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PRÓLOGO

Tengo el agrado de compartir con la comunidad científica y académica el volumen 10 de la Revista “Investigación y Desarrollo” el cual está destinado a Ciencias de la Salud. El presente fascículo está compuesto por artículos enmarcados en las líneas de investigación de la Universidad Técnica de Ambato en el ámbito de Salud Pública. En particular, la línea de investigación materno infantil está reflejada por los papers que analizan tanto la lactancia materna, así como la incidencia de cesáreas y la atención del recién nacido en los centros de salud de la región centro del Ecuador. Asimismo, se estudian las cirugías de emergencia enfocadas en el diagnóstico diferencial y su relación con el diagnóstico histopatológico para establecer oportunidades de mejora en cuanto a la provisión de los servicios médicos en áreas de emergencia y cirugía.

Adicionalmente, se presentan dos artículos de caso de estudio. El uno dirigido a la revisión de un paciente con una situación clínica compleja de difícil diagnóstico por las múltiples patologías que presenta y la evolución de éste dentro de su estancia hospitalaria. El segundo caso, se enfoca en la prestación y provisión de servicios médicos para pacientes de la tercera edad y expone la necesidad de un enfoque integral en la atención médica de este grupo etario. Finalmente, se cuenta con una revisión bibliográfica sobre rehabilitación cardíaca en pacientes con problemas cardíacos congénitos dentro del marco de calidad y seguridad de atención a dichos pacientes. Ello brinda soporte académico a la provisión de servicio de fisioterapia y rehabilitación para los pacientes con problemas cardiológicos congénitos.

Para este volumen 10 se contó con la recepción inicial de 12 artículos, luego de efectuadas las revisiones internas y las evaluaciones por pares externos ciegos, se aceptaron los mejores 8. De éstos, 5 son artículos científicos de investigación, 1 es de revisión bibliográfica y 2 son de estudio de caso. A la vez, todos cuentan con la revisión del sistema anti-plagio “Urkund” con un porcentaje inferior al 8% y la utilización de las normas APA 6ta. edición es correcta. Se cuenta con 5 artículos de autoría externa y 3 de investigadores de la propia universidad siendo la relación porcentual de 62,5% y de 37,5% respectivamente. Aprovecho para agradecer el esfuerzo de todos los que contribuyeron a este volumen, y en especial a los coeditores ad-hoc: los Doctores Alicia Zavala y Jesús Chicaiza de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud de la Universidad Técnica de Ambato.

Mathías E. Valdez Duffau (PhD)
Editor

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Los artículos que se publican en la revista son de responsabilidad exclusiva de sus autores y autoras; no reflejan necesariamente el pensamiento de la Revista "Investigación y Desarrollo" de la Universidad Técnica de Ambato.

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FRUSTRATION AND HOPE: A REVIEW OF THE RESPONSE UNDERTAKEN IN NATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES TO LOWER-THAN-EXPECTED RATES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.

FRUSTRACIÓN Y ESPERANZA: UN ANÁLISIS DE LAS MEDIDAS ADOPTADAS
EN LOS PROGRAMAS DE EDUCACIÓN NACIONAL ANTE LAS TASAS
INFERIORES A LAS ESPERADAS, EN LA ADQUISICIÓN DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS.

Roger Edwards, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Universidad Técnica de Ambato,
rs.edwards2@newcastle.ac.uk / rs.edwards@uta.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

This review and discussion focused on surveys and reports on the rate of foreign language acquisition and attainment within national compulsory education systems, academic analyses of the results obtained, and national programmes and initiatives designed to address the shortcomings revealed in them. The proposed reasons for lower-than-expected acquisition and attainment in foreign language learning within some countries of the European Union, Colombia, Vietnam and Ecuador were reviewed in detail. These reasons, and the measures undertaken as a result to remedy these failings, were evaluated through a comparison with recent academic research relating to these factors, and through comparison between the different experiences revealed in the surveys and reports. These comparisons found that some of the measures undertaken were fit for purpose and were likely to yield some improvements in acquisition rate, although to a lesser extent than those projected by some of the national programmes, while identifying some aspects which have been overlooked. The conclusion highlighted in which aspects of the teaching and learning of foreign languages greater focus is needed in order to effect the desired changes.

Key words:

EFL, acquisition, education, policy

RESUMEN

Este artículo de revisión y discusión se centró en los sondeos e informes sobre la tasa de adquisición y rendimiento en los idiomas extranjeros dentro de los sistemas de educación nacionales obligatorios, los análisis académicos de los resultados obtenidos, y los programas e iniciativas destinados a remediar las falencias identificadas. Las posibles causas del bajo rendimiento, menor al esperado, en la adquisición de idiomas extranjeros, observadas en algunos países de la Unión Europea, Colombia, Vietnam y Ecuador, se revisaron en detalle. Estos motivos y las medidas adoptadas como consecuencia para remediar las falencias fueron evaluados por medio de una comparación con investigaciones académicas recientes, así como entre las distintas experiencias recopiladas en los sondeos e informes. Como consecuencia de estas comparaciones, se concluyó que algunas de las medidas adoptadas sí son las adecuadas, y que darán lugar a una mejoría en la tasa de adquisición del idioma extranjero, aunque en menor grado que lo proyectado por algunos de los programas nacionales, y a la vez se identificarán otros aspectos que no han sido tomados en cuenta. La conclusión resaltó en cuales aspectos de la enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros es necesario un mayor enfoque para poder efectuar los cambios proyectados.

Palabras clave:

EFL, adquisición, educación, políticas

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, on launching their second national programme for the reinforcement of English language teaching and learning, the Colombian Ministry of Education made this important reflection:

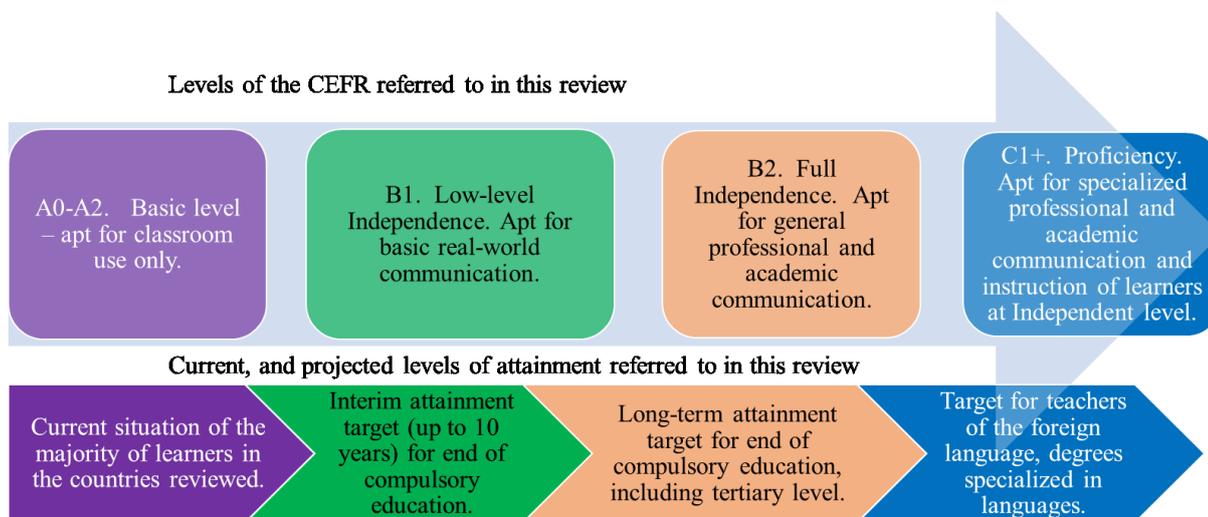
Las horas asignadas a inglés en teoría son suficientes para alcanzar los niveles de la aspiración si fueran horas de la mejor calidad en un ambiente de aprendizaje con buenas condiciones [The hours assigned to English are, in theory, sufficient to reach the levels aspired to, if only they were hours of the best quality, in a learning environment of a good standard]. (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2014, p. 46)

The aspirations referenced here were that nearly half of the student population reach level B2 by the end of high school education. The reflection is a common one: how many hours

of instruction are necessary to become fully independent in a foreign language, and which variables delay or even altogether impede the attainment of this level?

This same question has been raised by many other countries in recent years. Latin America and South-East Asia, especially, are areas where national initiatives have been undertaken, and are currently in progress, addressed at analysing why the many hours given over to English instruction in school and university systems have not resulted in a higher level of attainment. The standard being sought in the long term is a B2 level of the CEFR (MEN, 2014; Ortega & Argudo, 2016; Nguyen, 2017), with a C1 level required for some university language programmes. These aspirations, and the reason why certain levels of attainment are important to the governments and economies of the countries concerned, are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Schematic of the levels of the CEFR used as references in the review.



