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GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES IN SPANISH HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' TEXTBOOKS

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Resumen

La instrucción de gramática ha sido debatida en la pedagogía del español como lengua de herencia durante los últimos diez años aproximadamente (Correa 2011; Lynch 2008; Montrul 2012, 2013; Montrul and Bowles 2009, 2010). Uno de los problemas principales está relacionado no solamente con enfoques de enseñanza sino con qué gramatica debería enseñarse (Lynch 2008; Llombart-Huesca 2012; Montrul and Bowles 2010). Como consecuencia, el propósito de este artículo es analizar cuatro libros de textos populares que se han utilizado en instituciones universitarias durante los últimos quince años para aprendientes de español como lengua de herencia para evaluar si son consistentes con investigación reciente sobre la selección de formas gramaticales meta y de actividades y estrategias para la instrucción de gramática. El análisis muestra que hay una evolución en las estrategias de enseñanza de gramática desde un enfoque en el conocimiento metalingüístico a la ausencia de ello y de la instrucción explícita de la gramática a las actividades comunicativas basadas en tareas.

Palabras clave: instrucción de gramática; pedagogía de lenguas de herencia; enfoques de enseñanza; conocimiento metalingüístico; actividades comunicativas basadas en tareas.

Abstract

Grammar instruction has been debated in Spanish heritage language pedagogy for approximately the last ten years (Correa 2011; Lynch 2008; Montrul 2012, 2013; Montrul and Bowles, 2009, 2010). One of the main issues involves not only teaching approaches but also what grammar we should teach (Lynch 2008; Llombart-Huesca 2012; Montrul and Bowles 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze four popular textbooks that have been used in higher education institutions for the last fifteen years for Spanish heritage learners in order to assess if they are consistent with recent research regarding the selection of grammatical target forms and activities and strategies for grammar instruction. The analysis shows that there is an evolution in grammar teaching strategies from a focus on metalinguistic knowledge to the absence of it and from explicit grammar instruction to task-based communicative activities.

Key words: grammar instruction; heritage language pedagogy; teaching approaches; metalinguistic knowledge; task-based communicative activities.

1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a growing awareness that heritage language learners (HLL) have different linguistic skills and needs than L2 learners. Even though heritage language courses usually have a preference for content or community-based instruction (Llombart-Huesca 2012), it has been especially noted that there is a need for a critical examination of teaching methodologies and materials (Carreira 2000, 2003; Lowther Pereira 2010; Martinez 2003; Valdés 2001; Villa 2002). There are some recent studies on the benefits of grammatical instruction for HLL (Fairclough 2005; Montrul and Bowles 2009; Potowski, Jegerski and Morgan-Short 2009). In fact, Fairclough claimed that instruction was necessary to improve HLL production of otherwise incomplete forms. In the same vein, explicit instruction might be helpful to acquire the metalinguistic knowledge they lack. Lynch (2008) suggested that future textbooks for emerging heritage learners should be based on a communicative approach in which the problematic grammatical forms are explicitly taught. Furthermore, Llombart-Huesca (2012) proposed using a modular approach for HLL based on Ellis (2002) where the instructor could modify the grammar items of the code module (isolated focus on form instruction). The goal of this approach would be to draw awareness to the target form, where students cannot use the avoidance strategies for specific target forms. Llombart-Huesca argued that metalinguistic knowledge can only empower students by identifying the differences between standard and non-standard forms.

In this article, four popular textbooks for Spanish HLL (*Entre mundos* by Alonso-Lyrintzis and Zaslow, 2003; *Sí se puede* by Carreira,and Geoffrion-Vinci, 2008; *Conversaciones escritas* by Potowski, 2010 and Mundo *21 hispano* by Samaniego et al., 2014) are analyzed regarding grammar instruction, specifically the grammatical forms that are taught and the tasks that are used for practice and language acquisition. Since L2 instructional techniques have been found to be effective in the Spanish heritage classroom (Potowski, Jegerski and Morgan-Short 2009), are these types of tasks found in these textbooks?

2. Literature review

Research on HLL shows that these learners have undergone incomplete acquisition and attrition of their grammatical systems due to the English shift they experience after formal schooling. Thus, when they start taking Spanish courses they go through acquisition or re-acquisition processes (Potowski, Jegerski and Morgan-Short 2009).

Traditionally, instructors would decide what grammatical forms had to be taught and learners were presented with this before they engaged in communication. Correa (2011) proposed using informal surveys to allow students to participate more actively in their own learning. It is well-known that HLL struggle with metalinguistic knowledge due to their lack of formal instruction in Spanish. Therefore, due to the potential benefits of acquiring this knowledge, Correa (2014) suggested teaching it so that HLL could apply it later in their career. Since they possess an intuitive grammatical knowledge of Spanish, they need a different kind of instruction than their L2-learner counterparts. They use the grammar they know to improve their discourse skills (Parodi 2008). In general, focus on form instruction has been recommended for both L2 and HLL with a focus on writing so that especially HLL can fill their grammatical gaps (Montrul, Foote and Perpiñán 2008).

Due to the linguistic similarities regarding morpho-syntactic errors between lower proficiency HLL and L2 learners (Lynch 2008; Montrul 2012), Potowski and Lynch (2014) suggested using a communicative approach to promote grammar acquisition. On the other hand, classroom-based research has shown that explicit instruction can help HLL increase their grammatical skills (Colombi 2006; Montrul and Bowles 2010; Potowski, Jegerski and Morgan-Short 2009) and without instruction, they might not be able to completely acquire certain forms (Montrul and Perpiñán 2011). Other researchers such as Carreira and Kagan (w.d.) recommend a top-down approach since HLL can rely on their knowledge to analyze new information. Considering this top-down approach, four widely used textbooks for HLL at the college level are analyzed in this article in order to determine whether they are consistent with the most recent research in the heritage language-teaching field.

3. Analysis of four popular textbooks for Spanish HLL courses

The textbooks that have been chosen for this analysis in chronological order are: *Entre mundos*, *Sí se puede*, *Conversaciones escritas* and *Mundo 21 hispano*. They are widely used at an intermediate and advanced level in higher education. In all of these, grammar instruction focuses on typical morphological errors of HLL such as indicative/ subjunctive or gender agreement. Table 1 summarizes the grammar points covered in all the textbooks:

Grammar taught in all the textbooks.

Grammar	*Entre mundos*	*Sí se puede*	*Conversaciones escritas*	*Mundo 21 hispano*
Present indicative	YES	YES	YES	YES
Nouns and gender/number agreement	YES	YES	YES	YES
Preterit/ Imperfect	YES	YES	YES	YES
Future and conditional	YES	YES	YES	YES
Subjunctive: present and past	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 1

As shown in Table 1, all four textbooks introduce the present indicative, nouns and gender/number agreement, preterit/ imperfect distinction, future and conditional tenses and present/past subjunctive. This is in line with recent research on HLL since most of these grammatical forms have been identified as problematic (Llombart-Huesca 2012; Lynch 2008; Montrul, Foote and Perpiñán 2008 and Montrul 2013, among others).

In Table 2, we can find a summary of activities and strategies for grammar instruction.

Some Activities and Strategies for Grammar Instruction

	Entre mundos	*Sí se puede*	*Conversaciones escritas*	*Mundo 21 hispano*
Input (e.g. matching/ multiple choice)	*YES*	YES	*YES*	*YES*
Dictation	*NO*	*NO*	*NO*	*YES*
Translations	*NO*	*YES*	*YES*	*NO*
Error correction	*NO*	*NO*	*YES*	*YES*

Table 2

All four textbooks use communicative input activities. We will now proceed to a more thorough analysis of these textbooks in the discussion.

4. Discussion

4.1 Present Indicative

Entre mundos includes a language section in the index where grammatical forms and grammatical objectives are included in every chapter. The first grammatical point presented is the present indicative. After a brief explanation of the uses of the present, there is an explicit traditional chart with a list of verbs in the infinitive and all the different conjugations for each personal subject to fill in the missing forms. Orthography is integrated here for a focus on spelling changes in the conjugation of forms. In sum, there is a combination of traditional fill-in-the blanks with communicative activities for practice with the integrated topic of the Hispanic/ Latino identity. It seems that there are many opportunities in this textbook for metalinguistic awareness. Consistent with a deductive approach, there are charts for verb conjugations and a follow-up fill-in-the-blank activity for the irregular verb forms. After this, we can find a communicative activity in form of an interview of a classmate to find out about his/her daily routines. More traditional fill-in-the-blank activities are used to practice irregular forms in the present tense combined with communicative output activities to describe students' lives.

In *Sí se puede*, regular and irregular verbs in the present tense are also practiced with charts with missing forms to complete and fill-in-the-blank drills. However, in *Conversaciones escritas*, the focus is on the verb *haber* presented in the present tense, only in the cases that the spellchecker does not detect errors: *ha/a; has/as; he/e*. This is assessed via communicative input activities (true/false). The present tense is introduced in *Mundo 21 hispano* with contrastive uses (non-standard vs. standard) to check students' native intuitions. Practice is mainly communicative: writing sentences in the present tense with a list of words, interviewing a person to find out personal information, an activity with drawings through which students have to tell a story by describing them, a fill-in-the-blank activity, an explicit focus on form error-correction activity and a final output activity, where students have to describe their personal situation at the moment. Nevertheless, after the cultural sections, there are integrated grammar activities that introduce the present tense with stem- vowel changes and irregular forms through fill-in-the-blank activities where students have to create sentences conjugating certain forms or make-up questions with a list of verbs followed by an error correction activity.

4.2 Noun and gender/number agreement, and word categories

Noun and gender agreement are introduced in *Entre mundos* within the topic of the role of the Spanish language in the world via a decontextualized input activity consisting of selecting the correct article for each noun that follows the presentation of grammar. Then the rules for feminine and masculine words are explained with examples. In this case, an explicit traditional activity with a format of questions and answers is used to explain number agreement with nouns. Regarding teaching approaches, a deductive approach is used with a fill-in-the blank activity for the rules of formation of the plural.

In *Sí se puede,* the focus of the textbook is on general word categories (nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns, prepositions or conjunctions). They start with word categories such as nouns and adjectives. We can find definitions and a language awareness input activity, where students have to identify the category of each word (noun, adjective, other). Then there is a list of suffixes and students have to provide examples with those endings. Concerning activities, there is a fill-in-the-blank activity for the right ending, a question for metalinguistic knowledge on the use of dictionaries and a multiple-choice activity about metalinguistic knowledge (the endings of words and their meanings). Gender and number are also explained with nouns through error correction activities, a list of words to form the opposite gender, and a list of ambiguous occupations to explain the meaning. There is an emphasis on the different types of pronouns (subject pronouns, direct objects, indirect objects, possessive and demonstrative pronouns, interrogative and exclamatory, definite and indefinite). First of all, a question-answer format is used where students have to answer questions using pronouns. Even though some of these activities are decontextualized, with more activities with blanks and English translations in brackets, there is a final input activity where students have to choose between two options. The last pronoun category is one of the most complex: relative pronouns. Activities consist of underlined pronouns that have to be replaced with a synonymous pronoun and sentences have to be connected using a relative pronoun. After all this practice, relative pronouns are briefly explained and must be underlined in a list of sentences to make students aware of these complex grammatical forms.

With regard to pronouns in *Conversaciones escritas*, the overuse of subject expression is emphasized; relative pronouns are also presented with their rules and examples. Nonetheless, in terms of activities, we can find more input activities such as multiple choice, sentences to join with a relative pronoun, a fill-in-the-blank activity (with the right pronoun) and a paragraph where students have to delete the pronouns that are not necessary.

From the very beginning definite and indefinite articles are integrated into the reading content with a fill-in-the-blank activity in *Mundo 21 hispano*. Then, the grammar section starts with an introduction to nouns and articles. The grammatical section always starts with a contrast of sentences between the standard form and nonstandard alternatives specifically intended for HLL so that students can check their intuitions. After the grammatical explanations and examples, there are assorted activities: first, a list of nouns where students have to identify those of a different gender; secondly, students have to express their opinions on different nouns (no gender given); and thirdly, an interview to find out their classmates' opinions on different topics. In terms of the presentation of the definite articles, added to two fill-in-the-blank activities with definite articles, there is an interview and a follow-up written activity so that students can summarize the data collected in the interview. Then, indefinite articles are presented with the added explanation of omission of articles due to English transfer errors. We can also find a paragraph with blanks for definite and indefinite articles.

The next grammatical section on these word categories covers adjectives and pronouns. The first activity is a two-selection input activity to check their native intuitions, followed by the grammatical explanations and examples. Input activities consist of two options with diacritics (pronouns with no accents and verbs with accents) and output activities follow in which students have to respond to a few questions using demonstrative pronouns. Then, there is a list of questions to express opinions and feelings with demonstrative pronouns. More communicative activities follow: students have to express their reactions to cultural and historical information about Mexico and the last activity is an input activity in which students have to select the right form considering gender and number agreement.

Relative pronouns are then introduced. *El cual* and *el que* are specifically practiced via questions using a list of words and adding relative pronouns, combining sentences into one by using *el cual*, and defining certain terms with pronouns. *Lo cual, lo que,* and *cuyo* are practiced by writing sentences explaining what impressed students the most about a trip, reacting to some data on Colombia, asking classmates questions about the information that they remember about Colombia via a multiple-choice format.

4.3 Verbs

Regarding verbs, they are introduced as grammatical words in *Entre mundos*. After the present tense (described in an earlier section), the preterit and the imperfect are integrated within the topic of family. Regarding the imperfect, there is an input activity in which students have to read a paragraph integrated in the topic of family and select the preterit or the imperfect. Then, there is an output grammatical drill to conjugate a list of verbs in the imperfect. After these activities, one of the main uses of the imperfect is described. There are more activities on a deductive approach for language awareness via questions and answers or fill-in-the-blanks. At the end of the chapter, there is a communicative output activity about childhood. In the case of the preterit, a paragraph is given with a brief story in the past. Students have to underline the forms in the past that are not in the imperfect and explain why the imperfect cannot be used. The purpose of this activity is to make students reflect upon metalinguistic knowledge. Then some of the uses of the preterit are explained. A chart with fill-in-the-blanks for the preterit forms follows the explanation and then more exploratory question-answer output activities in which students have to review the conjugations of irregular verbs in order to be able to answer the questions. A review of the main uses of the preterit is provided, and then a narrative is given with forms in the preterit and imperfect in bold print. After all this, students have to complete an input activity in which they have to match each tense with its right use: past completed events versus a description of the background. Other forms of input such as an audio activity on a past event in the life of a poet are also used to contextualize a list of activities. Students need to create complete sentences in the preterit or imperfect. Then, they need to answer a few questions to check for listening comprehension using both tenses.

The following grammatical tense in the indicative is the future tense, presented with a text in bold print to describe the Mexican community in the U.S. A follow up communicative activity is used to express opinions and check for meaning. After this, there is a chart with blanks to fill in the forms in the future tense with questions about the conjugation of irregular forms. Finally, there are several output activities to express the students' plan in the next 10 years, rewriting several sentences in the future in order to make predictions about the classmates or talk about life in 35 years.

In contrast, *Sí se puede* concentrates on many tenses and moods in one chapter at the same time: present tense (indicative and subjunctive), future, preterit, imperfect, past subjunctive and conditional. Traditional activities with a focus on metalinguistic knowledge asking to identify the right form for each tense and fill-in-the-blanks are used for practice.

In *Conversaciones escritas*, grammar is integrated with orthography in a different section. The focus is on diacritics that the spellchecker does not detect and on specific forms that HLL struggle with (e.g. present and preterit, present subjunctive, preterit) as suggested by recent research on HLL (Llombart-Huesca, 2012; Lynch, 2008; among others). Several input activities are used so that students are able to make form-meaning connections with forms in the present and preterit that are only distinguished by the accent. Additionally, there is another input activity in which students write the appropriate form in a blank and they need to indicate whether the statement is true or false. For the future tense, after a brief explanation and examples there are charts with missing forms and a follow up question with the noticing strategy so that students pay attention to the forms that have an accent. Communicative and non-communicative activities are combined: converting periphrastic forms into the future (non-communicative), students are asked to express their opinions about the content of the paragraph or make predictions about the future (communicative).

In *Mundo 21 hispano,* after the short film there is grammatical support on the regular forms of the preterit. Students are asked to answer some questions in the past about La Paz. As expected, the preterit with regular forms is presented in the grammatical section. It is practiced via fill-in-the-blank and input activities (selection of the right form in the preterit). After the reading, there is a grammatical support on the preterit with irregular forms (fill-in-the-blank) and after grammatical explanations, activities consist of fill-in-the-blanks, error correction activities and an interview to find out what student classmates did in the past. In the following chapter, after the reading there is also a grammatical support activity on the use of the preterit and imperfect for finished events and to provide background information via fill-in-the-blanks. On the next page, the imperfect is introduced and practice is done via fill-in-the-blanks and a set of pictures to describe what a family was doing when they received a phone call. Then, a list of activities is provided so that students explain what they were doing last semester and this section finishes with an error correction activity.

The next use of the preterit and imperfect is that of finished events and events that provide background information. Communicative activities follow such as expressing feelings about a trip to Chile in the past, an input activity with forms in the preterit and several fill-in-the-blank activities with the imperfect and preterit. For simultaneous and recurrent actions, however, practice consists of different formats: activities in which students explain what they did during their stay in Buenos Aires, an interview with other classmates about what they were doing last summer when studying in Córdoba, an input activity with preterit/imperfect and preterit/imperfect fill-in-the-blanks.

4.4 Tú vs. Usted

Of the four textbooks analyzed in this article, *Entre mundos* is the only one that dedicates a section to explaining differences in register between *tú* and *usted* by showing examples of dialectal variation integrated within the topic of community. Students must answer questions about register by relying on their knowledge and experience. Practice consists of explicit output activities (e.g. rewriting sentences changing *tú* to *usted*).

4.5. Subjunctive

Due to the difficulty of acquisition of the subjunctive mode, it seems that there is a generalized attention to this mood in all textbooks. Regarding the instruction of the subjunctive, there are contextualized examples with the subjunctive and the indicative through a contrastive approach in *Entre mundos* followed by an explanation. As for practice, a fill-in-the-blank metalinguistic activity follows the explanation for students to deduce the rule.

One of the most common uses of the subjunctive is offering recommendations. This function is practiced through a communicative activity with input enhancement and questions focused on content. Then, a traditional fill-in-the chart follows. The next use of the subjunctive that is practiced is that of emotions. Another communicative activity with an input enhancement technique is used, and after this there is a disclosure of this use of the subjunctive through an output activity where students have to write a list of all the expressions of emotion from the previous activity and an output sentence-completion activity. After all the practice, there is a chart with a review of the main uses of the subjunctive. Additional practice on the subjunctive is provided at the end of the chapter with more sentence completion activities with recommendations and emotions.

In order to identify the expressions that correspond to the indicative and subjunctive, the book uses a contrastive approach. Students have to read a dialogue and place the expressions used in the text in the right column (certainty or doubt). Then, they proceed to connect each function with the right mode (indicative or subjunctive). Finally, they are asked to reflect upon the metalinguistic knowledge of the indicative and subjunctive. More output activities are provided so that students can write sentences with expressions or doubt.

Another use of the subjunctive (with indefinite or unknown antecedents) is presented through a language awareness activity in order to explain the difference in meaning in two sentences with the indicative and the subjunctive. Through sentence completion activities, there is practice of this function with the subjunctive. Then as a summary, there are traditional activities where students have to write lists of expressions that introduce the use of the subjunctive with persuasive, emotional, and doubt verbs. Finally, we can find a wrap-up survey in which students have to express their wishes through the completion of sentences.

After the general uses of the present subjunctive, the past subjunctive is covered via a written text about violence with forms in bold print in sentences and questions checking for reading comprehension. After a brief explanation, there is a chart with missing forms. Then, several sentence completion activities are provided for practice. The subjunctive with adverbial phrases comes next. In this case, a contrastive approach is used to distinguish between the meaning of the indicative and subjunctive in adverbial clauses with forms in bold print.

In *Sí se puede*, there is an initial exposure to a list of sentences in which students have to choose between simple or complex sentences in the subjunctive and explain their selection. The uses of the subjunctive are then explained and students have to analyze the uses in sentences with the subjunctive as a consequence. Following a contrastive approach, other sentences with the indicative and subjunctive are provided to explain differences in meaning.

The compound forms of the subjunctive that are explained are the present perfect and pluperfect. Charts with missing forms appear and we can find two input activities: one of them instructs students to choose the correct translation of some sentences and the second one is a sentence completion activity with a binary selection: a situation is given and students have to choose the appropriate interpretation.

In *Conversaciones escritas*, the present subjunctive is briefly explained and assessed via input activities with diacritics. As shown earlier, the focus is on form/meaning confusion, mainly due to orthographical errors. The strategies are very diverse: activities with missing accents, charts with missing forms with the auxiliary *haber* (to have) in the present indicative/subjunctive or past indicative/subjunctive, binary input activities (present/past subjunctive or past indicative/subjunctive), translations, sentence completion activities with verbs that require the past subjunctive, output activities as a reaction to a reading using the target forms. Future and past subjunctive are the following forms to occur: these forms are also contrasted with diacritics. Here students have to select between two options to complete sentences with the right form and give advice using them.

Mundo 21 hispano introduces the subjunctive with the occurrence of the present subjunctive in main clauses. Practice includes giving suggestions about visiting San Bernardino, expressing contradictory opinions about the economic development in Paraguay, input activities with verb forms, and output activities such as writing sentences to express wishes and plans for the spring and making suppositions about what will probably happen. After the reading, the grammatical activity is on the present subjunctive with nominal clauses (writing sentences in order to give recommendations). The subjunctive with nominal clauses is explained next. Practice is conducted via output activities in which students have to express their opinions about the world today using verbs that require the subjunctive and verbs that require the indicative, expressing surprise, and their opinions about their visit to Uruguay using given verbs that require the subjunctive or the indicative, giving recommendations about how to improve society, an error correction activity on the correct use of the indicative or the subjunctive, and giving advice. After the cultural section on Venezuela, the grammatical support activity is a fill-in-the-blank activity using present subjunctive or indicative with adjectival clauses and after the main reading and the short film, the fill-in-the-blanks have to do with the subjunctive or indicative within adverbial clauses.

The present subjunctive with adjectival clauses is then introduced. Activities consist of asking questions using adjectival clauses, describing a town that students would like to visit in Venezuela with adjectival clauses, a matching activity with a verb that needs to be conjugated in the indicative or the subjunctive and an error correction activity with indicative or subjunctive with adjectival clauses. After nominal and adjectival clauses, adverbial clauses are explained. Practice is provided via an input activity with adverbial expressions in a word bank (fill-in-the-blank) and communicative input activities integrated with the cultural components of the chapter such as explaining under what conditions students would travel to Isla Margarita, giving reasons to attack or defend the presence of international companies in Venezuela, and finally, an error correction activity with the use of the subjunctive. This is when temporal conjunctions are presented and students are requested to answer questions using expressions like *donde* (where) *cuando* (when) and *según* (according to), explaining what they plan to do in Caracas despite some difficulties that they might find and what they will have to do so that ecologists are happy about it, added to a few fill-in-the-blank activities on the appropriate use of the indicative or subjunctive.

There are some binary selection input activities for grammatical support and after the reading on verbs in the indicative and subjunctive (binary input activity). Then, the sequence of tenses in the indicative and subjunctive are explained and practice is clearly culturally integrated since students have to report what their Costa Rican friends said about their country using parts of sentences to build their own sentences, expressing predictions about the immediate future of Costa Rica in the next 15 years using the given examples, or describing what they thought of Costa Rica before and after the lesson.

Regarding the past subjunctive in nominal, adjectival, and adverbial clauses, output activities are preferred over other strategies: some things that Nicaraguans regretted, expressing what students in the class thought that it was necessary to do when they were in high school, forming sentences with parts of sentences about what their friend would do under certain circumstances, and polite recommendations. For the present perfect subjunctive, practice follows the same line with examples like these: discussing parents' regrets about activities that they had been unable to do in Honduras using some given actions, or expressing their thoughts on the clothing that some people were wearing in certain situations.

4.6. Direct objects and the personal a

In *Entre mundos*, the differences between direct objects and the personal *a* are integrated with the topic of the world today and explained followed by a question-answer format for language awareness. Then, verbs that require a preposition are explained via examples and with an output activity without much guidance in which students have to write sentences using a list of verbs with prepositions (*a*, *de*, *en*, *con*). In the following chapter, direct, indirect object, and reflexive pronouns are presented together. An activity to identify referents is offered and a fill-in-the-blank activity follows it so that students become aware of the order of the pronouns via a deductive approach. This practice is also complemented with translations.

In *Mundo 21 hispano*, after the reading on the Andean countries, there is grammatical support on the personal *a*. There is a list of words that have to be used to build sentences and then direct and indirect object pronouns and the personal *a* are presented. Output activities are assorted: questions that have to be answered using pronouns, interviews with classmates so that they can respond with pronouns, or questions about their knowledge of Peru.

4.7. Conditional

Entre mundos briefly explains the conditional to describe the Puerto Rican community in the U.S. An input-enhancement strategy is used to present a list of sentences with the target form and some follow-up questions to check meaning comprehension. After a chart with missing forms, there are more follow-up questions for irregular forms and language awareness. We can also find several communicative output activities to make hypotheses about Puerto Rico, surveys, role-play situations (e.g. What you would do if you had a child who did not want to speak Spanish?). Regarding complex conditional clauses (If-clauses), the pluperfect of the subjunctive is explained and practiced via output activities related to the previous text: “How could this have been avoided?” “What would you have done?” Finally, as a conclusion, students are asked to write an argumentative essay.

In *Sí se puede,* "If- clauses" are also presented and contextualized through an interview and a paragraph answering questions with conditionals and word completion activities. In *Conversaciones escritas*, the future and conditional are presented with the use of probability. There are substitution activities (underlined expressions to be substituted for the future of probability) and sentence completion activities.

In *Mundo 21 hispano,* fill-in-the-blanks on the future and the conditional precede the explicit grammatical explanations. Again, varied activities are suggested for practice, mainly output-based: writing sentences in the future about a trip to Guatemala, a picture description about people's plans for next weekend, or making up possible explanations of why your friend has not arrived to your birthday party yet. The conditional is the next grammatical target and the practice goes along the same instructional lines: creating questions with a list of words using the conditional and speculations about why the instructor did not come to class the day before. When working on the past subjunctive, students have to form if-clauses integrated with the short film to describe how students would have reacted under those circumstances. Output activities follow in varying formats: using *si* clauses, expressing under what circumstances the student would like San Salvador better, what the student would do if he/she went to El Salvador, looking at pictures, what he/she would like his/her classmates to do, and under what circumstances he/she would do a list of activities.

4.8. Compound verb forms

The past participle is practiced via a fill-in-the blank paragraph on the Cuban American community in *Entre Mundos*. Then, a metalinguistic activity with word completion sentences is given so that students reflect upon the forms of the participle. Sentences with forms in bold print are presented and then a table with blanks is provided to complete the forms. The next activity is a communicative activity with a list of questions and students who have lived those experiences have to sign. After the instruction of the past participle, the first compound verb form that appears is the future perfect via a set of goals by retirement through a sentence completion activity. The same strategy is chosen for the present perfect as well. Others are communicative activities, like writing a letter with students' experiences on their trip to Cuba, an audio activity in which students need to answer a list of questions with the target form about the content of the audio (a poem on Cuban immigrants in the U.S.), and a production activity in which students have to explain why they think some Latino communities have assimilated into the American society.

The pluperfect indicative is the next grammatical target used to discuss cultures in contact. There are a couple of sentences related to a previous reading with the grammatical forms in the pluperfect in bold print and questions regarding metalinguistic knowledge follow. Also, a brief explanation about its formation and its use can be found. There are other different activities such as reported speech and at the end of the textbook an appendix with grammar is offered.

In *Mundo 21 hispano*, the past participle is combined with other compound verb forms such as the present perfect indicative via fill-in-the-blank activities, a question-answer format with *estar* +participle, and error correction activities with past participles. Future perfect and conditional perfect are also explained together and examples of communicative practice are found in expressing opinions about what will have happened 20 years from now using future perfect or explaining to friends what students would have done if they would have had time using conditional perfect (with a list of examples in both cases).

4.9. Passive

The passive voice is introduced in *Entre mundos* through a language awareness activity. *Conversaciones escritas* also uses sentences to rewrite using the passive "*se*" and translations. Lastly, *Mundo 21 hispano* offers more variety on this matter: writing sentences with a list of words using the passive, stating generalizations with passive *se* about the Dominican economy, or even practice with active voice as a contrast using a word bank about recent news and fill-in-the-blanks.

4.10. Infinitive and gerund/ Command

In *Entre mundos*, formal commands are introduced relying on students' intuitions (from informal to formal commands) and gerunds are covered via translations. In a similar vein, *Conversaciones escritas* explains and exemplifies the infinitive and gerund followed by input activities and translations. In *Mundo 21 hispano*, there is grammatical support on infinitives with a fill-in-the-blank activity before the infinitive is explicitly explained. Practice involves task completion activities such as writing a list of impersonal commands, expressing opinions about war with verbs requiring the infinitive or describing a drawing of a robbery in a bank. Concerning formal and informal commands, other task completion activities are recommendations for the next trip to Uruguay, giving advice to friends about what to buy in a specific store (formal commands), giving instructions about a recipe, or what advice students would give to their roommates when they are depressed (informal commands).

4.11. Gustar verbs

The only textbook that explicitly covers this grammatical form is *Mundo hispano 21*. As part of the instruction, students have to write sentences using *gustar* verbs and expressing opinions on a list of topics. Interestingly, there is not a tradition of teaching *gustar* verbs in Spanish heritage textbooks since it is assumed that they don't struggle with this linguistic structure. In fact, Miglio and Miranda Flores (2012) claimed that HLL certainly showed some native-like grammatical intuitions towards the use of these verbs but they recommended including them in the instruction of HLL courses.

4.12. Prepositions

Sí se puede provides error correction activities and a final fill-in-the-blank activity for prepositions in popular sayings. In the same line, in *Mundo 21 hispano* there are several input activities on *para* and *por* and communicative output activities in which students have to complete tasks on why Dominicans admire and feel proud of a specific artist using *por* and providing ideas of some general plans of the Dominican government to solve unemployment issues using *para*.

5. Conclusion

Grammar teaching approaches and strategies for HLL are presented via a thorough analysis of four popular textbooks in HLL instruction. Even though there is a chronological advancement towards communicative approaches and activities, there are still some traditional vestiges that can be found such as non-communicative drills or activities for metalinguistic awareness (known to be lacking in

HLL). In fact, we can notice that metalinguistic awareness is not emphasized in the most recent textbooks since there is not a consensus on their benefits in grammar instruction for they could be confusing for HLL (Beaudrie 2009).

All the textbooks focus on the teaching and practice of the verbal tenses and mood distinction, categorical words, and noun and gender agreement. In the same vein, they put them into practice through communicative input activities and other output activities like fill-in-the-blanks used at a lesser or greater extent depending on the publishing date of the textbook. Furthermore, *Mundo 21 hispano* offers a variety of output-based communicative activities such as error correction or task completion activities. We can conclude that these textbooks in general seem to try to follow current trends in research on HLL grammar acquisition.

