are quite simply inferior to ours, on a continuum of which we are the apogee" (Chodzkienė, 2014, pg. 218).

iii. Minimalization

The final stage of ethnocentrism is the last attempt to bury the differences and it is presumed that humans are governed by common principles that guide values and conducts in their surroundings. Minimalization suggests that individuals disregard and/or trivialize differences by burying them under the 'weight of cultural similarities' (Bennett, 1986, pg. 183). If people are in an intercultural situation at this stage they will deem that a simple awareness for interaction will be needed for successful communication. Somehow this is still an ethnocentric view because for these individuals' differences are just some variations of different cultures. Between the stages of minimalization and acceptance there is a transition which is marked by a new way of perceiving the different cultures as dynamic and fluid and not as static and rigid.

iv. Acceptance

At this stage people do not have the expected behavior for acceptance but they start to behave as such. More precisely, they begin to give values to other cultures and begin to be co-creators of their own reality (Berger &Luckman, 1967). People in this phase start to seek some options to explore differences of other cultures and do not feel that they are threatening to them. They begin to accept that people can have their own cultural norms and rules different from theirs and they feel some kind of an amusement in that. This stage can be taken as the stage of marking openness in the way they perceive the differences.

v. Adaptation

This stage is essential for the acquisition of intercultural communication. The process of acceptance of different cultures is a process of changes in behavior and perception of the world and it is the heart of intercultural communication. The initial feeling of adaptation is empathy. Bennet defines it as a temporary change of the frame of reference where

we perceive situations as if we put ourselves in the shoes of the other person. Adaptation comes after acceptance and it is a change of behavior in terms of empathizing with people from another cultures.

vi. Integration

This is the last stage of openness to other cultures. In this stage the multicultural person is a one who is constantly in the process of becoming an integral part of a culture. This is being developed only after certain periods of living in different locations whereas the person contacts with different cultures. According to Bennet (1986), "Integration indicates that individuals are able to become a part of and apart from a given cultural context" (p. 186).

Another approach for developing intercultural competence connected to Bennet's model is present in recent literature and that is the extended learning model with implications from cultural neuroscience. This model suggests that the intercultural training programs among workers from different ethnic backgrounds are often taken as unsuccessful or very often cause even more cultural issues within the institution. According to this model, only the regular intercultural theoretical training is not enough to accomplish the desired outcome. Bennett's model of the developmental process for intercultural competence moving from ethnocentrism toward ethno-relativism gives another dimension for intercultural trainings. Recently, the field of cultural neuroscience has emerged and exposed new ways of combining theories and methods of cultural psychology with neuroscience (Ames & Fiske, 2010; Fiske, 2009). A lot of research has been done about people's backgrounds, practices, and beliefs which have shaped the psychological and neurobiological processes underlying their different behaviors (Chiao & Ambady, 2007; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Park & Gutchess, 2006). Based on the extended learning model, three suggestions are provided. These include activating change, mitigating egocentric biases, and integrating organizational interventions and are open for further research.

4. Gudykunsts's Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

This theory is based on the prediction that effective intercultural communication is essential for developing intercultural communication competence. Gudykunsts's theory

introduced the terms anxiety and uncertainty when encountering strangers. Spitzberg (2010) defines ICC "as an impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context." Along with this is mentioned the effective communication in intercultural context which is central to this theory. AUM was constructed in the shift from the emergence of ICC studies (Yoshitake, 2002, pg.178). Gudykunsts's theory is named Anxiety/ Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) whereas the desired result is not the reduced anxiety and uncertainty but effective communication. This theory focuses on encounters between cultural in-groups and strangers (Griffin& Bone, 2017, pg. 426). This theory applies in any situation where one person in an intercultural situation feels as a stranger. However, it is not necessary to travel to a foreign land in order to feel as or be a stranger.

AUM theory points out that when interacting with strangers, there will always be a sense of uncertainty and anxiety. In intercultural cases, uncertainty and anxiety are present due to cultural differences and a lack of understanding of cultural rules. From one hand, uncertainty is a cognitive phenomenon and means the inability to predict what strangers feel, believe, what are their values, attitudes and behavior. On the other hand, anxiety is the affective equivalent of uncertainty. In the AUM theory there are 94 axioms (Gudykunst, 1995) and one of the main axioms of that theory is actually Axiom 39, which states:

> An increase in our ability to manage our anxiety about interacting with strangers and an increase in the accuracy of our predictions and explanations regarding their behavior will produce an increase in the effectiveness of our communication (Gudykunst, 1995).