Source: compiled by author, from data in MEN (2014); Ortega & Argudo (2016); Nguyen (2017).

This review discusses the objectives and interim results of national programmes in Vietnam (British Council Vietnam, 2018; Nguyen, 2017; Tuyet, 2015); Colombia (Bonilla & Tejado-Sánchez, 2016; British Council, 2015a; Portafolio, 2015; MEN, 2014); and Ecuador (Ortega & Argudo, 2016; British Council, 2015b; Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador [Mineduc], 2014; Ureña, 2014). Various countries of the European Union have also experienced disappointing rates of progress in languages, as reported and analysed following the First European Survey of Languages Competences, (Costa & Almeida, 2015; Araujo & Costa, 2013; European Commission, 2012), and their results are also reviewed here.

The actions undertaken, or suggested courses of action proposed by academics and authorities in these different contexts, are reviewed and compared to the findings and recommendations of a number of established historical studies and observations of factors affecting the rate of acquisition (Spolsky, 2014, 1989; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Muñoz, 2006; Zarker, 2000; Jackson & Kaplan, 1999). The discussion and conclusions highlight those aspects of the initiatives and analyses which are fit for purpose, while recommending changes to those aspects in which resources have been mis-directed and are unlikely to yield much progress in the rate of acquisition.

METHODOLOGY

Criteria used for the selection of data for the study

Language acquisition is a vast topic: Spolsky (2014), (1989) identified 74 conditions which influence successful learning, while other authors have suggested yet more factors. Therefore, it is necessary to define the parameters of the present review and discussion and to set aside those factors which will have no bearing on the discussion here.

Firstly, all of the contexts discussed refer to the length of the acquisition process of a foreign language, and therefore exclude any discussion of acquisition rates for students learning within an L2 community. The study contemplates chiefly the experiences of students who learn the L2 in a classroom and/or through self-study from within their own country. However, some consideration is given to the minority who receive an amount of additional exposure from within their own countries, sufficient to be regarded as a degree of immersion in the target language, and the opportunities for implicit learning that may result (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; DeKeyser, 2003).

Secondly, this discussion is based upon studies of large populations derived from national statistics. It, therefore, necessarily excludes the effects of individual variation in acquisition rate. Spolsky (1989) postulated the formula:

$$K(f) = K(p) + A + M + O \text{ (Spolsky, 1989, p. 15)}$$

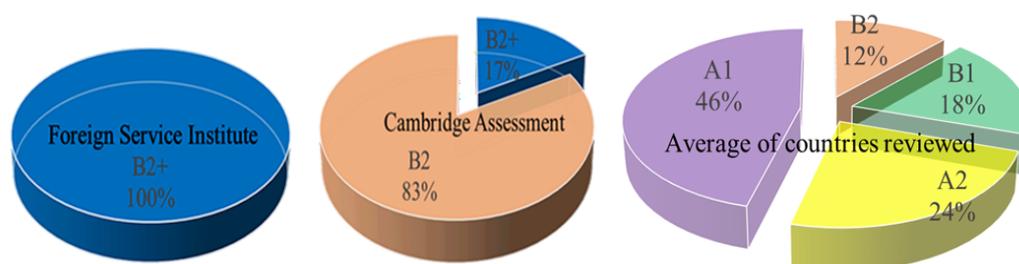
where $K(f)$ is the future level of competence of the L2 being aimed for, and is to be achieved by taking $K(p)$ (the current level of competence) and adding to it A , which is the individual's ability for languages; M , which are the individual's motivational factors; and O , which are the external opportunities for language learning and acquisition. For the purposes of this review and discussion, the considerations corresponding to factor 'A' are of no relevance. Considerations pertaining to factor 'M' are also

not relevant, except where motivational factors may be identified as common to a student population as a whole. Therefore, the 'opportunity' factors are the variables bearing upon rate of progress and attainment to be considered. Here, this study follows the criteria adopted by several of the contributors to the Spolsky and Sung (2014) examination of conditions for English language teaching and learning in Asia (see for example, Moon, 2014, pp. 167-184).

Criteria used for the evaluation of national programmes

There are no universally accepted research results on how many hours of total study are required to reach a specified level of competence in a foreign language. One source of official data for which there are reliable details concerning the background and study habits of students was provided by The Foreign Service Institute. The FSI, a U.S. government body which trains diplomats in almost all world languages, produced an influential report (Jackson & Kaplan, 1999) which indicated average times for the acquisition of a B2/C1 borderline equivalent level of competence in different languages. For languages of the same linguistic branch, for example English and Spanish, they claimed around 600 classroom hours are required, based upon the results obtained by their students. This coincides with the recommendation of Cambridge English Assessment (2017) and the Alliance Française [French language-teaching organisation] (2017) for the same level of competence in their respective languages. These institutions both claim that level B2 may be achieved by between 500 and 600 hours of guided instruction. These figures provide a yardstick for comparisons with the situation in the different countries in this review. Figure 2 shows the current expected level of attainment, based on an average of all the data available from the countries and regions here reviewed, in comparison with the expectations of the FSI and Cambridge Assessment.

Figure 2. Expected level of attainment after c.600 hours of instruction.



Source: data averaged by the author, from Araujo & Costa (2013); MEN (2014); Ortega & Argudo (2016); Nguyen (2017).

In combination with the maximal expectations shown here, it is necessary to consider the circumstances in which students of the FSI (Jackson & Kaplan, 1999), or those who study for the higher-level Cambridge certificates (Cambridge English Assessment, 2017) learn the target language. These can then be used to evaluate the measures and policies adopted by the national programmes in this review.

The FSI was at pains to point out that their data are average learning times under very specific conditions, which had been, in their view, optimised for their circumstances (Jackson & Kaplan, 1999). These may be considered the factors of 'opportunity':

- Recommended class size at the FSI was a maximum of 6 for English learners of Spanish or French.
- The learners were all highly motivated, both intrinsically and extrinsically.
- The teachers were all trained native speakers, or at least functionally bilingual.
- A variety of approaches and learning formats were employed, including some level of immersion in the L2.

Furthermore, all students in the FSI, and most students studying for higher level Cambridge English assessments (Cambridge English Assessment, 2017) and higher level French assessments (DELFDALF, 2018), are adults, or older adolescents. This is the first factor to be evaluated in the following discussion.

RESULTS

Data from national surveys of attainment in foreign languages

The language survey carried out by the European Commission in 2012 revealed statistics regarding attainment among adolescents (average age 15) across 14 countries of the

European Union. Tomasi (2017, pp.123-124) reported that "the level of independent user (B1+B2) is achieved by only 42% of tested students in the first foreign language." This overall statistic masks considerable variation among the participant countries, and results from selected countries with differing levels of attainment can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Countries representing lower, middle and upper ranges of attainment in languages.

CEFR level	France	Poland	Portugal	Greece	Estonia	Sweden
B2	5%	10%	15%	26%	41%	57%
B1	9%	15%	16%	22%	20%	25%
A2	15%	17%	16%	16%	12%	11%
A0/1	71%	58%	53%	35%	27%	7%

Source: data compiled by author from European Commission (2012).

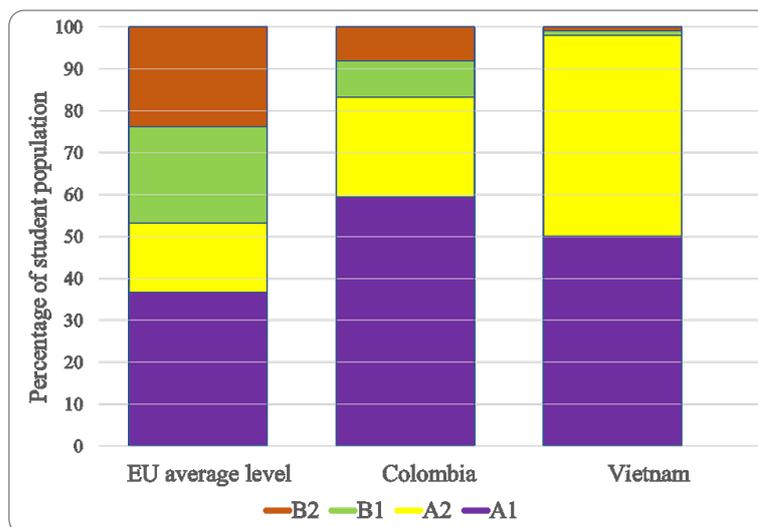
The situation among language students in Colombia is considerably further from achieving expectations (see Figure 3 for a comparison of EU, Colombia and Vietnam): 59% of school students up to 11th Grade showed an effective knowledge of English at A0/A1, with only 6% achieving B1 level in 2013 (Bonilla & Tejado-Sánchez, 2016). For most university students in Colombia, continued English instruction is obligatory with at least 200 (and often considerably more) classroom hours being provided at this level. In 2012, 8% of these students achieved level B2 following these additional hours of instruction, with over 60% remaining at A1 level (MEN, 2014).