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Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

THE BENEFITS OF CLIL INSTRUCTION IN SPANISH STUDENTS' PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

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Resumen

Este artículo pretende (i) analizar el vocabulario productivo de 101 estudiantes españoles de inglés como lengua extranjera de 4º de ESO en dos centros de educación secundaria situados en el norte de España en dos tipos de instrucción AICLE y no-AICLE y (ii) comparar los resultados obtenidos por los participantes de acuerdo con su sexo. Para medir el vocabulario productivo de los estudiantes se utilizó la versión paralela del *Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT)* (Laufer & Nation, 1995, 1999). Los resultados muestran que los alumnos AICLE obtienen puntuaciones significativamente mejores que sus compañeros no-AICLE siendo el tamaño del vocabulario productivo en ambos grupos inferior a 1000 palabras. En lo que respecta a las diferencias en cuanto al sexo no se constatan diferencias significativas entre los chicos y las chicas. Estos resultados parecen indicar que el enfoque AICLE resulta beneficioso para el aprendizaje del vocabulario productivo en una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Educación Secundaria, Vocabulario productivo, AICLE, no-AICLE, sexo.

Abstract

This paper aims at (i) investigating the productive vocabulary knowledge of 101 10th grade (*4th ESO*) EFL Spanish students in two different types of instruction CLIL and non-CLIL, and (ii) analysing the results obtained according to sex-based differences among the participants. We used the parallel version of the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer & Nation, 1995, 1999) to measure students' productive vocabulary knowledge. Our results reveal that our CLIL sample obtained significantly better results than their non-CLIL partners, and the students' productive vocabulary size ranks below 1,000 words. As for sex-based differences, CLIL boys' mean scores are the highest, but the differences between both sexes, regardless of their type of instruction, are not statistically significant. These findings led us to believe that the CLIL approach offers a benefit for productive vocabulary learning in a foreign language.

Keywords: Secondary Education, productive vocabulary, CLIL, non-CLIL, sex differences.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is acknowledged to be of paramount importance in foreign language learning (FLL). Hence, examining learners' word knowledge can provide interesting and reliable insights into their overall language knowledge. In recent decades, several studies have analysed the receptive vocabulary knowledge of EFL learners following an approach based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), i.e. learning a content subject other than language lessons through the foreign language and traditional EFL (non-CLIL) instruction (Canga Alonso, 2013 a, b; Nikula, Dalton-Puffer & Llinares, 2013; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Jiménez Catalán and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009; Jiménez Catalán, Ruiz de Zarobe & Cenoz, 2006). However, to our knowledge, there is a scarcity of research concerning productive vocabulary knowledge in CLIL and non-CLIL instruction at secondary school level in Spain. The main purpose of this paper is to compare general productive vocabulary size of traditional EFL and CLIL learners since it is generally believed that words are known receptively first and only after intentional or incidental learning become available for productive use. CLIL learners have a longer exposure to the foreign language, thus, the present research wants to prove that this exposure fosters productive vocabulary learning and CLIL subjects obtain better results in the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer & Nation, 1995, 1999).

The study also explores differences in productive vocabulary knowledge of male and female students. Recent studies on sex-based differences and vocabulary learning have not reached an agreement to assert that one sex outperforms the other as far as receptive and productive word knowledge is concerned. Thus, our findings will aim to shed some light on this aspect by comparing the scores obtained by male and female students in response to the PVLT. Hence, we review the main studies dealing with the importance of vocabulary knowledge and sex-based differences and explore the relationship between CLIL and foreign language vocabulary. A report of the study conducted with its methodology, main results found and interpretation of those results follows. The paper concludes by pointing out some lines for further research trying to overcome the main limitations of the present study.

2. Vocabulary Knowledge and sex variables in foreign language learning

A large vocabulary size is essential to interacting in a foreign language. In this sense, researchers have tackled the issue concerning the number of words necessary to understand spoken discourse (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2004; Nation, 2001) and to read and comprehend texts in the native and foreign language (Laufer, 1997; Anderson & Freebody, 1981). Among the former researchers, Adolphs & Schmitt (2004) estimated that, at least, 2,000 word forms have to be mastered in order to understand around 90% and 94% of spoken discourse in different contexts. Among the latter, Laufer (1992, 1997) stated that a text coverage of 95% can be reached with a 5,000-word English vocabulary or 3,000 word families, which agrees with the assertions made by Hazenberg & Hulstijn (1996), Nation (1993, 2001) and Cobb & Horst (2004). More recently, Nation (2006) asserted that 8,000 to 9,000 word families are needed for understanding a written text and a vocabulary of 6,000 to 7,000 word families for comprehension of spoken texts, if 98% coverage of a text is desired. Hirsh & Nation (1992) also pointed out that knowledge of 5,000 word families is necessary to enjoy reading. Estimates based on word frequency criteria have been calculated and research claims that gaining command of the 2,000-3,000 most frequent words as soon as possible is vital for the language learner to communicate orally and in written form in the foreign language (Milton, 2009; Nation & Waring, 1997; Nation, 1993). The sooner the most frequent words are learned by students, the better their language performance will be. As Schmitt claims: “The learning of these basic words cannot be left to chance, but should be taught as quickly as possible, because they open […] the door of further learning” (2000: 137).

As it has been mentioned, vocabulary size is one of the central dimensions in explorations of lexical proficiency. Different studies have set to the task of finding estimations of productive and receptive vocabulary size. The tests designed for this purpose are generally built upon frequency lists (Nation, 1990, 2001) on the assumption that knowledge of less frequent words implies knowledge of more frequent words (Schmitt, 2000). Based on this idea of finding estimations of productive word knowledge, several instruments have been designed to measure productive vocabulary size. One of the most frequently used tests is Lex30 (Meara & Fitzpatrick, 2000). It is a free word association task which assesses discrete, comprehensive and context-independent vocabulary. It has several practical advantages since it generates a rich vocabulary output very economically, that is, through single word prompts. It is easily administered and it requires very little time to complete (15 minutes); and it is scored automatically using a computer programme (Jiménez Catalán & Moreno Espinosa, 2005). This test has been implemented in primary education (Moreno Espinosa, 2009; Jiménez Catalán & Moreno Espinosa, 2005) and with undergraduates (Fitzpatrick & Meara, 2004, Jiménez Catalán & Moreno Espinosa, 2004). However, it presents some methodological problems when classifying the words that the Lex30 scorer did not recognize in their appropriate bands (Jiménez Catalán & Moreno Espinosa 2005).

Another instrument which has been used widely to explore students' productive vocabulary knowledge is the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer & Nation, 1995, 1999). The PVLT addresses two dimensions of lexical competency: partial productive word knowledge and word frequency. It measures discrete, selective and context dependent vocabulary (Mochizuki, 2012; Moreno Espinosa, 2010). One of the advantages of the test is that frequency bands are independent from one another, which allows researchers to give their testees either the whole test or only the bands that are suitable for their learners' level. This fact together with its format (see Appendix I) seems to be appropriate for secondary school students. Nevertheless, this test has not been as widely implemented as its receptive version (Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham 2001), which has been used to test primary (Agustín Llach & Terrazas Gallego, 2012; Terrazas Gallego & Agustín Llach, 2009; Jiménez Catalán & Terrazas Gallego, 2005-2008) and secondary school (Canga Alonso, 2013a) Spanish students' receptive vocabulary knowledge in traditional EFL instruction.

Considering these facts, it was decided that the PVLT is a good test to explore the productive vocabulary size of the sample of Spanish EFL learners in the last year of secondary school for two main reasons: it measures discrete, context dependent vocabulary, and it allows for profiling learners' vocabulary size on the basis of the frequency level to which the words used belong. Hence, the main aim of the present paper is to explore 10th grade Spanish students' productive vocabulary size in CLIL and non-CLIL instructional contexts, using the PVLT as the instrument of measurement.

Having analysed the importance of vocabulary in L2 learning as well as having referred to the research conducted on vocabulary learning, the importance of sex-based differences in the literature on vocabulary learning can be considered. The role of sex has also occupied an outstanding place in current research on vocabulary in a FL. Receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of male and female learners has been widely examined, and scholars have reached different conclusions. Boyle (1987) concludes that, exception to what, boys are superior to girls in the comprehension of heard vocabulary. Similarly, Scarcella & Zimmerman (1998) found that men performed significantly better than women in a test of academic vocabulary recognition, understanding and use. In Lynn, Fergusson, & Horwood (2005), and Edelenbos & Vinjé (2000), males also outperformed females in vocabulary knowledge in the foreign language. By contrast, in Nyikos' study (1990) women performed better than men in a memorization test of German vocabulary. Nevertheless, Jiménez Catalán & Terrazas Gallego (2005-2008) discovered no significant sex-based differences in performance on a receptive vocabulary test implemented with primary students.

In the same vein, in a recent longitudinal research Agustín Llach & Terrazas Gallego (2012) found very slight differences among males and females across grades in the context of Spanish primary education concerning their receptive vocabulary knowledge. Canga Alonso (2013b) also found slight differences in his study of primary and secondary school students' receptive vocabulary. On the contrary, highly significant differences were found in favour of females in the mean number of words produced in response to the 15 cues of a lexical availability test (Jiménez Catalán & Ojeda Alba, 2009). A set of recent studies compiled in Jimenez Catalán (2010) also pointed to mixed results on sex differences or tendencies. In this same volume, García Gómez (2010) explored the development of gender relations and identities through analysis of writing samples from Spanish male and female EFL university students, and his findings revealed male and female gender-biased subjacent ideologies. As Sunderland (2010) claims, a careful analysis of this compilation provides the conclusion that the relationships between vocabulary and gender are not enduring, but may be context and test type-specific. These relationships can also be influenced by L1, age or L2 proficiency since the studies previously referred to show a variety of results depending on the context (Spain and abroad), type of instruction (CLIL/non-CLIL) and even among learners when the same test is applied to students from the same learning context.

Considering the aforementioned studies, it can be stated that results are inconclusive regarding the role of sex in foreign language learning and in particular in lexical acquisition. Furthermore, the type of word knowledge explored, the learning context, or the task used for data gathering seem to play a relevant role in the establishment of sex tendencies. For this reason, the present study tries to ascertain if the scores obtained by male and female students in the PVLT are alike since no difference has been made in the formal instruction they received either with a CLIL or a non-CLIL approach as both high schools mix boys and girls in the same classroom

3. CLIL and vocabulary learning

As mentioned in the introduction, CLIL implies the teaching of a content subject through English. Thus, its essence is integration with a dual focus: "language learning is included in content classes (e.g. maths, history, geography […], etc), and content from subjects is used in language learning classes" (Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols, 2008: 11). CLIL also provides real and meaningful input for the learner in form of subject content and language for classroom management (Muñoz, 2007).

Assuming that in CLIL settings it is necessary to progress systematically in pupils' content and language learning and use, vocabulary knowledge is of paramount importance in order to encourage communication in the classroom. Feedback is also integrated into classroom discourse to encourage interaction among apprentices. Thus, the challenge in a CLIL setting is that trainees need to engage in dialogic interactions by using the vehicular language. As a result of this interaction, Dalton-Puffer

(2007, 2008) reports that there are some areas where clear gains are observed in CLIL classrooms such as e.g. receptive skills, vocabulary, morphology, and creativity.

Vocabulary size follows a systematic order related to frequency, since at the lowest levels of proficiency, learners are familiar with the most frequent words. But, as their experience with the FL increases, less frequent words are incorporated into the lexicon (Milton 2009; Vermeer 2001; Barrow Nakanishi, & Ishino, 1999). Therefore, it seems evident that a content-based approach provides more opportunities to learn, either explicitly or implicitly, target vocabulary in meaningful situations (Pérez-Vidal, 2009; Muñoz, 2007), since learners are exposed to the target language for a longer period than students' enrolled in traditional EFL classrooms. Xanthou (2011) proved that CLIL had a positive impact in a group of primary school children in Cyprus regarding students` vocabulary tests results which demonstrates that by attaching words to their surroundings, the likelihood of comprehension and retention is increased. These gains in receptive vocabulary size align with other research conducted in Spain (Jiménez Catalán & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009; Jiménez Catalán, Ruiz de Zarobe & Cenoz, 2006), where significant results were obtained in favour of the CLIL group in receptive vocabulary knowledge. In a similar study, Canga Alonso (2013a) found statistically significant differences between 6th grade primary students in CLIL contexts and those enrolled in a traditional EFL approach. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, there is a lack of research in productive vocabulary knowledge in CLIL and non-CLIL types of instruction using the PVLT in Spanish secondary school. For these reasons and the aspects mentioned in the previous section, this study aims at (i) investigating the productive vocabulary knowledge of 15-16 year-old male and female Spanish students learning English in Spanish 10th grade (4th ESO) in relation to: ii) type of instruction (CLIL vs. non-CLIL) and iii) sex-based differences. Thus, the researchers set out to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the productive vocabulary knowledge of 10th grade EFL learners in CLIL and non-CLIL instruction?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences in productive vocabulary sizes between CLIL and non-CLIL learners?
3. Do we find statistically significant differences in students' performance with regard to sex in the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test?

4. Method

4.1 Participants

Two student samples constitute the participants of this study. The CLIL group, is made up of 73 learners (37 boys and 36 girls), whereas the traditional or non-CLIL group, comprises 38 learners (26 boys and 12 girls). Both groups learn English as a curricular subject in the same grade of secondary education. (4th ESO/10th Grade). They have been learning English as a school subject since the 1st year of primary education in two weekly sessions of 50 to 60 minutes. Additionally, the CLIL group has been receiving extra-exposure to English since their 7th grade (1st year of Secondary Education).

The sample is homogeneous in regards to their socio-economic and cultural background, since participants were drawn from two high schools in the same area. Students also shared Spanish as their native language (L1). The groups differ in the kind of instruction they received, i.e. CLIL vs. non-CLIL, and consequently, in the number of hours of exposure to English FL. Learners in the non-CLIL group were exposed to English through the English FL school subject, exclusively. However, learners in the CLIL group received, apart from the weekly EFL lessons, input in Natural Sciences and Arts and Crafts through the medium of English. Consequently, not only the amount but also the nature of the input differs between the traditional and the CLIL group. Traditional learners have received approximately 1,049 hours of exposure to EFL on a yearly basis since 1st grade of primary. The CLIL group has received the same 1,049 hours plus 30-60 more hours in CLIL.

Table 1 illustrates the approximate number of hours of exposure students have received by the time of data collection.

		Hours of exposure	
Grade	Age	CLIL	Non- CLIL
4th Secondary	15-16	1,079-1,109	1,049

Table 1. Hours of exposure to English FL

4.2 Data Collection

The 2,000 word parallel version (version A+ version C) of the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (see Appendix 1) was used to measure the productive vocabulary knowledge of these subjects (Laufer & Nation 1999; Laufer & Nation 1995). The test measures knowledge of vocabulary at the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 word bands (e.g. the 2000 word band would test words 1 – 2,000). The word bands correspond to the 2,000 and so on most frequent words in English which are based on West's (1953) General Service List and the Thorndike & Lorge´s list (1944). We have chosen the 2,000 band of the test since as mentioned in section one, gaining command of the 2,000 most frequent words as soon as possible is vital for the language learner to communicate orally and in written form in the foreign language (Milton, 2009; Nation, 1993; Nation & Waring, 1997). The PVLT measures controlled productive knowledge (Laufer, 1998) since test-takers have to complete a missing word in 30 different sentence contexts where they are given the first letters of the target word as a cue. Therefore, the PVLT is a reliable, valid and practical measure of vocabulary growth (Laufer & Nation, 1999: 44). Completing the test requires the knowledge of meaning, form, phonological aspect and collocations of the target word. In addition, reading comprehension is required in gaining the clues to complete the task.

Data was collected in one session during school time. The time allotted to complete the task was 10 minutes. At the beginning of the test, clear instructions together with an example were given both orally and in written form in the students' L1 to clarify what they were being asked to do.

Tests were corrected and total scores obtained. 0 was the minimum score and 30 was the maximum. Estimations in words were also obtained. In order to calculate students´ word estimates, Nation's formula "Vocabulary size = N correct answers multiplied by total N words (the relevant word list divided by N items in test" (Nation, 1990: 78) was applied. In order for an answer to be correct, the word has to be both grammatically and orthographically adequate, e.g. if the missing word is a verb, it has to be written in the corresponding tense. Therefore, a wrong verb tense would get 0 points in that given sentence.

The sample was also analysed with SPSS 19 to check whether there were statistically significant differences according to type of instruction, sex and productive vocabulary knowledge.

5. Results

Regarding our first research question (What is the productive vocabulary knowledge of 10^{th} grade EFL learners in CLIL and non-CLIL instruction?) the data (see table 2) revealed that the maximum score in the sample was twenty-nine points out of thirty which was attained by one of the students in the CLIL group whereas the minimum score (zero out of thirty) was achieved by one participant in the non-CLIL group. These figures indicate that students are behind from learning the 2,000 most frequent words according to the frequency lists collected by Kucera & Francis (1967), West (1953), and Thorndike & Lorge (1944). The data also implies that students can have problems understanding spoken and written discourse in English since they need to have gained at the least the 2,000 most frequent words in order to communicate orally and in written form in the foreign language (Nation & Waring, 1997). Mean scores are also higher in favour of the CLIL group (12.19 vs. 9.6) but standard deviations are quite similar for both cohorts (4.9 vs.5). This implies that the variability of results is quite alike for both groups.

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
CLIL (n=73)	3	29	12.19	4.9
Non-CLIL (n=38)	0	22	9.6	5

Table 2. PVLT 2,000 results.

This profile is illustrated in the rankings of percentages summarized in figure 1. The results show that our CLIL informants obtained better results than our non-CLIL students in all the ranks but the lowest (0-5). It is also noteworthy that both groups of students attained similar scores in the 6-10 and 11-15 ranks, although CLIL students performed slightly better. These two ranks (6-10 and 11-15) are also the ones with the highest percentages for both cohorts. On the contrary, the raking 26-30 is quite low in the CLIL group and shows no evidence in the non-CLILs.

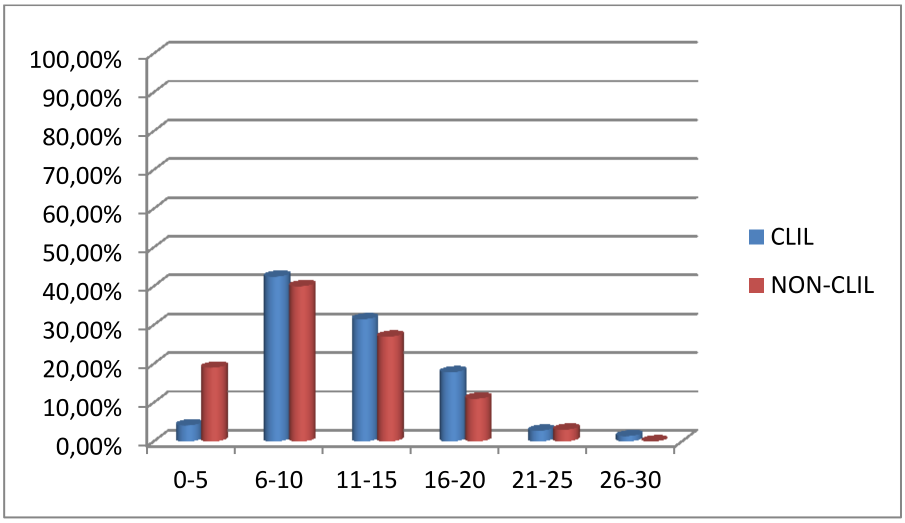

Figure 1. Frequency distribution of tests scores CLIL and non-CLIL groups.

As for the second research question (Are there any statistically significant differences in productive vocabulary sizes between CLIL and non-CLIL learners?), students' scores were translated into the number of known words for each frequency level applying Nation's formula (1990: 78). As illustrated in table 3, the means obtained by the CLIL group confirms our previous presupposition on a two-fold basis: CLIL learners recognized and produced a higher number of words (813) when compared to the non-CLIL group (640) and both groups were under the 1,000 most frequent words in English. The standard deviations are quite alike, although the CLIL cohort presents greater variability in their scores and their deviations are slightly higher when compared to the non-CLIL cohort (327 vs 304)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
CLIL (n=73)	200	1933	813	327
Non-CLIL (n=38)	0	1467	640	304

Table 3. Estimation of words CLIL and non-CLIL groups.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk tests were implemented in order to ascertain whether our sample met the normality assumption. The values obtained (see table 4) indicate their distribution is not normal for the variable type of instruction, therefore non-parametric tests had to be implemented.

Test	Type of instruction	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistics	gl	Sig.	Statistics	gl	Sig.
PVLT	CLIL	.138	73	.002	.950	73	.006
	Non-CLIL	.133	38	.087	.969	38	.368

Table 4. Parametric tests: Type of Instruction

The Mann-Whitney U test was applied in order to ascertain our results were statistically significant regarding the two types of instruction analysed in this paper. As illustrated in table 5 The p-value (p=0.014) is very close to 0.01, which proves that there are statistically significant differences between CLIL and non-CLIL learners' word estimates in favour of the CLIL group.

	PVLT
Mann-Whitney U	994.50
Wilcoxon W	1735.50
Z	-2.445
P. (two tailed)	.014

Table 5. Non-parametric tests: Type of instruction

The results for our third research question (Do we find statistically significant differences in students' performance with regard to sex and type of instruction in the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test?), CLIL girls obtained better maximum scores (29 points) in the PVLT whereas non-CLIL boys attained the highest rate in the lowest scale of the rank (i.e. 0-5 points). As can be seen in Figure 2, most of the informants, regardless of their sex and type of instruction scored between 6-10 points in the productive vocabulary test. With regard to medium scale of the rank (i.e. 11- 15 points), non-CLIL and CLIL girls obtained the highest percentages (33%). On the contrary, CLIL boys are much better in regards to the 16-20 point rank (24% vs. 11%). Finally, 5% of non-CLIL and CLIL boys scored more than 20 points but less than 25 in the PVLT. As we will analyse in the following section, these findings show the tendency that boys and girls behave similar to peers of their same sex regardless of the type of instruction.

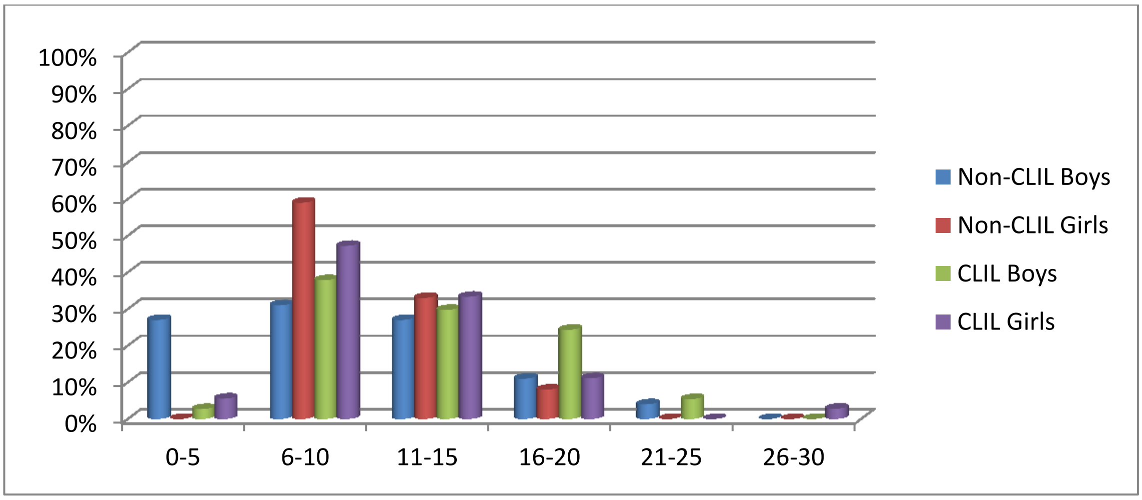

Figure 2. Frequency distribution of tests scores for boys and girls.

The box-plot in figure 3 illustrates graphically the median values for boys and girls in both types of instruction, which concord with the data analysed above. This figure also indicates that our results are quite homogeneous for both cohorts. There is also an outlier which belongs to a girl whose scores are much higher than the ones obtained by the rest of the students. She belongs to the CLIL group and is the informant who scored 29 points in the PVLT:

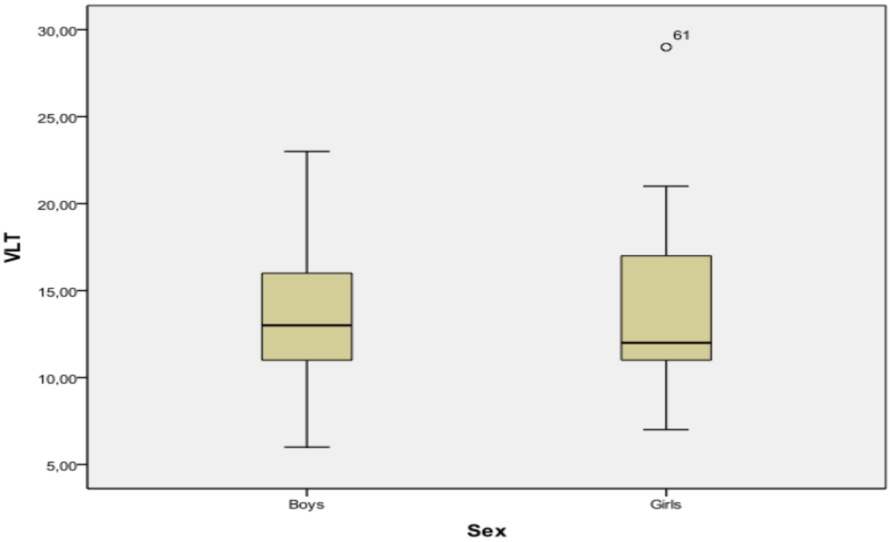

*Figure 3.*Median vales according to sex and type of instruction.

Regarding word estimates and sex-based differences, the descriptive statistics shown in table 6 illustrate that non-CLIL boys obtained the lowest mean scores (635 words) closely followed by non-CLIL girls (661 words). One CLIL girl obtained the highest score (1933 words), but CLIL boys attained the highest mean score (876 words).

		Min	Max	Mean	SD
CLIL	Boys (n=37)	267	1400	876	301
	Girls(n=36)	200	1933	748	344
Non-CLIL	Boys (n=26)	0	1467	635	343
	Girls(n=12)	400	1067	661	240

Table 6. Distribution of word estimates according to sex.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk parametric tests were implemented in order to ascertain whether our sample met the normality assumption according to sex based differences. As shown in table 7, the p-values obtained were lower than (p=0.05) for the girls, so the sample did not meet normality and, therefore, non-parametric tests were applied.

Test	Sex	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistics	gl	Sig.	Statistics	gl	Sig.
LT PV	Boy	.100	63	193	.981	63	.432
	Girl	.131	48	.039	.943	48	.020

Table 7. Parametric tests for sex-based differences.

The U Mann-Whitney test was conducted to calculate inferential statistical differences among our informants according to sex. Its results reveal that there are not significant differences at a significance level of 5% (p=0.13) in vocabulary size estimations. Table 8 offers these results:

	PVLT
Mann-Whitney U	1260.50
Wilcoxon W	3276.50
Z	-1.50
P. (two tailed)	.134

Table 8. Results of inferential statistics for sex-based differences.

6. Discussion

The analysis of our data clearly shows that, regardless of the type of instruction (i.e. CLIL/non-CLIL), the productive vocabulary knowledge of the 10th graders analysed in the present research is lower than 1,000 words. If we compare this data with the findings obtained by Moreno Espinosa (2010) in the same educational level and socio-cultural context, we ascertain that productive vocabulary size is practically the same for both non-CLIL samples of students since our students' estimation of words is 640 and Moreno Espinosa's 645. These results may also imply that the EFL instruction Moreno Espìnosa's and our sample of non-CLIL groups of learners have received in the compulsory schooling, is rather similar, regardless of the type of school students have attended.

Our data also indicates that CLIL learners obtained significantly higher scores than non-CLIL students in the PVLT (p=0.014), which seems to show that CLIL instruction may favour productive vocabulary learning. This result is in line with previous studies, which show that CLIL or longer foreign language exposure programs foster vocabulary learning, and that benefits start appearing after some time (Agustín Llach and Canga Alonso, 2014; Celaya & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010). The longer exposure to English input CLIL learners have received can help explain this advantage in general productive vocabulary size. Furthermore, the different nature of their exposure, in which traditional EFL instruction is combined with a more meaningful and contextualized content instruction through the L2 might also account for this difference (Xanthou, 2011). As an avenue for further research, future studies could test learners productive knowledge of specific vocabulary related to certain fields such as Natural Sciences and/or Arts and Crafts (the CLIL subjects). We could speculate that results would favour the CLIL group, whose productive vocabulary size might be higher for both semantic fields. However, this is just mere speculation, since we have not conducted such test and further research on words students may have acquired in the content classes together with a comparison of their results to non-CLIL learners' is needed.

In short, CLIL seems to favour productive vocabulary knowledge, but there might be other factors influencing students' productive vocabulary learning, such as exposure time. It is indeed difficult to discern whether the CLIL factor or the longer exposure (more instruction hours) is responsible for the CLIL advantage in our data, as these two factors are impossible to untangle in our present study.

If we compare our findings with previous studies on receptive vocabulary size conducted in the same area and educational level but with a different sample of students Canga Alonso (2013c), we ascertain that the estimations of words are higher in the receptive vocabulary test (935 words). These results concord with previous research on students' receptive and productive vocabulary sizes as students tend to obtain better results in receptive tests than in productive ones because reception is a prior step to production (Zhong, 2012; Yamamoto 2011; Martínez Adrián & Gallardo del Puerto, 2010; Webb 2008; Laufer, 1998). However, this comparison should be taken with caution since Canga Alonso has not conducted research on productive vocabulary knowledge and his sample of students is different from the one analysed in the present study. As abovementioned, research has shown that receptive skills are developed prior to productive ones which explains that students' results in the receptive VLT were higher. Therefore, further research is called to correlate the receptive and productive vocabulary of the students in the present sample to compare it with previous studies on receptive and productive vocabulary in the same area.

Our results also indicate that CLIL and non-CLIL learners would have problems in performing certain linguistic tasks such as understanding informal spoken discourse for which Adolphs & Schmitt (2004) estimate that, at least, 2,000 words are needed. Nation (2006) talks of 6,000 to 7,000 word families for comprehension of spoken text, if 98% coverage of a text is desired for understanding written text, and he contends that 8,000 to 9,000 word families are needed for text understanding, or for reading for pleasure. Nevertheless, EFL learners would have an easier time watching TV programmes (Webb & Rogers 2009a), or movies (Webb & Rogers 2009b), since the first 1,000 most frequent words make up for around 85% of the total word coverage. Accordingly, researchers call for the command of the 2,000-3,000 most frequent words as soon as possible (Webb and Chang 2012; Nation & Waring, 1997; Nation, 1993), and our students' mean scores (813 vs 640 words) indicates that they have not even acquired the 1,000 most frequent words in English. Furthermore, we agree with Schmitt (2000) and Webb & Chang (2012) that such a paramount learning task cannot be left to chance and that the most frequent words should be taught explicitly in the EFL classroom.

Sex-based differences are non-significant in the present study (p=0.13) although CLIL boys obtained the highest scores (876 words). This finding is in line with the results obtained in receptive vocabulary with students of their same age in non-CLIL instruction (Canga Alonso, 2013c), but differs from tests with younger CLIL and non-CLIL learners in their same educational context (Canga Alonso, 2013a, 2013b; Agustín Llach and Terrazas Gallego, 2012; Jiménez Catalán and Terrazas Gallego, 2005-2008) where girls obtained the highest scores. It is also noteworthy that the sample of CLIL students shows the opposite tendency since non-CLIL girls slightly outperformed non-CLIL boys (661 vs. 635 words) and followed CLIL girls (748 vs. 661 words). In light of these results on sex-based differences and type of instruction, we agree with Sunderland's (2010) assertion that the relationships between vocabulary and sex are not enduring, but may be context and test type-specific, and also influenced by L2 proficiency since by implementing the same test (i.e. PVLT parallel version A+C) in the same context (i.e. last year of Spanish compulsory education) students obtained different results according to their sex and type of instruction. In this way, male CLIL learners obtained the highest scores whereas non-CLIL girls outperformed their male non-CLIL partners. These similar results for both sexes also verify our initial presupposition that sex-based scores should be similar since both sexes were treated equally in the classroom and they received the same formal instruction.