According to this axiom, in order to communicate effectively we need to manage appropriately our uncertainty and anxiety. This axiom may be appropriate only if one is careful of the communication process whereas anxiety and uncertainty are between its minimum and maximum. In spite of saying that, uncertainty and anxiety will not necessarily move towards effective communication. What he says is that in these conditions one can mindfully try to understand strangers and how strangers are interpreting the messages. In that case one can reply in such manner that will lead to effective communication. Hence, the management of uncertainty and anxiety is actually the desired effec-

tive communication which depends on what is being done and in what circumstances. However, there are a lot of critiques of the AUM theory and one of it is the critique by Griffin and Ting-Toomey. In connection with the above-mentioned axiom Griffin and Ting-Toomey point out that effective communication and the closest meaning to incoming messages will not minimize misunderstanding and the problems of this thesis are the definition of effective communication and effective communication as the goal of ICC (Yoshitake, 2002, pg. 182). In conclusion, considering effective communication as the closest meaning of the intended meaning reduces communication to a linear and mechanical activity i.e. this theory only explains the mechanical aspect of communication.

5. Chen and Starosta's Concept

These were the critics of intercultural communication studies considering the intercultural competence and stated that the previous studies have conceptual ambiguity. That is the reason why Chen and Starosta (1996) developed a model of intercultural communication competence that integrates features of both cross-cultural attitude and behavioral skills models. The model has three conceptual dimensions of intercultural communication competence, including intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural adroitness. Based on this conceptual model, Chen and Starosta (2000) exposed the nature and components of intercultural sensitivity and developed an instrument to measure the concept. They created a questionnaire which measures intercultural sensitivity that includes the following factors:

1. Intercultural Engagement: the degree of participation in the intercultural communication;
2. Respect for Cultural Differences: to realize, accept and respect for other cultural diversities in the communication;
3. Interaction Confidence: how confident the interlocutors perform during intercultural communication;
4. Interaction Enjoyment: the level of delight interlocutors feel in the intercultural communication;
5. Interaction Attentiveness: the ability of receiving and responding to the messages properly during the intercultural communication.

This instrument of assessment of intercultural sensitivity consists of 24-items comprising the above-mentioned factors. Studies which have used this instrument suggest that the usage of the concepts in the instrument can be improved, but the instrument is acceptable and a culture free scale for measuring intercultural sensitivity can be developed further (Pourakbari & Chalak, 2015).

Conclusion

In summary, it can be emphasized what are the most important areas to focus on considering intercultural communication competence. In addition to the final theory of Gudykunst, who points out that effective communication is essential for successful ICC implementation, when doing training for ICC the following areas should be considered:

1. Developing self-concepts for self-identities and social identities
2. Correcting ethnocentrism
3. Dealing with and avoiding stereotyping
4. Increasing tolerance for anxiety and uncertainty when meeting "strangers"
5. Increasing empathy
6. Maintaining dignity and respect for strangers
7. Developing mindfulness

Therefore having and acquiring knowledge of intercultural communication is not enough in order to develop our intercultural competence; it is necessary to transform our attitudes and views of the world as well. Experience is difficult to transfer; it is through our personal experience that we learn best. As the AUM theory points out "if uncertainty and anxiety are managed, successful and effective communication takes place. They are the primary causes of intercultural misunderstanding (Griffin& Bone, 2017, pg.428). In addition, the field of neuroscience exposes findings that are connected to people's behavior and should be considered in further research.

Finally, it can be concluded that the intercultural approach trains learners to be diplomats i.e. they should be able to view cultures from a perspective of informed understand-

ing and this aim displaces the long-standing objective of language teaching - to attain native speaker proficiency. One can become more interculturally competent by traveling, mixing with people of different cultures, learning about different cultures, and accepting every culture as it is because each culture is special and worth respecting and this leads to ending disputes and provides mutual understanding between people all around the world.