In Vietnam, the statistics for high school students are very similar. The average 16-year-old accumulates 600 hours of English

language instruction, and yet is at the A0/A1 level. Admittedly, English is considered by many linguists harder to access for Vietnamese speakers than for Spanish speakers (Jackson & Kaplan, 1999), but the reported progress is slower than both the FSI's estimates, and the expectations of those involved in language education in Vietnam:

98% of Vietnamese students study English for 7 years but are unable to use it in basic communication. On average, only those who major in the language can score 5 out of 10 in the National English Entrance Exams to university. After entering university, most have to restart at beginner level. (Nhan, 2013, p. 147)

Figure 3. Level of attainment at the end of compulsory education.



Source: compiled by author from data for EU from European Commission (2012), Colombia from MEN (2014), and Vietnam from Nhan (2013).

Finally, Ecuador reports a similar experience to that seen in Colombia or Vietnam. In the case of Ecuador, alarm at the very low level of attainment of students of English led to the “CRADLE” initiative, followed by the current programme of “Reinforcement of English Language Teaching” (Ortega & Argudo, 2016; Ministerio de Educación de Ecuador [Mineduc], 2014). Slight improvement was afterwards recorded in the level of English in the population as a whole, but Ecuador remains below Colombia in standardised international proficiency indices (Education First, 2017a), (Education First, 2017b).

Clearly, in these last three cases, each in themselves fairly representative of their wider regions (Education First, 2017a), (Education First, 2017b), as well as in some countries within

the European Union (Araujo & Costa, 2013), rates of English language acquisition, both in secondary and in tertiary education, have been historically very low when compared to the potential for attainment highlighted in Figure 1, and remain relatively low despite some years of targeted intervention (Bonilla & Tejado-Sánchez, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Ureña, 2014).

There are many inter-connected factors within the ‘opportunity’ conditions for foreign language acquisition (see for example Spolsky & Sung, 2014). Those which have been highlighted and explicitly addressed in the reports and initiatives commissioned by national governments and the European Commission are evaluated in the following section.

DISCUSSION

Factor 1: hours of study against age of students

As was summarised in a thorough review of studies of the influence of learner age on rates of acquisition by Muñoz and Singleton (2011), adults and older adolescents experience a considerably higher rate of L2 acquisition than young adolescents, although the rates do begin to converge in most skill areas after several hundreds of hours of instruction, according to the Barcelona Age Factor Project (Muñoz, 2006).

Therefore, 600 hours of instruction for adults will always equate to a higher level of attainment than 600 hours between late childhood and mid-adolescence. In all of the countries reviewed here, current compulsory provision of English language instruction amounts to at least 600 hours accrued by 15/16 years of age, with some areas providing up to 900 hours, (Araujo & Costa, 2013; Bonilla & Tejado-Sánchez, 2016; Ortega & Argudo, 2016).

Consequently, are the countries surveyed here justified in their frustration or alarm at the slow rate of progress? According to

the tendencies reported by the Barcelona Age Factor Project (Muñoz, 2006), 600 hours of instruction between late childhood and mid-adolescence is sufficient to bring a majority of students to B1 level. If this analysis is applied to some areas of the European Union, then it would seem there is no justification for frustration, as adolescent learners are making the expected rate of progress for their age (see for example, statistics for Slovenia, Greece and the Netherlands, in European Commission, 2012). In other areas of Europe, the majority of students are at A2 level or below, following 600 hours of instruction, which is certainly less than expected.

Araujo and Costa (2013) see the age of beginning training in the foreign language as an essential 'opportunity' for influencing attainment by the end of compulsory education: "In general, with respect to system-level policies, we can say that the most significant effect is the onset of language learning" (p. 28). However, in Vietnam, Colombia and Ecuador (Nguyen, 2017), (Bonilla & Tejado-Sánchez, 2016), (Ureña, 2014), and in some European nations (see statistics, for example, for the U.K., France, Poland, Spain in European Commission, 2012), the rate of acquisition by mid-adolescence is so slow that it seems that considerably reducing the age of onset would have little additional impact. Earlier onset has been a recommendation in both Colombia and Ecuador (see, for example MEN, 2014, 2015), and yet if 600 hours between, say, ages 10 and 16 has produced an attainment of level A1 at best, it seems unlikely that a further 300 hours between, say, ages 6 and 10 will move students much further towards a level B1, or indeed B2, by age 16.

On the contrary, if rates of acquisition are far slower among children than among older adolescents, as a large number of studies have shown (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011), then those countries with low attainment by 16 should rather invest only in post-16 compulsory foreign language tuition. Mandatory university-level English instruction has been embraced by both Colombia and Ecuador, but at the same time as their having dedicated scarce resources to primary-level English teaching (British Council 2015a; British Council 2015b). Some government policy may be mistakenly guided by the Critical Period Hypothesis (Colombo, 1982) which suggests that native-like attainment may only result from some degree of L2 immersion during childhood. The CPH is itself a matter of considerable debate (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011), but, in any event, it has not been shown that failure to attain a B2 level is linked to a lack of early-childhood learning opportunities.

Factor 2: class size

Within the education systems of the European Union, Vietnam, Colombia and Ecuador, class size is rarely less than 25, and may often be closer to 40 students (British Council, 2015a; British Council, 2015b; Araujo & Costa, 2013). There is no consensus on how class size correlates to attainment in language learning. Zarker's extensive survey of the impact of class size on both language learning and on other subjects suggested that the quantifiable benefits may be in the order of a few percentage points (Zarker, 2000). This was supported by the conclusions of Araujo and Costa (2013) who stated: "there is little effect of classroom size in foreign language learning" (p. 28), and they even maintained that reduced class size coincided with lower attainment in some instances.

Some indication that very large classes may be a threat to learning has been put forward by British Council reports (British Council, 2015b), but without suggesting any strong correlations. On the other hand, a number of small-scale studies do show considerable differences in learning progress (see for example, Yi, 2008) and certainly private academies and specialist language institutes around the world insist on reduced class sizes as a key benefit for learners.

None of the surveys and national programmes recommended a significant reduction in class size within their public education systems (MEN, 2014; Nguyet, 2017; Education First, 2017a, 2017b; Araujo & Costa, 2013). Certainly, class size in countries whose education system produces close-to-expected progress in the acquisition of English, such as the Netherlands or Sweden, class sizes are no different to those with poorer results (Araujo & Costa, 2013). Therefore, in the light of much contradictory evidence, and certainly with no clear indication of a positive correlation between class size and an improved rate of acquisition, all of the initiatives and recommendations surveyed were correct not to prioritise this factor by assigning scarce funding to smaller classes

Factor 3: average levels of motivation

The average level of motivation of the students within the European survey was well below those described by the FSI (Araujo & Costa, 2013). Intrinsic motivation was particularly low compared with students who voluntarily attend classes at

private language academies or as part of specialist professional programmes. However, Araujo and Costa found no positive correlation between intrinsic interest in language learning and attainment in European countries, and in some instances the opposite was true (2013, pp. 36-37).

The extrinsic motivations resulting from having made English study obligatory for high school or even for university graduation (British Council, 2015a; Consejo de Educación Superior, 2013) are certainly strong, but a greater, albeit emerging, motivation may come from the phenomenon of the imaginary international English language community described by Canh (2014). In his study into language learning in Vietnam, Canh argues that globalised communication and interaction on economic, cultural and sporting themes have created an 'imagined community' to which most learners desire to have a connection. Therefore, traditional discussions of acculturation (Schumann, 1985) and integration to a specific group, previously more applicable to second language acquisition studies (Dornyei, 2001), may be substituted for a desire to belong to this 'imagined' global community and be equally felt by students of English as a foreign language in any context.

In the case of Colombia, the government has attempted to force a cultural shift towards an internationally-integrated population through the Colombia Bilingüe programme (Portafolio, 2015; British Council, 2015a), but there is no evidence as yet whether integration can successfully be made a national policy in this way. In any event, the permeation of this international English-speaking culture into society is universal and seemingly irresistible, and is therefore outside of the control of government initiatives. The impact of this motivational factor on rates of English acquisition remain to be seen and should be the subject of future study in national programmes.

Factor 4: teachers' linguistic competence

To return to the limitations highlighted above by the Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN, 2014) (see introduction), the quality of the hour's instruction is seen to be fundamental in determining the learners' rate of progress. The factor most frequently highlighted in the national programmes surveyed here (Tuyet, 2015; MEN, 2014; British Council, 2015b) is teachers' linguistic knowledge, that is, language skills, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge of the target language.