All in all, this data indicates that CLIL instruction has been beneficial for the CLIL group. However, we should take this assumption with caution since the sample of CLIL learners is not very numerous and further research is needed in order to test if a bigger sample of CLIL students would obtain similar results to the ones shown in this paper.

7. Conclusions

Three main findings stand out from the present research study. First, the productive vocabulary size of our sample of Spanish secondary school CLIL and non-CLIL learners lies below the range of first 1,000 most frequent words in English, according to the results of the PVLT, which shows that our students might find it difficult to understand spoken and written texts in English. As expected, their scores are lower to those obtained by students of their same age and sociocultural background in receptive vocabulary tests since reception is a previous step to production when you learn a foreign language. With regard to the second research question, the results purport that CLIL instruction seems to favour larger productive vocabulary sizes as CLIL learners obtained significantly better results than non-CLILs. Finally, no statistically significant differences can be established according to the sex of the participants, which implies that boys and girls have added a similar amount of words to their productive vocabulary. Nevertheless, these results should be taken with caution due to the number of students who took part in the present research. Therefore, further research is needed in order to explore if the productive vocabulary size of a bigger sample of students of the same age and types of instruction from different schools in the area remains alike or is significantly higher or lower than our informants' productive vocabulary knowledge. One further limitation of the present study is the use of a single, and somewhat limited, instrument to measure productive vocabulary size. Using other tests for vocabulary knowledge, such as lexical availability tests might provide even more insightful results and reveal more qualitative data concerning learners' vocabulary knowledge. Finally, CLIL programmes have spread in Spain in the last decade; therefore it would be interesting to relate 10th graders receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge in order to ascertain which type of instruction (CLIL/non-CLIL) could benefit vocabulary learning. Further research is called for to overcome these limitations and address this new research path on CLIL instruction.

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Appendix 1: Productive Vocabulary: Parallel Version (A+C) (Laufer & Nation, 1995 1999)

In the following sentences we have omitted the end of a word. Complete the sentences with the right word. For examples: *He was riding a bic_______;* you should have completed the sentence as follows: *He was riding a bicycle*.

The 2,000-word level
Example: He was riding a bicycle.

1. They will restore the house to its orig____________ state.
2. Each room has its own priv____________ bath and WC.
3. The tot_____________ number of students at the university is 12,347.
4. They met to ele____________ a president.
5. Many companies were manufac____________ computers.
6. The lakes become ice-free and the snow mel____________.
7. They managed to steal and hi____________ some knives.
8. I asked the group to inv____________ her to the party.
9. She shouted at him for spoi____________ her lovely evening.
10. You must spend less until your deb____________ are paid.
11. His mother looked at him will love and pri____________.
12. The wind roa____________through the forest.
13. There was fle____________ and blood everywhere.
14. She earns a high sal____________ as a lawyer.
15. The sick child had a very high tempe____________.
16. The bir____________ of her first child was a difficult time.
17. My favourite spo____________ is football.
18. In A.D. 636 an Arab army won a famous vic____________ over another army.
19. I'm glad we had this opp_____________ to talk.
20. There are a doz__________ eggs in the basket.
21. Every working person must pay income t______.
22. The pirates buried the trea________ on a desert island.
23. Her beauty and ch________ had a powerful effect on men.
24. La________ of rain led to a shortage of water in the city.
25. He takes cr________ and sugar in his coffee.
26. Pup______ must hand in their papers by the end of the week.
27. Ann intro__________ her boyfriend to her mother.
28. Teenagers often adm_________ and worship pop singers.
29. In order to be accepted into the university, he had to impr________ his grades.
30. The dress you're wearing is lo_______.

Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

HACIA UNA SOCIEDAD EUROPEA MÁS MULTILINGÜE Y MULTICULTURAL

Susana Gómez
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Resumen

El presente artículo resume el trabajo realizado dentro del marco del proyecto europeo *Familias Multilingües*, una iniciativa que tiene como objetivos (i) animar a las familias de inmigrantes a mantener la lengua y cultura con sus hijos y (ii) apoyar a los docentes para que, a través de los recursos disponibles, puedan explotar la multiculturalidad en el aula y enfoquen la educación hacia una sociedad intercultural más abierta, solidaria y tolerante. Este artículo se centrará en la descripción de los objetivos del proyecto, destinatarios, metodología, materiales creados, proceso de trabajo y relevancia dentro del contexto de una Europa multilingüe y multicultural.

Palabras clave: Multilingüismo, diversidad, cultura, idiomas, adquisición de lenguas

Abstract

This article summaries the work done on the Multilingual Families project, a European project whose aims are (i) to support immigrant families to keep the language and culture with their children and (ii) to encourage teachers to exploit multiculturalism in their everyday teaching by using the available resources so as to foster a more tolerant, caring and open society. The article will cover the project´s objectives, target audience, methodology, materials, working process and relevance within the context of a multicultural and multilingual Europe.

Key words*:* Multilingualism, diversity, culture, languages, language acquisition

"Multilingual Families: Supporting Multilingual Families, a Linguistic Treasure for Europe" (Ref. 531085-LLP-1-2012-1-PL-KA2-KA2MP) es un proyecto financiado por la Unión Europea dentro del marco del programa «Key Activity 2 Languages» de «Lifelong Learning Programme» en el que han trabajado expertos docentes e investigadores de reconocido prestigio de instituciones educativas de diferentes países europeos como Polonia, Reino Unido, Alemania, Austria, República Checa y España1. Su principal objetivo consiste en ayudar a las familias de padres plurilingües y a los más de 47 millones de inmigrantes que viven en la Unión Europea a preservar su lengua y cultura con sus hijos y en su entorno familiar y educativo. El colectivo al que va dirigido este proyecto representa un gran tesoro lingüístico que debemos preservar y fomentar para mantener la diversidad lingüística y cultural en una Europa cada vez más multicultural.

Para conseguir este objetivo, el equipo del proyecto está apoyando a los padres plurilingües informándoles acerca de las razones por las cuales conviene educar a sus hijos en más de una lengua y

1 El partenariado de este proyecto lo forman las siguientes instituciones educativas europeas: Społeczna Akademia Nauk en Polonia, Thüringer Volkshochschulverbande.V. (TVV e.V.) en Alemania, Wiener Volkshochschulen (VHS Wien) en Austria, Pelican School en República Checa, Kindersite y The Mosaic Art And Sound Ltd. en el Reino Unido.

ayudándoles a llevar a cabo dicha tarea guiándoles en el proceso de enseñanza a través de una serie de materiales y recursos que ya están disponibles de forma gratuita en la página web del proyecto www.multilingual-families.eu .

Figura 1. Ejemplo de material creado para padres

Si bien desde el proyecto pretendemos ayudar a los padres plurilingües, esta iniciativa también está enfocada al sector docente, es decir, a profesores y educadores que trabajan con inmigrantes de diferentes edades. Así pues, los profesores tienen disponibles en la página web del proyecto el material para que puedan no solo aplicarlo en su centro con sus alumnos inmigrantes, sino a su vez compartirlo y difundirlo entre las familias de esos alumnos. Nuestro objetivo final en el campo educativo es fomentar la integración, tolerancia, el respeto y la diversidad cultural en las aulas valorando y potenciando la gran riqueza lingüística y sobre todo cultural que un alumno extranjero puede aportar a sus compañeros de clase.

Figura 2. Ejemplo de material creado para profesores

Además de los múltiples recursos y enlaces que la página web del proyecto ofrece sobre el tema del multilingüismo, el equipo del proyecto ofrece materiales en forma de ejemplos prácticos de actividades que tanto padres como profesores pueden utilizar como punto de partida para fomentar el aprendizaje y el uso de la segunda lengua en un contexto informal y relajado. Del mismo modo hemos recopilado ejemplos personales de familias multilingües que han querido compartir su experiencia y sus consejos sobre cómo educan a sus hijos en más de una lengua.

Figura 3. Ejemplo de materiales prácticos para padres y experiencias personales de familias multilingües

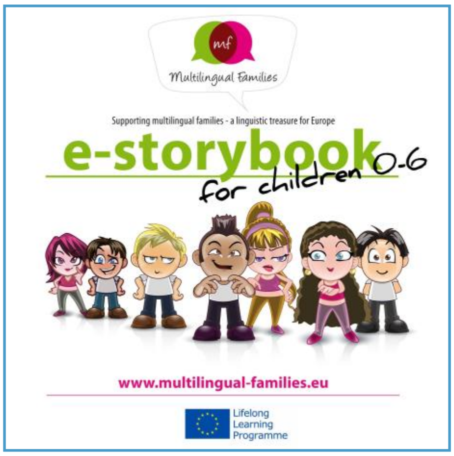
Para facilitar el acceso al mayor número de familias en Europa y en el resto del mundo, todos los materiales del proyecto son de acceso libre y gratuito y han sido traducidos a 32 idiomas, a saber, inglés, español, catalán, euskera, gallego, aranés, francés, alemán, italiano, portugués, rumano, checo, ruso, eslovaco, ucraniano, urdu, polaco, vietnamita, búlgaro, serbo-croata, hindi, turco, griego, árabe, chino, esloveno, húngaro, holandés, noruego, japonés, coreano y bereber.

Los materiales están disponibles en documentos en formato pdf que se pueden descargar o imprimir directamente de la página web. De igual modo, algunos de los materiales están también en formato interactivo. Todo este material está compuesto principalmente de actividades y juegos diseñados no sólo para aprender una segunda lengua, sino también para hacer a las familias y a los profesores a reflexionar sobre la gran ventaja que supone conocer más de un idioma y que va más allá del mero conocimiento de una lengua o de la capacidad de comunicarse con más personas. Entre las ventajas más significativas, destacamos las siguientes:

1. CREATIVIDAD: El plurilingüismo fomenta desarrollo de la creatividad y de una mentalidad más flexible (Kharkhurin, 2012).
2. MENTALIDAD MÁS ABIERTA:Los niños que se han educado en un entorno plurilingüe a menudo desarrollan un interés por otras culturas y valoran las diferencias culturales, lo cual es una competencia muy deseada entre los adultos (Coelho, 2012).

3. FLEXIBILIDAD: Dominar más de un idioma propicia que los niños se sientan cómodos en ambientes diferentes. Fomenta la flexibilidad y la capacidad de adaptación (Cunningham-Andersson, 2011).
4. CAPACIDADES COGNITIVAS: Los niños plurilingües gozan de una mayor flexibilidad cognitiva, de una mejor capacidad de resolución de problemas y de capacidades intelectuales de orden superior. El aprendizaje de idiomas de forma intuitiva y natural puede propiciar que los niños desarrollen una mayor pasión por aprender en general (Baker, 2001).
5. COMUNICACIÓN: El aprendizaje de idiomas ayuda por lo general a mejorar las habilidades comunicativas (Boysson-Bardies, 1999).
6. CONFIANZA: Permitir a los niños ser lo que son (respetando su bagaje cultural y lingüístico) fomenta el desarrollo de una confianza natural en sí mismos. (Cunningham-Andersson, 2011).
7. VISIÓN DEL MUNDO MÁS AMPLIA: El multilingüismo fomenta un estado mental de apertura y una perspectiva más global (Baker, 1998).
8. ENRIQUECIMIENTO: Los inmigrantes no solo poseen su lengua nativa, sino también una gran riqueza de aspectos culturales íntimamente ligados al idioma (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2001).
9. DIVERSIDAD: Los niños plurilingües y los hijos de inmigrantes son un puente para la herencia y la historia de sus diferentes culturas. Pueden dar vida a nuevas historias, así como hacer resurgir tradiciones (Min, 1997).

Uno de los materiales más atractivos lo conforman las actividades interactivas disponibles online para niños de 0 a 6 años y de 6 a10: los *e-story books* disponibles en:
http://www.ourboox.com/books/multilingual-families-estory-book-for-children-0-5/ y
http://www.ourboox.com/books/multilingual-families-estory-book-for-children/



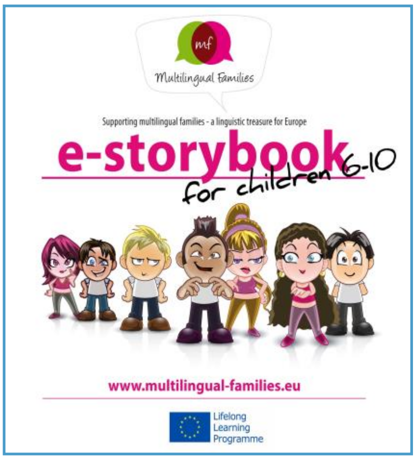


Figura 4. Ejemplo de material interactivo

El equipo del proyecto, compuesto por expertos en multilingüismo y educación multicultural procedentes de seis instituciones educativas europeas, ha trabajado en el mismo durante los años 2013, 2014 y 2015. En la fase inicial del proyecto se ha llevado a cabo un estudio empírico con casi un centenar de familias inmigrantes de varios países europeos en el que se han recogido sus inquietudes, experiencias y sobre todo las necesidades específicas de apoyo que necesitan, necesidades que han servido al equipo del proyecto como punto de partida para el desarrollo del proyecto y la creación de materiales para el mismo.

Todo el material del proyecto ha sido pilotado por varios padres y centros educativos en diferentes partes de Europa y ha recibido excelentes críticas no sólo por parte de los protagonistas del mismo (padres, niños y profesores), sino también por la Comisión Europea que ha seleccionado al proyecto como ejemplo de buenas prácticas de proyectos europeos relacionados con las lenguas extranjeras.

Confiamos en que, con estos resultados y todo el trabajo realizado que es de libre acceso para todos los ciudadanos, hayamos hecho nuestra pequeña-gran aportación en fomentar el mantenimiento de este tesoro lingüístico tan importante para todos los europeos.

Es ahora cuando todo está ya listo para que el proyecto empiece realmente su andadura y los materiales comiencen a explotarse por toda Europa y más allá de sus fronteras. Por tanto, este proyecto está abierto para cualquier familia plurilingüe, docente, director de una asociación, centro o institución educativa, niño o adulto con interés por los idiomas y curiosidad sobre el fascinante mundo del bilingüismo, multilingüismo, la adquisición, aprendizaje y uso de la lengua materna y de una segunda o tercera lengua.

Toda la información del proyecto, materiales creados, descripción detallada de la implementación del mismo en diferentes países europeos y mucho más está disponible en la página web www.multilingual-families.eu.

Figura 5. Imágenes utilizadas en los materiales del proyecto que representan al público meta del mismo

Principales enlaces:

- Página web del proyecto: http://www.multilingual-families.eu/
- Página del proyecto en Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Multilingual.Families
- Email de contacto con el equipo del proyecto en España: multilingual.families.spain@gmail.com

- Materiales para padres:https://sites.google.com/site/multilingualfamiliesprojectes/resultados-del-proyecto/para-padres
- Materiales para los centros educativos: https://sites.google.com/site/multilingualfamiliesprojectes/resultados-del-proyecto/para-profesores
- Materiales para niños:https://sites.google.com/site/multilingualfamiliesprojectes/resultados-del-proyecto/para-ninos
- Materiales de uso general:https://sites.google.com/site/multilingualfamiliesprojectes/resultados-del-proyecto/material-de-uso-general

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Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

PREVENTING HOMOPHOBIA THROUGH ENGLISH IN YEAR 6 OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract
Homophobia is the most common hate crime in our current society and it also exists in the schools. The Spanish educational system is sensitive to this issue: the law recognizes affective-sexual diversity and highlights the importance of overcoming sexist behaviour, so that the students learn to respect and value diversity. There is also homophobic bullying in the last years of Primary education, such as the group of students this project focuses on: twenty-seven sixth graders who study in a bilingual state school located in a working class area of Madrid. Given that this school runs a bilingual program, the objective of this action research project is double: both linguistic and attitudinal: to improve the students' linguistic skills in the target language (English) while carrying out cross-curricular activities referred to the prevention of homophobia and acceptance of diversity. The results show that homophobic attitudes register a lower acceptance from the group of students at the end of the project, which also demonstrates that a foreign language can be used to teach values effectively.

Keywords*:* homophobia, bilingualism, values, diversity, primary education, ESL.

Resumen
La homofobia es el delito de odio más común en nuestra sociedad actual y también existe en la escuela. A pesar de que el sistema educativo español es sensible a esta materia e introduce conceptos como la valoración de la diversidad y la necesidad de vencer los comportamientos sexistas, los comportamientos homófobos también se han extendido a los últimos cursos de Educación Primaria, como ocurre en el grupo de alumnos en el que se centra este trabajo de investigación: veintisiete alumnos de 6º de Primaria matriculados en un colegio público que sigue el proyecto bilingüe de la Comunidad de Madrid. El objetivo de este trabajo de investigación es tanto lingüístico como actitudinal: proporcionar al alumnado oportunidades para mejorar sus destrezas en la lengua inglesa a la vez que se incluyen actividades dirigidas a la prevención de la homofobia y aceptación de la diversidad. Los resultados muestran que las actitudes homófobas registraron una menor aceptación entre los alumnos al final del proyecto, lo que demuestra que una lengua extranjera puede emplearse para la enseñanza de valores de forma efectiva.

Palabras clave: homofobia, bilingüismo, valores, diversidad, Educación Primaria, ESL.

1. Introduction

Hate crime is not a mere anecdote in current Spanish society. The number of incidents linked to hate crime has risen in 2013 up to 1,172 cases, according to the Security Office (Duva, 2014, n.p.) in a report where data from all police groups were gathered, except the Basque autonomous police. Moreover, this report shows that most incidents are related to the sexual orientation of the victim (452 cases), followed by racism (381) disability (290), religion (42), homelessness (4) and anti-Semitism (3). This only refers to situations where the crime has been reported to the police, which is by no means the mainstream tendency in homophobic attacks: just one person out of 10 (10 %) had reported to the authorities the most recent incident of discrimination that they had experienced, as revealed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2013, 20).

In the report, this organization suggests two reasons that could explain why victims do not denounce homophobic attacks: they fear the Security forces and also because they are not openly homosexual. The most dangerous consequence is the impunity of attackers and distrust of victims (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2013, 21).

Dealing with this problem is a must in Primary education, especially if the teacher identifies verbal attacks from some students directed at other children who are thought to be gay or lesbian. In the case of the group of students this project focuses on – twenty-seven sixth graders in a bilingual state school in Madrid– the insult preceded the reality: one boy was identified as gay and received offensive words concerning homosexuality, even if he did not recognize himself as gay.

Tutorial action was needed and carried out, although it did not work at the beginning, and some other measures were necessary. In the context of a bilingual school, implementing a program to teach values through English was a possibility which could be explored. Therefore, the main objective of this action research project is to analyse if a foreign language can be useful to teach values effectively and provide our students with opportunities to acquire a more respectful attitude towards sexual and affective diversity.

2. Focus of the action research project

The main objective of this action research project is to use English to carry out a number of activities aimed at preventing homophobia in a group of students in Year 6 of Primary education, in the context of a bilingual state school located in a working class area in Madrid. At the same time, these activities should enable them to improve their linguistic skills –listening, speaking, reading and writing– in order to succeed in the external examinations they have to take at the end of the academic year.

The reason why this topic was chosen within the context of teaching values in the English class is that some homophobic insults were noticed by the tutor, an issue which was addressed at that moment, by holding a discussion with the students and coming to a double agreement: insulting others is a form of disrespect which every member of the school should avoid and disrespectful words used to refer to homosexuals should not be used in any context. Although the situation was dealt with immediately with apparent success, a new approach was necessary in the long term, both to prevent homophobia and help these students with a deeper understanding and valuing of diversity and respect for others' opinions and tendencies, such as those concerning sexual orientation.

In terms of the curricular objectives, Year 6 students in a bilingual school have to take an external examination at the end of the year to demonstrate level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to be able to join a bilingual section in Secondary education. At this level, users are acquiring the ability to communicate in a limited number of the most familiar situations in which language is used in everyday life. Users at this level need to be able to understand the main points of simple texts, many of which are of the kind needed for survival when travelling or going about in public in a foreign country. At this level, they are expected to use the language for survival and to gain basic points of information (Cambridge English Teaching Support, 2013).

Therefore, the purpose of this action research project is double: linguistic and attitudinal: to improve the students' linguistic skills while carrying out cross-curricular activities related to the prevention of homophobic bullying so that they learn to adopt more respectful attitudes towards diversity.

2.1 The school

This action research project has been carried out in a bilingual state school named CEIP Santo Domingo, where the bilingual programme was implemented in 2007 and gradually reached Year 6 in 2013. This means that all Primary students are immersed in the bilingual programme and receive ten hours of lessons in English per week: English, Science and Arts & Crafts. There is a staff of twenty-eight teachers and the bilingual programme is developed by eight teachers plus four language assistants.

2.2 The group of students

This project is focused on a group of twenty-seven pupils who study Year 6 of Primary education. There are twenty-three students who have been learning English since they were three years old. It can be described as a multi-ethnic and multicultural group due to the fact that there are fifteen students born to Spanish parents and six from South American families (Ecuador and Bolivia). Three students have a Spanish parent and the other one was born in a foreign country (Colombia and United Kingdom). In addition to this, there are three gypsy students who do not come to school on a regular basis and have some learning difficulties even in their mother tongue.

As far as the level of English is concerned, only one student failed the subject of English in the first term and all of them passed Science and Arts and Crafts. In general terms, it can be said that there are eight fast learners, eleven average, three slow learners and five students who repeated year 6 and are not integrated in the bilingual program. The English teacher, who is also the manager of the bilingual programme in the school, carries out activities aimed at the development of the four basic skills on a weekly basis.

As mentioned above, some homophobic insults among students had been noticed in class, and they were always addressed to one student whose level of integration in the group is not bad. The verbal attackers are three boys and the victim is another boy who has some 'queer' or affected manners when talking and interacting with others. He does not like football and all his friends are girls. From the teacher's point of view, he is happy and feels quite relaxed in class. However, despite being the focus of homophobic insults, he is not openly gay.

Before implementing this program, the teacher used to deal with this issue by stopping the class and having a talk with the whole group. The victim was not singled out in front of the class, although he used to feel more relieved afterwards. The problem was only managed by the teacher in the context of the class, and it did not reach other stages such as the headmaster or head of studies. However, the teacher realised that this procedure lacked long-term effectiveness, due to the fact that the students' role in this case was very passive: they just had to listen/pretend they were listening to the teacher's talk, and appear to acquiesce. Nevertheless, a deeper understanding and change of values and attitudes was not being achieved.

3. Objectives

3.1 General aim

Under our current educational law, teachers are asked to work on values such as diversity and respect, as well as to develop our students' affective capacities in all aspects of their personality and their relationships with others, as well as develop an attitude against violence, prejudices of any kind and sexist stereotypes (LOE, 2006). The new Spanish educational law, LOMCE, enacted by the Popular party, has eliminated from the legal text certain expressions which were included in the previous law, such as "affective capacities", "sexist stereotypes" and the recognition of affective-sexual diversity. However, the LOMCE still includes in its introduction concepts such as "equality of rights and opportunities which help to overcome any kind of discrimination (…) education to prevent conflicts and the pacific resolution of these (…) non-violence in all scenarios: personal, family, social and, especially, bullying (…) development of values aimed at the effective equality between men and women; prevention of gender violence" (Preámbulo LOMCE, 2013; my translation).

The nature of our subject, English, allows teachers to include a wide variety of topics in the class so that the students can improve their communicative skills. Therefore this project pursues promoting the students' abilities in English at the same time as teaching values and preventing homophobia.

3.2 Educational objectives

This general aim can be subdivided into more concrete objectives:

- Using the target language in a bilingual school where students learn in English and Spanish, to teach values and cultural awareness (prevention of homophobic attitudes and acceptance of diversity) in a real and effective way, by carrying out a variety of activities in the context of the English class.
- Collecting and analyzing some data about the level of homophobia in a group of 23 students aged 11-12 who study in a state school in Madrid, both at the beginning and at the end of the action research project.
- Helping this group of students develop their linguistic skills in English as a foreign language as well as preparing them for the external examinations they are taking at the end of the year.
- Developing a sense of community in the group of students by making them reflect, discuss and talk about concepts such as diversity, acceptance and respect, among others.

4. Development

4.1 Initial evaluation

Students were handed out a survey containing questions about acceptance of other cultures and people coming from different countries, religions, races and sexual diversity. They did it on February

3rd, 2014. They had to say if they totally agree/agree/ disagree/ totally disagree with a list of statements, which enabled the teacher to measure the level of acceptance of diversity in the group before carrying out this project. Moreover, the same survey was handed out again after having done all the activities, to see if there were any changes in their opinions.

Concerning the contents of the survey, it not only contains questions related to homosexuality but also other aspects linked with diversity (religion, races, other cultures and countries…), since sexual diversity is only one among many issues concerning the acceptance of differences.

4.1.1 Results of the initial evaluation

The survey shows some interesting data about the students' acceptance of other cultures and diversity in general. This was used to plan the different activities aimed at helping our students develop their personality and affective skills. Some results must be highlighted, as follows: 75% of students disagree with the idea that a girl can have a girlfriend, and 60% of them have the same opinion about homosexual boys. 80% of students would not tell their family if they were gay/lesbian and 66% think that homosexuals cannot have a family and be as good parents as heterosexual people. 45% agree with the idea that gay people are likely to be insulted, kicked or abused. In addition to this, 45% of students feel that insulting others might be correct if we feel the necessity or find a reason to do it.

Nonetheless, most students appear to feel very happy in a multicultural environment: 83% of students feel curious about other cultures, countries and lifestyles and 71% do not mind if another person is black, Asian or South American, or has a different religion. 60% think that people can have different opinions which should be respected by the rest, and most of them do not think they are always right (74%).

These results show us that, in general terms, racism and xenophobia have been overcome in this group of students, although other aspects need some reinforcement, such as homophobia. One reason could be that the school provides the students with many opportunities to meet children from different cultures from the time they enter the school at the age of three. Furthermore, cultural diversity is present in the coursebook; although affective diversity is not a common topic at school even if the students start to perceive gender stereotypes when they are very young.

4.2 Activities

Once results from the initial evaluation were obtained, the whole lesson plan started a week later, February 10th, 2014. The tasks were carried out on a regular basis, once every week (in an English class) and finished on May 5th, 2014. Most activities planned for the project were not new for the teacher, since they had been also put into practice the year before with fourth graders in the same school. Provided that the students' opinions are an important part of this project, which requires flexibility when dealing with the time, most activities would require half an hour but it actually took a longer time to carry them out because of the discussions held in class. There are seven activities in total, although the last one, devoted to the improvement of the students' writing skills, is divided into three different parts.

The activities which form part of this project are divided in four groups, according to the main linguistic skills they promote: listening, reading, writing and speaking. As far as the groupings are concerned, the activities were carried out individually, in pairs, small groups and the whole class, because it is important that students practise different ways of interaction. These different groupings may differ in the objectives: for example, communication will be more promoted in pairwork and groupwork rather than in individual tasks, whereas accuracy in writing may be better achieved in individual activities. The grouping system depended on the kind of skill that is promoted in each activity. In order to meet the objectives, the activities have to be clear, varied and sufficient; well balanced (adapted to the children's level, to their learning stage and to their interests) and appropriate, being adjusted to the students' individual needs.

Furthermore, this project aims at providing the students with opportunities to enjoy learning and activate their thinking skills, which is why certain games and videos have been also included. Given that communication in the class is of paramount importance, reflections were always followed by a discussion where the students could share their ideas and learn from one another.

Concerning the different activities, the students played two games (an ice-breaker and a revision game to clarify contents), saw a movie after which they had to write a script and they held a discussion after watching another video. They also participated in a role play about different types of families, learnt about the gypsy culture by means of a text and another discussion and, at the end, wrote a letter and a story where they were asked to reflect about all the ideas they had been working on.

5. Qualitative impressions

Observation and an analysis of the students' performance in the different activities can also clarify their level of achievement in this action research project, from the teacher's point of view. To do so, it is essential to study how they carried out each task, as follows:

In the first activity, 'Step Forward', students had to identify roles of people who might suffer different kinds of discrimination. The discussion held afterwards was the most important step of the task, and it was necessary that they share their opinions with the rest of the class. They were able to identify discrimination in the cases of poverty (beggar) and handicapped people (the person who has a wheel chair): "They cannot go to the Eiffel tower because the beggar has no money and the handicapped person cannot go upstairs", a student said.

Concerning the remaining roles, they linked the situation of the illegal immigrant with poverty more and found it difficult to identify gender discrimination (the case of the successful businesswoman, who was not allowed to run a company where only men worked, according to the students' thoughts). From their point of view, a gay boy can visit a small town holding hands with his partner, but they are sure he will suffer attacks by other people. When they were asked to step into these people's shoes in each situation, some adjectives popped in, such as "sad", "angry" and "scared". To finish, the teacher's impression is that they felt bad but were not able to explain the reason: a common answer was “I would feel bad, but I don’t know why”, especially in the cases of the businesswoman and the gay boy.

In the second activity, ‘Gender Backpack’ they had to come up with different ideas and thoughts which promote gender discrimination, such as ‘blue is for boys, pink is for girls. This activity was great fun for them, much more than the previous game. They found it difficult to mention gender stereotypes, which had to be prompted by the teacher: colours blue/pink, aggressive, relaxed, clean, football, videogames, cry, sensitive… They were perfectly able to associate each stereotype with the correct gender, which is the basis of the task. When the teacher (a man) circled several characteristics from each gender (blue, sensitive, relaxed), when describing himself, they were able to understand that a person can have characteristics from both genders.

An issue can be highlighted: all students agreed on the idea that cleaning is more typical of women than men, but the teacher asked the girls: ‘Do you like cleaning?’ And all of them said: ‘No!’ So the teacher wondered: ‘Why do we always associate cleaning with women if, for example, no girls in this group like cleaning?’ And they understood it was only a stereotype which had to be tackled.

They also showed a good attitude towards the following task, which involved watching a scene from the film *Billy Elliot*, which the students loved. In fact, they asked the teacher to watch the whole movie in other sessions. Most students considered that Billy should be allowed to dance, although it is thought to be a girlish hobby. In fact, some students raised their hands in class to give examples about their families: a boy said that his mother used to be a runner when she was younger. There was one student who did not like that Billy was a ballet dancer, “because that’s for girls”. The teacher asked the class if they thought the same, and some students said that anyone should be allowed to be a ballet dancer. “You have to do what you like”, a male student answered.

Nonetheless, they also understood the position of the father: ‘he is older’, they said. The adjective ‘old-fashioned’ was uttered more than once that day. Another issue was discussed in class: girls who like playing football. A girl said that a student in Year 5 plays football very well, whereas some other boys do not like that sport. The teacher also mentioned that he is a boy and does not like football. To sum up, a majority of students thought that all hobbies were good for both boys and girls, and they were able to deal with stereotyped conceptions in this context.

The following activity, ‘Stand up’, was not very close to the students’ reality. They watched the video about homophobic bullying and analyzed the different roles in it, but no one knew any cases of homophobic bullying in their environment. The teacher said that there was some sort of homophobic bullying when they call each other *‘marica’, ‘maricón’,* etcetera, but it was hard for them to see any similarities. Then, the teacher had to talk about verbal violence, and some of them understood. The problem is that many students only identify violence with physical attacks.

In the video, they perfectly understood the absence of the figure of the teacher, because they all agreed on the idea that these situations are not told to adults. They liked the reaction of the students who gave support to the gay boys, and in that moment the teacher introduced a new idea: there are very few homophobic students in schools, but they normally show that they do not like gay people. Then, the vast majority of students kept quiet. The teacher insisted on the importance of defending classmates who are suffering unfair situations (like homophobic bullying), but they said that it was not easy to be brave enough to do so, “because the bully can also kick you”.