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CHAPTER 7

The 21st Century Skills and Language Education

Emin Idrizi

Introduction

The language classroom of the 21st century goes beyond teaching and learning language skills and language areas, such as grammar and vocabulary. To satisfy the needs and overcome the challenges of the new age, one needs to master not only language skills, but also additional necessary skills which are believed to be crucial competences in the new century, otherwise known as 21st century skills, which mainly include critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. According to the National Education Association (2015), standard skills (e.g. reading or writing) are not sufficient for today's world. Students shall also become good critical thinkers, skillful communicators, creative individuals, and good collaborators. The 21st century education and curricula, as a result, increasingly aim to encompass the four skills in order to prepare pupils and students for success and better academic performance in later studies, lifelong learning, and the new-century workplace.

This chapter explores the 21st century skills, or the "4C's." The skills will be discussed separately by providing definitions for each as well as discussing their relevance and ways they benefit the learner. For each skill, example activity or activities are given in order to ensure that the readers get a better understanding of what it practically means to integrate a 21st century skill in language teaching. Finally, the chapter discusses some common issues and important considerations teachers shall have when incorporating these skills in language classes.

The 21st century skills

In order to promote and encourage the inclusion of the 21st century skills, it is important to clarify what these skills really entail and encompass and why they are relevant and important for students. In the following sections, we provide an overview of each skill and discuss their relevance.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is considered one of the key thinking processes in today's educational systems. There are numerous definitions for critical thinking and this is due to the fact that the skill can mean something different to different people and it is a matter of perspective. However, one definition of critical thinking is as follows:

The ability to use higher-level thinking processes to search for meaning in an action or event… The kind of thinking we use to question, doubt, compare and contrast, and make judgments. (Collins & O'Brien, 2011)

In a more EFL context, Richards and Schmidt (2010) define critical thinking as:

A level of reading comprehension or discussion skills when the learner is able to question and evaluate what is read or heard. In language teaching this is said to engage students more actively with materials in the target language, encourage a deeper processing of it, and show respect for students as independent thinkers. (p. 147)

- Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation
- Use systems thinking
- Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems
- Make judgments and decisions
- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs
- Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view
- Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis

Figure 1 Processes involved in critical thinking (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019, p. 4)

Critical thinking is seen as a key skill in the development of a student's thinking ability and capacity as well as it is considered to be a crucial competence in the educational settings. It is often mentioned in relation to higher order thinking skills that students need to use for a better academic performance. Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2019), for instance, consider analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, among others, as processes involved in critical thinking.

Critical thinking is also seen as a key skill in the digital age and the online mass communication. Students nowadays are required to have enough competences to distinguish between false and true information, reliable and unreliable sources, relevant and irrelevant materials, to name just a few. This competence, therefore, is not only vital in educational settings, but also beyond the classroom, in students' future careers and lives.

The benefits of critical thinking for learners

Considering the nature of foreign language learning, it is rational to point out that critical thinking is central during the language learning process. Taking into account the cognitive effort a learner needs to put throughout his language learning experience; the input, i.e. reading and listening, he needs to comprehend, memorize, analyze and eval-

uate; the output, i.e. speaking and writing, he needs to process, evaluate, and create; the difficult cognitive process of acquiring the foreign language structures and system, and so on, makes critical thinking a skill with crucial importance in L2.

Numerous scholars as well as extensive research point to the need and benefits of incorporating critical thinking skills in education in general, and language teaching and learning in particular. As Trilling and Fadel (2009) rightly argue, in addition to acquiring and using knowledge, using thinking is a must in all subjects. This is due to the positive effects of critical thinking on students' learning and enthusiasm.

Critical thinking is believed to have various positive effects on language learners. Research (Yang & Gamble, 2013), for instance, indicates that critical thinking has the potential to improve students' success as well as enrich their learning. An article by British Council ("Critical Thinking and Problem Solving", n.d.) provides some potential gains students can make from engaging in critical thinking. These include:

1. Critical thinking fosters learner autonomy as well as make learners more adaptive in terms of learning beyond the classroom;
2. Critical thinking makes students more active, and later in their lives, this may help them become lifelong learners in the areas they studied;
3. Critical thinking can help students participate more in solving social issues

Activities that develop critical thinking skills

Activities that include and develop critical thinking skills can vary in the foreign language classroom. They may range from simple class discussions to projects that require the use of students' higher order thinking skills. What is more important is that a teacher can easily merge language points with critical thinking elements in these activities, ensuring time efficiency and richer learning outcomes.