National testing of English language teachers in 2010 revealed that 29% of all staff working in the Colombian public sector were at the B2 level. Following efforts, this percentage increased to 43% in 2013, leading to the current initiative, Colombia Bilingüe, which seeks to have all English teachers at B2 level or above by 2025.

A similar case is reported by the British Council in Vietnam, where they collaborate in teacher training with the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training [MOET]. Starting from 2008, MOET raised the target for linguistic standards for English teachers to B2 for all English teachers, and C1 for high school teachers (British Council, 2018, para. 1).

This initiative came in response to the results of a nationwide test of English teachers' ability at the B2 level. Only 3% of high school teachers passed the test, with some 17% of primary school teachers being found to be at the A1 level, which led MOET to conclude that lack of student progress, despite receiving hundreds of hours of instruction, was due to professional inadequacy (Tuyet, 2015).

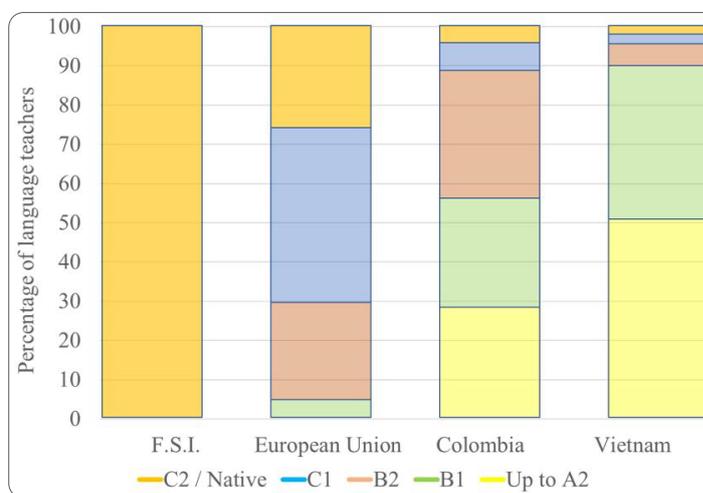
In Ecuador in 2012, less than 1% of teachers in the public sector were found to be at level B2 (Ecuador tiene falencias [Ecuador has failings], n.d.). The Ecuadorian government then established, and currently maintains, the requirement that all specialist English teachers have at least a B2 level of competence, but this remains far from being achieved. As in Colombia and Vietnam, the Ecuadorian government (Mineduc, 2014) places the greatest emphasis on the correlation between the linguistic competence of teachers and an adequate rate of foreign language acquisition among students (Ureña, 2014).

One criterion of minimum linguistic competence is provided by Cambridge English (2018) in the DELTA teacher training programme. A minimum of C1 is required for teachers considered to be 'proficient', or 'expert' according to their assessment criteria. This level is generally achieved in Europe, where teachers' subject knowledge of the target language is located in the range between B2 and C2 (European Commission 2012, pp. 206-207). Most language teachers in the public sector are required to have at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent in the relevant language, which in most European countries corresponds to a C1 level. In many cases, a large number of native-speaker teachers are employed. In Malta, 54% of public sector English teachers are native speakers. In Spain, France,

Sweden and the Netherlands, the proportion of native speakers is 20% (European Commission, 2012).

Figure 4 illustrates the different levels of competence in the different countries and regions in this review, and compares them to standards at the FSI.

Figure 4. Level of CEFR competence in language teachers.



Source: compiled by author from data in Jackson & Kaplan (1999); European Commission (2012); MEN (2014); Nhan (2013).

There seems to be a strong correlation between teacher linguistic level and student attainment across all of the regions reviewed here. However, many European countries, including France, Spain and the UK, are far from achieving expected progress, despite the linguistic expertise of their teaching staff (see table 1). Vietnam, Colombia and Ecuador are right to place a strong emphasis on teacher subject knowledge, but they should not expect that remedying this factor alone will lead to better attainment, if this were the case, most European countries would already be achieving expected levels of attainment.

Factor 5: other aspects of instructional quality

The quality of instruction involves many factors, such as the teacher's classroom practice, their knowledge of methodologies, and their classroom management skills, as well as resources such as the quality, or indeed availability of textbooks.

The nature of the learning curriculum and of teacher training in generally accepted pedagogical methods has largely been standardised in most educational contexts, especially following the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by most countries (MEN, 2014), which demands an emphasis on communicative competence, and due to collaborations with expert international organisations such as the British Council (British Council, 2018; British Council 2015a, 2015b), as well as the use of internationally published textbooks which conform to accepted standards. However, there is evidence

of continued inefficient practices in the language classroom, such as avoidance of the L2 for instruction and a perpetuation of grammar-translation techniques (Espinosa, 2015), which may offset some of the advantages of teacher linguistic competence.

Nonetheless, within Europe, Araujo and Costa (2013) found no evidence that differing approaches and methodologies had any significant impact on acquisition (pp. 33-34), and Spolsky did not find variation in approach to be directly correlated with acquisition: "Any intelligent and disinterested observer knows that there are many ways to learn languages and many ways to teach them, and that some ways work with some students in some circumstances and fail with others" (Spolsky, 1989, p. 383).

A qualitative factor found to be significant by Araujo and Costa (2013, p. 35) is described as how good language lessons are perceived to be by students. For example, where a teacher prefers to engage their students with low-level cognitive tasks, such as copying texts, or appears to take little interest in student learning, it is likely that learning will be impeded. This general quality of lesson may be one of the most significant factors influencing the rate of learning, and this is certainly manifested by the national school inspectorate in the UK (Ofsted, 2015). Their report into modern foreign language learning [MFL] from 11-14 observed that "too often, inspectors found teaching that failed to challenge and engage pupils" and concluded that "achievement was not good enough in just under half of the MFL classes observed." (Ofsted, 2015 p. 5)

The UK was in last place in the European Survey of Languages, although with reference to the teaching of French and Spanish as foreign languages, rather than English. Results were similar to those seen in Latin America and Vietnam, that is, 80% at level A1 or below (European Commission, 2012, p. 232). There may be parallels to be drawn between this situation and those of Colombia, Ecuador or Vietnam, yet there are no published inspectorate reports pertaining to the quality of lessons in these countries. On the contrary, in Colombia, respondents in surveys manifested a positive opinion of the general quality of language lessons at school and university (British Council, 2015a, pp. 55-56), (British Council 2015b). Greater rigour and transparency in inspections and lesson observations may lead to much needed reform in this area. On the other hand, in the UK, MFL attainment has plateaued for many years despite this transparency (Tinsley & Board, 2017).

Factor 6: exposure to the foreign language outside of the classroom

In some countries, such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Malta, a majority of students do reach level B2 by the end of high

school (Costa & Almeida, 2015). In these European countries, the target language enjoys a very strong presence in the cultural and working environment, allowing students hundreds, or even thousands, of additional hours of passive exposure. The level of impact on acquisition of such passive exposure outside of the target language country, that is, as part of foreign, rather than second language learning, has not been reliably quantified, but there is certainly a consensus that the presence of the target language in the environment is a strong complement to language acquisition (Costa & Almeida, 2014; British Council, 2015a, 2015b)

The opportunities for passive exposure include English language television and film, which is readily available in several countries (Costa & Almeida, 2014). The impact is, of course, strongest in listening skills, as may be seen in the data compiled by the First European Survey on Language Competences (European Commission, 2012) and summarised in Table 2 below. Countries whose television and cinema are dominated by original version English language content score very highly in listening skills:

Table 2. Top EU countries by listening skill

CEFR level in Listening	Sweden	Malta	Netherlands	Slovenia	Greece
B2	76%	72%	60%	46%	48%
B1	16%	16%	18%	20%	16%
A2	6%	8%	10%	14%	10%
A0/A1	2%	4%	12%	20%	26%

Source: compiled by author from data in European Commission (2012).

Ecuadorians who consider themselves fluent in English certainly place great importance on this aspect of acquisition:

The largest shares of those that felt confident in their English skills (advanced and fluent) said that it was due to social and cultural factors such as watching English language films and television (29%), listening to music with English lyrics (22%) and speaking English with friends (15%) and at work (15%). (British Council, 2015b, p. 40)

A similar situation was reported in Colombia (British Council, 2015a). However, this survey refers to those who already see themselves as very competent in the language. The general situation in Colombia and Ecuador is a cultural and professional environment with a negligible presence of the English language. Both British Council reports consider a failure to engage with the English language outside of the classroom as a key factor in poor English acquisition among the population as a whole. Therefore,

in the majority of the countries surveyed in this review, there is a general lack of opportunity for this passive complement to study considered to be of great importance by many experts (Costa & Almeida, 2014; Council of Europe, 2017; European Commission, 2011).