One student said that two boys should not be allowed to walk holding hands because “that’s not correct”. This means that he was not able to give a good reason, only that it was not correct. He showed some more homophobic reactions in other activities and the teacher used to stop the class and use his comment to show and give examples of more respectful points of view. However, he was not singled out by the rest of the class, which might appear to be wrong but it was actually positive, since a relaxed and warm atmosphere is essential to carrying out this project and, moreover, all the pupils understood that their answers were accepted and respected. In fact, these ‘homophobic’ attitudes are the ones which must appear in class and be discussed within the context of the session, with the rest of the students. It is really hard to make the students change some fossilized thoughts and ideas but, at least, they realized that there are more points of view concerning certain topics such as homophobia and gender stereotypes, not only theirs, which have to be respected.

In the following task, ‘Coloured families’[1] students were asked to identify different types of families (monoparental, heteroparental, homoparental) on a poster. It was an easy activity for the students, in terms of the objectives concerning diversity. There are very few ‘traditional’ families’ in the class, because many parents are divorced or have drifted apart. However, some students found it strange to have two fathers or two mothers, and the teacher highlighted “the importance of being loved, no matter who’s loving you”. They could perfectly see which gender stereotypes were broken by the characters of the poster; however, surprisingly, they reproduced most gender stereotypes in the following part of the task, role plays: angry and strong fathers, caring mothers, very active boys and quiet girls… The impression of the teacher is that gender stereotypes were fossilized in their minds so it would take some time to help the students get rid of them. This can be approached with further action in the future, as explained in another chapter of this project.

The following activity, ‘Gypsy Boy’, which consisted of reading a text about two gypsy boys who loved each other, was a very interesting one for the students, because they got to know a little bit more about the culture of the three gypsy students in the class. Given the fact that these gypsy students do not belong to the bilingual program, it was necessary to use Spanish. As far as the gypsy culture is concerned, the students confessed certain prejudices against that culture, although they showed a very respectful attitude towards their gypsy classmates, not well integrated in the group. Two students did not like the idea of seeing a gay couple kissing one another, ‘because it’s disgusting’, they said in Spanish. This situation is perfect to tackle homophobia. The teacher asked if their parents are allowed to kiss one another in the street, and they agreed. Then, the teacher added: “So, if your parents are allowed to kiss the person they love, why can’t a gay boy or a lesbian girl kiss the person they love? Is that fair?” Those students confessed it was not fair, but they found it awkward.

[1] Material educativo titulado ‘Familias de Colores’ en español, desarrollado de forma conjunta por el sindicato Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) y la Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FLGTB).

The overall impression of the teacher is that the students who show a more homophobic attitude are starting to see other points of view, which is a great achievement, although it will take a little bit longer to erase that attitude forever. An example of that initial change is that they did not complain about working on this project and also they started to accept others' opinions and, at least, listen to them and react respectfully.

To finish the whole project, the students carried out a writing task which they did not like very much, because they feel lazy when they have to write in English (also in Spanish). It was hard for them to give a definition in English of some words such as *stereotype* or *homophobia*. They preferred to give examples, which also allowed the teacher to check if they had understood the word. They also had to write a note to a boy who is suffering homophobic bullying in class and no students complained about having to give support to a gay classmate. All of them showed a sympathetic attitude. When asked to give him a piece of advice, most students encouraged him to feel free to do what he wanted to do, and added that he should call the police, a teacher or his parents if he notices a bad reaction from other students. "You are good", some students wrote. The students who had shown homophobic attitudes during the whole project also achieved the objectives: they gave Matt some support and invited him home for dinner. However, they struggled at giving advice.

6. Assessment

Apart from the initial and final evaluation, assessment and formative feedback are of paramount importance in this action research project, since they will help the students react against their homophobic comments and beliefs and, therefore, change their minds to a more open and respectful perspective.

The assessment criteria for each activity are essential because they will help the teacher understand and bear in mind which objectives the students need to achieve. As a teaching technique, he ticked in his notebook which students had not achieved certain assessment criteria in each activity, especially those ones referred to diversity. Given that the initial evaluation consisted of an anonymous survey, this procedure helped him to identify the most homophobic attitudes in the class.

In general, the objectives were rather realistic and most students were able to achieve them. Nevertheless, some homophobic attitudes appeared in the class –not very often– and those occasions were suitable to start teaching values, as follows: the teacher stopped the class and the focus of the lesson was the homophobic comment at that moment. The teacher repeated the comment aloud, always in a respectful way, because it is very important that the students feel free and comfortable to say whatever they think. Then the teacher asked other students if they shared that idea, and let the class discuss the issue, keeping quiet if possible and allowing the children to share their thoughts. He always concluded the discussion with a positive and tolerant comment, for example: "Opinions are free, but we have to respect other opinions so that everyone feels happy and accepted".

Another useful technique was to revise previous activities and talk about feelings, which are much more instinctive, especially when dealing with gender stereotypes and gay couples, for example: "Can you remember when we watched the video *'Stand up'*? How would you feel if the rest of students laughed at you because you're holding hands with another boy?" By making the students step into somebody else's shoes and asking them how they would feel in certain situation, they are starting to be more sympathetic and sensitive to other realities.

Finally, the teacher gave a second opportunity to those students who were not on the right track to pass a certain assessment criterion in the activity. They normally understood what answer the teacher wanted and, to be honest, the teacher is not sure if their more positive reaction was real. Nevertheless, changing a very homophobic attitude is hard and takes a very long time.

7. Final evaluation

After carrying out all the activities in class, the same survey was handed out to the students in order to see if their opinions concerning affective diversity had changed. They did it on May 12th, 2014. They had some days in between to assimilate some concepts and come out with their own thoughts and perspectives. The results are presented below:

There is a tendency to accept homosexual relationships: Only 30% of students disagree/ totally disagree with the idea that a girl can have a girlfriend (before the project was carried out, 75% of the students had this thought). Concerning boys, 25% do not approve gay relationships (60% before the project). Nevertheless, homophobia is present in their environment, since most students (70%) would not tell their families if they were gay/lesbian. This aspect has not changed if compared to the beginning of the process.

As far as homoparental families are concerned, a change can be noticed: most students (62%) consider that homosexuals can make a family and be as good parents as heterosexual people. Only 38% of students disagree/totally disagree with this idea, 28 percentage points less than before starting the project. It is remarkable that no one totally disagrees with the statement and 5 students did so in the initial evaluation.

An important issue was the students' attitude concerning homophobia at school. Only 9% of students agree/totally agree with the idea that gay people can be insulted, kicked or abused (45% expressed this idea in the initial evaluation). It is also interesting to highlight that 12% consider that insulting others might be correct if they feel the necessity or find a reason to do it (45% expressed this idea in the initial evaluation).

Summing up, all the statements presenting homophobic attitudes registered a lower acceptance from the group of students, which was the key objective of this project. An issue which needs further work would be the acceptance of affective diversity in the family framework.

Other aspects linked with diversity (religion, races, other cultures and countries…) were fairly well accepted at the beginning of the project. In the initial evaluation, 83% of students felt curious about other cultures, countries and lifestyles and most of them did not think they were always right (74%). 60% thought that people could have different opinions which should be respected by the rest, and 71% did not mind if another person was black, Asian or South American, or has a different religion. In the final evaluation, these results do not undergo a significant change.

Although the results obtained in the final evaluation make sense if compared with the initial survey, it is also possible that a number of students did not show what they really think in their answers, but gave the answer the teacher expected them to mark. The condition of anonymity pursues authentic answers; however, personal interviews with every student could be also held to check the results obtained in the final evaluation. Another option might be to develop other questions which indirectly address the same issue, to cross check.

8. Conclusions

An analysis of the level of achievement of the educational objectives which were set at the beginning leads to the conclusions of this action research project. To start with, the students were able to reflect individually in class and, which is even more important, express their own ideas in the target language. While carrying out every single activity, key issues such as diversity, acceptance, respect and homophobia were raised and the students had many opportunities to talk about them, either in small groups or with the whole class. It is notable that the general behaviour of the students improved, in comparison with the previous period of the year. One reason might be that the students got used to respecting others and others' opinions and points of view while carrying out the project. They reflected on their feelings and the whole group talked about equality of opportunities, diversity in different contexts and the importance of creating a warm atmosphere where everyone feels happy and relaxed.

Regarding the development of the linguistic skills and the students' preparation for Cambridge examinations, the activities included in this action research project made all the pupils write, listen, speak and read in English. Different groupings were involved in order to help the students practise English in a variety of situations. The chronological and logical development of the four skills was followed: listening at the beginning, reading and speaking and, at the end, writing activities where the students could reflect on the whole project and organize all the information on a piece of paper.

Concerning the external examinations (KET/PET), twenty students of this group took them in order to demonstrate an A2/B1 level of English, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. As explained before, both exams test the students' abilities in terms of the four skills. Seven students took PET exam (higher level than KET) and thirteen took KET. It was the English teacher who decided the exam each student would take.

In the test, four students demonstrated level B1 and twelve demonstrated level A2, which allowed all of them to join a bilingual section next year in 1º ESO. The remaining four students demonstrated level A1, but two of them are going to repeat Year 6. The results in Cambridge examinations cannot be compared with other years, since this is the first group which has reached Year 6 on the bilingual track. However, according to the Education Council of Madrid, around 80% of students demonstrated at least level A2 in these examinations, which is exactly the percentage of students in this school.

Moreover, all the activities were carried out according to the planning, no incidents were registered during the sessions and the students' attitude and behaviour in class was correct and respectful. As far as the organization of the project is concerned, some aspects might be changed in the future: asking the students to create definitions is a very hard task, even in their native language. Instead of that, they can be asked to put examples or brainstorm words regarding that concept. Peer-pressure is also an aspect which needs to be taken into account in the future: some students might not feel free to say what they really think in the sessions, because they are afraid of their classmates' reactions if, for example, they defend a gay friend or have a relative who is not heterosexual (contagion of the stigma). This can be solved by creating a very warm atmosphere where all interventions by the students are respectful, accepted and praised, since they are helping to build knowledge. Approaching this problem from a different perspective, for example, forcing the students to give an opinion or guiding the content of their answers, would only raise the pupils' affective filter and they might be afraid of giving their real opinions.

The most important conclusions are those linked with the results of the final evaluation: the level of homophobia has seemed to decrease in this group of students after having carried out an action research project focusing on affective diversity. Homosexuality was avoided by 67.5% of students at the beginning of the project, a percentage which seemed to reduce 40 points at the end of it (27.5% of the students did not accept that a boy can have a boyfriend or a girl can have a girlfriend). In the context of the school, homophobic attacks are supported only by 9% of students after carrying out the project, versus 45% of students who supported this at the beginning.

Finally, the results of this action research project show that a foreign language –English, in the case of most bilingual schools in Madrid and many other places– can be used to teach values effectively and deal with homophobic attitudes in class. By working in English, students not only had the opportunity to improve their communicative skills in the target language, but also went a step further: they were able to assimilate a new perspective concerning social values and respect towards diversity. Through English, they learnt that there is a wide variety of types of families: not only heterosexual, but also homoparental, among others. The key idea is to respect other lifestyles and treat those people the same as 'we' want to be treated. In addition to this, the students' homophobic attitude at school seemed to have been changed by working on this project. As mentioned above in the final evaluation, more students seemed to censure homophobic attacks at school than at the beginning of the project.

9. Reflections for the future

Teaching values effectively requires time and work for years. Transforming someone's criteria to face reality is a hard task which cannot be finished in weeks or months. Therefore, this action research project was only the first step to help this group of students become more open minded and value diversity in general as well as avoid homophobic attacks and attitudes in particular. Certain issues will need to be reinforced in the future, such as gender stereotypes and the concept of violence. The first one is hard to be dealt with, since the current society provides citizens with many examples of gender stereotypes in publicity, politics, TV programs and series, for example. Moreover, the Spanish society used to be much more male chauvinist decades ago and that conception still survives in the current generations.

The second topic, violence, is crucial to be analyzed in class in the future, due to the fact that many students only identify violence with physical attacks, not bad words or insults which are addressed to someone, and might cause harm as well. Working on this will be of paramount importance and there are a wide range of activities aiming at this issue: role plays, techniques to react assertively, analysis of videos, among others, which could help the students realize that words can be as harmful as punches.

There is also room for improvement of the techniques used to analyze the students' final evaluation. Provided that some pupils might be tempted to answer 'what the teacher wants me to answer', some other tools could be used in further studies: individual in-depth interviews to the students at the beginning and end of the project might help to identify who is homophobic under which circumstances and the level of that homophobia, whereas a different survey including a wider variety of questions would help to cross check answers.

Nevertheless, and given that homophobia is not a common topic to deal with in class, the important issue is to raise such a big problem at school: pronouncing such taboo words at school like gay, lesbian, homophobia or talking about gender stereotypes imply a huge step in the context of the current society. Some students will probably continue to feel homophobia, but they will also realize that their point of view is not unique anymore: some other perspectives, much more respectful, are becoming important and widespread as well, and that is also a huge step. Teaching values and changing people's minds to a more diverse reality requires time. Being aware of that obstacle and taking it into account is the first step to being successful when carrying out any projects of this nature.

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APPENDIX A:

LESSON PLAN: 'GENDER BACKPACK'

- Linguistic objective: To express external and internal obligation by using *have to* and *must.* To express reasons and cause/ effect by using *because* and *so*. To use *however*, *but* and *on the other hand* to express adversative ideas.

- Objectives concerning diversity: To identify traditional roles of boys and girls and understand that anyone can have characteristics which traditionally belong to the other sex. The main aim is to see that gender roles are essentially false because nobody fulfils 100% the features of his/her gender. Everyone has his/her own personality and that has to be respected, the same way we should respect and accept other behaviours and attitudes, no matter if they are performed by a girl or a boy.

- Topics: Features of gender; male, female. External and internal obligation: *have to* and *must*. Cause/ effect and expression of reasons: *so* and *because*. Opposite ideas: *however*, *on the other hand*.

- Procedure:

  A) STAGE 1: The teacher drew on the blackboard two big circles and the headings 'boys' and 'girls'. Afterwards he told the class that they had to brainstorm features and characteristics which are traditionally associated with boys or girls, and gave four examples to check if the class has understood the task: blue clothes, pink clothes, brave, caring. Students had to say in which circle they could classify these four ideas and why. Moreover, they had to write down on a piece of paper eight more examples for each gender. Their ideas were shared with the whole class afterwards. Some examples were: aggressive, playing football, playing with dolls, relaxed, active, doing the chores, playing videogames, earning money, taking care of the family, crying (see Appendix B).

  B) STAGE 2: When the choral list was ready, the teacher told the class his own characteristics from the ones written on the blackboard, and tried to choose some from each circle. For example, "I am a boy but I don't like playing football, but I am active… I like blue clothes but I also have a pink T-shirt". Two volunteers (a girl and a boy) did the same: describe themselves as accurately as possible, no matter if they chose features which are linked with the opposite gender. The teacher highlighted the importance of realising that most people have features which traditionally belong to the other gender, for example: girls who like playing football, boys who have cried, girls who don't like doing the chores, boys who have played with dolls. Concerning this issue, some students gave interesting information about themselves: for example, a boy said that he used to play with dolls with his female cousin when they were younger.

C) STAGE 3: In the end, most students understood that the two circles are false, because all boys have some female characteristics the same way that all girls will have male characteristics. The most important thing is that we accept others and do not become gender policemen/women: people who call the attention of a person who performs an action that is traditionally associated with the other gender.

- Assessment criteria: Students have to be able to:
  - Identify three actions which are traditionally associated with boys/ girls. - Recognise one of his/her own characteristics which is traditionally associated with the other gender.
  - Show a respectful attitude towards people who are 'breaking' gender laws, by focusing on the importance of feeling free and being loyal to oneself.

APPENDIX B:

BOYS	GIRLS
Play videogames	Clean and do the chores
Active	Relaxed
Aggressive	Sensitive – cry
Football	Basketball
Blue	Pink
Play with cars	Play with dolls
Earn money	Take care of the family

Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

NEW LISTENING STRATEGIES FOR A NEW GENERATION: USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO UPDATE LISTENING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

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Resumen

La comprensión auditiva, como destreza especial del campo de la enseñanza de lenguas, es una habilidad difícil de enseñar y aprender. Últimamente, además, se ha convertido en un desafío aún mayor, debido al uso generalizado de una lengua "real", con sonidos ambiente, una velocidad de conversación natural, dubitaciones, interrupciones, uso de diversos acentos…Este articulo resume y refleja la necesidad de mejorar la "metacognición" a través de la enseñanza de estrategias auditivas según se ha visto en investigaciones recientes centradas en el complejo proceso cognitivo que implica la comprensión auditiva. No solo se tiene que prestar atención a las habilidades de percepción y a un enfoque "bottom-up", también hay que tener en cuenta las estrategias "top-down". Debido a las dificultades encontradas en el entendimiento de textos orales por parte de los estudiantes y considerando los avances en la tecnología, se debería tener más en cuenta un mayor uso de materiales audiovisuales, ya que ayudan a una mejor contextualización y proporcionan mayores pistas visuales, para un mejor entendimiento por parte de los alumnos. El material audiovisual está más al alcance en la vida cotidiana de nuestros alumnos y debería ser un recurso más aprovechado por los profesores de idiomas, para poder desarrollar así las habilidades auditivas de los alumnos.

Palabras clave: la enseñanza, comprensión auditiva, audiovisual, las estrategias, la tecnología.

Abstract

Listening, as a discrete skill within language teaching, is recognized as a difficult skill to learn and teach. It has perhaps become more challenging recently due to the current emphasis on using 'real' language, with background noise, at a natural speed, with hesitations, interruptions, fillers etc. combined with the use of a variety of accents. This article summarises and reflects on research which has focused on both the complex cognitive processes involved in listening and the need to improve students metacognition through the teaching of listening strategies. While perception skills and bottom-up approaches to listening need to be attended to, top-down strategies also need to be taught. Given the difficulties experienced by learners in understanding oral texts, and advances in technology, video materials should be exploited more than audio, as they help set context and provide many visual clues enabling listeners to understand more easily. Video has become far more accessible and present in the everyday lives of our students and should be exploited more by (English) language teachers to develop their listening skills.

Keywords: teaching, listening, video, listening strategies, technology.

1. The development of listening as a separate skill

Teaching listening as a separate skill within English Language Teaching has only existed since the late 1960s, and has changed a great deal since those days. The listening component first entered the Cambridge First Certificate exam in 1970 and until 1984 listening texts were simply written texts read aloud (Fields, 2008). According to Osada (2004), in the 1970s the status of listening increased from being "peripheral" to being of "central importance", in the 80s researchers became " increasingly interested in exploring the intricacies of this complex skill" and in the 90s attention to the skill "increased dramatically". It has been increasingly acknowledged as a highly active skill rather than a passive one.

Communicative teaching methods, alongside major developments in technology, have contributed towards changing the teaching of listening. Furthermore, recent research has focused more on the process of listening rather than the product, and has encouraged the use of metacognitive strategies in listening comprehension. The original model developed in those early days including pre-listening, listening and post-listening tasks has been developed, although that basic structure remains predominant in the language classroom. However, just as the widespread availability of tape-recorders and language laboratories facilitated an emphasis on listening as a discrete and important skill in itself within language teaching, the recent revolutions in technology and their widespread availability now enable further changes and modernisations in listening comprehension teaching methods. Teachers and students must take full advantage of new technologies to update and improve methods used to help students with their listening comprehension skills.

It now seems outdated, for example, to rely so heavily on audio, and so little on video. Authenticity of texts and tasks has become a key concept in the field of English language teaching recently, and yet in modern day life, especially among the young people who we predominantly teach, video through the Internet (YouTube and videos posted on other websites and social networks), television series and film make up a large part of media which is being accessed, more so than audio content such as radio and podcasts. This changing cultural / technological scene should be exploited by English language teachers to improve our students' listening skills.

2. The cognitive processes involved in listening

Listening is a completely different skill from reading in part due to its transitory nature. This makes it more challenging because students cannot go back over something they are not sure about, they can not control the speed, if they 'get stuck' on a word or two they will have then missed the next part. It also requires good short-term memory to retain the previous information. Besides this, listening to monologues or dialogues in a classroom situation does not allow learners to use any communication strategies to clarify meaning or ask the speaker to repeat or slow down. In other words it is easy to fail to understand, as there are many hurdles to overcome when listening. Research into this area of the cognitive processes involved in listening by Anderson (1995; as cited in Goh 2000 p.56), Goh (2000) and Vandergrift (2004), amongst others, shows the complexity of these processes. Employing top-down strategies in listening require the use of world knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and knowledge of the context and of the speaker operating within it, as necessary elements to enable learners to tackle listening texts, and achieve overall comprehension. All of this information helps learners to infer overall meaning from oral texts. Bottom-up processes involve understanding the phonemes, the words, the chunks of language and the discourse. Vandergrift (2004) concludes that both top-down and bottom-up processes "interact freely with each other to help listeners construct a meaningful interpretation of what they hear" (2004:14). Learners may use the two approaches simultaneously. He advocates the need for a balance between these two approaches as the key to successful second language listening.

3. The difficulties of listening in L2.

Given the complex cognitive processes involved, listening is indeed a difficult skill to teach and to research, given its covert nature (we are unable to see the processes involved). Add to this the fact that the emphasis on using true-to-life conversations, with background noise, at a natural speed, with hesitations, interruptions, fillers etc. of real speeches and conversations, combined with the recent emphasis on exposing listeners to different accents, (rather than the outdated Received Pronunciation), have all made listening an even more difficult skill to acquire. The listening process is often anxiety-producing as a result. In short, there are many factors which can lead to a breakdown in comprehension. Anecdotally, in my University we have noticed students complaining about the difficulty of listening, more than the other three skills, despite candidates having plenty of practice using current listening comprehension teaching methods, and therefore analysing the possible reasons for this and seeking ways to overcome these difficulties is important.

4. New technologies for a new generation: video as an aid to assist listening comprehension.

Using video would be a way of aiding students with using top-down processes to decipher listening texts, by providing visual information such as body language, gestures, expressions and other vital clues regarding the contexts, the speakers, and all of the information which has to be provided during the pre-listening stage to enable students to actívate the schemata, understand the context, relationship between the speakers etc. Using video mirrors real-life situations more accurately than having to listen 'blindly, without any visual clues. In reality, nowadays, video communication technology such as Skype is overtaking the use of landlines (Graddol, 2006), on-demand video content is used more than radio, and so on, while a wide range of authentic video content is now available to teachers to use in class, and students at home, providing there is Internet access. Overdependence on audio should be a thing of the past and could help compensate for the increased demands on students due to the use of authentic features in listening texts. Furthermore, using video as a tool for developing listening skills can be motivating and interesting for students. By providing the links to the videos online, students can watch again at home after class, if necessary.

5. Are top-down or bottom-up strategies most important to teach?

Osada (2001, as cited in Vandergrift, 2004 p.8) argues for more emphasis on using a top-down cognitive processing approach because beginner learners cannot construct overall meaning when they are still deciphering speech at a word-by-word basis and are not able to process the auditory information, the connected speech, in real-time. They have to learn to infer meaning, and learn to listen for gist using a top-down approach. Osada believes that there is an over-emphasis on bottom-up processing. Opinions differ as to which approach should be emphasised. In Goh's (2000) study of Chinese learners and her analysis of why they failed to understand listening texts, it was shown that of the ten top problems that the students faced which led to a breakdown in understanding listening texts, five were linked to perceptual processing (with three linked to parsing and two to utilisation). For example, they did not recognise words they knew (they recognised them by sight but not by sound, or had remembered their pronunciation or word stress wrongly).This study shows that bottom-up processing is vital in understanding listening texts too. In fact both approaches are important and this depends somewhat on the nature of the listening task, whether it requires listening for specific information or for gist (overall meaning) for example.

6. Helping students to learn to listen.

Training in perception skills, then, is vital to successful listening. Students have to learn to identify words and identify them within connected speech. Hulstjin (2003: as cited in Vandergrift,2004 p.14) argues for the emphasis to be put on bottom-up skills such as word recognition and word segmentation, and alongside colleagues has developed a software programme (123LISTEN) which allows teachers to segment digitized video or audio texts into short chunks, with each chunk accompanied by a transcript. Students can use this tool to practise alone, by listening and trying to understand before consulting the text display to verify their predictions. This perception training, a vital part of learning to listen, particularly when listening for specific information, can be practised independently by students at their own pace, using this software or similar technologies or websites. Krashen referred to the concept of 'narrow listening' (1996: as cited in Vandergrift, 2004 p. 16) whereby students choose the type of oral texts they are interested in, in order to listen extensively. Large amounts of comprehensible input are essential for students in language learning, he argued. Using DVDs or TV on demand with subtitles in English is one way of doing this and again, the advances in technology enable learners to access these authentic listening/viewing materials, through language options on smart TVs, as well as DVDs and websites on laptops, tablets or mobile phones. Markham, Peter and McCarthy (2001: as cited in Vandergrift, 2004 p. 7) compared the effects of using captions on intermediate-level learners of Spanish and found that those watching with English subtitles outperformed those watching with Spanish subtitles and they, in turn, outperformed those with no captions, and therefore they recommended students to progress through this cycle of using L1 captions to L2 captions, in order to practise and improve their listening.

7. Metacognitive strategies in listening

Vandergrift (2004) has linked metacognitive strategies to the stages of listening instruction within a lesson. These stages and strategies are vital in teaching students how to listen and for them to be aware of the processes involved so that they can use the strategies at home with their own authentic texts. Using predicting as a pre-listening activity, then monitoring their predictions during a first listening, comparing what they have written with peers, and deciding what other details they need to know, and then verifying again through a second listening, and later discussing results as a whole class to reconstruct or re-tell the details of the listening text, with a final reflection stage, together make up a logical way of constructing a sequence of learning events. This more developed approach of making students aware of the metacognitive processes involved in listening can indeed help students to learn how to listen effectively and is a learning process that students can then use independently using authentic resources which they can access via the Internet. It has been proposed as a way of shifting the emphasis away from the need to get correct answers (the product) onto the processes involved in effective listening, and in doing so could empower the learner to learn independently. The limitations of this process approach are that it is “presently only supported by anecdotal evidence and qualitative studies, which show positive student attitudes and growing metacognitive awareness of the process of listening”, as Vandergrift himself acknowledges (2004:12).

8. Recent research on teaching listening strategies

However, since Vandergrift wrote those words, in the last decade more research has been published concerning learners perceptions of using listening strategies and research indicates that incorporating teaching of metacognition results in increased performance in L2 listening (Lemmer, 2009;Bidabadi & Yamat,2013). Bibadabi & Yamat’s study of 84 Iranian TEFL students (2013) found that they used all four of Vandergrift’s metacognitive strategy types(2006), namely *planning and evaluation, directed knowledge, problem-solving* and *personal knowledge*(controlling anxiety, confidence); that the most frequently used was *directed knowledge* (sustaining concentration and so on) and that these strategies should be included in EFL resources. Lemmer (2009) describes in detail his advanced listening course in Japan which tackled various metacognitive strategies and concluded that significant improvements in listening scores were achieved after students had completed the course.

9. Recent research involving using new technologies.

Vandergrift (2007) notes the developments in new technologies and argues that more research is needed into how these technologies are being used, and what choices are now available to the language learner, as well as raising a multitude of other questions which warrant further research. He questions whether listeners are able to transfer listening skills acquired through various new technologies into ‘real-life’ for example. Since these observations by Vandergrift, technology has raced ahead, and continues to do so, and is a large part of ‘real-life’, particularly with the use of smartphones, iPads and smart TVs, making on-demand video content even more present in the lives of everyone, especially the younger generations. One of Lemmer’s(2009) conclusions is that video content should be used so that students can determine context more easily, better infer meaning of unknown vocabulary and see gestures and expressions of speakers. He also points out that using video is less artificial. Brown (2007, as cited in Lemmer, 2009) found that visual clues help motivation as well as helping understanding.

10. Innovations to improve listening in the language classroom.

English Language teachers can, and should, make use of authentic video content from a whole host of websites such as CNN (ww.cnn.com), BBC news (www.bbc.com/news), The Economist (www.economist.com/multimedia) if teaching media students for example, or websites such as the UK National health service website (http://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/), www.thesite.com (which deals with young people's health and emotional concerns), or charity/NGO websites such as Oxfam, ww.ageuk.org etc. These are just a few examples of websites which have plenty of short, and often clear, videos. These websites, as well as videos on YouTube, can be of particular use for teaching listening within ESP courses, or in bilingual teaching, as well as in more general English courses. Short videos with easier, clear language content can be selected by teachers from such websites, and when used along with transcripts provided by teachers, are a good and unlimited source of listening materials on every topic. In addition, many newer course books such as the *Speakout* series by Pearson, or the *global* series by Macmillan among others, now provide video content with listening activities and, in my experience, students find these materials motivating and accessible. Short web-based videos are accessible both in terms of being free and easy to access online, and often accessible linguistically, in terms of being short, clear and easy to understand.

11. Conclusion

New technologies mean new realities and for younger learners in particular they have become an essential part of life and the learning process. They open up new and exciting possibilities for teaching listening skills and strategies, and for English language teaching as a whole. Twenty-first century research has enhanced our understanding of the complex cognitive demands that listening involves, and listening in L2 is even more difficult. This frequently perceived difficulty of listening, which can cause anxiety in learners further impeding their performance, can be overcome in several ways. Firstly, through an understanding of where comprehension breaks down for which we owe much to Anderson (1995),Goh (2000) and others due to their analysis of cognitive processing in L2 listening, and subsequently attention being paid by teachers to all stages in the comprehension process (perception, parsing and utilization). The use of bottom-up and top-down cognitive strategies need to be employed by learners to overcome their difficulties, so these must be taught. Secondly, metacognition needs to be addressed and learners need to be made more aware of listening strategies through inclusion in courses and textbooks, to enable them to become autonomous learners and improve their listening. Finally, learner difficulties can be eased and supported by a full exploitation of new technologies, in particular websites with video content alongside subtitles and transcripts, as opposed to audio. The visual clues provided by using video can help counteract the difficulties involved in L2 listening with all its authentic features such as accent, hesitations, fillers as well as the intrinsic difficulties of a language such as English, such as connected speech, weak forms etc. We have only begun to scratch the surface of the potential inherent in new technologies, and further research will help guide us more accurately in finding the most efficient ways to improve our students listening abilities.

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Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

"ONLY CONNECT!" CREATING CONNECTIONS WHEN READING FICTION AND DIGITAL TEXTS

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Abstract

The paper draws on work within neuroscience as well as literacy education and cognitive literary studies to examine differences between the deep reading of traditional narratives and the reading of digital media. Since game-playing, hyper-links and extended novel reading can affect how the brain develops, teachers need to understand how they can enable their pupils to develop the neural pathways that make flexibility of reading style possible. This means engaging with the impressive array of research available within the neurosciences on learning to read. The particular capacity examined is connectivity. The nature of instant access to anyone who is on-line and the use of hyperlinks are contrasted with the connectivity with fictional others proffered by the deep reading of novels, specifically fantasy series. The article concludes by calling for more sustained classroom reading as well as support for digital literacies.

Key words: Neuoroscience, cognitive literary studies, reading, digital literacies

Resumen
Este artículo se basa en el trabajo dentro de la neurociencia, así como la alfabetización y estudios literarios cognitivos para examinar las diferencias entre la profunda lectura de narrativas tradicionales y la lectura de los medios digitales. Puesto que el juego, los hipervínculos y la lectura extensiva de novelas pueden afectar el desarrollo del cerebro, los maestros necesitan entender cómo lograr que sus alumnos desarrollen las vías neurales que hagan posibles estilos flexibles de lectura. Esto significa familiarizarse con el impresionante conjunto de investigaciones disponibles dentro de las neurociencias en relación con la lectura. Más en concreto, este artículo estudia la habilidad de la conectividad. La naturaleza del acceso instantáneo a cualquier persona que esté en línea y el uso de los hipervínculos se contrastan con la conectividad con otros ficticios que nos brinda la lectura profunda de novelas, sobre todo de series de novelas de fantasía. El artículo concluye haciendo un llamamiento para una lectura más sostenida en el aula, así como para el apoyo a las alfabetizaciones digitales.