It is important to point out that many EFL language coursebooks nowadays are written by ensuring critical thinking skills are included in language learning content in order to develop both learners' language skills and critical thinking skills at the same time. Some language coursebooks do this implicitly while some others include critical think-

ing skills explicitly by making students aware of what they are learning and developing. For teachers, on the other hand, this facilitates the process in terms of incorporating the skills in teaching as well as it familiarizes them with how critical thinking can be fit in language teaching and learning.

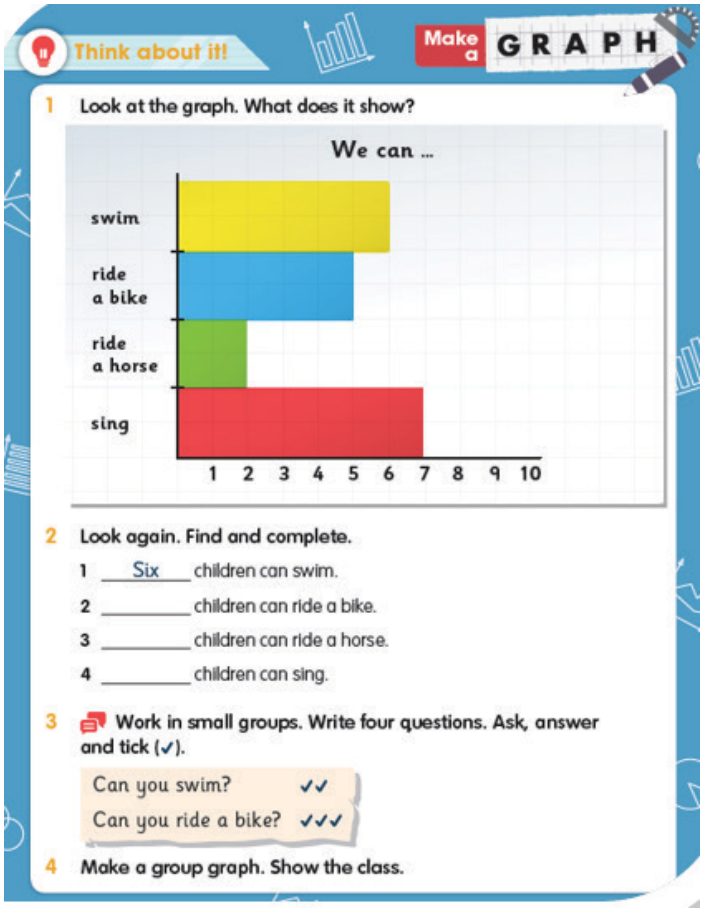

Figure 2 A sample activity in a language coursebook that fosters critical thinking skills in young learners (Harper et al., 2017)

As pointed out earlier, there are numerous ways and many activities we can use to include critical thinking in the language learning classroom. Below we provide some example activities that can develop the skill in language learners.

One useful language activity that can be used to engage language learners in critical thinking is an activity which uses the phrase "if something happens…" to have students engage in brainstorming ideas, whole-class discussion, and essay writing (Rashtchi & Khoshnevisan 2020, p. 46). The idea of the activity is to have learners think about what the world or life will be like if something unexpected happens. They are given some concrete sentences (see figure 2) to work on imagining and hypothesizing possible scenarios. After the learners are finished with sharing the ideas, a whole class discussion can be initiated to discuss the shared ideas. Finally, they can be assigned an essay for one of the topics given.

1. What will happen if people lose the ability to talk?
2. What will happen if no one acts violently?
3. What will happen if no wars occur in the world?