Exposure to reading texts in English was also shown to be a strong element among fluent English users in Ecuador and Colombia. In both countries, nearly 50% of those who considered themselves at an advanced level of English stated they read frequently, either for pleasure, or as a requirement of work or study (British Council, 2015a), (British Council, 2015b). Conversely, those qualified as weak in English stated they seldom or never read in the L2.

None of the countries surveyed here have undertaken an explicit programme, or invested resources in allowing their citizens to receive greater exposure to written English. Colombia has undertaken a nationwide reading initiative for both L1 and L2

(MEN, 2013), but making subtitling rather than dubbing mandatory on national television or cinema has so far not been implemented

by any country, despite recommendations of the potential impact of such a measure (European Commission, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Compulsory national education systems around the world face the challenge of equipping citizens with a level of L2 competence sufficient for them to participate in the global labour market, and allow them to join the international “imagined community” for social and cultural interaction. Many of these systems have so far failed in that goal, but are dedicating increasing resources in an attempt at remedying the situation.

600 or 700 hundred hours of tuition at secondary or tertiary level is not likely to bring more than a small proportion of students to B2 level, unless the specific conditions present at the FSI, for example, could be practically implemented in national compulsory education. In the few countries where this goal is achieved, this review has shown that there is a culture of students’ being exposed to, and voluntarily engaging with, hundreds of hours of L2 input beyond the classroom. Implementing the same culture in other countries would require a paradigm shift on the part of both governments and citizens.

More modest improvements, for example bringing most students to B1 level, may be attainable if the initiatives of the kind reviewed here for Colombia, Vietnam and Ecuador continue. All of these countries are right to insist on a far higher level of linguistic competence for their teaching staff. They are also right to adopt

international standards of teaching and assessment.

A major area of concern is that the general quality of lessons has either not been measured and explicitly addressed, or at least few governments have disclosed any perceived threat to learning of this kind. Institutional inspections and future academic studies of lesson quality in terms of efficient use of time, the use of higher cognitive activities, and teacher interest and motivation for the progress of their students, if undertaken, may reveal great deficiencies with the potential to undermine progress in other areas.

Finally, increasing the time students spend learning the L2 within the compulsory education system is unlikely to give any benefits unless other aspects of instructional quality are addressed first. In any event, moving toward earlier onset of language education in primary school or before will not be as effective as continuing compulsory L2 instruction into tertiary education, at least until the age of 18. In this way, making B2 competence a mandatory requirement for completing either academic or vocational tertiary education may prove to be the most time-efficient means to reaching the required level of attainment, as long as the other reforms discussed here are implemented at all levels of the compulsory system.

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TASK-BASED LEARNING WORKSHEETS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

HOJAS DE TRABAJO DE APRENDIZAJE BASADAS EN EL DESARROLLO DE INTELIGENCIAS MÚLTIPLES

Ximena Orellana-Mora; Instituto Universitario de Lenguas-Universidad de Cuenca;
ximena.orellanam@ucuenca.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

This project proposes the use of Task-Based Learning worksheets developed as a supplementary material based on the Our World through English 1 in order to improve students' language skills by accessing multiple intelligences learners have. Nineteen subjects in their eighth year of Basic Education at Cornelio Crespo Toral School participated in this study for fifteen months. Data have been collected from a pre-test, a post-test, and a questionnaire. The results show the improvement of students' language learning skills by 24,04%. At the end of the study, the participants developed a sense of motivation, awareness, and increased their language learning skills through the application of the Task-Based Learning worksheets. Teachers realized the effectiveness of new strategies and techniques to be implemented in their classes by applying appropriate materials to improve learning skills based on dominant intelligences.

Keywords:

Intelligence, Learning, Multiple Intelligences, Task-Based Learning, Worksheets.

RESUMEN

Este proyecto propone el uso de hojas de trabajo de aprendizaje basado en tareas, desarrolladas como material complementario para el Libro Our World through English 1 con el fin de mejorar las destrezas del idioma de los estudiantes accediendo a las inteligencias múltiples que los estudiantes poseen. Diecinueve estudiantes en su octavo año de Educación Básica en la Escuela Cornelio Crespo Toral participaron en este estudio durante quince meses. Los datos se han recopilado de una prueba previa, una prueba posterior y un cuestionario. Los resultados muestran una mejora en las habilidades de aprendizaje de idiomas de los estudiantes en un 24,04%. Al final del estudio, los participantes desarrollaron un sentido de motivación, conciencia e incrementaron sus habilidades de aprendizaje de idiomas mediante la aplicación de las hojas de trabajo de aprendizaje basado de tareas. Los docentes notaron la efectividad de la implementación de nuevas estrategias y técnicas en la clase por medio del uso de material apropiado para mejorar las destrezas del idioma basado en inteligencias múltiples.

Palabras clave:

Inteligencia, Aprendizaje, Inteligencias Múltiples, Aprendizaje basado en tareas, Hojas de trabajo.

INTRODUCTION

New ideas about teaching a foreign language have been brought to the forefront in recent decades, the most important being the use of a variety of activities inside the language classroom to enhance the teaching and learning experience. With the emergence of the technological era, teachers have been given the opportunity to broaden students' learning opportunities. This is not the case in the majority of public and rural schools in Ecuador due to the fact that the necessary resources to implement fresh and innovative programs are difficult to obtain. Consequently, a large number of English teachers are forced to continue teaching their classes strictly based on the textbooks students use. The only available resources for teachers in such context are boards and markers, but these resources, by themselves, do not motivate students to actively participate in the learning process, nor do they require teachers to consider students' differences. Gardner (1993) claims "It is of the utmost importance that we recognize and nurture all of the varied human intelligences and all of the combinations of intelligences. We are all so different largely because we have different combinations of intelligences" (p.15).

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to increase students' performance in listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar and vocabulary with a focus on the seven multiple intelligences

through the design and implementation of Task-Based Learning worksheets as supplementary material with the Our World through English Student's Book 1 (OWTE SB 1) (2005a)

The OWTE SB 1 was used in all public educational institutions in Ecuador to teach English to the eighth year of Basic Education. It was part of the six-year textbook series OWTE. It was conceived as a change in the Ecuadorian curriculum and a CRADLE project in order to improve the quality of English education in Ecuador. The course components included the Student's Book and the Teacher's Book and CD. The Student's Book had twelve units and each unit presented activities related to grammar, functions, vocabulary, and skills development.

Thus, this study was limited to nineteen students in their eighth year of Basic Education at the Cornelio Crespo Toral Public School in Cuenca, Ecuador. The six female and thirteen male subjects are thirteen-year-old on average, and the majority of them are from families with a very low socioeconomic status. This study took fifteen months, beginning in April 2010, and finishing in June 2011. Students had English classes five hours a week, one hour daily.

► Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the worksheets designed to use as supplementary material for the OWTE SB 1 was based on the Multiple Intelligences theory (Gardner, 2001) and the Task-Based Learning Approach (TBL) (Willis, 1996).

Multiple intelligences theory

In 1983, Gardner first introduced the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI). This theory, according to Blythe and Gardner (1990) "proposes that people use at least seven relatively autonomous intellectual capacities -each with its own distinctive mode of thinking- to approach problems and create products" (p. 33). This assumption makes educators think to what extent the activities presented in class are connected to students' intelligences and whether or not, they have been activated.

Forty years ago, the MI theory was unthinkable due to the IQ paradigm. Hammond (2008) clearly stated this: "challenging the largely linguistic and logical bias of the IQ paradigm, Gardner proposed the existence of additional intelligences, each of which students possess in varying amounts due to both innate and environmental causes" (p.1). The seven multiple intelligences are described as follows: Verbal-Linguistic: Having the ability to see

patterns in language; Logical-Mathematical: Having the ability to problem solve and establish connections; Spatial: Being able to describe space and time; Bodily-Kinesthetic: Knowing how to use one's body in a skilled manner; Musical: Being able to identify rhythm and directionality of sound; Interpersonal: Possessing an awareness of others; and, Intrapersonal: Self-knowledge.

According to Acosta (2015), "the exact combination of intelligences varies from person to person". In other words, a learner who is strong in the Verbal-Linguistic and Interpersonal intelligences, have secondary strengths in the Intrapersonal, Spatial, and Musical intelligences and weaknesses in the Logical-Mathematical and Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligences. Another learner may have an entirely different combination of intelligences (Acosta, 2015). To effectively use the MI theory in the language classroom, it is necessary for teachers to determine which types of intelligences are predominant and which are not completely developed in students instead of focusing on how intelligent students are.

Indeed, it is important to clarify that MI are not learning styles. Gardner has explicitly stated that his theory of MI differs from "learning styles", as research does not support the effectiveness of learning styles. Additionally, according to Strauss (2013),

Gardner defines intelligence and learning style in order to be clear about these concepts. On the one hand, people have multiple intelligences; nevertheless, one of these intelligences has been substantially developed. By intelligence, Strauss (2013), based on Gardner' theory, refers to an area where a person has considerable power. For instance, a person has the ability to master a foreign language because the linguistic intelligence has been developed. On the other hand, learning style refers to how a person approaches a certain topic or area. For example, the author claims that "an individual who has a reflective style is hypothesized to be reflective about the full range of materials".