Palabra clave: Neuorociencia, alfabetización, estudios literarios cognitivos, alfabetización digital

1. Introduction

The epigraph to E.M. Forster's modernist classic *Howard's End* (1910) –"Only Connect!"– exhorts the reader to form close, intimate connections with others. This exhortation is ironically undermined as Forster exposes the *lack* of connection between Margaret Schlegel and Henry Wilcox. The sentence that follows "Only Connect! That was "the whole of her [Margaret's] sermon" informs readers that "she failed" (Chapter 22). Margaret and Henry's inability to build a "rainbow bridge" that would connect them despite their manifold differences still holds the power to fascinate as readers connect with the characters' emotions and care about their dilemmas. Deep attachments with literary characters form part of the pleasure of becoming literate. Classroom teachers delight in that momentous event in a child's reading career when the desire to know *what happens next*? to Harry, Hermione and Ron or to the animals in Lucy Daniels' *Animal Ark* or whatever the cult series of the moment might be that transforms a child who can decipher text into a reader who is engrossed in books. In this article, I shall consider the nature of this connection with fictional characters and compare it with the connectivity enabled by on-line reading by using recent innovative work within the neurosciences to take our thinking further.

Digital media enable greater connectivity – *interactivity* – than any previous media. Instant access to anyone who is on-line at the same time as us or to information stored elsewhere is heralded as one of the most popular and positive aspects of the digital age. Governments and daily newspapers exhort teachers to pay attention to digital literacy from the moment the child enters school (*The Guardian*, for example, launched a campaign "to upgrade computer science, IT and technology teaching in schools" in January 2012, Chorley 2014). But when children start to enjoy digital literacy for hours on end, their behaviour is rarely met with approval. On the contrary, the very same newspapers that promote digital literacy also report extensively on the dangers of spending too long on-line (Carrick-Davies 2011; Jeffries 2013; Barrow 2013; Robinson 2013; Greenfield 2009).

It matters what "they" say in the newspapers (whether digital or paper) because this is most parents' main source of information about literacy, and quite probably many classroom teachers' as well. Much of this reporting, unfortunately, distorts the nature of the information being presented. For instance, when *The Daily Mail* reported that 70% of head teachers are concerned that Facebook and Twitter are damaging children's literacy skills (Barrow 2013), this was presented as though it were evidence that digital literacy *is* damaging children rather than a survey of opinions. Even when those commissioning a study are in charge of the media release, for instance the independent regulator and competition authority for the British communications industries, Ofcom, reported on their survey of how people in the UK are using communication technology the title of the news release was "Techie Teens are shaping the way we communicate". What the survey actually measured was how much time various age groups spent using digital and non-digital communications technologies and also their "Digital Quotient" (DQ in an analogy to IQ). DQ purports to describe "confidence and knowledge of communications technology", but in practice includes statements which are measuring attitudes towards and pleasure in using technology. It did not demonstrate that teenagers were the cause of the changes in the way we communicate, only that they used digital communications devices frequently and enjoyed doing so. When this was reported in *The Guardian*, the title shifted to "six-year-olds *understand* digital technology better than adults" (Garside 2014; my emphasis), although the survey did not test understanding, only the use of and attitudes towards communications technology (no other type of technology was examined in the survey). And in my reporting of these two surveys and the slippage in the reporting of the findings, I have adopted another useful technique in journalism: I have hidden the sources. Rather than referring to Becky Barrow and Juliette Garside in the running text, I have hidden their names in parentheses and highlighted the names of the newspapers instead. I now draw your attention to this to show how simply the voices of Barrow and Garside can be camouflaged and become simply part of the "they" in "what 'they' say in the papers".

As a regular reader of academic journals, you obviously have access to more reliable, scientifically evaluated information than the newspaper reporting cited above. Yet I suspect that, like me, you are also drawn to such headings in the media – you "connect" with the ideas – and such connections may inform your day-to-day practices within literacy education. What I want to do in this article is to step back from the politics and emotions tied up in responses to children's literacy practices to think through the gut reactions that are embodied in the reporting of literacy stories in the media. Why, for instance, are we delighted when children become avid readers of novels but fearful when they become avid game-players? Why do we criticise ourselves for wanting to print out a text in order to read it, whilst our children seem able to manage with digital texts alone?

Clearly there is a difference in how we respond to text we read on screens as opposed to texts we read on paper; this was already established in a review of the research by Andrew Dillon as early as 1992. Admittedly, the technology has advanced considerably since then, not least in terms of screen quality. As digital ink technology reduces eye-strain, enabling people to be physically more comfortable gazing at a screen than they would have been in the studies Dillon reviews, slightly different patterns emerge, but the physical strain on the body continues to be brought to the fore (e.g. Mangen 2013a) and the precise qualities of the digital form need to be clarified in future research (Margolin, Driscoll, Toland & Kegler 2013). Furthermore, a broad array of studies demonstrate that reading print-on-paper texts are better for memory recall after reading (Mangen, Walgermo & Brønnick, 2013), for digesting complex information (Stoop, Kreutzer & Kircz, 2013a, 2013b), and for immersing oneself in a story (Mangen 2013b; Mangen & Kuiken 2014). Digital texts, on the other hand, are only superior for "quick information gathering, communication and navigation" (Stoop, Kreutzer & Kircz, 2013a, 2013b). The reasons for these differences are not yet clear, but the physical ways in which our bodies perform literate acts and how our brain processes materials has led me to research in the neurosciences in search of an explanation as to how digital reading differs from reading on paper.

Unfortunately, most of the really valuable information about how the brain functions when we read is published in formats that are not easily available for classroom teachers. Each study typically examines a very small aspect of reading (for instance, observing upright forms in letters such as b, d and k versus upright forms in non-letters (Hruby and Goswami 2011, 159), is typically published in highly cited journals with other researchers as its target readers, using such highly specialized terminology that few classroom teachers would either be able to understand or wish to read after a day spent trying to teach children to read fluently. Fortunately, increasing numbers of neuroscientists are attempting to bridge that gap, and in doing so support literacy educators as they attempt to create supportive contexts for teaching children to read (Sousa 2005, 2011; Hruby and Goswami 2011). In this paper, I draw on work within neuroscience to extend our thinking about the differences between the deep reading of traditional book formats and the reading of digital media with the aim of considering how to enable our children to gain both types of skill, thereby enabling choice. The particular facility I wish to examine is related to our ability to connect with one another. Digital media enable greater connectivity – interactivity – than any previous media. Instant access to anyone else who is on-line is one of the most popular and positive aspects of the digital age. I wish to consider the nature of that connectivity and contrast it with the connectivity with fictional others that develops through the deep reading of novels. This comparison will not lead to a clear solution, but can help guide us away from false dichotomies and overly emotional or politicised responses.

2. The Reading Brain

Unlike speaking, reading is not an innate ability, but by learning to read “we rearranged the very organisation of our brain, which in turn expanded on the ways we were able to think, which altered the intellectual evolution of our species” (Wolf 2008, 3). As Maryanne Wolf observes, it took 2000 years to develop the alphabetic system, and yet in North America and most European countries, we expect children to have grasped this principle within 2000 days of life (2008, 19). By 3000 days we expect children to have a sufficiently strong command of the principles involved to be able to read silently and independently, and from 4000 days onwards we expect young people to conduct the majority of their learning by reading. Somewhat surprisingly, the majority of youngsters do in fact manage this impressive feat, even though “no areas of the brain are specialized for reading. … As far as we know, the genes have not incorporated reading into their coded structure, probably because reading, unlike spoken language, has not emerged over time as a survival skill” (Sousa 2005, 32). Nevertheless, the social stigmatism and limited job opportunities for those whose reading is not proficient mean that, as educators, we should treat reading as though it were a survival skill.

That said, the recognition that reading is *not* an activity the brain is designed to master is important for helping us to dismiss the claims of the so-called “real books” movement promoted by teachers such as Liz Waterland in the 1980s (Waterland 1985). Proponents of “real books” claimed that learning to read was like learning to speak, and that children simply needed to be immersed in good quality literature in order to *develop* the necessary skills. To be fair, Waterland did note that “This is not to claim that what goes on in the child’s head is the same for both skills but to suggest that the method of acquisition might usefully be compared” (1985, 10). As a metaphor, comparisons between learning to read and learning to speak are appealing; we have all encountered children who have grown up in literacy rich environments and learned to read for themselves. But it is only a metaphor. Many of the problems associated with the real books movement in its more extreme forms arose from taking this comparison literally, with the result that much of the excellent work teachers were doing to support grapheme-phoneme correspondence was dismissed, leaving children who come from homes that are not literacy rich to flounder (Beard and McKay 1998). Turning to neuroscience – “what goes on in the child’s head”– we can not only dismiss the over-extension of metaphors comparing speech and reading, we can also address Waterland’s real problem: the impoverished reading environments of phonics driven classrooms. Not only has neuroscience demonstrated that emotional states affect the memory processes needed for learning to read (Binney, Embleton, Jefferies, Parker, & Ralph, 2010), it has also provided us with more precise information about how sounds are encoded. Goswami and Szücs (2012) found that aural coding patterns are more sensitive to syllables and speech rhythm than phonemes. The implications for classroom practice are what every literacy teacher already knows: having fun playing with rhyming words, learning rhythm and rhyme together in nursery rhymes and clapping games are conducive to the development of literacy skills.

Reading may not be genetically encoded in our DNA, but most people’s brains do, in fact, use the same areas for reading. In their review of neuroscience for reading education researchers, Hrubi and Goswami caution against paying too much attention “noneophrenology … wherein areas of dedicated function are mapped to precise locations in the brain” (2011, 157), because they fear that this will result in the search for pinpointing aspects of reading (such as grapheme-phoneme correspondence) to localized brain areas. They also note that one does not need to use expensive technology to make diagnoses about problems such as dyslexia when cheaper, more child-friendly methods are available. I take their point, but suggest that since so much work on identifying how the various parts of the brain work together when reading has already been done, it would be helpful if literacy teachers were better informed, as this would deter assumptions that there are discrete areas of the brain that are designated to the various sub-skills involved in fluent reading.

In *Proust and the Squid* (2008), Wolf outlines how the brain learns to read. She also reveals how dyslexic readers' brains differ from those of proficient readers and differences which relate to whether the text is logographic, syllabic or alphabetic. (The differences are primarily in terms of the firing of neurons in areas specialized for visual information versus neurons in areas specialized for auditory information.) She has produced a timeline which breaks down the process of reading into microseconds showing how various different parts of the brain respond and then process the information.

A Time Line of Reading (Wolf 2008:144)

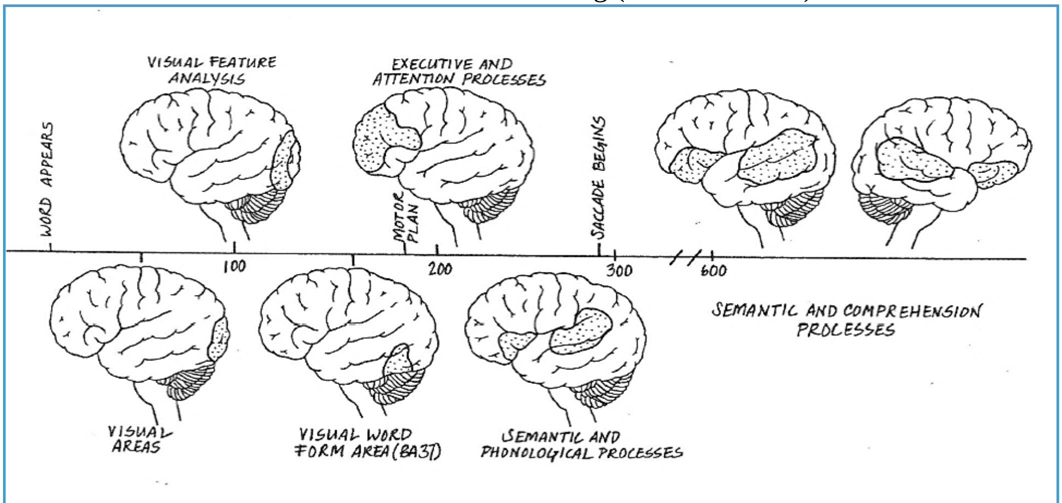

Figure 6-3: A Time Line of Reading

Novice readers are less precise than skilled readers, and so make more generalized use of the various areas of the brain. Indeed, Wolf's overview makes the point that, in terms of forging neural pathways, the primary task of the novice reader's brain is to automate these processes. A brief excursion into neophrenology reveals how demanding this task is.

For readers of alphabetic languages, the process begins in the occipetal lobes and, deep within them, the fusiform gyrus. These are areas concerned with processing visual information – the fusiform gyrus are particularly important for identifying colour and recognizing faces – and it seems that they play a vital role in word-recognition. The so-called "visual word form area" quickly identifies features of letters (distinguishing between b and d but not worrying about loops in the upright section, for instance) and determining whether the shapes do constitute a letter or a word. These areas seem to have slightly different roles in each hemisphere, with the left seeking out determining features and the right determining whether or not the parts do constitute a face or word. The second large areas used in reading are the temporal & parietal lobes, including Wernicke's area, which are associated with phonology and language comprehension. Novice readers make more general use of these areas than skilled readers except when skilled readers are faced with a text so difficult they are forced to resort to childhood reading strategies. The third main areas involved are the frontal lobes – associated with decision-making and executive functions such as memory. This includes Broca's area, which plays such a vital role in semantics. The cerebellum ("little brain") is also involved & is critical for the timing of the connections. Novice readers' main task is to connect the processing skills in these various areas. This becomes automated, as Carla Shatz's helpful summary of Donald Hebb's 1949 classic *The Organization of Behaviour* succinctly puts it: "Neurons that fire together wire together". Pathways are formed as the brain habituates the connections between the aforementioned parts of the brain to create efficient networks. In adolescence, these pathways are pruned such that the most valuable are left unfettered by rarely needed neurological paths. Typically, the pathways for reading concentrate in the left hemisphere known as the ventral route (Wolf 2008, 142).

For my purposes, the most important insight gained from looking at how the brain processes the written text is how these processes release the time and space needed for deep thought. The language of books encourages vocabulary learning, analogical linguistic forms (such as similes and metaphors) and complex syntax, all of which are vital for precise thought. This increased workload on the level of decoding the input from the page actually increases our capacity for thinking and feeling. "Paradoxically, the developmental shift to specialised left-hemisphere activation for basic decoding purposes allows more bilateral activation for meaning and comprehension processes. … We are no longer mere decoders of information" (Wolf 2008, 143). As the pathways for decoding become automatized, feeling and thinking become more possible. The result is what Birkerts terms "deep reading" (1994). The term refers to the intense submersion in the world or argument of the book, when the world outside the reader seems temporarily suspended. For Wolf, and I believe many of us who work with literacy education, the greatest achievement of the reading brain is that it allows for reflection and intellectual development. More specifically, she comments on the way reading encourages empathy: "While reading, we can leave our own consciousness, and … enter for a brief time the wholly different perspective of another person's consciousness", as a result of which "we are no longer limited by the confines of our own thinking" (Wolf 2008, 7-8). Wolf's examples are drawn from reading stories depicting the thoughts, feelings and actions of fully developed characters. Nevertheless, one would think that moving beyond the confines of our own thinking would be even better developed by encounters with real human beings, the kinds of social activity that is promoted through the internet. I shall explain why that does not happen in just a moment, but first let me explain what I mean by empathy in more detail, and specifically why empathy is encouraged in the reading of novels.

3. Connecting with Fictional Characters

In two recently published monographs, Blakey Vermeule and Suzanne Keen draw on research in the cognitive sciences to investigate readers' emotional attachments with fictional characters. They demonstrate that fiction encourages a less guarded empathetic response to human situations because the reader recognizes the freedom from real world responsibilities. Caring for fictional characters is analogous to, but not quite the same as, the way we care about real people. Emotional encounters with fictional characters can be even more profoundly felt because fiction provides us with "large doses of really juicy social information, information that it would be too costly, dangerous, and difficult for us to extract from the world on our own" (Vermeule 2010:14). Fiction enables us to care without making ourselves vulnerable.

This investment in the lives of fictional others has been explained in terms of "Theory of Mind" or "mind-reading", that is, our ability to accurately assess what another person is thinking and feeling and to anticipate how they may respond as a result. Mind-reading is an evolutional survival skill: the brain has specific areas which are devoted to this task. These processes need to learn to fire together to be effective, but when they do, we are pretty good at assessing what others are thinking. Reading fiction helps to hone these abilities (Kidd and Castano, 2013). We find such social information incredibly valuable; we actively seek it out, and feel rewarded (by which I mean very literally that the pleasure centres in our brains are stimulated) when we obtain such information. The pleasure of this type of information is a common impetus for children to become proficient readers. Wolf terms this the "tipping point between leaping into reading life or remaining in a childhood bog where reading is endured only as a means to other ends" (2008, 132). The leap into reading typically occurs in the pre-teen years and is often fuelled by the desire to know what happens to a character. This is where series books come into their own for literacy educators.

Series such as *Harry Potter, Twilight*, *Inheritance* and *The Hunger Games* are all very lengthy, and the breadth of their spines alone clearly signal the demands they will place on the reader up front. They require "two stiff tariffs at the outset … First, it asks us to suspend our disbelief. Second, it asks us to give it the valuable gift of our attention" (Vermeule 2011, 14). So the books are self-selecting, but because of the hype (and a certain amount of peer-pressure) surrounding these stories, starting with the first book (which is consistently shorter than the later books) is not so difficult. Once the series has begun, the reader enters a fantasy world and engages with the traditional, linear quest narrative, following a flawed protagonist in the battle between good and evil. Fantasy, to a greater extent than even realistic novels, signals its own artificiality and constructedness and so allows readers to let down their guard and immerse themselves in the lives of a small number of characters. The extended focus over thousands of pages on just three central characters in each series allows readers to gain a wealth of mind-reading experience, to build a relationship with the fictional characters. At the same time, the hours and hours of extended reading practice enable neural pathways to form.

I find it no coincidence that mind-reading activities are central to both the plot and the characterisation of the key characters in all the multi-million selling series of the past two decades. In *The Hunger Games*, guessing how others will behave is central to Katniss's survival in the arena. The climax of the *Harry Potter* series comes when Harry learns that he is one of Voldemort's Horcruxes, which explains why Harry has had access to Voldemort's mind and his evil thoughts. He dislikes this connection as does Edward in *Twilight* who cannot help knowing what other people are thinking. He is attracted to Bella because she is the only person whose mind he cannot read. And in Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance* cycle, the intimate connection between the minds of dragons and their riders is celebrated. Increasingly, however, we are becoming aware that the leap into reading involves digital texts, and the subject matter that is appealing to the child is not an engagement with a fictional character but with information texts.

4. Connecting with Digital Others

When children play video games or surf the net, they are wholly consumed: like the deep reader of the book, the world outside their experience appears to disappear as they focus intently on the screen. Unsurprisingly, many teachers and journals on literacy practices endeavour to integrate this fascination into literacy education. For instance, a recent issue of *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* includes a discussion by Li, Snow and White (2015) on the impact of access to digital media on literacy skills, other examples include providing a rationale for incorporating this media into our literacy education practices (Hampel, 2009; Morrell, 2012), advice on selecting apps to support beginning readers (Cahill and McGill-Frazen, 2013), a study of the use of iPads in literacy education (Hutchison, Beschorner and Schmidt-Crawford, 2012) and teaching tips on the incorporation of smartphones (Bromley 2012) and digital texts (Thoermer and Williams 2012) in reading education. I applaud such innovations and the recognition that children need to learn to use these technologies effectively, not least because other studies have shown that pre-teens are far from efficient in their use of even simple digital techniques such as feeding search terms into google and scrolling through the outcomes (Leu et al. 2008; Goldman Braasch, Wiley, Graesser and Brodwinska 2012). We still need to teach children how to read these media, but we also need to improve our understanding of how digital literacies differ from the traditional reading of narratives (Coiro 2003).

For the most part, it would seem that the texts we read digitally do not differ so very greatly from those we read on paper. Indeed, the shape of the traditional narrative has been changing, at a dramatic pace over the past two decades, so that novels resemble digital formats. Linear plot development – often enhanced with sub-plots on a related theme – with rising tension leading to epiphanal moments has given way to finding and comparing information. We can see this in our television watching. As Margaret Mackey's recent study of young adults engaging with film, novel and video games – *Narrative Pleasures* – reveals, many video games resemble traditional narratives more closely than recently published novels. Mackey's conclusions, grounded in hundreds of hours of interviews and recordings of young adults engaging with different kinds of narrative reveals how central narrative is to the formation of her subject's thinking, also when playing video games, and how well they are able to remain focused and produce complex responses to the narrative of the video game. Her findings are supported by Elson and Ferguson's summary of 25 years worth of empirical research into the relationship between violent digital gaming and real world behaviour. Elson and Ferguson (2014) debunk the myth that violent games inevitably lead to violent behaviour, but their review also demonstrates that, unlike paper fiction, these digital narratives do not increase empathy. Mackey's subjects entered what Csikszentmihalyi refers to as "flow" (1990); a total immersion in the activity of engaging with a narrative world, which appears to be the same regardless of whether the medium is paper or digital, but as I have already pointed out, there are significant differences between digital and paper literacies.

Early internet pages showed a close resemblance to traditional books. Gradually, however, printed forms – including many academic journals – are starting to mimic the internet with the increased use of images, shorter texts and clearer metatextual markers for guiding the reader's eye: pull-out quotes, oversized headings and often color. Other examples include the gamefication of classic works of literature when adapted for iPad users: readers can choose options for the characters to follow. These changes suggest the differences between paper and digital reading are minimal, and yet researchers find that more information is retained when students read paper texts rather than digital texts (Mangen, Walgermo & Brønnick, 2013). Proposed explanations for this finding include visual ergonomics, haptic differences, meta-cognitive differences and navigation. We do not yet know enough to understand all the implications for education, but we do know that the brain does not process hyperlinked digital text in the same way that it processes paper and ink texts.

The hyperlink creates a very different reading experience from traditional paper reading experiences. Digital texts typically contain numerous links to other texts, images, film-clips and so on, all of which can be accessed with a single click. We are always just a click or two away from knowing more about the topic or finding the right piece of information. The hyperlink can also take us to other people – we are always just a click away from knowing what other people are thinking or saying about a topic. During the brief history of the internet, these connections to other texts and other people have become more animated, so that we are constantly alerted to the presence of other media as we read. This instant access to information is, of course, one of the greatest advantages of digital technology. Using these links, we can independently build our own informational world, an option which is normally highly praised.

Karen Bromley's advice on how to use Smartphones to supplement classroom reading celebrates this activity (2012). She describes how she used her Smartphone to supplement her reading of an informational text about a type of parrot – the kakapo – that is facing extinction. She looked up terms and compared measurements. She also followed up her reading in a variety of ways, and sums up the classroom implications for other literacy teachers. One of the key points she makes (pulled out in an oversize quote which mimics on-line texts) was that "Using my smartphone, I synthesized what I read in the book, and extended my connections to the world beyond the book" (Bromley 2012, 341). She pities readers in classrooms who were not free to pursue their interests in this way and proffers a powerful argument for augmenting traditional literacy education with Smartphone technology.

Bromley's searches do indeed seem to have enabled her to gain more from the book she was reading. But as we use tools such as the hyperlink and Smartphones to navigate away from the original text we were reading, so our commitment to that original text decreases (Carr 2010, 103). We have doubtless all had the experience of going to check something and wandering off, click by click, until half an hour has gone by and we have forgotten what we originally went into the digital world to look for. Part of Bromley's point is that this is no bad thing: instead of being passive consumers, we become active creators of worlds of our own choosing. For information searches such as store opening times, this lack of commitment to a text is hardly problematic, but digital technology is increasingly used to enable real time connections during events. For instance, the use of twitter to comment on musical performances and films whilst as they are happening. From a content point of view, this is deeply problematic. Sometimes we need to commit to a text, a film, a piece of music and endeavour to understand it on its own terms. We need to be able to focus, to concentrate, to allow our own feelings and thoughts to mature without the interruption of hearing about other people's thoughts and feelings. It is wonderful that we have technology that enables us to follow our own interests, but we also need to learn to pay attention to the interests of others expressed through lengthy texts, films, music and so on. Digital technology has made the total immersion in another world increasingly difficult. And the neuroscientific evidence of synaptic pruning alerts us to the fact that if we do not learn to do this by our late teens, our brains will have difficulty acquiring the skill thereafter.

Although narrative fiction typically contains a wealth of the social information about how other people think that appeals so strongly, digital media, especially social media proffers even greater access to the minds of real people. Twitter and facebook enable us to surround ourselves with the social information we are designed to seek out. No wonder youngsters sit transfixed in front of their screens. When we watch someone texting or playing a video game, "What you see is a mind consumed with a medium. When we're on-line we're oblivious to everything else going on around us" (Carr, 2010, 118). Outwardly, this looks the same as the reader immersed in a novel. Both freeze the reader in a way that creates a mind-out-of-body experience. Internally, however, the brain forming rapid decisions about whether or not to follow a distraction such as a hyperlink or checking an email is actually firing in a different way from the empathetic reading brain. As Nicholas Carr explains

> [I]f, knowing what we know today about the brain's plasticity, you were to set out to invent a medium that would rewire our mental circuits as quickly and as thoroughly as possible, you would probably end up designing something that looks and works a lot like the Internet. It's not just that we tend to use the Net regularly, even obsessively. It's that the Net delivers precisely the kind of sensory and cognitive stimuli – repetitive, intensive, interactive, addictive – that have been shown to result in strong and rapid alterations in brain circuits and functions.
>
> (Carr, 2010, 116)

The key neurological difference between on-line reading and the reading of novels that Carr draws our attention to lies in the greatly increased activity taking place in the frontal lobes where decision-making takes place. Where the fluent reader of the book processed the text primarily through the ventral route in the left hemisphere, inadvertently supporting empathy with fictional beings promoted during deep reading, fluent Internet users use a specific network in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex – an area associated with decision-making, especially decisions involving trust in relationships – which they do not use when reading print. A team of researchers looking for ways to stimulate the brains of the elderly examined what happens when they used Internet search engine such as google using fMRI techniques (Small et al 2010). They found that internet use stimulated a more than two-fold increase in signal intensity in the frontal pole, anterior temporal region, anterior and posterior cingulate, and hippocampus. Novice Internet users do not use these areas of the brain, but after just an hour a day for five days, they begin to do so (Small and Vorgan, 2008). Our brains are changed by what and how we read. Small et al's study was concerned with much older readers, and we should exercise caution in applying their findings to children who are still developing their neural pathways for reading. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence available to claim that following hyperlinks and other link-click-link literacies do forge different neural pathways from traditional print narratives.

The conventional response to such information about how media affect the way we think, feel and behave, as Marshall McLuhan warned us in the pre-Internet world, is to argue that it is not so much the media as “how they are used that counts” which, McLuhan bluntly observes, “is the numb stance of the technological idiot” (McLuhan [1964] 2003, 31). The MIT neuroscientist Robert Desimone observes that “It takes a lot of prefrontal brain power to force yourself not to process a strong [distracting] input” (in Carr 2010, 232, fn 232). Once the flag announcing an email has popped up on your screen, it is hard not to at least acknowledge its presence, and so lose concentration at least momentarily. When the neurons respond to distractors such as hyperlinks, they wire together forming neural pathways that expect distraction. The activity of clicking from link to link means that the reader is engaged and active in ways that continuous prose cannot offer. The downside, as Carr also points out, is that “neurons that don’t fire together don’t wire together”(120). The repeated action of clicking from link to link also means we literally train our brains to expect such stimulation which, in turn, makes it increasingly difficult to engage with longer texts, to read deeply. “Reading changes our lives, and our lives change our reading” (Wolf 2008, 158). I would add that “reading changes our brains, and our brains change our reading”.

I am not a Luddite who thinks we can (or should) prevent our children from taking advantage of the digital world. As educators, our job is most definitely to enable children to take advantage of digital print and the environments in which it is produced. For gleaning information, digital media have so many advantages over traditional books. Nevertheless, we must take the risk to deep reading posed by digital media seriously, and I think the way forward is to complement such reading with books that hone in on our desire for social information. This, I think, is where the appeal of novels foregrounding mind-reading are central, including fantasy series and other disparaged works such as *Gossip Girl*, which, with its connection to the blogging world overtly displays the social appeal of digital media and provides the wealth of insight into the private thoughts of fictional characters that promotes theory of mind. Oddly enough, magic and gossip seem to be the very things which can counterbalance the demands of click-link-click on-line reading and so proffer choice between deep reading and skimming in later life.

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Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

VENTAJAS DE LA APLICACIÓN DIDÁCTICA DEL E-PEL (*PORTFOLIO* EUROPEO DE LAS LENGUAS ELECTRÓNICO) PARA EL APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS

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Resumen

El PEL y e-PEL suponen como instrumento de enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas cambios a nivel pedagógico en lo que respecta al eje del proceso, el papel del alumno y el aprendizaje significativo. Pero las TIC aportan ventajas tecnológicas adicionales, que presenta la versión electrónica, el e-PEL, las cuales mejoran y facilitan la gestión de la información y la comunicación con otras personas que pueden contribuir al aprendizaje. Por consiguiente, es importante tener presentes estas ventajas para que docentes y alumnos puedan aprovecharlas al máximo para poder conseguir uno de los objetivos del MCERL, el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida.

Palabras clave: e-PEL, *Portfolio* Europeo de las Lenguas, ventajas, *portfolio* electrónico, aprendizaje de idiomas.

Abstract

As a tool for teaching and learning languages, the PEL and e-PEL imply pedagogical changes with respect to the axis of the process, the role of the student and meaningful learning. But ICTs bring additional technological advantages to the electronic version, the e-PEL, which improves and facilitates information management and communication with others who can contribute to learning. Therefore, it is important for teachers and students to know these advantages to achieve one of the objectives of the CEFR, lifelong learning.

Key words: e-PEL, European Language Portfolio, advantages, electronic portfolio, language learning.

El e-PEL ofrece ventajas respecto de su homólogo en formato impreso, las cuales estarán determinadas por las características del usuario. Los estudiantes que nunca han trabajado con él, se abrumarán sin duda en la producción de un e-PEL por dos razones: por una parte, debido a los cambios metodológicos que este implica y, por otra, por la cuestión técnica (Álvarez *et al.*, 2005). Sin embargo, los estudiantes versados en su utilización, que han adquirido experiencia en nuevos hábitos de aprendizaje y en el conocimiento de la plataforma del e-PEL, obtendrán provecho de él, lo cual dependerá de su grado de convicción respecto a esta nueva herramienta.

Las ventajas del e-PEL son consecuencia directa de los avances técnicos resultantes. El simple uso de las TIC ofrece una mejora significativa en la gestión del e-PEL en diferentes aspectos. Asimismo, el e-PEL continúa teniendo las ventajas pedagógicas de la versión impresa, ampliadas por la utilización de las nuevas tecnologías (Gil *et al.*, 2011). Por consiguiente, los aspectos positivos del e-PEL se pueden dividir en dos grupos dependiendo de su naturaleza: ventajas pedagógicas y técnicas. Sin embargo, ambos aspectos están a veces íntimamente interrelacionados y no pueden disociarse (Romero, 2011).