Figure 3 An activity that can develop critical thinking in students (Rashtchi & Khoshnevisan 2020, p. 46)

Another example activity that can foster critical thinking in learners is called *"What happens next?"* ("Teacher's Corner: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills", n.d.). This activity can be prepared for different age groups and learners of different levels. It consists of an unfinished picture strip story which can be handed to students or pupils as handouts. Students are basically required to understand the story and come up with a rational ending. Before the activity, students may be given the title of the strip story so they can predict what the story is about. After they have been handed the story, there is a reading comprehension phase to ensure that the story has been understood. Students are organized in groups to work on predicting a logical finish for the story using critical thinking. Finally, groups share their versions of the story with the whole class while at the end, they draw and write the last part of the story. The language focus of this task is reading and writing, while students also engage in critical thinking while predicting the story ending.

Collaboration

Collaboration is generally defined as "the process of working with someone to produce something" ("Macmillan Dictionary | Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus", 2022). In language education settings, the term refers to the skill that a language learner is expected to develop while working together with his/her peers in order to achieve learning goals. The learner is typically required to be able to provide the necessary contribution in a team, accept responsibility, and value others.

- Collaborate with others
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises toaccomplish a common goal
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member

Figure 4 Processes involved in collaborative tasks
(Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019, p. 5)

Collaboration is seen as an indispensable part of education nowadays. As Johnson and Johnson (2008) rightly hold that it is hard to find an instructional method, a coursebook or learning material that does not include cooperative learning. The same can be said for language teaching and learning. Most of the latest language teaching approaches and methods include and encourage collaborative learning among students (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Famous language teaching methods and techniques, such as Task-based Teaching and Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, Project-based Learning, to name just a few, all have student-student collaboration as a crucial learning interaction in their lesson planning. In addition, collaboration and cooperative learning is supported by important learning theories. For instance, according to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, learning takes place best in social interaction contexts, i.e. in collaboration with others, and that collaboration is vital in the process of learning (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Farr& Murray, 2016).

In addition to serving students in the learning process, collaboration, in the long-term perspective can be also seen as an ability that students will need in their future careers and lives. As far as the former is concerned, many professions nowadays require their employees to be part of team building and team work, as well as engage in various professional development opportunities through collaboration. Contemporary societies, on the other hand, require their citizens to cooperate and unite when it comes to the common good; participate together in crucial decision-making processes; and work with one another so as to solve social and global issues. To put it simply, students need collaborative skills not only for learning goals, but also to become better citizens tomorrow.

The benefits of collaboration for learners

There are numerous benefits from applying collaborative skills and learning in the language education. Well-known learning theories, for instance, point to the importance of student collaboration in the language learning process. As mentioned earlier, Sociocultural Theory stresses the key role of social interaction in learning. Cooperative learning is also emphasized in the Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). According to this theory, social interdependence occurs when each person's outcome is impacted by the other members in a group who share the same aim. That is to say, the learning that takes place during collaborative activities is a result of every student's effort and contribution in the group. This suggests that learning outcomes from group work are higher and better than individual work.

In collaborative learning, besides achieving good learning outcomes, students also have the opportunity to develop important social skills; in addition, working and learning in groups make them more aware of how effective group and collaborative work can be (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This may help students grow into individuals who are well-prepared for the workplaces which require team building and team work. Furthermore, Fathman & Kessler (1993) report on studies which indicate that collaborative learning makes learners (1) more tolerant towards learners of other ethnicities, (2) more caring for others (3) better at conflict resolutions etc.

Activities that develop collaborative skills

Fortunately, language teaching materials and language teaching coursebooks nowadays have plenty activities that serve teachers to engage their students in collaborative activities. However, the language coursebooks typically provide short activities that include collaboration between two or more students. If language teachers want to include more advanced or longer activities, such as projects and tasks, they often need to refer to other supplementary language materials for ideas and support. Below, two interesting example activities are provided which engage students in stimulating collaborative learning. These activities can be tailored to different age groups (preferably late young learners, adolescents and adults) or level (most appropriate for pre-intermediate level and above).