To illustrate this, several additional studies about the MI theory and its implications for language teaching have been made. One such study by Ander-Egg (2006) distinguishes various characteristics related to the MI theory. First, the conception of the existence of only one intelligence does not visualize students' diversity. It focuses only on a uniform vision that makes learning the same for everybody. Second, the MI theory is related to the mechanisms of the brain that are shown through each individual's intelligences. Furthermore, each intelligence has its own mechanisms of the brain which are identifiable. In other words, every intelligence is independent in its functioning; however, the various intelligences work together when are applied to a field or discipline.

Multiple intelligences activities

The main reason for using multiple intelligences activities in the classroom is that they offer support to learners who probably find traditional activities ineffective in helping them learn the new language. Since all individuals learn in different ways because of their individual combination of intelligences, to be effective, activities in the language classroom need to be aimed to each of these intelligences. Students learn better when the language activities match their intelligence types (Gardner, 2001).

This suggests that key points in MI theory (Armstrong, 2009) are important to be considered during the process of designing the activities: "a) Each person possesses all eight intelligences. b) Most people can develop each intelligence to an adequate level of competency. c) Intelligences usually work together in complex ways. d) There are many ways to be intelligent within each category" (p.15).

Previous language studies about Multiple Intelligences theory in EFL classrooms

It is acknowledged that different studies, such as the ones described above, have been conducted to evaluate the

effectiveness of various methods of language teaching. While linguistic intelligence activities are frequently included in language teaching, other studies have shown that teaching a variety of activities that address different intelligences has positive results on the learning process. The following is a summary of those studies:

Hammond (2008) has extensively studied the role of multiple intelligences in learners and their influence in the learning process. He states in his study the following about MI:

Sixty percent of activities are logical or linguistic. The personal intelligences comprise around 25%. In other words, four of the nine intelligences make up almost 85% of classroom activity. Where the remaining intelligences are activated, this is usually in terms of theme rather than actual engagement of a skill pertaining to that intelligence -- for example a unit on sport may appeal to kinesthetic intelligence, which is one thing, but may do little to actually activate any actual kinesthetic skills (p. 23).

Due to this fact, the activities of worksheets have to be designed taking into account the real activation and performance of each intelligence.

In their book, Campbell and Campbell (1999) mentioned the educational programs that six schools implemented using the MI theory for five or more years. The schools included in the study (two elementary, two middle-level, and two high schools) have a variety of student population across the United States. The authors addressed such questions as how the MI programs have affected student achievement and where and how those results were achieved (p. 45). The Campbells' study revealed significant academic achievement gains in the target students. These results are described in the book. In addition, the book describes the transformation of their teaching environments, curriculum, assessment methods, student attitudes and achievements, and teachers' beliefs in the six schools studied.

In addition, Gardner (2009), described how the MI theory has been introduced and implemented successfully in numerous countries around the world. It is the first collection that reviews, synthesizes, and reflects on this unique cross-cultural and educational phenomenon. It contains works by various authors that provide a fresh and fuller understanding of the MI theory, specifically the reason why it has been accepted worldwide, how its use intends to be appropriate in diverse cultures, and what has supported.

Finally, Hoerr (2000) agreed with the MI theory. The author

mentioned that “Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences resonates so strongly for many educators because it offers a model for acting on what we believe: all students have strengths” (p. 5).

Task-based learning approach

The Task-Based Learning Approach, sometimes known as Task-Based Language Learning or Task-Based Language Teaching, was popularized by Prabhu (1987) when he noticed that his students were able to learn a language just as easily with non-linguistic problems as when linguistic questions were

introduced. This approach focuses on asking students to perform meaningful tasks using the target language. In other words, as Branden (2006) mentioned, during these meaningful tasks “the learner takes up the central role” (p. 10).

Defining the word ‘task’

It is essential to be clear about what a task is. The following authors have defined this word from different points of view. In table 1, Branden synthesizes these concepts.

Table 1. Definitions of task as language learning goals

Author	Definition
Long (1985)	A piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form.... In other words, by ‘task’ is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between. ‘Tasks’ are the things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists.
Crookes (1986)	A piece of work or activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an education course, at work, or used to elicit data for research.
Carroll (1993)	Any activity in which a person engages, given an appropriate setting, in order to achieve a specifiable class of objectives.
Bachman & Palmer (1996)	An activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation.
Bygate et al. (2001)	An activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective.

Source: Developed by the author, based on Branden (2006, p.5).

In summary, a task is synthesized as an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific goal. It is important that tasks

reflect real life and focus on meaning. Thus, learners are free to use the language they master.

Characteristics of tasks

Willis (2009) listed five characteristics that are required for a task. These characteristics are the following: “a) A task is an activity that engages learners’ interest, b) There is a primary focus on meaning, c) The success of the activity is judged in terms of outcome, d) Completion is a priority, and d) The activity relates to real-world activities” (p.1)

Additionally, Nunan (1989) mentioned a very important characteristic: a task is an activity “where the learner is an interactor and negotiator who is capable of giving as well as taking” (p. 80). All of these characteristics are extensively important to consider in the designing of tasks. The lack of one of these characteristics may mean students’ failure and frustration along the learning process. That is why in designing all of the Task-Based learning worksheets, a careful review of these characteristics was made.

Conditions that are present within a TBL framework

Willis (1996) has conducted extensive research and writing about the TBL Approach. The author defines four conditions that are within a TBL framework: exposure to the target language; opportunities to use the language, both spontaneously and planned; motivation to listen, talk, read, write, study, and reflect; and instruction focus on language form. (p. 132).

Correspondingly, Willis’ first three conditions are valid because of the stimulation of language use by providing a range of learning opportunities for students of all abilities, and these conditions encourage learners to activate and use the language they already master, both for comprehension and for speaking and writing. However, the last condition-instruction focus on language form goes against everything that has been said so far about the Task-Based Learning Approach. It is important to remember that a task focuses on meaning but language.

Advantages of using TB approach

In one of her conference presentations, Willis (2009) gives an explanation about the use of TBL approach when teaching a second or foreign language: TBL provides learners with natural exposure (input), chances to use language to express what they want to mean (output), to focus on improving their own language and to analyse and practise forms. TBL tends to keep learners motivated since it builds on the language they know in a positive way. Learners are actively engaged throughout the task cycle and get chances to think for themselves and express themselves

in the security of a group. Learners become more independent and feel empowered, gaining satisfaction from successfully achieving things through English. (p. 20)

Thus, these three advantages are condensed into one: Task-Based Learning activities motivate students. In other words, students know the outcomes to be achieved whether they are able to express their ideas in the target language. Thus, learners make a reduced number of mistakes because they use the language they feel comfortable with.

METHODOLOGY

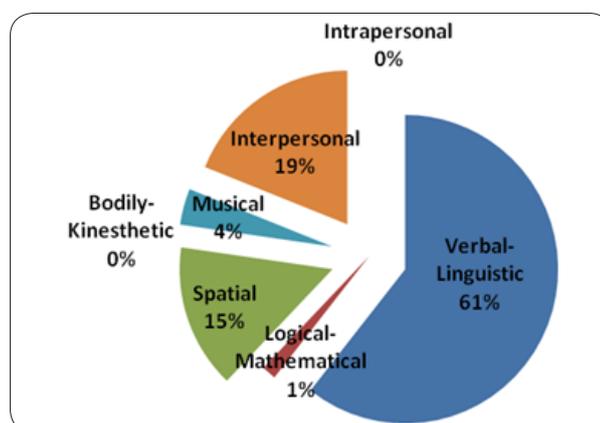
In order to reach the proposed objectives of this study, a type of methodology and process based on MI and TBL was applied. First of all, the nineteen subjects chosen to participate in the study were given a standardized pre-test in December 2010, at the end of the first trimester (Ponce et al., 2005b). Parents of all the students involved in the study signed a consent form allowing their children to participate in the study. The students still had not used the supplementary TBL worksheets by the time of the pre-test.

Then, the units six through ten in the Our World through English Student's Book 1 were carefully reviewed to identify which intelligences were focused repeatedly in the various exercises.

To achieve the objective of enhancing students' performance in English skills, TBL worksheets with a focus on multiple intelligences were designed in order to improve students' language skills.

As an illustration, Figure 1 is a summary of the 132 tasks analyzed in the five units. The pie chart clearly shows the predominance of the three targeted intelligences throughout the five units (Verbal-Linguistic, Interpersonal, and Spatial intelligences). In addition, the figure shows that the Bodily-Kinesthetic and Intrapersonal intelligences are completely missing, and the Logical-Mathematical intelligence is targeted in a noticeable reduced percentage of the total activities.