Desde el punto de vista pedagógico y lingüístico, el e-PEL aporta ciertas ventajas, ya que fomenta un aprendizaje y una enseñanza de idiomas más reflexiva y clarifica y precisa los objetivos de aprendizaje en términos comunicativos. Asimismo, favorece la autoevaluación en la identificación de las competencias adquiridas, de las necesidades lingüísticas o de los objetivos de aprendizaje y fomenta un cambio educativo hacia un modelo de enseñanza que otorga mayor responsabilidad al alumno en su propio aprendizaje (López-Fernández, 2014).

Además de las ventajas inmediatas del método *portfolio* en lo que respecta a las instituciones educativas también se pueden derivar efectos relacionados indirectos. Por tanto, el desarrollo de una estrategia del e-PEL puede representar un elemento de cambio en la enseñanza de idiomas centrada en el profesor hacia aquella con el alumno como eje del aprendizaje, hacia el profesor como asesor de aprendizaje. Estos aspectos deben contribuir a su motivación y orientación hacia los objetivos de aprendizaje, con lo que el número de abandonos y la duración del estudio podrían reducirse (Tosun *et al.*, 2011).

El desarrollo de una nueva cultura de aprendizaje requiere una estrategia global para la gestión del cambio y el concepto subyacente a los medios didácticos. Asimismo, se requieren la formación de profesores y la evaluación periódica de la enseñanza. La introducción del e-PEL como método de enseñanza puede, en última instancia, servir, como herramienta para el diseño del proceso de aprendizaje, a la apertura a las nuevas formas de organización y métodos de enseñanza. En particular, la integración de diferentes modalidades de estudio, es decir, *e-learning* y *blended learning*, se facilita cuando se utilizan herramientas como el e-PEL y ambientes personales de aprendizaje (Martínez, 2011).

Mediante el uso del e-PEL, se puede fomentar eficazmente la toma de conciencia de los contenidos y objetivos de aprendizaje, lo que reviste dificultad en la enseñanza centrada en la figura del docente. El e-PEL es especialmente adecuado cuando se trata de reflexionar sobre las propias experiencias y actitudes. El principio didáctico se podría resumir como “de la enseñanza al aprendizaje". La ventaja de un e-PEL en comparación con su homólogo en papel es que el proceso de aprendizaje puede reflejarse durante un largo período a través de diferentes etapas (Gil *et al.*, 2011).

El método *portfolio*, que de hecho es la base de la utilización didáctica del e-PEL, abarca cinco subprocesos relacionados entre sí. En primer lugar, la definición de objetivos y el contexto de aprendizaje, la recopilación y selección de recursos y su relación con la meta de aprendizaje, a continuación la reflexión y organización del proceso de aprendizaje, la presentación y publicación de productos de aprendizaje y, finalmente, la valoración, evaluación y desarrollo de competencias (Barberá *et al.*, 2011). Las actividades en el contexto del e-PEL incluyen, por ejemplo, la recuperación de los productos de aprendizaje en el transcurso de la selección de los mismos por parte del usuario en relación con la meta de aprendizaje (Díaz *et al*., 2012). Esta acción se realiza en el *Dossier*, como se muestra en la Figura 1:

Figura 1: *Dossier* del e-PEL

La organización y la asociación de muestras lingüísticas con el objetivo de aprendizaje son ámbitos de gestión personal de la información, la presentación del e-PEL es un acto de publicación digital, o incluso de publicación social. Se basa, como se ha mencionado, en la reflexión sobre el proceso de aprendizaje, es decir, la planificación de vías de aprendizaje y el desarrollo de estrategias de aprendizaje, lo que podríamos definir como planificación estratégica (Rodríguez, 2012). En conclusión, la producción de un e-PEL implica una serie de actividades en el ámbito de la información y la publicación.

La definición de la autonomía del alumno como individual, cognitiva y organizativa en cuanto a la orientación introducida por Holec (1981) supuso un punto de partida, si tenemos en cuenta la tecnología disponible para el aprendizaje de idiomas en ese momento. Su puesta en marcha supuso el desarrollo de habilidades de organización que se consideraban como algo separado, o al menos separables, de la competencia en la L2. Por el contrario, la concepción de la autonomía del alumno, desarrollada bajo el impacto de la práctica en el aula, es individual y colaborativa, cognitiva y afectiva, organizativa y comunicativa. Su puesta en práctica es esencialmente una cuestión de ayudar a los alumnos a ejercer estrategias de tipo comunicativo, metacognitivo y autorregulador a través de la lengua objeto de estudio. Esta concepción de la autonomía del alumno presenta un desafío para los docentes de lenguas, que tienen que ayudar a desarrollar los conocimientos de idiomas de los estudiantes para descubrir formas convincentes y efectivas de explotación de la creatividad dialógica para mejorar la autonomía a través de la comunicación electrónica en beneficio de la enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma tanto formal como informal (Little, 2015). El desarrollo del aprendizaje estratégico se plasma en la sección del e-PEL *Aprender a aprender*, en la que el alumnado reflexiona sobre las estrategias que utiliza y determina cuáles pretende incorporar y la forma de hacerlo, tal y como se muestra en la Figura 2:

Figura 2: Aprender a aprender

Hay dos dimensiones importantes en el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma: lo que pasa dentro del aula y lo que pasa fuera. Si bien la enseñanza de idiomas siempre ha sido considerada como una preparación lingüística para utilizarla en contextos comunicativos reales, gran parte de la atención en la enseñanza de idiomas en el pasado se ha centrado por lo general en el aprendizaje formal de idiomas. Al mismo tiempo, las limitaciones de aprendizaje en el aula han quedado patentes. Hoy en día, sin embargo, Internet, la tecnología y los medios de comunicación, así como las redes sociales virtuales proporcionan mayores oportunidades para el uso significativo y auténtico de la lengua (Richards, 2015).

Si el estudiante realiza actividades de aprendizaje autodirigido en un aula de clase, llevará a cabo un trabajo consciente que implica la interacción con docentes y pares en el aula, aprendiendo del consenso, del intercambio de ideas, del diálogo. De esta forma, el alumno aprenderá a ser autónomo en su aprendizaje para seguir aprendiendo a lo largo de la vida (Barona, 2015).

Los alumnos que compilan material de un e-PEL se sienten a menudo orgullosos y satisfechos cuando ven reconocidas sus habilidades. Gracias al enfoque del e-PEL, incluso existe reconocimiento de la persona en sí misma. Requisito previo es, sin embargo, la existencia de una base de confianza entre profesores y alumnos, la cual puede ayudar a resolver el conflicto entre la evaluación formativa y sumativa (Romero, 2011).

A través del e-PEL, se destaca aquello que el alumno sabe hacer (Barberá *et al.*, 2011):

> Se podría afirmar que se trata de un instrumento en el sentido psicológico del término que explica las herramientas mentales como soportes y vehículos del pensamiento, pero que a su vez es un sistema dada su complejidad y puesto que alberga diferentes elementos interrelacionados en sí mismo. También se trata el *portfolio* como una metodología que busca hacer emerger las actuaciones más brillantes de cada individuo o como un estilo que marca una tendencia y un modo de actuar ya en los distintos estamentos de la vida (p. 23).

El e-PEL supone una mejora de la gestión desde el punto de vista técnico, ya que constituye un instrumento que utiliza las herramientas tecnológicas con el objeto de recopilar múltiples muestras del proceso de aprendizaje en diferentes formatos (audio, vídeo, gráficos y texto). Sin embargo, podría utilizar el hipertexto para mostrar más claramente las relaciones entre objetivos, contenidos, procesos y reflexiones. El e-PEL aportaría así la posibilidad de que los marcos de expresión estén diversificados. Además, al tener un formato digital, aporta los beneficios propios de este tipo de tecnología (Quiñonero, 2011). Un ejemplo al respecto sería vincular el descriptor con la muestra de aprendizaje que demuestra su consecución: Haciendo clic en el descriptor "Soy capaz de manifestar con educación mi acuerdo o desacuerdo con lo que se ha dicho" se abriría el archivo de vídeo del diálogo, en el que el alumno expresa su aprobación o desaprobación sobre la opinión de su interlocutor. Esta acción se llevaría a cabo en la sección del e-PEL *Tabla de descriptores para la autoevaluación*:

Figura 3: Tabla de descriptores para la autoevaluación

La mayor ventaja del e-PEL, sin embargo, podría subyacer en las posibilidades de comunicación electrónica con otros titulares del e-PEL u otros grupos, si este estuviera integrado en un ambiente personal de aprendizaje (Ruiz, 2011) y se utilizara como e-PEL 2.0, evolución que parece inevitable en la Sociedad de la Información y Comunicación (Clark, 2009).

Así, se ampliaría la gama de opciones de retroalimentación y, por tanto, de oportunidades para evaluar su propio aprendizaje en dos sentidos. Los comentarios podrían realizarse no solo a través de la anotación, del comentario, de los marcadores, sino también mediante el contacto personal a través de herramientas de comunicación síncrona y asíncrona. De esta forma, aumentaría el número de personas que pueden ejercer como orientador o tutor. Junto con el profesor, también podrían hacer comentarios los compañeros de aprendizaje o expertos externos sobre el proceso de aprendizaje (Li, 2015). Además de la valoración personal (autoevaluación) y la evaluación externa, sería posible la coevaluación realizada por los compañeros, aunque aquí surge la pregunta de si estos compañeros estarían instruidos a tal efecto o si estarían lo suficientemente motivados para realizar una evaluación fundamentada. Estos dos aspectos deben ser tenidos en cuenta por el docente desde su papel de orientador del aprendizaje (Cristancho, 2002).

El e-PEL debería permitir la posibilidad de retroalimentación independiente del tiempo y espacio, elemento clave en entornos virtuales (Sevillano *et al.*, 2014), lo cual permite recibir información útil de forma más rápida, frecuente y regular, que conduce a un desarrollo intensivo de la cultura de retroalimentación, que posibilita como evaluación formativa durante el proceso de desarrollo la construcción del conocimiento.

El e-PEL pertenece al grupo de los llamados *webfolios* porque es accesible desde una página web, que constituye una recopilación de materiales coherente con la finalidad de conseguir una serie de objetivos unificados. Otros modelos ya existentes son los que se pueden crear y gestionar con *Wordpress* y *Wikispaces*.

Desde la perspectiva computacional, es una única carpeta en la que están archivados diferentes tipos de archivos en subcarpetas de materiales similares. Desde el punto de vista pedagógico, un *webfolio* contiene objetivos, tareas de evaluación, aprendizaje y reflexión personal. Cuando se publica en la red, se convierte en una página de Internet (Gathercoal *et al.*, 2002). Las ventajas de un *webfolio*, basado en un servidor, son obvias: el acceso se proporciona mediante conexión a Internet independientemente del tiempo y la ubicación, por lo que es accesible desde dispositivos móviles. Se podría afirmar pues que el e-PEL es "móvil", ya es posible acceder a ellos desde cualquier lugar sin estar conectado físicamente a la red eléctrica. Aunque esto lo hace dependiente del acceso a un servidor institucional y su funcionalidad. El e-PEL debe integrar todo el proceso de aprendizaje de un individuo durante toda la vida independientemente de las instituciones educativas. La idea del e-PEL personal, a lo largo de toda la vida, que puede ser utilizado por los alumnos (aunque no necesariamente), no resulta de momento factible, ya que no existen todavía versiones digitales del PEL para los niños y adolescentes. Aspectos a tener en cuenta a largo plazo son el funcionamiento del servidor, la gestión y conservación de las cuentas y el desarrollo de las aplicaciones.

El e-PEL facilita la gestión de las muestras de aprendizaje, si bien esta se podría mejorar, ya que únicamente es posible almacenar archivos en diferentes formatos. El requisito de capacidad a pesar de la abundancia de datos multimedia es bajo. El e-PEL se puede copiar en cualquier momento, y transferirse así a un dispositivo de almacenamiento virtual con cierta facilidad. El etiquetado, sin embargo, facilitaría la clasificación de los ejemplos. Asimismo, diversas opciones de recuperación mejoran el acceso a los recursos electrónicos (Rey *et al.*, 2011).

Se debería posibilitar la retroalimentación a través de enlaces entre los contenidos del e-PEL. Gracias a que el e-PEL es fácil de manejar, se podrían vincular los productos de aprendizaje y los criterios (por ejemplo, retroalimentación a través de hipervínculos). Estos enlaces vincularían las partes del e-PEL entre sí y con el exterior. La estructura mediante hipertexto permitiría establecer vínculos con el desarrollo personal del propio estudiante. Así, se podrían realizar referencias a las entradas anteriores (contenidos, objetivos, muestras), con lo cual se reforzaría la reflexión sobre el aprendizaje conseguido. La disposición de las entradas mantendría el orden cronológico, pero los hipervínculos permitirían una visión no secuencial (Amorós, 2007).

Las hojas digitalizadas del e-PEL no deben ser tipografías pasivas, sino que deben entenderse como objetos manipulables, en los que la interactividad y capacidad de respuesta deben combinarse para conformar un indicativo de calidad de los medios de comunicación, que a diferencia de los medios de comunicación analógica, por primera vez en nuestra historia cultural transforma el objeto de percepción en objeto de manipulación (Bernsteiner, 2008). Incluso reviste mayor importancia que esta manipulación se pueda realizar igualmente de forma conjunta y cooperativa, de tal manera que se posibilitaría una interacción directa entre el autor y los demás usuarios, ya que desaparece la unilateralidad asociada con los medios de comunicación analógica.

Este *portfolio* electrónico ofrece diferentes opciones multimedia, proporcionando así más posibilidades de presentación, de manera que se diversifica la variedad de formatos (texto, sonido, imagen, vídeo, animación). A través de la configuración de los productos de aprendizaje, se pueden presentar de forma más flexible (Himpsl, 2010).

La versión desarrollada por el Ministerio permite además presentar el conocimiento y su desarrollo mediante diferentes formas de expresión multimedia. Esta tecnología y la digitalización es el eslabón central de las TIC. Mediante la digitalización, se procesa toda la información en un sistema. De esta manera, surgen nuevos sistemas multimedia y medios interactivos, donde convergen la tecnología de los medios de comunicación y la informática. Tipos de datos como imágenes, sonido, gráficos y vídeo pueden documentar los progresos efectivos y el proceso de su consecución de forma efectiva, lo cual no es posible en el formato impreso del PEL (Ruiz *et al.*, 2004).

La producción de los productos de aprendizaje en forma digital promueve el uso de los contenidos a largo plazo. Asimismo, las entradas digitalizadas son más fáciles de transferir, ya que la totalidad de los archivos almacenados se puede importar a otro sistema. Esta posibilidad de transferencia es sin duda un factor importante en la elección de la plataforma del e-PEL. El soporte físico de esta plataforma debe contar con una interfaz, apoyada por otras plataformas. Para la utilización del e-PEL como muestra de conocimientos lingüísticos con fines profesionales, se pueden recopilar y transferir las entradas mediante correo electrónico (Gallego *et al.*, 2009). Un ejemplo sería la presentación de la sección del e-PEL *Experiencias de aprendizaje de idiomas e interculturales* a modo de CV lingüístico para la candidatura a un puesto de trabajo, según se muestra en la Figura 4:

Figura 4: Experiencias de aprendizaje de idiomas e interculturales

Esta herramienta puede utilizarse de muchas maneras y completar así cualquier proceso de aprendizaje, por lo tanto, puede usarse en cualquier tipo de instituciones educativas, que a menudo asocian a su uso objetivos diferentes. Por un lado, el método *portfolio* constituye una herramienta para el desarrollo de competencias (Brahm, 2007). Por ejemplo, el tratamiento de la información y la competencia digital se pueden incardinar en el contexto de la información y la representación del conocimiento. La práctica de la competencia de aprendizaje, es decir, del aprendizaje autónomo, y de la competencia digital pueden llevarse a cabo sobre todo con la ayuda del e-PEL como herramienta de aprendizaje. Los conocimientos adquiridos mejorarán la competencia profesional de los usuarios, por lo tanto sus posibilidades de encontrar empleo y facilitarán su transferencia al mercado laboral. Esto también aumenta el prestigio de la institución educativa, que utilice esta herramienta.

Gracias a la facilidad de revisión y modificación, los estudiantes también toman conciencia del proceso de evaluación. Gracias al fácil almacenamiento de versiones de un producto de aprendizaje, el usuario puede comprender mejor la valoración del resultado. Mediante un proceso de evaluación desglosado, se contribuye a mejorar el aprendizaje (Barberá *et al.*, 2011).

Asimismo, su uso no solo representa un cambio en la docencia, sino también en la evaluación de los progresos en el aprendizaje, que está relacionado, por supuesto, con el proceso de aprendizaje en conjunto. Por lo tanto, el tipo de evaluación es un argumento crucial en la aplicación del MCERL en las EOI, el cual es una evaluación de productos centrada en el aprendizaje por parte del profesor, mientras que el *e-learning* 2.0 es una evaluación para el aprendizaje, por consiguiente, una evaluación con respecto al proceso de aprendizaje pasado y futuro en sí mismo. Esto se relaciona básicamente con el ideal de aprendizaje de Humboldt, pero por el contrario, la evaluación no solo es llevada a cabo por el profesor, sino también por el usuario (autoevaluación) y sus compañeros (coevaluación) (Sembill, 1996). El e-PEL contribuye a los dos objetivos de la evaluación, evaluación del aprendizaje y para el aprendizaje (Lorenzo, 2005) y las tres formas de evaluación. El e-PEL se basa en la autoevaluación, su presentación ante una comunidad de aprendizaje puede ser el punto de partida de la coevaluación y la evaluación externa, por ejemplo, en el mercado laboral. La gama de formas de evaluación se amplía gracias la introducción del método *portfolio*, lo que aumenta las posibilidades de retroalimentación y por consiguiente de mejora del alumno.

La ventaja de *webfolios* abiertos, basados en Internet como un elemento de *e-learning* 2.0, radica por tanto, en la interacción de la evaluación sumativa por parte del docente y formativa realizada por los compañeros. En la evaluación sumativa se evalúa la consecución de un objetivo fijado externamente, que el alumno no puede elegir, en un momento determinado, sin embargo, en la evaluación formativa y continua existe voluntariedad. El alumno presentará su trabajo ante un público seleccionado por él y recibirá retroalimentación y no una evaluación cuantitativa de un público externo, una nota. Su proceso de aprendizaje puede mejorar de forma permanente y esta información no solo se comenta de forma selectiva (Barberá *et al.*, 2011). Los usuarios del e-PEL pueden representar a través de los elementos multimedia las relaciones entre los resultados del aprendizaje en la enseñanza reglada, no reglada y el aprendizaje informal.

Una ventaja substancial para el proceso de aprendizaje sería el diálogo de los alumnos entre sí y con el profesor. Asimismo, el e-PEL no contempla la posibilidad de compartir contenidos, que aportaría el efecto de la inmediatez: los comentarios se podrían realizar e intercambiar de forma fácil y rápida, y no mediante el correo electrónico, como en la versión oficial. Si surgiera algún problema, se podrían realizar las consultas con celeridad. Las respuestas y las posibles soluciones propuestas permanecerían en este formato digital, por tanto también podrían hacer uso de ellas otros usuarios que *a posteriori* encontraran la misma dificultad (Barberá *et al.*, 2006). Esto se podría llevar a cabo mediante *blogs,* que contiene por ejemplo el webfolio Mahara[1]: Los alumnos elegirían la temática y los participantes, según su finalidad.

La gestión del e-PEL requiere ciertas habilidades multimedia y promueve la adquisición de forma natural y sostenida de la competencia digital. Asimismo, se fomenta la capacidad de aprender y escribir, así como la comunicación y las habilidades para resolver problemas. Se tiene que considerar la importancia de la competencia digital como competencia básica, ya que para el aprendizaje permanente el usuario tiene que contar con autonomía de aprendizaje en la gestión de su diario de aprendizaje en particular y de todas las aplicaciones del e-PEL como herramienta de aprendizaje en general (Kugler, 2008). La escritura y la organización de los textos, el diseño adecuado de página, la creación de gráficos atractivos, la optimización de imágenes escaneadas y postproducción de vídeo o audio y patrones de sonido conducen a una representación del aprendizaje amplia a través de una variedad de aplicaciones.

En conclusión, se puede afirmar que el e-PEL presenta las siguientes ventajas pedagógicas y lingüísticas:

- Alumno como eje del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas
- Reflexión sobre el proceso de aprendizaje de lenguas
- Fomento de la autonomía en el aprendizaje de idiomas
- Beneficios psicológicos para el aprendizaje de idiomas

Pero las diferencias respecto a su homólogo en papel se hacen patentes en las siguientes ventajas tecnológicas:

- Mayor comunicación y accesibilidad
- Organización más efectiva
- Interactividad
- Diferentes formas de presentación multimedia
- Uso de los contenidos a largo plazo
- Versatilidad
- Ampliación de las posibilidades de evaluación
- Ampliación del proceso de aprendizaje
- Desarrollo de la competencia digital y del tratamiento de la información

Se pueden consultar ejemplos prácticos de actividades con el *portfolio* oficial de la OAPEE (Organismo Autónomo Programas Educativos Europeos) en las páginas web, que se detallan en el Anexo 1.

[1] https://mahara.org/

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Anexo 1

Página de la Junta de Andalucía con actividades para los niveles A1, A2 y B1 en inglés, francés y alemán: http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/webportal/web/PEL?vismenu=0,0,1,1,1,1,0,0,0

Página de la Generalitat Valenciana con actividades elaboradas por el profesorado de los centros que han realizado la experimentación del *Portfolio* de Adultos +16 de las Lenguas: http://www.cece.gva.es/ocd/sedev/es/acti_ela_EOI.htm

Página de la Generalitat Valenciana con la Guía del *Portfolio* de Adultos (16 o más años) y de la Guía del *Portfolio* de EOI: http://www.cece.gva.es/ocd/sedev/es/porto_adultos.htm

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Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

DIFICULTADES DE LA IMPLANTACIÓN DEL AICLE EN LAS ENSEÑANZAS PROFESIONALES: PERCEPCIONES DEL PROFESORADO Y PROPUESTAS DE SOLUCIÓN

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Resumen

A pesar de que, como señala Coyle (2010: viii) "Spain is rapidly becoming one of the European leaders in CLIL practice and research", las enseñanzas bilingües se están implantando a un ritmo más lento en Formación Profesional que en el resto de las etapas educativas no universitarias (Educación Primaria y Secundaria). En este trabajo, exploraremos las causas de la baja implantación del bilingüismo en las enseñanzas profesionales y explicaremos las iniciativas que se están llevando a cabo para paliar esta situación, tanto por parte de la Administración educativa, como por parte de otras instituciones como la Universidad.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza bilingüe, Formación Profesional, percepción del profesorado, materiales AICLE.

Abstract

Although, as Coyle (2010: viii) states "Spain is rapidly becoming one of the European leaders in CLIL practice and research", bilingual education is being implemented at a slower pace in Vocational Training than in the rest of non-university education (Primary and Secondary). In this paper, we will explore the causes of low implementation of bilingualism in Vocational Training and explain the initiatives undertaken by the Local Education Authority and other institutions, such as the University, to improve this situation.

Key words: Bilingual education, Vocational training, teachers' perceptions, CLIL materials.

1. Beneficios de la implantación del AICLE en las enseñanzas de Formación Profesional

Las instituciones europeas consideran que el aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras constituye un excelente medio de cohesión y construcción comunitaria, ya que favorece los intercambios culturales y la movilidad trasnacional y por ello, han impulsado y apoyado la rápida expansión de las enseñanzas bilingües de currículo integrado (AICLE). El AICLE proporciona una metodología más eficaz que las enseñanzas tradicionales de idiomas para la adquisición de la competencia lingüística en una lengua extranjera (Admiraal et al. 2006; Alonso et al. 2008; Jiménez Catalán y Ruiz de Zarobe 2009; Lagasabaster 2008; Loranc-Paszylk 2009; Lorenzo 2010; Lorenzo et al. 2009; Navés 2011; Navés y Victori 2010; Pérez Cañado 2011; San Isidro 2009, 2010; Várkuti 2010), y todo ello con la garantía de que los estudiantes adquieren los contenidos vehiculados en la L2 en la misma e incluso en mayor medida que sus compañeros monolingües (Badertscher y Bieri 2009; Bergroth 2006; de Jabrun 1997; Grisaleña et al. 2009; Housen 2002; Jäppinen 2005; Lamsfuß-Schenk 2002; Madrid 2011; Seikkula-Leino 2007; Stohler 2006; Van de Craen et al. 2007).

Además, el doble esfuerzo cognitivo que los estudiantes han de realizar para adquirir de manera integrada contenidos y una lengua extranjera contribuye al desarrollo de estrategias cognitivas que posibilitan una comprensión más profunda de la materia, de manera que

> linguistic problems (…) intensified mental construction activity (…) resulting in deeper semantic processing and better understanding of curricular concepts. (Halbach 2009: 21)

Por ello, y como señala Dalton-Puffer,

> rather than being a hindrance, L2 processing actually has a strong potential for the learning of subject-specific concepts. (Dalton-Puffer 2008: 143).

En este sentido, las dificultades que el profesorado encuentra para vehicular los contenidos en una lengua distinta de la materna, más que una desventaja, constituye una oportunidad para adoptar enfoques metodológicos más ricos y eficaces que potencien la construcción de los aprendizajes a través de técnicas como el andamiaje, el aprendizaje basado en problemas y el aprendizaje colaborativo, entre otras, de manera que la metodología AICLE mejora el funcionamiento cognitivo (Coyle et al. 2010:10,29), potencia el desarrollo de habilidades para la resolución de problemas que requieren operaciones mentales de orden superior (Mehisto y Marsh 2011; Kormi-Nuori at al. 2008 y Bialystok et al. 2007) e intensifica la actividad de construcción mental (Dalton-Puffer 2008: 143).

Los estudios de Formación Profesional también pueden verse beneficiados con la introducción del bilingüismo, ya que, como explica Mª Jesús Frigols (Megías 2013:7), los estudiantes de Formación Profesional en programas bilingües consiguen un nivel de conocimientos equiparables a los que venían registrando en su lengua materna y además, son capaces de utilizar una segunda lengua. Sin embargo, la incorporación del AICLE a la Formación Profesional conlleva ventajas que no solamente afectan a lo lingüístico y cognitivo, sino que supone la adición de nuevos beneficios formativos y profesionales.

En este sentido, el bilingüismo contribuye a la consecución de los objetivos del proceso de Copenhague, que pretende mejorar la calidad, el rendimiento y consideración social de la FP. Para alcanzar estos objetivos es importante reflexionar acerca de las competencias que han de adquirir los egresados profesionales en el marco de un mercado globalizado e internacionalizado. En este contexto, la competencia lingüística en una o dos lenguas extranjeras adquiere una relevancia especial, puesto que sus efectos positivos se despliegan en varios momentos de la vida estudiantil y profesional.

Así pues, el dominio de al menos una lengua extranjera potencia la movilidad internacional de los estudiantes, a través de programas europeos de estudios o de prácticas en empresas en el extranjero y permite la realización de contactos profesionales en otros países que pueden ser útiles al estudiante en el futuro. Al finalizar los estudios, conocer una lengua extranjera contribuye al incremento de la tasa de empleabilidad y abre nuevas posibilidades laborales en un mercado de trabajo integrado y globalizado que demanda la movilidad trasnacional de los trabajadores. Además, se favorece el acceso a nuevas informaciones en otros idiomas conectadas con la actividad profesional (en manuales, a través de internet…) y por tanto, coadyuva al aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, a la formación continua y a la actualización profesional de los trabajadores.

En definitiva, la Formación Profesional parece el contexto más propicio para la implantación de programas bilingües, puesto que los beneficios observados no solo afectan a las competencias lingüísticas y a las estrategias cognitivas, sino que contribuyen a una clara mejora de la calidad y consideración de los programas profesionales y abren nuevos horizontes laborales y formativos a los egresados profesionales.

2. La implantación del AICLE en las enseñanzas profesionales

A pesar del valor añadido que supone la introducción del bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional, son estas las enseñanzas públicas no universitarias en las que el AICLE se está expandiendo con mayor dificultad. Las primeras comunidades autónomas que introdujeron ciclos formativos bilingües fueron Andalucía y Aragón en el curso 2006-2007 y a ellas se han ido sumando otras como Murcia, Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Cantabria, etc., aunque el común denominador en todas ellas es que la expansión del AICLE en las enseñanzas profesionales es menor que en el resto de las enseñanzas públicas no universitarias de Primaria y Secundaria.

Para comprender esta tendencia, estudiaremos la difusión del bilingüismo en la comunidad autónoma de Castilla La Mancha. En esta comunidad autónoma, las enseñanzas bilingües se introducen en 2005 mediante la Orden de 07/02/2005, de la Consejería de Educación y Ciencia, por la que se crea el programa de secciones europeas en centros públicos de Infantil, Primaria y Secundaria de la comunidad autónoma de Castilla-La Mancha (DOCM 24-02-2005). Sin embargo, los primeros ciclos de Formación Profesional con enseñanzas de currículo integrado se hacen esperar tres años más, puesto que las primeras secciones bilingües de FP se implantan en el curso 2008-2009. Además, el ritmo de expansión del AICLE en las enseñanzas profesionales es muy lento. Como muestra el siguiente gráfico, las secciones europeas en Formación Profesional constituyen un 2% del total de la oferta de enseñanzas profesionales en Castilla la Mancha, mientras que en las etapas de Educación Primaria y Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, el índice de generalización es mucho mayor: el 20% de los Colegios Públicos ofertan enseñanzas bilingües y el 44% de los Institutos de Enseñanza Secundaria.

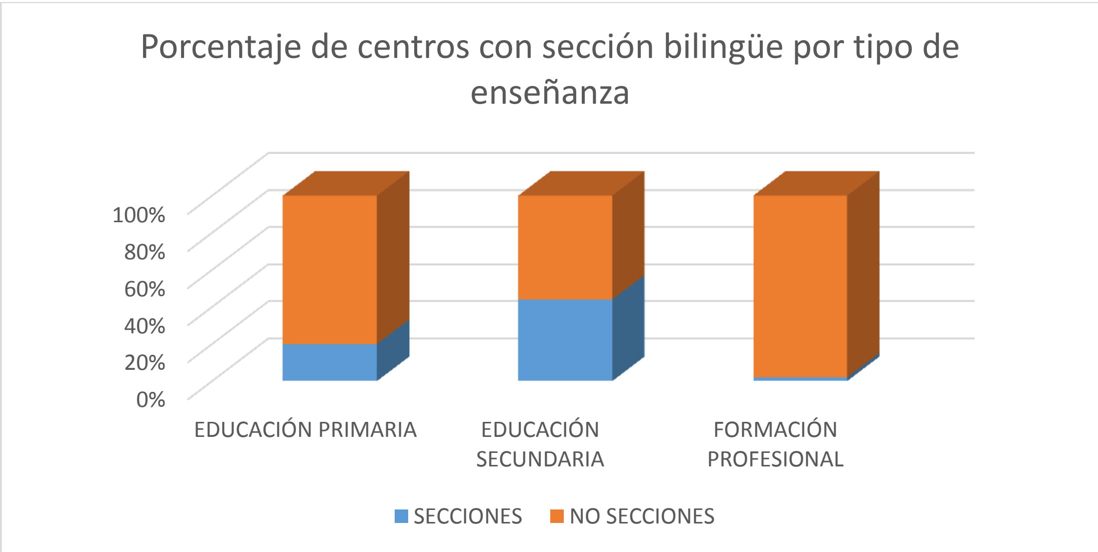

Gráfico 1. Porcentaje de centros públicos en Castilla La Mancha con sección bilingüe por tipo de enseñanza (2014)

Por tanto, existe una gran diferencia entre la baja implantación del bilingüismo en Formación Profesional y el éxito de expansión del AICLE en el resto de las enseñanzas públicas no universitarias, y especialmente en la etapa de Educación Secundaria.