The first example activity is a project work that require the use of internet resources and it is called "Internet-based simulation" (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p. 50). In this activity students are grouped either in pairs or larger groups and are given a task which they need to accomplish. Namely, they are asked to simulate a trip to a city abroad, say New York, and are given a certain amount of money to be spent for the trip, such as flight tickets, hotel, restaurants they are going to visit, cinemas, sightseeing, and so on. Students in the group are asked to plan the itinerary; they are required to explore the internet and find authentic places and prices. For instance, they need to find real flights, real hotels, real cinemas, and so on. Of course, the tickets and the bookings will not be paid as it is only a simulation, but while planning authentic places shall be explored and real costs shall be calculated. They need to make sure they spend the money they are granted. Students, can also be given less budget so as to make the task more challenging. After all the itinerary is planned and documented, students may be asked to write a report about the trip or present it in front of the class. Groups in this activity shall have internet skills as well as be provided with useful sites if necessary. During the activity, students in the group are engaged in useful collaborative tasks. They need to plan together, share responsibility, make compromises, and support each other so as to accomplish the task. In addition to using collaborative skills, students also learn and expand their language knowledge.

Another exciting activity which can have students collaborate is a task-based activity named "Creating a Utopian Society" (Bridge Education Group, 2009). The task is main-

ly designed to make students practice speaking skills by having them work together in creating a utopian society. The task starts by addressing common social problems which they may utilize while creating their utopia (i.e. things they like to change). The students can be organized in pairs or groups and are engaged in consensus building. They are given a map of a blank island to draw and create their utopian state. In addition, the instructor provides a list of things they need to work on, for instance, the name of the country, main institutions, decide on the weather, customs, dressing, and so on. In this task-based activity, students are given the opportunity to collaborate, e.g. negotiate and find a consensus, while deciding on the utopian society. In the end, the students are asked to present their work in front of the class. This activity can be used with teenage and adult learners.

Communication

Communication is the most important ability that learners need to develop in their language learning process. In fact, the ultimate goal of teaching and learning a language is for students to be able to communicate. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2019), communication involves the ability to accomplish the following:

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade)
- Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness a priority as well as assess their impact
- Communicate effectively in diverse environments (including multi-lingual)

Figure 4 Processes involved in successful communication (the Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019, p. 5)

Of all the 21st century skills, communication is the most common skill in language teaching and learning. This is because communication is the central focus of most of the teaching and learning content. Hence, this skill is both encountered and practiced much more in an English class than the other skills, that is, critical thinking, collaboration, or creativity. Most of language teaching approaches and methods that have emerged since the last century stress that communication is their main focus, especially the methods that have emerged from the Communicative Approach, such as Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching. In these methods, communication is the basis from which language lesson should be developed (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

For younger generations communication is seen as one of the essential skills in a developing world and in the time of globalization. It is considered to play a vital role in pursuing lifelong learning, an important self-development pursuit for any individual who wants to be competitive and up to date with new trends in the profession. In addition, communication is regarded as a necessary skill in the new age as the new generations are constantly becoming part of a growing community (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009).

Communicative skills have also become important as we are witnessing an enormous growth and a rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Digital tools, online platforms, online media, social networks, and so on, have become the new means of mass communication. Students are required to learn and adapt to the online communication as well as acquire digital literacy, which generally means: being able to find and evaluate information online; being able to understand and interpret information from the new media and sources on internet; and being able to communicate information online. The learning of this new mode of communication ensures students prepare for the workplace and life of the 21st century.

Students benefit enormously from engaging in communication and acquiring communicative competences. First of all, in an EFL context, communication helps learners become fluent in the foreign language in all skills, which includes listening, reading, writing and speaking. In a wider educational perspective, communication is a key factor which determines their academic success and achievement, as well as guarantees lifelong learning, and hence, more opportunities for continuous professional development in their career.

Communication is seen as a vital competence in one's career in the new century; for instance, communication can help an individual in a job interview or help one be productive and prosperous in the profession. As McIntosh et al. (2008) rightly state "communication skills can not only help you get the job you want, they can help you be more successful in the job you have" (p. 4). In addition, communication is typically intertwined with collaboration taking into consideration that good communication leads to good collaboration, and vice versa, successful collaboration indicates that a successful communication has taken place. Hence, collaboration, team building, and teamwork are increasingly listed under many job requirements nowadays and good communications skills make students more competitive in the job market as well as more effective as future employees.

Example activities that develop communication

Language coursebooks nowadays provide various activities that not only help students communicate in the target language, but also assist them in developing universal communicative skills. However, these activities may sometimes be insufficient when it comes to developing students' desired communicative competences and teachers may need to turn to supplementary materials to ensure students are engaged in real-world communication. Below, an example activity that foster communication among learners is provided.