Figure 1. Summary of Intelligences Identified in Units Six through Ten



Source: Tasks analyzed in the OWTE 2015 developed by the author

As explained above, the OWTE SB1 favors the Verbal-Linguistic, Spatial, and Interpersonal intelligences and places a limited or no emphasis on the Logical-Mathematical, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, and Intrapersonal intelligences. As a result, students who have learning styles that are not addressed by the three main intelligences, have a disadvantage in the classroom. In case that the various tasks that are included in the OWTE SB 1 are analyzed, it may be inferred that most of the activities designed

by the book's authors focus on Verbal-Linguistic, Spatial, and Interpersonal intelligences.

During the second stage of the research, the nineteen subjects took the Teele Inventory of Multiple Intelligences (TIMI) (Teele, 2004) to determine their dominant intelligences. Based on the results of the TIMI, the TBL worksheets were designed for the students to use as supplementary material for units six through

ten. The four dominant intelligences in the students are the Spatial, Interpersonal, Logical-Mathematical, and Bodily-Kinesthetic.

Consequently, once the TBL worksheets were designed, the students participating in the study completed the worksheets in addition to doing the exercises in units six through ten of their textbooks. The interplay between the TBL approach and the MI theory is crucially, even more, apparent in the designing of the worksheets. For instance, it is necessary for a task to have a communicative purpose and include one of the less dominant intelligences identified in Figure 1. Because of this essential interplay, aspects related to the MI theory as well as the TBL approach were carefully studied before the TBL worksheets were designed. The main point of this study was to ensure that all the nineteen students were given the opportunity to learn the new language, using their dominant intelligences as well as their less dominant ones through tasks.

Every TBL worksheet mentions the unit, the title, the lesson as well as the lesson objective and the target intelligence/s. These target intelligences, in fact, include the Verbal-Linguistic intelligence, but it is not shown in the worksheets. The reason for this

omission is that every TBL worksheet demands communication, so the Verbal-Linguistic intelligence is mandatory in every worksheet. Subsequently, the Task-Based Learning worksheets were designed according to the specific needs of the nineteen students in the study to have tasks that focus on their individual dominant intelligences.

Regarding objectives, most of the lesson objectives proposed by the OWTE SB 1 have been changed given that these objectives do not attempt a communicative goal. For example, lesson 5 in unit 8 has this objective: "To practice Wh-questions" (p.53). In fact, this is not a communicative goal; this is a grammar goal which does not help students to gain confidence in using the target language. Therefore, a communicative goal has been changed to: To ask information questions to get personal information. These communicative objectives were developed in each lesson.

In the following examples of two designed worksheets (Figures 2 and 3), the unit, the lesson, and the unit title are mentioned. After that, the lesson objective is placed as well as the focused intelligence/s used by TIMI. Finally, the instructions are given to make students work on a specific task:

Figure 2. Example of a modified unit that focuses on logical-mathematical and interpersonal intelligences

Lesson 1		ORDINAL NUMBERS		UNIT SIX	
Lesson objective:			Focused Intelligence/s:		
To describe the positions of songs in a ranking.			Logical-Mathematical / Interpersonal		
			Source: Teele (1995), TIMI		
TASK	A	Look at the website BestSongsEver.com. Then talk with your partner about the positions that these songs occupy. <i>Example: Bohemian Rhapsody is second in the list.</i>			
BEST SONGS EVER.COM					
Number	Artist	Song	Genre	Year	Points
1	Led Zeppelin	Stairway to Heaven	Rock	1971	742
2	Queen	Bohemian Rhapsody	Rock	1975	741
3	Pink Floyd	Wish you were here	Progressive Rock	1975	683
4	Pink Floyd	Learning to Fly	Rock	1987	593
5	John Lennon	Imagine	Rock	1971	558
6	Metallica	Nothing else Matters	Rock	1992	539
7	Nirvana	Smells like teen spirit	Grunge	1991	532
8	The Eagles	Hotel California	Rock	1977	518
9	The Beatles	Hey Jude	Rock	1968	501
10	Pink Floyd	Comfortably Numb	Progressive Rock	1979	488
11	Metallica	Master of Poppets	Trash Metal	1986	478
12	Oasis	Wonderwall	Britpop	1995	470
13	Dire Straits	Sultans of Swing	Rock	1978	468
14	Guns N' Roses	Sweet Child O' Mine	Hard Rock	1987	456
15	AC-DC	You shook me all night long	Hard Rock	1980	451
16	The Beatles	Let it be	Rock	1970	450
17	The Jim Hendrix Experience	All along the Watch over	Psychedelic Rock	1968	448
18	Radiohead	Creep	Alternative Rock	1992	448
19	The Beatles	A Day in the Life	Psychedelic	1967	444
20	Pink Floyd	Another Brick in the Wall	Art Rock	1979	436

Source: List of hits by BestSongsEver.com.
Source: Developed by the author, based on OWTE (2015)

Figure 3. Example of a modified unit that focuses the spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences

Lesson 1	MY SCHOOL	UNIT SEVEN
Lesson objective: To describe school places and their locations.		Focused Intelligence/s: Spatial / Bodily-Kinesthetic Source: Teele (1995), TIMI
TASK	A	Go with your teacher at the middle of the school's playground. Tell your class the places your school has. Point them out and describe their locations. For example: <i>That is the director's office. It's next to our classroom.</i>

Source: Developed by the author, based on OWTE (2015)

Finally, at the end of the second trimester, in March 2011, students' language performance was once again evaluated when the participants were given a standardized post-test (Ponce et al., 2005b). The post-test was given to the students after they completed units six through ten in their textbooks and the supplementary TBL worksheets that were designed specifically for purposes of this study according to their dominant intelligences. As students' opinions are important in the learning process, they were asked whether or not the worksheets helped participants to develop an interest to learn vocabulary, grammar,

listening, reading, speaking and writing skills and to what extent. In addition, the subjects answered whether the worksheets were motivating to increase interest in learning English in general. According to students' responses, most of them were satisfied with the improvement they reached. In addition, it was mentioned that the repetition of specific words helped students with the internalization of the new words and later, their use in sentences. Moreover, the subjects expressed that the tasks were dynamic and motivating to do. Another opinion was that the pictures used helped them to remember the focused vocabulary easily.

RESULTS

At the beginning of this research work, the nineteen students involved in the study were given the pre-test found in the Our World through English Teacher's Guide 1. This test was selected because it is a standardized test which analyzes students' performance from a neutral point of view. The test assesses the four main language skills, listening, reading, writing, and speaking as well as grammar and vocabulary. Each skill was evaluated over 5 points, given that 19 subjects were assessed, the highest mark for each skill was 95 points. The results for the subjects who took the pre-test are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Total marks for each skill assessed and the percentages in the pre-test

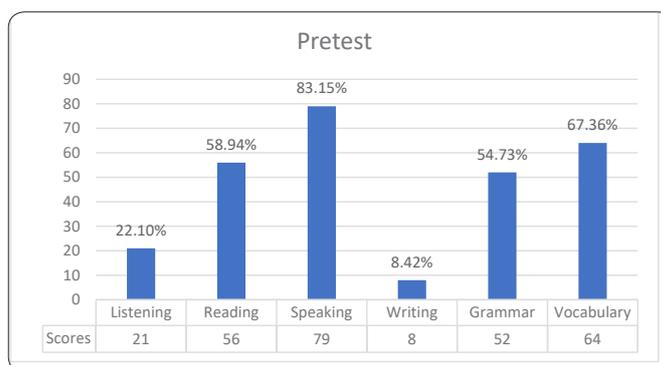
Evaluated parameter	Scores	Percentage
Listening	21	22.11
Reading	56	58.95
Speaking	79	83.16
Writing	8	8.42
Grammar	52	54.74
Vocabulary	64	67.37

Source: developed by the author, based on the results of the pre-test

Regarding Figure 4, students performed well in speaking; however, their performance in listening and writing was not proficient. This disparity may have been caused by structure mistakes. When students spoke, they were able to keep the

conversation flowing. The questions were answered accurately. On the other hand, students had sentence structure problems during the writing task. Sixteen students did not write complete sentences or the words in the sentences were misspelled. These observations suggest that students felt more comfortable speaking than writing.

Figure 4. Students' performance on the pre-test



Source: Developed by the author, average for each skill

As a result, it is necessary to mention that the grammar and vocabulary performance were not as expected. This is probably another reason why students were not able to write correctly. Grammar and vocabulary are tools that a language

uses to communicate, but assuming that these tools are not used correctly, communication failure occurs. In summary, the deficiencies indicated in the pre-test were a gap that the TBL worksheets were designed to address.