3. Percepción del profesorado acerca de los factores que afectan a la baja implantación del bilingüismo en Formación Profesional

Como hemos visto en el apartado anterior, existe un avance limitado en la expansión del AICLE en las enseñanzas profesionales, pero ¿cuáles son las razones que pueden explicar esta situación?

Para poder dar respuesta a este interrogante nos entrevistamos con el equipo directivo y profesorado de Formación Profesional de un IES que oferta 14 ciclos de Formación Profesional de grado medio y grado superior y posee una sección europea, es decir, un ciclo formativo bilingüe. Las conclusiones que se derivan de dichas entrevistas se especifican a continuación.

En primer lugar, existe un obstáculo principal que es la ausencia de formación lingüística del profesorado de las disciplinas no lingüísticas (DNL) de Formación Profesional, al que la normativa exige un nivel B2 del MCERL para impartir clase en un ciclo formativo bilingüe. Gran parte de los profesores entrevistados conocen la situación de otros centros de Formación Profesional de la región y explican que la nota dominante es la ausencia de profesores de Formación Profesional con un B2. Este es un problema mayor, puesto que la implantación del bilingüismo en un ciclo de Formación Profesional determinado depende directamente de la existencia de profesorado acreditado.

Además, los profesores señalan otros obstáculos e inconvenientes. La mayoría considera que las enseñanzas bilingües entrañan una mayor dificultad en la preparación de las clases y en la elaboración o adaptación de materiales para la docencia. El reducido número de ciclos formativos bilingües y por consiguiente, del alumnado que los cursa, no hace rentable para las editoriales la edición de libros bilingües para esta etapa educativa, por lo que nos encontramos ante una escasez de oferta editorial de materiales docentes.

Por otro lado, la mayoría de los profesores consideran que existen módulos profesionales más aptos que otros para ser impartidos en una lengua extranjera, e incluso aducen que la oferta de ciertos módulos en modalidad bilingüe podría afectar negativamente a la matrícula, de manera que podría existir la posibilidad de que la condición de bilingüe tuviera un efecto disuasorio para parte de los potenciales alumnos de ciertos ciclos formativos.

Finalmente, existen otros factores que pueden influir en la ralentización del proceso de implantación del bilingüismo en FP, como la reticencia de los departamentos didácticos, ya que ven en el AICLE una amenaza del *status quo* y de la propia organización del departamento, puesto que, por ejemplo, el profesorado bilingüe limitaría las posibilidades de elección de grupos por parte del profesorado con mayor antigüedad.

En definitiva, el principal obstáculo para la implantación del bilingüismo en las enseñanzas profesionales es la práctica ausencia de profesores acreditados con un nivel de B2 del MCERL y además, la mayor parte del profesorado considera que no hay una motivación clara para que los profesores de Formación Profesional se formen lingüísticamente y se embarquen en un programa bilingüe, ya que a la mayor dificultad en la preparación de las clases y de los materiales docentes, se une el hecho de que es posible que los potenciales alumnos pudieran evitar cursar ciertos módulos en un centro en la modalidad bilingüe y optarían por realizarlo en otro en el que no existiera esta dificultad. Esta situación correspondería en mayor medida a los alumnos de ciclos formativos de grado medio que a los de grado superior, aunque el rechazo o aceptación del bilingüismo por parte del alumnado, y siempre, en opinión del profesorado, dependería de la familia profesional, del tipo de módulo y de sus salidas profesionales, fundamentalmente.

Esta percepción de la enseñanza bilingüe no coincide con otras etapas educativas como Educación Primaria y Secundaria. En primer lugar, en Primaria y Secundaria, las familias tienen un papel determinante en la elección de centro educativo y consideran, junto con el profesorado, que el bilingüismo constituye un elemento de prestigio (Fernández et al. 2005; Laorden y Peñafiel 2010, Mell et al. 2013). Por otro lado, el profesorado de Primaria y Secundaria encuentra en el bilingüismo un medio de reciclaje, una expectativa de cambio y de mejora profesionales. Las clases bilingües les proporcionan la posibilidad de mejorar metodológicamente, de responder a nuevos retos y de conectar con alumnos más motivados (Coyle 2006; San Isidro 2009). Por su parte, los profesores de FP imparten enseñanzas no obligatorias y se encuentran con alumnado más adulto, más motivado y que ha elegido los estudios profesionales que está cursando. A ello hay que sumar el carácter más práctico de las enseñanzas profesionales, por lo que la necesidad de revulsivos profesionales no se encuentra en un grado tan acusado en este colectivo como en el profesorado de enseñanzas obligatorias y especialmente de Enseñanza Secundaria.

En definitiva, el contexto de las enseñanzas profesionales es muy distinto de las enseñanzas no universitarias de Primaria y ESO (Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria) debido a tres factores fundamentales: en primer lugar, las enseñanzas de FP son voluntarias y no obligatorias, lo que afecta positivamente a la motivación del alumnado. Por otro lado, los alumnos son de mayor edad y las eligen con una influencia más limitada de la opinión de las familias y, por último, los profesores de FP no perciben que el bilingüismo vaya a mejorar ni su situación profesional ni la del centro por un posible aumento de la matrícula, al contrario que ocurre en Primaria y ESO.

4. Medidas adoptadas por la Administración educativa para promover la implantación del bilingüismo en FP

La Administración educativa de Castilla La Mancha es plenamente consciente del lento desarrollo de las enseñanzas bilingües en Formación Profesional y ha intentado dinamizar su implantación en este nivel educativo. Además, la Consejería de Educación de esta comunidad autónoma está realizando una decidida apuesta por las enseñanzas de currículo integrado, de forma que su progresiva generalización a todos los colegios de Enseñanza Infantil y Primaria y al conjunto de los institutos de Enseñanza Secundaria constituye uno de sus principales objetivos estratégicos. Para su consecución, la Administración está adoptando una serie de medidas que podríamos clasificar en dos grupos: medidas genéricas para la expansión del bilingüismo en todas las enseñanzas no universitarias y medidas específicas para promover el currículo integrado en las enseñanzas profesionales.

Dos son las medidas genéricas principales impulsadas por la Administración Educativa para apoyar el desarrollo de las enseñanzas bilingües. La primera de ellas consiste en la puesta en marcha de nuevos programas formativos para la mejora de la competencia lingüística de los profesores que sustituyen al antiguo programa PALE. El objetivo de los nuevos programas formativos consiste en aumentar considerablemente la oferta e implicar al mayor número de profesores posibles, de manera que mientras que el programa PALE venía formando anualmente unos 120 profesores, las Aulas Europeas Específicas han ofertado al profesorado más de 2.600 plazas para perfeccionamiento lingüístico en cada uno de los cursos 2013-2014 y 2014-1015.

La segunda medida adoptada por la Administración consiste en la elaboración de un nuevo marco normativo de las enseñanzas bilingües a través de la creación de los Programas Lingüísticos. Los centros educativos pueden incorporar un Programa Lingüístico y elegir entre una de las tres modalidades contempladas atendiendo a su contexto y a la formación lingüística de su profesorado: programas lingüísticos de iniciación, en los que una materia ha de ser impartida en lengua extranjera; programas lingüísticos de desarrollo, con dos materias vehiculadas en lengua extranjera y, finalmente, los programas lingüísticos de excelencia en los que las materias bilingües han de ser tres y al menos una de ellas ha de ser impartida por profesorado acreditado con un nivel lingüístico correspondiente al C1 del MCERL. Esta normativa facilita a los centros el acceso inicial al programa bilingüe, para el que ya no se exigen, como ocurría en el programa anterior de las secciones europeas, la existencia de dos materias bilingües, sino que solo se precisa impartir una asignatura en lengua extranjera. Es muy probable que esta medida posibilite la incorporación de nuevos centros al programa bilingüe y es probable que afecte también positivamente a la expansión del bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional, aunque aún es pronto para valorar su eficacia en este sentido, puesto que el nuevo marco bilingüe regulado por los Programas Lingüísticos ha sido publicado recientemente (DOCM 20-06-2014).

La adscripción de nuevos centros a los Programas Lingüísticos puede iniciar nuevas sinergias que servirán para retroalimentar el desarrollo del bilingüismo. Si muchos más centros incorporan programas lingüísticos, las nuevas plazas de profesorado que se creen y las plazas de reposición se ofertarán en estos centros con perfil bilingüe, de manera que es muy probable que los profesores que se presenten a las oposiciones para el cuerpo de profesores y maestros contemplen como elemento fundamental de su formación la obtención de un B2 o un C1 y que los profesores funcionarios que participen en el concurso de traslados se preparen para acreditar esos mismos niveles lingüísticos si no quieren ver limitadas sus posibilidades de movilidad, por lo que de todo ello se derivarán efectos positivos respecto de la formación lingüística del profesorado.

No obstante, en el contexto específico de la Formación Profesional, es más complicado poner en marcha estas sinergias y desarrollar este proceso de generalización del bilingüismo, ya que se parte de una situación inicial caracterizada por el escaso número de módulos formativos bilingües y además, como veíamos anteriormente, la motivación para la incorporación al programa bilingüe no es tan potente como en los contextos de la Educación Primaria y Secundaria.

Por ello, la Administración ha ido adoptando medidas de carácter específico para intentar impulsar el bilingüismo en las enseñanzas profesionales. En primer lugar, la Consejería de Educación establece que la incorporación del bilingüismo a las enseñanzas profesionales constituye uno de sus objetivos, tal y como establece en la Orden de 28/05/2012

> La Formación Profesional de Castilla-La Mancha necesita conectar mejor estas enseñanzas con la realidad socio-laboral en un entorno productivo cada vez más competitivo, más complejo y más propicio a la movilidad transnacional. En este sentido, la posibilidad de ofertar secciones europeas en determinados Ciclos Formativos de Formación Profesional, se convierte en un objetivo de esta Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deportes.

La eficacia de esta disposición es, en realidad, limitada, ya que tiene un carácter meramente declarativo y depende de su concreción en medidas específicas. En este sentido, la Administración ha ensayado otra estrategia para impulsar el desarrollo del bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional: la reserva de plazas para esta etapa educativa en las convocatorias para la incorporación del bilingüismo en centros públicos de enseñanzas no universitarias. Desde la creación de las secciones europeas en Castilla La Mancha en 2005, la implantación y extensión del bilingüismo se ha gestionado a través de convocatorias anuales en las que se ofertaba un número determinado de plazas para la incorporación de nuevos centros. Viendo la escasa representación de los módulos profesionales en las resoluciones de estas convocatorias, a partir de 2010 se opta por reservar un número de plazas bilingües para la Formación Profesional. Sin embargo, esta medida tampoco ha sido eficaz, puesto que en las distintas convocatorias, el número de solicitudes de incorporación al programa bilingüe procedentes de enseñanzas profesionales es muy inferior a la cantidad de plazas que se les reserva a esta etapa educativa. En realidad, esta estrategia no es eficiente porque no atiende a la raíz del problema que es la escasa formación lingüística del profesorado de Formación Profesional y su baja motivación para formarse en este sentido y formar parte de programas bilingües en los que ven más inconvenientes que ventajas.

5. Otras iniciativas: elaboración de materiales bilingües para FP en el marco de un proyecto de colaboración docente subvencionado por CYTEMA

Una vez examinadas las dificultades de la Administración para dinamizar los procesos de implantación del bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional, daremos cuenta de una iniciativa procedente del entorno universitario, cuya finalidad es contribuir a proporcionar herramientas y recursos al profesorado de enseñanzas profesionales para que se familiarice con el procedimiento de elaboración y adaptación de materiales bilingües.

Las entrevistas realizadas al profesorado de Formación Profesional revelaban que uno de los obstáculos para la implantación del bilingüismo en esta etapa educativa es la percepción de una mayor dificultad en el desempeño docente, debido entre otras razones, a la escasez de materiales editoriales y a la necesidad de recopilar y adaptar por cuenta propia los materiales disponibles. Por eso, uno de los objetivos del proyecto de colaboración docente liderado por la Facultad de Educación de Ciudad Real (UCLM) y titulado "Especialización y mejora de recursos docentes y jornadas formativas para la adaptación al espacio europeo de enseñanza superior: guía de recursos bilingües medio ambientales y turísticos en las áreas protegidas de Castilla La Mancha" ha sido la elaboración de materiales bilingües destinados al aula de Formación Profesional. El proyecto fue subvencionado por el Campus

Tecnológico de Energía y Medio Ambiente, CYTEMA y se desarrolló durante el curso 2013-2014. Una de sus acciones principales consistió en elaborar materiales didácticos digitales y bilingües conectados con la educación medioambiental y el conocimiento de las reservas de la biosfera de la Mancha Húmeda y se dirigían especialmente a tres ciclos formativos: Ciclo de Técnico Superior en Gestión Forestal y Medio Natural, Ciclo de Grado Superior en Educación Infantil y Ciclo de Grado Superior de Guía, Información y Asistencias Turísticas. Además de los materiales digitales (Jerez et al. 2014a) se editó un libro en papel (Jerez et al. 2014b) en el que se proporciona una pequeña guía acerca de la metodología AICLE y la elaboración de materiales bilingües (Nieto 2014: 221-234).

Para desarrollar el proyecto, se estableció una colaboración entre investigadores de la UCLM expertos en Educación Medioambiental y profesores universitarios especializados en la Didáctica de la Geografía y en la Didáctica de Lenguas Extranjeras, en conexión con profesores de Formación Profesional y equipos directivos. Gracias a este trabajo interdisciplinar, fue posible conjugar el rigor científico respecto de los contenidos relativos a la educación medioambiental con aspectos propios de la metodología del currículo integrado (AICLE) y así elaborar un libro digital bilingüe que contribuya a la educación medioambiental de los alumnos de Formación Profesional.

Un objetivo fundamental de los materiales elaborados en inglés es promover el pensamiento crítico del alumno (Mehisto 2012: 16) y desarrollar su competencia para valorar situaciones de conflicto medioambiental. En este sentido, el eje vertebrador de los contenidos es el concepto de sostenibilidad. Para ello, hemos evitado proporcionar al alumno definiciones cerradas destinadas a la memorización, sino que el objetivo es que los alumnos las construyan de manera crítica, reflexionando en cada caso acerca de la búsqueda del difícil equilibrio entre la actividad humana y la protección medioambiental. Por ello, se evitan planteamientos que conduzcan a la asimilación de conocimientos bancarios y se privilegia en su lugar la adquisición de competencias y capacidades y su aplicación a distintas situaciones y contextos. Se pretende pues, guiar al alumno en la construcción de sus propios aprendizajes a través de la observación, de la experimentación y de la reflexión.

Así pues, la construcción crítica de los aprendizajes constituye un elemento central. Las actividades propuestas acompañan a los estudiantes para que paso a paso, a través de un proceso de andamiaje, comprendan la verdadera dimensión del problema de la sostenibilidad y la necesidad de armonizar posturas contrapuestas y puedan aplicar sus conocimientos a diversos escenarios. El aprendizaje colaborativo y la negociación de significado tienen un papel clave en este proceso de elaboración de los aprendizajes, por lo que las secuencias propuestas prestan especial atención a la interacción, el intercambio y la promoción del diálogo en el aula, tanto en parejas, pequeños grupos, como en gran grupo, con el profesor como guía.

Además de la interacción oral, se potencian las habilidades productivas escritas del alumnado a través de la escritura colaborativa y la elaboración del propio material de estudio. Son los alumnos los que en grupo han de negociar definiciones y elaborar un glosario con los conceptos fundamentales de las lecciones.

El interés principal de este proyecto reside en la posibilidad de que el trabajo y la investigación que emana de la Universidad, en este caso, a través de la Facultad de Educación, contribuya a la introducción de innovaciones en las enseñanzas no universitarias, de manera que las Facultades de

Educación puedan participar de manera práctica en la mejora de los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, mostrando así, su compromiso con la Educación.

6. Conclusiones

Las ventajas de implantar el bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional son evidentes, ya que aporta a sus estudiantes beneficios lingüísticos, que se materializan en la adquisición de una buena competencia lingüística en una lengua extranjera; beneficios cognitivos, puesto que contribuye al desarrollo de estrategias cognitivas, y beneficios laborales y formativos, ya que posibilita la movilidad y la formación a lo largo de la vida.

Sin embargo, la expansión del bilingüismo en las enseñanzas profesionales no está siendo tan rápida como en el resto de las enseñanzas no universitarias. En Primaria y Secundaria convergen varias fuerzas que impulsan la implantación del AICLE. En primer lugar, existe una percepción de las familias muy positiva respecto de los centros bilingües, que a su vez repercute en que los centros educativos incorporen enseñanzas bilingües para aumentar su prestigio y consideración social. Además, el profesorado de estas etapas educativas encuentra en el bilingüismo un motor de cambio y mejora de aspectos de su desempeño docente como la motivación del alumnado. En Formación Profesional, el contexto es muy distinto. En este caso, la decisión de escolarización recae en mayor medida en los potenciales alumnos que en las familias y la elección de cursar un módulo u otro depende de factores como la titulación (hecho que puede restringir el abanico de posibilidades a ciclos de grado medio), las preferencias o las salidas profesionales, de manera que la condición de bilingüe no es determinante para que un módulo profesional pueda atraer a un mayor número de alumnos, sino que, en algunos casos, los profesores entrevistados señalan que puede producir un efecto contrario de carácter disuasorio. En este sentido, el contexto de los estudios de Formación Profesional es muy complejo, debido, entre otros factores a la gran variedad de familias profesionales y módulos y a la existencia de Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio y de Grado Superior, y esta heterogeneidad dificulta la toma de decisiones globales. Por otro lado, las enseñanzas de Formación Profesional no tienen carácter obligatorio, sino que los alumnos las cursan voluntariamente y este hecho tiene un efecto positivo en la motivación. Por ello, una parte de los profesores de Formación Profesional, parecen centrarse más en los inconvenientes que en las ventajas de la introducción del bilingüismo y temen que pueda alterar el funcionamiento y organización de los departamentos, a la vez que observan que las enseñanzas bilingües suponen un esfuerzo añadido para el profesor en la preparación de sus clases y en la búsqueda y adaptación de materiales y recursos. Estas razones parecen estar en la raíz del menor interés del profesorado de enseñanzas profesionales para formarse lingüísticamente y poder acreditar un nivel correspondiente a un B2 del MCERL. En este sentido, la ausencia de profesorado acreditado lingüísticamente constituye, sin lugar a dudas, el principal obstáculo para la implantación del bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional.

Las acciones emprendidas para paliar esta situación no están siendo muy efectivas. Aunque la Administración considera como objetivo la expansión del bilingüismo en FP, lo cierto es que la medida de reserva de plazas en las distintas convocatorias de ampliación de centros bilingües no ha tenido mucho éxito, puesto que hay menos solicitudes que plazas reservadas y año tras año quedan plazas vacantes. Es posible que el nuevo marco normativo de los Programas Lingüísticos, que prevé la posibilidad de iniciar el bilingüismo con una sola asignatura impartida en lenguas extranjera, junto con el esfuerzo de la Administración en materia de formación lingüística del profesorado, den más frutos en el futuro.

Por otro lado, la escasez de materiales bilingües adaptados destinados a los estudios profesionales, constituye una preocupación de los profesores de Formación Profesional. En este sentido, instituciones como CYTEMA convocan proyectos de colaboración entre el profesorado universitario y el de Formación Profesional y promueven acciones como la desarrollada a través del proyecto "Especialización y mejora de recursos docentes y jornadas formativas para la adaptación al Espacio Europeo de Enseñanza Superior: guía de recursos bilingües medio ambientales y turísticos en las áreas protegidas de Castilla La Mancha", a través del cual se elaboraron materiales bilingües vinculados a la protección medioambiental y dirigidos a tres ciclos formativos de Formación Profesional. Estos materiales inciden en la construcción de conocimientos a través de la observación, la experimentación y la reflexión, promueven la comprensión de la complejidad que subyace a la protección medioambiental y colaboran al desarrollo de las destrezas comunicativas en una lengua extranjera, especialmente las destrezas productivas.

Estos proyectos de colaboración constituyen una interesante línea de trabajo a seguir, puesto que posibilitan que las iniciativas universitarias incidan en la realidad y mejoren los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje en contextos tan complejos y heterogéneos como el de introducción del bilingüismo en la Formación Profesional. Sin embargo, hay que concluir, que tanto los esfuerzos de la Administración, como otras iniciativas procedentes del entorno universitario, tales como el proyecto descrito en este trabajo, están teniendo un impacto muy limitado en la expansión del AICLE en la Formación Profesional, al menos en el contexto educativo de Castilla-La Mancha y al menos a corto plazo. Habrá que estar atentos a la futura evolución del bilingüismo en las enseñanzas profesionales y a la promoción de nuevas medidas que la favorezcan.

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Encuentro
Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas

ASPECTOS METODOLÓGICOS E INVESTIGADORES DEL ANÁLISIS DE NECESIDADES EN SEGUNDAS LENGUAS: APLICACIÓN AL MUNDO PROFESIONAL

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Resumen
En este artículo se hace un estudio descriptivo del Análisis de Necesidades (AN) en segundas lenguas en el mundo profesional como elemento indispensable para realizar una investigación minuciosa relacionada con el aprendizaje de una lengua. Se habla de su recorrido histórico, sus objetivos y sus componentes más destacados con el fin de realizar una investigación fiable con combinación de diferentes recursos, métodos y triangulación. Se realiza un contraste con el AN de necesidades tradicional, el cual se basaba solo en competencias lingüísticas, con el actual, que realiza un estudio pragmático relacionado con el mundo comunicativo en el que se mueve el estudiante.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje de lenguas, investigación lingüística, análisis de necesidades, triangulación, métodos y recursos de AN.

Abstract
In this article we offer a descriptive study of Needs Analysis (NA) in second language in professional environments as an important element when doing an accurate linguistic research related to learning of second languages. We describe it from a historical point of view, explaining its objectives and its most prominent components in order to make a reliable research in combination with different resources, methods and triangulation. We offer a contrast between traditional NA, which was based only on language skills, and the current NA, which goes deep into a pragmatic study related to the communicative world in which the student performs.

Key words: language learning, linguistic research, needs analysis, triangulation and methods and resources of NA.

1. Introducción

No todos los métodos de enseñanza en segundas lenguas son igualmente eficaces para todos los aprendices y circunstancias, especialmente en lenguas para fines específicos, en los que, si no se hace un análisis de necesidades previo, con toda seguridad, no se darán las soluciones didácticas idóneas a los objetivos precisos. Sin embargo, de la misma manera que existen varios métodos de enseñanza, existen varios métodos para realizar un análisis de necesidades, con diferentes enfoques y tipos de tareas (Long, 2005). En este artículo analizaremos no solo el concepto del AN en segundas lenguas y su trayectoria, sino que especificaremos los posibles métodos e instrumentos para la obtención de los datos necesarios para realizarlo. De la misma manera, nos centraremos en la explicación de esos diferentes procedimientos y de los recursos para la obtención de datos en AN, finalizando con la definición de triangulación en sus diferentes modalidades.

2. Concepto y definición de análisis de necesidades en segundas lenguas

Los enseñantes necesitan conocer las características personales y ocupacionales de los posibles aprendices con el fin de aplicar un método de enseñanza adecuado y eficaz para cada caso. Esos aprendientes pueden ser profesionales con experiencia en su puesto de trabajo, lo cual aporta una información extra, ya sea para diseñar un curso o para realizar un análisis de sus necesidades lingüísticas. Sin embargo, el concepto de necesidad ha dado lugar a una amplia gama de interpretaciones. Hutchinson y Waters (1987) ofrecen una clasificación muy útil de necesidades que refleja los distintos puntos de vista existentes y que da lugar a diferentes formas de análisis. Dicha clasificación se organiza en dos grandes grupos. Por un lado, están las necesidades de la situación meta, es decir, lo que el alumno necesitará hacer al término de su aprendizaje. Por otro lado, están las necesidades de aprendizaje, es decir, lo que el alumno necesita hacer para aprender. Dentro del grupo de necesidades lingüísticas de la situación meta, Hutchinson y Waters (1987) distinguen tres tipos de necesidades: las demandas, los deseos y las deficiencias.

Las demandas también han sido denominadas necesidades objetivas, percibidas o producto. Las demandas son "the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation" (Hutchinson y Waters, 1987: 55). West (1994) y Long (2005), describieron este tipo de necesidades como necesidades objetivas y pueden ser consideradas más o menos generales en el marco de un análisis de situaciones típicas del día a día. El objetivo en estos casos es establecer los requisitos lingüísticos de situaciones ocupacionales o académicas para las que se están preparando los alumnos. A este tipo de análisis se le conoce con frecuencia como análisis de la situación meta (ASM) (Moreno, 2003).

Otro gran grupo de necesidades son los deseos del alumno (wants), también denominados necesidades subjetivas o sentidas. Estos deseos se han definido como "what the learners want or feel they need" (Hutchinson y Waters, 1987: 57). Al tratarse de necesidades muy personales, los deseos a veces han recibido la etiqueta de necesidades subjetivas. Según Cesteros (2004), dichas necesidades no se pueden considerar generales, son bastante impredecibles y, por tanto, indefinibles.

Las carencias del alumno (lacks), también llamadas deficiencias—se han considerado igualmente importantes por parte de Hutchinson y Waters.

> To identify necessities alone is not enough... You also need to know what the learner knows already, so that you can then decide which of the necessities the learner lacks...The target proficiency, in other words, needs to be matched against the existing proficiency of the learners. The gap between the two can be referred to as the learners' lacks.
>
> (Hutchinson y Waters, 1987: 55-56)

Como se ha podido apreciar, en un análisis de necesidades completo será necesario abordar los diferentes tipos de necesidad mencionados. La distinción entre demandas y deseos es conveniente, pues los deseos de los alumnos no tienen por qué coincidir necesariamente con las demandas previstas por el profesor, por el experto o por las empresas. Por otro lado, hay que tener en cuenta las carencias del alumno, porque dependiendo del nivel en que este se encuentre, y considerando otras posibles limitaciones del contexto de enseñanza-aprendizaje, no siempre será posible alcanzar el nivel demandado por la situación meta (Moreno, 2003).

Veamos ahora la evolución del AN en segundas lenguas y su aplicación con diferentes fines.

3. Trayectoria del análisis de necesidades en segundas lenguas

El AN empezó a surgir al mismo tiempo que empezó a surgir el interés por el aprendizaje de una lengua con fines específicos y principalmente, del inglés. Sin embargo, la forma de llevarlos a cabo ha ido cambiando a lo largo de la historia de la lingüística aplicada y en particular, la enseñanza de ESP. En los años setenta, se estableció un método de AN en segundas lenguas a través de un proyecto del Consejo de Europa llevado a cabo por Richterich y Chancerel (1980), en el que se pretendía descubrir el dominio de una segunda lengua con fines profesionales de movilidad a través de la entonces Comunidad Económica Europea. Este proyecto, al igual que el de Wilkins (1974), pretendía realizar un diagnóstico a partir de conocimientos lingüísticos nocionales de la lengua que fueron considerados como básicos en una segunda lengua. Se crearon materiales pedagógicos a partir de esos AN, compuestos por conceptos gramaticales, semánticos y funcionales supuestamente necesarios para cubrir necesidades en segundas lenguas con fines ocupacionales.

Esos anteriores estudios fueron más intuitivos que empíricos y no tuvieron en cuenta las necesidades comunicativas reales de los hablantes ni los procesos cognitivos del aprendizaje de lenguas (Long, 2005). En los últimos treinta años y después de numerosas investigaciones realizadas en cuanto a la adquisición de segundas lenguas, son pocos los autores que justifican ese tipo de AN. Actualmente, el tipo de AN realizado a profesionales tiene en cuenta si los estudiantes o hablantes de esa segunda lengua son profesionales ya trabajando (in-service), comenzando su carrera o a punto de comenzarla (pre-service), ya que los objetivos de aprendizaje de la segunda lengua presentan diferencias (Long, 2005). Los individuos del grupo de profesionales incorporados a un puesto de trabajo implicados en el AN de una segunda lengua pueden aportar datos importantes en cuanto a su experiencia profesional y en cuanto a objetivos de aprendizaje, pero tal vez no son capaces de aportar datos lingüísticos relacionados con el dominio del discurso necesario para cada situación. El grupo de individuos sin experiencia o que no ha comenzado a trabajar a menudo no es capaz de identificar necesidades lingüísticas ni puede aportar información relacionada con su trabajo. Es por tanto la labor del analista identificar las necesidades, gestionar la metodología de obtención de datos y realizar un diagnóstico. West (1994) distingue cinco tipos de AN lingüísticos: a) Análisis de la situación objetivo: establece las necesidades del entorno profesional para el que está siendo preparado el sujeto; b) análisis de deficiencias: combina ambas situaciones, es decir, la situación objetivo y las deficiencias actuales; c) Análisis de estrategia: se considera lo que el sujeto tiene que estudiar y cómo hacerlo; d) Análisis de medios: el diseñador del curso estudia los medios convenientes para el estudio de esa lengua, sus ventajas y desventajas; e) Auditorías lingüísticas: AN dentro de una empresa y organizado por esa misma empresa.

Sea cual sea la unidad de análisis que se utilice para la aproximación de la realización de un AN en segundas lenguas, ya sea con metodologías actuales o antiguas, aportarán información para realizar un diagnóstico siempre que impliquen elementos evaluadores y de estudio fiables en cuanto a obtención de datos. Sin embargo, la unidad de análisis más fiable y más utilizada actualmente es aquella basada en tareas. Veremos en el siguiente apartado las causas de esta elección por parte de numerosos investigadores.

3.1 AN en segundas lenguas basado en tareas

Según Long (2005), el AN basado en la tarea como unidad de análisis tiene una motivación fundamental que es la de la convicción de que lo que se está analizando está relacionado con tareas de la vida real (Long y Norris, 2000; Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 1998). Sería de poca utilidad realizar un análisis de las necesidades del estudiante o hablante en términos de unidades lingüísticas como palabras, estructuras o nociones, si no se llevan a la práctica real. Los AN basados en análisis lingüísticos tienden a dar como resultado listas de términos y estructuras descontextualizados y son de poco uso para realizar diagnósticos o incluso para diseñar materiales didácticos, ya que dan poca información sobre cómo y con qué fin esas estructuras son utilizadas en la realidad (Cameron, 1998).

Como ya dijimos anteriormente, los trabajadores expertos o ya inmersos en su profesión, son capaces de aportar información válida relacionada con su trabajo en términos de tareas, pero no en términos de lengua, ya que suelen tener poco conocimiento lingüístico específico, de ahí que la conceptualización de las necesidades ayude al analista a comprender los contenidos necesarios para realizar tareas profesionales y a partir de ahí realizar un diagnóstico de necesidades, ya sea para diseñar un programa de aprendizaje o detectar carencias lingüísticas (Hutchinson y Waters, 1987). Ese analista lingüístico o investigador es el encargado de hacer un diagnóstico o elaborar unas conclusiones válidas y fiables, por lo que juega un papel fundamental en el proceso investigador y analítico. En el siguiente apartado se presenta su caracterización e importancia.