Class Survey is an activity that aims to engage students in interaction and communication in a fun way (Activities to Promote Interaction and Communication, n.d.). The materials for the survey, such as the survey sheets and questions, shall be provided and prepared by the language teacher and be appropriate for the learners in terms of level, background, and interest. The learners are expected to master and become more confident in making questions considering the many students they get to interview. The interview questions may be general questions or connected to a profession, depending on the students' background, age, and proficiency. Before the task, the teacher can have a few students to model the activity in front of others. The students can be divided into interviewers and interviewees. The students do the interview, and upon finishing, students can be organized in groups to analyze the responses and be given the task to organize

them in charts or graphs (e.g. on a blank sheet, or even laptops if available), or provide a summary. The teacher can then check the sheets with survey results for language issues. Various follow-up tasks can be used after the survey. This activity can be tailored to different age groups and levels.

Creativity

Creativity refers to "the ability or power to create with originality, innovation, self-expression, and imagination" (Collins & O'Brien, 2011, p. 110). When defining creativity, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2019), distinguishes between the processes that are involved when one thinks critically and those involved while working creatively with others, each of which includes the following:

THINK CREATIVELY

- Use a wide range of idea-creation techniques (such as brainstorming)
- Create new and worthwhile ideas (both incremental and radical concepts)
- Elaborate, refine, analyze, and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts

WORK CREATIVELY WITH OTHERS

- Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively
- Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work
- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real-world limits to adopting new ideas
- View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.

Figure 5 Processes involved in creative thinking and working creatively with others (the Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019, p. 4)

Creativity is another key competence that has enormous relevance in today's world. The concept of creative thinking and innovation has gained a considerable momentum in almost all spheres of life in the last decades and has become a focus of many governments and the business world (Jones & Richards, 2016). Creativity is considered to be a crucial skill in the workplace of the new century taking into consideration the rapid economic development and technology advancement in the world. Innovation has become a primary goal for many companies, governments, educational institutions, world organizations etc. to name just a few.

The increasing interest in creativity as a skill has resulted in a shift on how education considers the competence and to the degree it is included in the curriculum. Schools and publishing houses are gradually incorporating creative thinking in the teaching and learning content so as to prepare students for a more creative workplace and society. This is taking place at all levels of education, from early to higher education levels. Educational institutions are increasingly providing the necessary professional development for teachers in order to ensure creativity is well understood and successfully implemented in the classroom.

The benefits of creativity for learners

Referring to literature, Hadfield and Hadfield (2015) discuss several benefits of using creativity with language learners. The first is that learners engaging in creative activities and tasks are more motivated and this, in turn, results in more positive outcomes. Creativity and creative tasks help learners become more risk-takers, and this makes them do more than what their real linguistic abilities are. In addition, the more cognitive effort and the deeper the language is processed during creative activities, the more language becomes stored and memorable for the learner.

Creative thinking can also trigger important and far-reaching changes in learners. It is considered to bring about significant change in learners' abilities to make important choices and take responsibility of their choices, and this can help empower them as individuals as well as result in better self-confidence and self-esteem (Jones & Richards, 2016), and greater autonomy in communication (Ollerhead & Burns, 2016). These can serve students both in short-term perspective, by making them more successful in the

learning process, as well as in long-term perspective by helping them become more productive as individuals, employees, and citizens.

Activities that stimulate creativity in the language classroom

Finding activities that foster creativity is important for language teachers if they want to incorporate the skill in the language classroom. Unfortunately, these activities may not be often found in language coursebooks (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013). As a result, language teachers can go for supplementary materials so as to ensure the creative activities are part of their language teaching content. Below, we provide an example activity that can foster creativity.

An interesting and thought-provoking activity which promotes creativity among learners is called "Creative observation" (Read, 2015, p. 35). The activity can be used with young learners and the materials include images taken from advertisements and which have a message, or are intended to influence people. The aim of the activity is to have learners look and evaluate images using creative thinking, to make learners aware of how images can have an impact on people's lives, and of course, make learners use the target language with the help of visuals. Learners are asked certain questions while looking at the picture and trying to guess the message, such as how the picture makes them feel. After this stage, learners may be given digital images that encourage certain responses (e.g. certain food is delicious – to make you hungry and buy the product, etc.). They can then work in pairs or groups to take turns in sharing the images they have and try to figure out the meaning and the possible influence the images have. Finally, the responses can be checked in terms of whether the intended meaning is guessed or found.

Integrating the four skills in the language classroom: issues, considerations, and suggestions

The implementation of the four skills in language classroom is easier said than done and there are various issues and obstacles that hinder the process. In this section, some common issues and considerations are discussed when it comes to the teaching and integration of the four skills in language education.

One common barrier to integrating the four skills in the language classroom is that language teachers may not have a clear understanding of what 4C's encompass and how they are taught together with the rest of the language skills (Halvorsen, 2018). This may be due to the fact that educators may have no preparation or professional training on how the four skills can be implemented in language teaching and learning. Thus, training teachers on the four skills is a must if we want to see them incorporated in lessons. As McCommas (2014) rightly points out "the success of the "21st-Century Skills" movement depends on preparing teachers to effectively deliver both skills and content" (p. 21). The preparation can take place both in language teacher education settings or via professional development opportunities. It is only with well-equipped teachers that we can hope to see and witness the full implementation of the 21st century skills and their positive effects on learners.

Another hurdle in integrating the four skills in the language classroom is the lack of inclusion of the 4C's in the foreign language coursebooks. Many language coursebooks do not have the skills incorporated in their content (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2013), especially old editions. Lack of knowledge on the skills and the ways they are taught, on one hand, and the absence of the skills in the coursebooks, on the other, makes the process of implementing the 4C's challenging. If schools, therefore, want to see the 4C's implemented sooner in the language classroom, they should make sure they do a needs analysis of coursebooks and ensure new editions with incorporated 4C's are provided for teachers. In addition, teachers shall be given professional development opportunities on how these skills are taught.

An additional obstacle to including the four skills in the language teaching are the outdated and traditional teaching methods. There are many teachers who still practice teacher-centered methods or deliver lecture-type instructions which typically keep learners passive in the classroom. The 4C's, on the other hand, require student-centered type of instruction or methods. Saavedra & Opfer (2012) hold that traditional lecture-type instruction, or "transmission education", as they call it, provides some learning of facts for students, however, this mode of teaching is not appropriate to teach the 21st century skills and that this is one of the main reasons why these skills are not being learned and mastered. For instance, how can one learn and master communicative skills without or with little teacher-student or student-student interaction?

One consideration that teachers of English should have when including 4C's in teaching is that they need to ensure they teach the skills properly and by using appropriate approaches, techniques and activities as well as follow the right procedures. For instance, teachers cannot expect to improve students' communicative competences by using traditional instructional methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method. Instead, they should refer to more communicative based methods, such as Communicative Language Teaching and Task-based Language Teaching, for useful activities and tasks that develop such communication as well as provide authentic materials that students would need in real-world situations. Another example is that of teaching collaborative skills in class. Just because some students work in a group does not translate into cooperative learning; in order for a collaborative task or activity to be effective, it should include a well-structured group in which everyone will engage in interaction, exchange of information, and be responsible for their own learning (Fathman & Kessler 1993).

Last but not least, the implementation of the 4C's can be greatly assisted by new technologies and technological tools. Teachers who incorporate the skills shall be aware and take advantage of numerous platforms, websites, applications, and so on, available on internet. These can be used in all modes of teaching, be that face-to-face in the classroom, in a blended mode of teaching and learning, or online. For instance, the internet-based simulation we elaborated earlier can best work in either blended or online mode. Learners can use authentic websites to do the bookings and plan the itinerary which engages them in authentic and real-world communication; can use google maps to find interesting places and locations; can use Zoom or Skype to collaborate during their project; and so on. Another way we can use technology to foster the four skills is through blogs. Teachers can guide students to create and use a blog, a website for discussion or information, for various student-centered activities which can be tailored to incorporate any of the 4C's, including ICT skills. In the time of the internet and new generation of learners who are digital natives, opting for technology-driven activities will not only help the learning of language skills and the 4C's, but will also be motivating and stimulating to learners.

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