3.2 El papel del investigador en el AN

El investigador juega un papel indispensable en la investigación lingüística cualitativa más evidente aún si cabe que en la cualitativa, ya que es el principal instrumento para obtener y representar los datos. Este investigador debe tener habilidades analíticas. El investigador analítico, según Rodríguez Gómez y otros (1996), debe estar preparado para ser paciente y esperar hasta que sea aceptado por los informantes; ser flexible y tener capacidad de adaptación y autocrítica y tener sensibilidad y capacidad de diferenciar las respuestas contradictorias. Según Taylor y Bogdan (1986, p.20), el investigador es el centro del universo empírico en la investigación cualitativa por diferentes causas:

a) La investigación analítica es inductiva y el investigador no recoge datos para evaluar hipótesis. El investigador desarrolla conceptos partiendo de su propia interpretación de los datos con la ayuda de su bagaje y de su experiencia.

b) El investigador cualitativo es sensible a los efectos que él mismo puede causar sobre las personas que son objeto de la investigación, por lo que debe evitar ser intrusivo.

c) Es esencial que el investigador analítico, experimente la realidad tal como la percibe la persona que estudia para poder comprender mejor los hechos y, al mismo tiempo, debe apartar sus propias creencias y predisposiciones.

d) Para este investigador todas las perspectivas son valiosas, ya que no busca necesariamente una única verdad, sino la comprensión detallada a partir de perspectivas múltiples.

e) El investigador debe estar vinculado en cierta manera al mundo empírico en el que se va a introducir para asegurar el ajuste entre los datos obtenidos y la realidad y a la vez tiene que subrayar la validez de los datos por medio de procedimientos rigurosos.

Sin embargo, el papel difícil del investigador es precisamente utilizar un método riguroso de obtención y validación de datos y expresarlo con veracidad y coherencia. Veamos, pues, los métodos de obtención de datos del AN.

4. Métodos de AN para obtención de datos

La elección de cada método depende del objetivo investigador y el criterio de cada investigador. Denscombe (2008:154) explica: "when choosing a method for the collection of data, it is a matter of horses for courses". Es decir, no hay una norma fija; cada método puede unirse a una finalidad diferente. Sin embargo, antes de elegir un método o procedimiento, hay que tener en cuenta algunos aspectos importantes (Descombe, 2010: 153). Primero, no tener una idea prefijada en cuanto a la elección de un método antes de iniciar la investigación. Segundo, ningún método para la obtención de datos se puede considerar como perfecto ni como inútil. Cada método tiene sus puntos débiles y sus puntos fuertes. Cada uno produce unos datos cuya utilidad depende de lo que el investigador pretende demostrar. Tercero, al elegir el método, el investigador debe basar su decisión en el criterio de utilidad y no pensar que el método ha sido elegido exclusivamente porque sea superior a otros en cuanto a precisión. Cuarto, los métodos de investigación no son exclusivos de una investigación. Al ser estos elegidos de forma pragmática, existe la posibilidad de que dos métodos se combinen y uno compense las debilidades del otro. Quinto, el uso de más de un método permite al investigador utilizar la triangulación, es decir, la combinación de diferentes métodos con el fin de poder analizar los datos desde diferentes perspectivas para contrastarlos y compararlos como veremos más adelante.

Veamos los diferentes métodos de obtención de datos especialmente relevantes en el AN.

4.1 Las entrevistas

La entrevista es una forma específica de conversación en la que se genera conocimiento mediante la interacción entre un entrevistador y un entrevistado. Las entrevistas forman parte de un método de investigación muy utilizado en la investigación lingüística, principalmente por la relación comunicativa establecida entre el investigador y los investigados, proporcionando de forma eficaz datos útiles y válidos en cuanto a lo que los participantes dicen o escriben para emitir sus mensajes o expresar sus ideas o emociones (Robson, 2003).

El uso de las entrevistas como método de obtención de datos se presenta a los investigadores como un método atractivo, ya que se aleja de la manipulación de los datos como algo externo a los individuos y se acerca al conocimiento generado por los seres humanos a través del diálogo. (Kvale, 1996:11) Las entrevistas permiten a los entrevistadores y a los entrevistados discutir las interpretaciones del mundo en el que viven y expresar cómo viven las situaciones desde sus respectivos puntos de vista. No deben ser consideradas simplemente como un método de obtención de datos sobre la vida, sino que se deben considerar parte de la vida misma; son una implicación e integración humana en la investigación (Cohen y otros, 2011). En la entrevista de investigación influyen el lenguaje no verbal o incluso los silencios, que pueden ser significativos y por lo tanto susceptibles de ser analizados tanto como el discurso verbal emitido (Callejo, 2002).

Existen tres tipos de entrevistas desde el punto de vista de la estructura y organización: estructuradas, semiestructuradas y desestructuradas. A continuación se presentan las tres brevemente.

a) Estructuradas: con preguntas fijas y predeterminadas por parte del investigador, que siguen un orden establecido previamente. Se diferencian de los cuestionarios en que las respuestas son más abiertas. Son utilizadas habitualmente cuando se realizan sondeos sociales en los que el investigador necesita obtener datos de un amplio número de sujetos.

b) Semiestructuradas: con preguntas predeterminadas pero que pueden ser variadas en cuanto al orden y a la forma de realizarse la pregunta. Aunque el investigador aquí tenga una visión clara de las preguntas que tienen que ser respondidas, está preparado para ser flexible en cuanto a información y desarrollo y se pueden ir añadiendo preguntas nuevas a medida que avanza la entrevista. Las respuestas esperadas son abiertas y el entrevistado puede exponer su punto de vista con un amplio margen de flexibilidad.

c) Desestructurada o abiertas: el investigador tiene un área de interés general pero deja que la conversación fluya y se desarrolle libremente. Su papel ha de ser lo menos intrusivo posible. Este tipo de entrevista puede ser totalmente informal, ya que se propicia que el entrevistado confíe en el entrevistador. Según Callejo (2002), "si en la entrevista abierta se produce una confesión, es porque es la reivindicación de una norma que se cree aceptable o el reconocimiento de una norma que se acepta en la práctica". Este tipo de entrevista también ha sido denominada por muchos investigadores entrevista abierta o en profundidad, no directiva o antropológica. Es una técnica de observación a través de una conversación ordinaria entre dos personas pero con algunas particularidades. La principal particularidad es la pragmática, ya que el fin de esta conversación es la investigación y una conversación ordinaria puede tener múltiples sentidos pragmáticos (Callejo, 2002). En esta investigación la mencionaremos como entrevista abierta.

La gran ventaja de la elección de la entrevista abierta para un análisis de necesidades es que no se prevén ni se anticipan respuestas ni hay limitaciones como en las entrevistas estructuradas, sino que predominan las opiniones y las actitudes. Son entrevistas exploratorias sin un formato fijo, como veremos en el siguiente apartado.

4.1.1 Las entrevistas abiertas

Según Valles (1997), la entrevista abierta o en profundidad se basa en un discurso propuesto por el investigador/entrevistador sobre aspectos que desea conocer en forma de conversación, mediante preguntas abiertas. La finalidad de plantear este tipo de entrevista es que el entrevistado se sienta con plena libertad de exponer sus ideas y opiniones según una serie de pautas que el interlocutor le dé para focalizar su discurso. De esta forma se espera generar una conversación fluida, capaz de profundizar en la realidad a estudiar. Este tipo de entrevista se caracteriza por la flexibilidad en el transcurso de la conversación, ya que permite al entrevistador conducir el diálogo por el camino que crea oportuno, según vaya surgiendo la conversación. Esto requiere una gran experiencia por parte del entrevistador, como señala Valles (1997:189). El uso de las entrevistas abiertas en AN en ESP ha sido llevado a cabo por algunos investigadores analistas en diferentes entornos profesionales, dando muestra de la fiabilidad y utilidad de los datos en sus investigaciones. Tenemos como muestra a Ramani y otros (1998), que llevaron a cabo una investigación con científicos de la India. Fixman (1990), realizó una investigación con directores de nueve empresas norteamericanas diferentes en cuanto a número de empleados y sectores, para descubrir las necesidades de inglés como segunda lengua entre sus empleados latinos. Cumaranatunge (1988) -utilizó las entrevistas abiertas para descubrir necesidades entre otros, de las asistentas domesticas de Sri Lanka.

En suma, Silverman (1993) enfatiza la importancia de las entrevistas abiertas, ya que a través de ellas el participante expone directamente su única forma de mirar al mundo y de definirlo e insiste en que el entrevistador debe de tener una actitud abierta pero a la vez mostrar lo que denomina Sánchez Martín (2003): “neutralidad emocional”, concepto que está relacionado con la imparcialidad, la distancia y la objetividad del entrevistador.

4.1.1.1 Preparación de las entrevistas y tipos de preguntas

La fase preliminar a la propia entrevista es precisamente el punto de la investigación donde se toman decisiones determinantes sobre la investigación. Es uno de los momentos más importantes en el proceso de la obtención de datos, ya que se decide la estrategia idónea para acometer los objetivos por medio de trazos generales, hasta llegar a los más específicos (Cohen y otros, 2011).

No hay unas reglas fijas que normalicen la preparación de las entrevistas para la realización de las preguntas de investigación. Es muy difícil crear un modelo fijo de entrevista abierta, ya que se trata de una conversación en la que, inevitablemente, surgirá cierta improvisación. Sin embargo, al generarse un discurso fruto de la interacción a través de un diálogo, hay que prever efectos y tener en cuenta imprevistos.

Expertos como Holstein y Gubrium (1995) consideran prioritariamente dos aspectos de las entrevistas:

a) El contrato comunicativo, que es un pacto previo entre entrevistador y entrevistado en el que se ponen de acuerdo en el tema a tratar y cómo tratarlo. También se acuerda el tiempo de duración y el tipo de diálogo. Este pacto crea una mejor disposición para que el entrevistado declare sin ninguna presión.

b) La interacción verbal durante la entrevista, ya que hay que estructurar la entrevista para que tenga una buena dinámica de confidencialidad. Para conseguir esa dinámica de confidencialidad, el entrevistador marca las pautas con las instrucciones, los comentarios y los silencios, para ir llevando su investigación hacia sus objetivos.

Sin embargo, como se mencionaba anteriormente, estas pautas no siempre tienen que ocurrir en el lenguaje oral. Según Goffman (1979), en las relaciones entre las personas, se dan unos territorios del “yo” o espacios de reivindicación que son elocuentes en sí mismos. El entrevistador tiene que respetar el espacio que el entrevistado quiera crear y no intentar invadirlo con el fin de tener una mayor aproximación en el diálogo. Dentro de estas pautas también es necesario tratar los turnos o tiempo de actuación de cada uno y respetarlos.

Antes de comenzar la entrevista, el investigador debe tener claros los objetivos de su entrevista y, por lo tanto, los datos que quiere obtener de esta. Por lo tanto, el proceso es el siguiente: (a) fijar los datos que el investigador quiere obtener de la entrevista abierta; (b) realizar las preguntas de tal manera que no sean cerradas, sino abiertas, con el fin de conseguir esos objetivos. De hecho, las preguntas abiertas guían las respuestas a expresar mejor los sentimientos e ideas y a describir experiencias (Hutchinson y Wilson. 1994: 309) y (c) replantear preguntas en el caso de que el participante se desvíe del objetivo.

Ya hemos dicho anteriormente que no existe una estructura fija en la entrevista ni reglas precisas para la preparación de una entrevista, pero sí es interesante clasificar los tipos de preguntas, ya que de ellas depende la utilidad de las respuestas que se obtengan.

Veamos en el siguiente punto otra estrategia para la obtención de datos del análisis de necesidades: los cuestionarios.

4.2 Los cuestionarios

Los cuestionarios son herramientas ampliamente utilizadas para recoger datos de sondeos y pueden ser administradas sin la presencia del investigador (Cohen y otros, 2011: 377). Pueden variar en cuanto a propósito, diseño y apariencia y consisten en listas de preguntas escritas. Los individuos participantes en la investigación suelen leer los mismos listados de preguntas. Esto permite consistencia y precisión al analizar las respuestas, además de facilitar el proceso. Una de las ventajas más destacadas de los cuestionarios es que simplifican el proceso de la obtención de datos, preguntando directamente a los individuos participantes para obtener datos de forma rápida y directa y se pueden aplicar a un gran número de sujetos. Sin embargo, se ha identificado una desventaja desde el punto de vista ético (Cohen y otros 2011: 377) y es que los cuestionarios suponen en cierta forma una intrusión en la vida personal de los sujetos interrogados, ya sea por el tiempo que consume o por el tipo de preguntas a las que tiene que responder, que con frecuencia pueden suponer una invasión de la privacidad. Por esta causa, los participantes nunca deben ser coaccionados a terminar las respuestas de un cuestionario, sino que el investigador se tiene que hacer responsable de motivarlo de tal manera que sienta que forma parte de la investigación y que gracias a su participación, se van a obtener resultados útiles y valiosos para el proceso del conocimiento y la sociedad.

Los datos que se obtienen a través de los cuestionarios suelen estar clasificados en dos categorías: hechos y opiniones (Denscombe, 2010: 156). La información relacionada con los hechos no requiere el juicio o la actitud personal de los sujetos participantes, pero la información obtenida a través de las opiniones implica creencias, puntos de vista y preferencias de los sujetos participantes. Hay que tener en cuenta que en la práctica, los cuestionarios suelen contar con dos categorías, hechos y opiniones, para que sean más completos en cuanto a información.

4.2.1 Tipos de preguntas de los cuestionarios

La distinción más general entre los tipos de preguntas de los cuestionarios, además de hechos y opiniones, es la de preguntas abiertas y cerradas. Las preguntas abiertas son las preguntas en las que no se especifica ninguna respuesta para elegir y se deja abierta a la elección del participante para que escriba en ella. Las preguntas cerradas son las que ofrecen ya unas respuestas predeterminadas para su elección. Las preguntas abiertas pueden aportar una información extra en la que el investigador tal vez no había pensado, pero a su vez, es difícil de codificar o interpretar ya que las preguntas pueden ser demasiado variadas o no tener que ver con el objetivo de la investigación. A pesar de esta limitación, a su vez puede ofrecer respuestas ricas en contenido y ofrecer ejemplos ilustrativos que pueden llevar al investigador a replantearse el análisis de las respuestas. Oppenheim (1992) opina que incluso en algunos casos, se puede plantear la misma pregunta de tipo abierto y otra de tipo cerrada para contrastar las respuestas. Otra limitación de las respuestas abiertas es que los participantes las vean como consumidoras de tiempo y los participantes se muestren reacios a responder, lo que da como resultado poca validez a la respuesta. De ahí que muchos cuestionarios profesionales tiendan a incluir exclusivamente preguntas cerradas (Dornyei, 2010). Algunos investigadores están de acuerdo en que en el caso de que fuera necesario incluir una pregunta abierta habría que incluirla al final de las respuestas cerradas, en lugar de insertarla al principio, ya que de esa manera los participantes completan las previas respuestas cerradas sin sentirse en la obligación de completar la pregunta abierta y en el caso que sea respondida, será libremente y dará más validez a esta (Aldridge y Levine, 2001).

Las preguntas cerradas ofrecen ya unas opciones de respuestas y el participante solo tiene que elegir una o varias, según el tipo de dato que se trate. Hay varios tipos de preguntas cerradas, pero todas tienen en común que el participante no tiene que realizar ninguna producción escrita sino una selección determinada. La ventaja de las preguntas cerradas es que ofrece una clasificación, codificación o tabulación de datos que no deja lugar a la subjetividad. Pero dentro de las preguntas cerradas, hay varios tipos de estructuras, como veremos en el siguiente apartado, en el que nombraremos las más importantes en el AN. La siguiente clasificación la hemos realizado como tipo de respuestas, ya que son en realidad las que conforman las preguntas cerradas o abiertas según su formato.

4.2.2 Tipos de respuestas

Las respuestas de escala son las más comunes en los cuestionarios de investigación ya que implican al participante en una valoración o evaluación de las respuestas objetivo por medio de varias opciones en las que tienen que marcar dentro de una escala la importancia de cada una. Esa escala de valoración indica diferentes grados en una categoría y puede ser de diversa naturaleza; por ejemplo, puede valorar una categoría indicando si es "bueno" o "malo", "frecuente" o "infrecuente", "importante" o "poco importante" o también pueden valorar opiniones: "completamente de acuerdo" o "en desacuerdo". Los puntos en la escala se suelen asignar por medio de números consecutivos que facilitan la posterior clasificación o codificación en el análisis de los datos. La gran ventaja de las respuestas en escala es que pueden valorar y evaluar prácticamente todo, desde una autoevaluación interna de actitudes, hasta una valoración de elementos externos o la importancia de cualquier tema (Aiken, 1996).

La respuesta de escala más utilizada en los cuestionarios es la Escala de Likert, que fue así nombrada por su autor, Rensis Likert (1932). El primer artículo de Likert sobre esta escala vio la luz en el año 1932 y se calcula que más de 100.000 investigadores la han utilizado en estos últimos setenta años, ya que es un método simple, versátil y consolidado. La escala de Likert consiste en una serie de elementos relacionados con una categoría objetivo, que puede ser una persona, un grupo de personas, una institución o un concepto. Los participantes tienen que responder dentro de una escala de valoración, su grado de satisfacción en cuanto a acuerdo o a opinión, asignando a cada elemento de la escala una puntuación. Por ejemplo, "totalmente de acuerdo"= 5, "totalmente en desacuerdo" = 1.

Los investigadores de lenguas están familiarizados con las preguntas de respuestas de elección múltiple por su uso masivo en la evaluación de segundas lenguas. No solo es posible elegir una respuesta, sino varias; incluso se puede dar la opción de no elegir ninguna opción. Este tipo de respuesta es popular por su funcionalidad conceptual, la que permite insertar varios conceptos en las respuestas con el fin de que el participante elija el correcto mostrando sus conocimientos y también por su fácil corrección. Cuando se trata de respuestas relacionadas con la evaluación de la gramática de una segunda lengua, se recomienda que todas las respuestas sean ortográficamente correctas aunque solo una sea la adecuada para responder la pregunta. Solo así se puede identificar el dominio de la competencia (Dornyei, 2010).

Las respuestas de listado consisten en una lista de elementos similares en cuanto a rango y los participantes pueden elegir una respuesta o varias, o incluso todas según su juicio. Este tipo de respuestas tiene un peso considerable a la hora de agruparlas para emitir un juicio o una valoración a través de un cálculo estadístico (Aiken, 1996).

Establecer un orden en objetos, conceptos abstractos o incluso personas siguiendo algún criterio es una actividad común en la mente humana. Por eso, ordenar respuestas siguiendo algún criterio se convierte en un acto humano normal cuando los participantes encuentran este modelo de respuestas en un cuestionario. Tal como indica su nombre, las respuestas de ordenación están dispuestas en un listado de opciones en el que hay que establecer un orden asignando un número a cada una según sus preferencias o según el orden de importancia para cada individuo.

4.3 La observación

La observación permite al investigador la obtención de datos para emprender una investigación de tipo cualitativo, no desde el punto de vista de lo que los sujetos dicen, sino que es la evidencia directa de lo que ve y percibe el investigador en un escenario de primera mano (Denscombe, 2010).

Existen dos tipos de observación: observación sistemática o no participante, que tiene sus orígenes en la psicología social, en particular, en el estudio de la interacción en escenarios como clases o grupos de estudiantes. Normalmente está asociada a los resultados cuantitativos. La observación participante, asociada a la sociología y la antropología, que se utiliza para comprender mejor los procesos de los grupos investigados, está vinculada normalmente a la obtención de datos cualitativos. Estos dos tipos de observación pueden parecer aislados aparentemente en cuanto a su uso dentro de la investigación social, pero comparten algunas características vitales (Denscombe, 2010). Así pues, a diferencia de otros tipos de métodos analíticos como los cuestionarios o las entrevistas, en la observación en general, el investigador basa sus datos en lo que ve, en lugar de lo que le dicen los sujetos participantes. Los datos se recogen en un entorno de acontecimiento real y de situaciones reales o simuladas en las que el investigador se implica en busca de los datos y los hechos investigados ocurren en un entorno de vida natural. Es decir, si la investigación no se hubiera realizado, ocurrirían de la misma manera.

La observación es sensible a la posibilidad de que el investigador se deje llevar por su percepción personal y que los datos sean subjetivos. Ante esta posible falta de validez, hay que arbitrar procedimientos para reforzarlas, tales como grabarlas, seguir un proceso estricto de evaluación de la observación y compartir el proceso de la observación con otros investigadores.

4.4 Auditoría lingüística

La auditoría lingüística no tiene una definición explícita o sencilla, ya que está relacionada con diferentes tipos de procedimientos de obtención de datos de AN mencionados anteriormente. Sin embargo, así como el AN facilita la información detallada sobre participantes individuales o sobre amplios grupos, la auditoría lingüística tiene a las instituciones y organizaciones como las unidades de análisis y estos son realizados por medio de cuestionarios cuantitativos. Coleman (1988) constata que, de hecho, la auditoría lingüística precede al AN en grandes instituciones con el fin de identificar a los individuos cuyas necesidades deben ser estudiadas a posteriori. Una auditoría lingüística produce: a) un análisis de la situación objetivo o TSA (Target Situation Analysis) en forma de competencias lingüísticas necesarias o de uso dentro de una organización o institución; b) un perfil de las competencias lingüísticas existentes dentro de la organización o institución, identificadas a través de test evaluadores y c) una recomendación o asesoramiento de formación externa, si fuera necesaria, para mejorar esos perfiles o competencias lingüísticas ya existentes y detectadas a través del TSA. La auditoría lingüística es útil para elaborar un informe que favorezca la visión rápida de la situación lingüística de una empresa y para percibir las diferencias entre percepción y realidad, o lo que es lo mismo, entre lo que está ocurriendo y lo que debería ocurrir y aunque el contexto en el que se realiza el análisis es muy específico, permite aplicar métodos de obtención de datos como los nombrados anteriormente.

4.5 Test

La evaluación a través de test constituye otra opción valiosa para realizar un AN, especialmente los realizados como evaluación tradicional de conocimientos para comprobar los conocimientos lingüísticos. De hecho, los test han sido procedimientos fiables para comprobar los conocimientos lingüísticos. Estos se realizan con fines evaluadores como el de realizar un diagnóstico de nivel antes de comenzar un curso de idiomas, para definir el nivel del hablante de esa segunda lengua, para comprobar el nivel adquirido después de haber finalizado un programa de lengua o como previsión diagnóstica para comprobar que un hablante puede comunicarse en una situación objetiva determinada. El test que se realiza en un AN debe estar relacionado con el análisis de la lengua basado en tareas de la misma manera que la enseñanza de una segunda lengua así como su evaluación deben de estar basadas en la acción comunicativa de los alumnos a través de situaciones comunicativas o tareas comunicativas sustituyendo así a los test tradicionales (Long y Norris, 2000). Citaremos algunos ejemplos de evaluación en un AN basado en tareas para poder comprender su práctica y su adaptación.

En el AN y en la investigación lingüística son tan importantes las herramientas como los recursos que se utilizan para obtener los datos. Veamos ahora los recursos más destacados a la hora de aplicar un AN.

5. Recursos de AN para obtención de datos

En esta sección se presenta el medio humano o escrito para aplicar lo visto hasta el momento. Especificaremos los recursos posibles, centrándonos especialmente en el análisis del lenguaje del sector profesional. Los recursos humanos (estudiantes, hablantes de segundas lenguas, jefes de formación, directores de empresas, etc.) como fuentes de información propia sobre necesidades comunicativas presentes y futuras constituyen una fuente fiable de obtención de datos reales, aunque no es tarea fácil obtener recursos que faciliten los datos debido a las restricciones de tiempo de los profesionales y las restricciones económicas que está sufriendo el mundo empresarial y financiero, tal y como hemos dicho en el capítulo anterior. En cuanto a los análisis de recursos escritos, estos se pueden definir como los registros producidos de forma individual o en grupo, de hechos o de procesos (McCulloch, 2004). Los documentos escritos nos permiten adentrarnos en áreas relacionadas con el conocimiento sobre la actividad lingüística epistolar, periodística, literaria, etc. (McCulloch, 2004) desde tres puntos de vista: desde el análisis del pasado, desde el punto de vista diacrónico de los procesos de cambio o continuidad a lo largo de la historia y desde el punto de vista del presente. Empezaremos analizando los recursos de tipo escrito para pasar a los recursos de participantes, que son los más utilizados en un AN lingüístico.

5.1 Recursos escritos en AN

Se han publicado resultados de investigaciones e incluso manuales que han servido como recursos para favorecer el AN en la adquisición de segundas lenguas. También pueden considerarse recursos escritos que sirvan de ayuda para realizar un AN y que no sean publicaciones resultantes de investigaciones, cualquier recurso escrito que se pueda encontrar en el entorno profesional o habitual del individuo analizado y que pueda ser consultado como ayuda de análisis lingüístico. Podemos citar como ejemplos, manuales de operaciones, manuales de uso de maquinaria, instrucciones de procedimientos dentro de una empresa, contratos, rutinas profesionales a seguir, recetas, glosarios de sectores profesionales o incluso diccionarios específicos como el *Diccionario de títulos ocupacionales* o DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*: 1991) o diccionarios económicos o profesionales en general.

Estos recursos escritos reflejan el conocimiento técnico que se le exige profesionalmente a las personas implicadas en el análisis y las tareas que tiene que realizar en su entorno, lo que implica una comunicación interna y externa que puede ser útil para conseguir el dominio de una segunda lengua (Long, 2005). Además de esos recursos escritos, es de crucial importancia en un AN considerar el recurso personal o de los propios informantes interesados en que se realice un análisis exhaustivo de la necesidad de un discurso determinado.

5.2 Informantes

Los recursos nombrados anteriormente son de gran ayuda para realizar un análisis lingüístico, pero el mayor recurso de información es el facilitado por los informantes, ya sean hablantes de esa segunda lengua y sus objetivos comunicativos o informantes relacionados con estos. De hecho, las personas que están aprendiendo esa segunda lengua a analizar, además de ser una fuente importante de información, desean ser consultados porque son los principales afectados de forma positiva por el estudio o diagnosis lingüística. Esos informantes tienen que ser la representación del sector objetivo en la investigación y es conveniente que tengan verdadera intención de participar en ella, ya que formarán parte del criterio principal para emitir un juicio sobre hechos hasta ese momento de consulta desconocidos (Long, 2005). Cuando se elige una muestra de participantes profesionales como facilitadores de información en un AN, hay que tener en cuenta si esos participantes tienen experiencia profesional previa que pueda influir en el conocimiento aportado o simplemente el análisis lingüístico se realiza sobre un trabajo futuro y sobre el que no existe seguridad sobre las necesidades discursivas necesarias. Un error cometido comúnmente por los editores de material específico de enseñanza de segundas lenguas para profesionales es no haber realizado un AN previo con profesionales expertos, lo que ha producido ciertas discrepancias entre la vida real profesional objeto de análisis y el discurso necesario dentro de ella con el consecuente prejuicio para los estudiantes (Ventola, 1987).

6. La triangulación

La triangulación es un procedimiento antropológico comúnmente utilizado en la investigación, que consiste en contrastar los resultados a través de una comparación de recursos y/o herramientas utilizados previamente. La triangulación contribuye a la veracidad de los datos y a aumentar la fiabilidad de los mismos (Glesne y Peshkin, 1992: 24). Long (2005) sugiere una triangulación entre varios recursos y varios métodos o una combinación de ambos como fines de validación del investigador o del analista de necesidades, para poder presentarlos, en su caso, a los informantes o participantes en la investigación, para además, poder contrastar los resultados con ellos mismos. Analizando las necesidades de los participantes o aprendientes de una segunda lengua, se descubren las necesidades objetivas e individuales y no solo las generales desde el punto de vista de los participantes institucionales (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lynch, 1995).

6.1 Triangulación de recursos

El proceso de triangulación de recursos implica que el investigador compare diferentes resultados obtenidos de diferentes recursos o informantes, presentando diferentes perspectivas desde el punto de vista de estos e incluso del analista. Es conveniente que esos mismos participantes reflexionen sobre esos resultados presentados y sus diferentes perspectivas. En el entorno empresarial, pueden ser, por ejemplo: los jefes de formación, los directivos, los trabajadores, los formadores o incluso el mismo observador (Greenwood y Gonzalez Santos, 1992).

6.2 Triangulación de métodos

La triangulación de métodos implica la comparación de los datos, pero a través de diferentes métodos de obtención de estos, como la observación participante o no participante, las entrevistas, los cuestionarios, la evaluación o las auditorías. Para las investigaciones cuantitativas, se pueden comparar además, diferentes diseños de investigación como resultados obtenidos a través de estudios de progreso de estudiantes o de cuestionarios cuantitativos. La combinación de investigación cualitativa y cuantitativa en un mismo estudio, de hecho, es común con la triangulación metodológica, ya que ambos tipos de investigación están diseñados para comprender y presentar comportamientos o actuaciones, sus antecedentes y sus consecuencias desde diferentes perspectivas (Cobb, 2000).

Además de las tres formas principales de realizar triangulación: métodos, recursos y ambos, es decir, una triangulación mixta, también tenemos que citar otro tipo, que es la triangulación de investigadores, ya que supone un factor importante para hacer análisis contrastivos de los datos resultantes en una investigación.

6.3 Triangulación de investigadores

Lo que se compara en el caso de la triangulación de investigadores es el conjunto de datos obtenidos del mismo hecho investigado, pero desde el punto de vista de diferentes investigadores implicados en el análisis. Esa confirmación de datos, siempre y cuando no haya habido acuerdo, discusión o colaboración previa por parte de dichos investigadores, dará gran credibilidad a los datos reflejados en dicha investigación (Denzin, 2001). Con este tipo de triangulación se mitiga la parcialidad del investigador al concluir o presentar sus propios datos y contribuir, como hemos dicho anteriormente, a la validez y fiabilidad interna de la investigación. El hecho de tener más de un investigador en el equipo del AN tiene un potencial investigador que aporta honestidad a este, especialmente si la investigación es cualitativa, ya que dicha investigación a veces puede inducir a caer en la parcialidad en la obtención y presentación de datos (Boyd, 2000).

Como conclusión en lo referente a la triangulación, el uso apropiado de este procedimiento se hace indispensable como procedimiento de confirmación, contraste y validez de los datos obtenidos en una investigación, especialmente en una investigación cualitativa, aunque también es un procedimiento viable en una investigación mixta o incluso cuantitativa. Los investigadores, cuando usan la triangulación deben incidir en articular la estrategia de este procedimiento y aclarar las causas por las que se ha aplicado (Thurmond, 2001).

7. Conclusiones

Con este artículo, hemos realizado un recorrido sobre el AN, su definición y su trayectoria en la enseñanza de segundas lenguas, argumentando que su interés ha ido creciendo a lo largo de los años, debido a la enorme utilidad de la identificación de las necesidades como para el diseño de cursos. Hemos incidido en la propia definición de del término “necesidad” y hemos explicado la diferencia entre los términos “demandas”, “deseos” y “deficiencias” puntos clave para entender las causas del AN y a partir de ahí poder incluirlo en una investigación lingüística de relevancia.

Con la evolución de esta técnica y el desarrollo del enfoque comunicativo en los últimos veinte años se ha llegado a la conclusión de que el verdadero AN, especialmente en el mundo profesional, es conveniente realizarlo además de con el fin de ser un diagnóstico lingüístico, hay que realizarlo con un enfoque realista comunicativo y basarlo en tareas relacionadas con el entorno comunicativo en el que se encuentra el hablante o en el que se va a encontrar.

Hemos destacado que es positivo utilizar una combinación de informantes y de métodos con el fin de añadir profundidad al análisis y poder validar datos a través de la triangulación. El uso de diferentes métodos y recursos de obtención de datos en un AN aumentará la calidad, además de la cantidad de la información obtenida. Long (2005:64) añade que esos procedimientos deberían estar secuenciados y empezar por lo general o lo abierto, como puede ser el método de las entrevistas abiertas, y seguir con un método más específico, como pueden ser los cuestionarios.

Hemos finalizado incidiendo en la triangulación y sus tipos como procedimiento investigador indispensable en cuanto a validación y fiabilidad de datos obtenidos en una investigación. Es de gran importancia que los investigadores cualitativos y los analistas estén familiarizados con estas técnicas y estrategias investigadoras que tienen que ser aplicadas a la investigación de forma científica como única forma posible de obtener resultados de valor.

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