The final procedure in this study was giving the nineteen students a post-test as a method to compare and measure the

degree of change occurring as a result of their use of the Task-Based Learning worksheets. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test administered to students in the study was a standardized test included in the Our World through English Teacher's Book 1. Each skill was evaluated over 5 points, given that 19 subjects were assessed, the highest mark for each skill was 95 points. The results of the post-test are presented in the following table 3:

Table 3. Total marks for each skill assessed and the percentages in the post-test

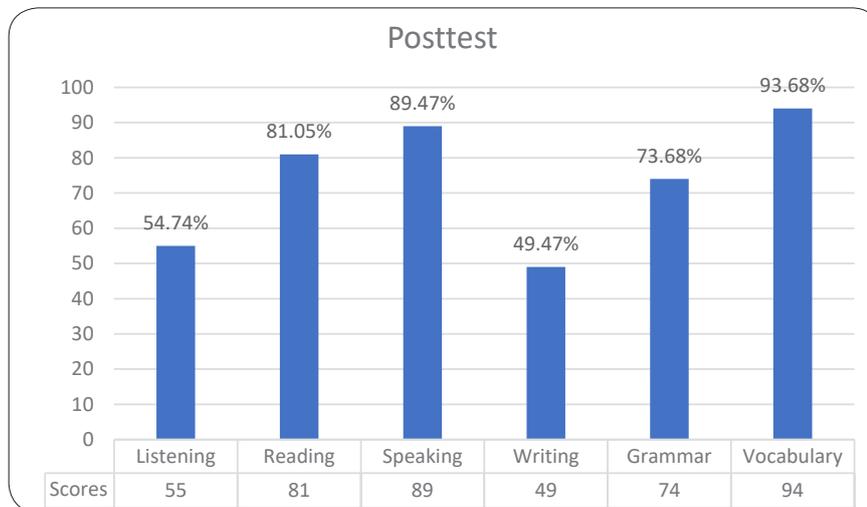
Evaluated parameter	Scores	Percentage
Listening	55	54.74%
Reading	81	81.05%
Speaking	89	89.47%
Writing	49	49.47%
Grammar	74	73.68%
Vocabulary	94	93.68%

Source: Developed by the author, based on the results of the post-test

Thus, students' scores increased significantly after the application of the Task-Based Learning worksheets. The main reason is that participants had more exposure to the language,

used it in meaningful situations and chose the language they mater. Therefore, according to Figure 5, the TBL worksheets did increase the students' language performance significantly.

Figure 5. Students' performance on the post-test.

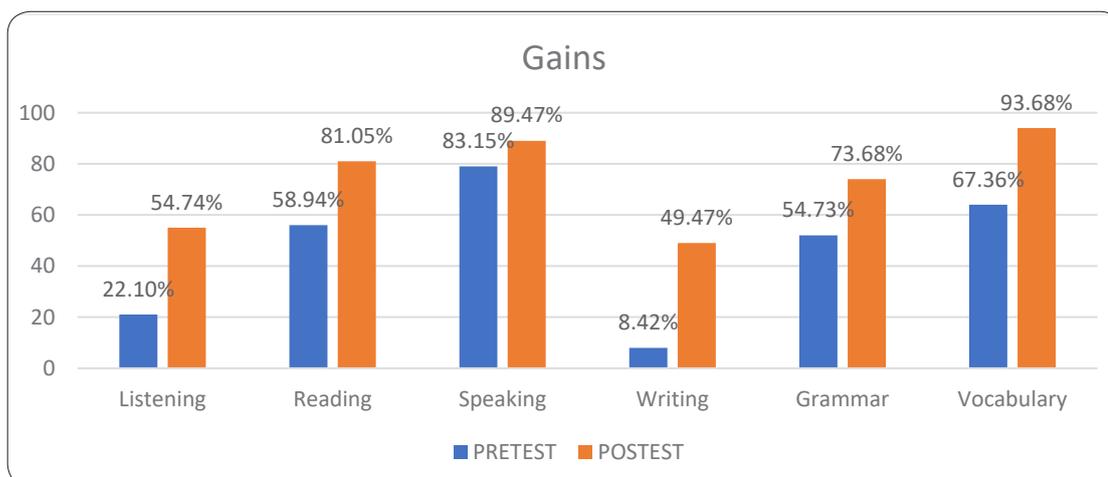


Source: Developed by the author, based on the results of the post-test

Comparing the students' scores on the pre-tests and post-tests, as stated in figure 6, there was an improvement in all six areas of the tests, especially in the writing skill section. At the beginning of this study, the subjects scored a plain 8.42% on the writing pre-test, but after using the Task-Based Learning worksheets,

the overall scores improved by 37,89% reaching 46,32%. Furthermore, 80% of the nineteen students were able to write complete sentences (subject + verb + complement) at the end of the study.

Figure 6. Percentage Gains between pre and post-test



Source: Developed by the author, based on the results of the pre and post-test

In addition to the pre-test and post-test as data resources, students were given a questionnaire in order to ascertain their point of view related to the worksheets. Most of the students were satisfied with the improvement they achieved. Students mentioned that they had the opportunity to practice vocabulary more constantly with the TBL worksheets. In other words, the

repetition of specific words helped them with the internalization of the new words and later, the subjects used them in sentences. Moreover, students expressed that the tasks were dynamic and motivating to do. Another opinion was that the used pictures helped them to remember the target vocabulary easily.

DISCUSSION

After the analysis and interpretation of the results of this study, it is important that educators and policymakers facilitate professional development in educational institutions to ensure that teachers realize the effectiveness of new strategies and techniques and learn about their implementation in the classes. In addition, it is necessary to provide mentorship to fellow Ecuadorian educators who wish to implement the MI theory in their English classes. Third, educators and policymakers need to be committed to creating an internet blog where teachers from Ecuador and all around the world reflect on and share their experiences using various teaching techniques in the classroom. Additionally, students from the Cornelio Crespo Toral School achieved a significant increase in their language performance skills of 24,04%. This average is relatively low compared to their personal appreciations of the TBL worksheets.

Therefore, further research needs to be carried out in order to analyze the possible causes for this low language performance. It is necessary for researchers to concern about the education

process to continue conducting further studies to test the effectiveness of using TBL worksheets based on students' predominant intelligences as a resource to improve language skills. The environmental, educational, and social conditions of students play an important role. To be specific, the tasks designed as the supplementary material would increase students' scores in a great deal whether they had had functional families, appropriate classrooms, and the means to buy the essential school material to work in class. Finally, it is possible to replicate this study in the English courses of the Language Institute of University of Cuenca taking into consideration that similar studies are repeated in the future, long-term data may increase the validity and reliability of the results of this study. As a final consideration, it is the author's desire that knowledge of the MI theory and its importance to second language acquisition become propagated given to other educators seek new and improved teaching methods to ensure they are offering students the best education possible.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded on how students learn in an accurate way and the importance of applying appropriate materials

to improve their learning skills based on their dominant intelligences. However, the task of designing suitable teaching

material is not always simple. It demands a vast knowledge of whether the teaching material (textbook) promotes students' differences and motivation. A common situation often occurs when teachers are required to use a given textbook. That is the reason why worksheets that focus the multiple intelligences concentrate on both, contents and creativity.

Regarding the creation of material, a second important aspect is the need to be clear about what a task is. Using tasks in class means giving students the opportunity to use the language in

a communicative way. Regrettably, educators tend to name any activity as a task when, in practice, this "activity" prevent students to communicate. Finally, it is important to stay "up-to-date" as new practices, theories, approaches, and methodologies are developed because they continually change the teaching/learning process. Considering that teachers are in constant improvement, it is necessary to be involved and immersed in this process in order to select and use the best teaching methods for students.

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THE USE OF CLASSICAL MUSIC TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

EL USO DE MÚSICA CLÁSICA PARA MEJORAR LA COMPRESIÓN LECTORA

Daniela Holguín-Barrera; Universidad Técnica de Ambato (UTA); md.holguin@uta.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on an action research project related to the use of classical music to improve reading comprehension in a foreign language classroom at a university level in the town of Ambato, Tungurahua, Ecuador. The need for university students to improve reading skills in this society was analysed, due to the fact that young people have not developed reading habits, even in their mother tongue. This aspect was considered, as well as students' results on reading exercises applied to them, before and after being exposed to the use of classical music in the language classroom, which were evaluated through a comparison between the different experiences revealed in the surveys applied to the students, and their grade reports. The conclusion highlights that there was a significant improvement in the academic performance of students when they felt comfortable in their classroom environment while classical music was played. Even though research has not yet proved scientifically that the use of classical music influences students to improve their reading comprehension in the language classroom, there are studies related to the use of classical music in education and the learning process, related to the topic of this study, which contributed to conclude that further research must be done in this specific area.

Key words:

classical music, comprehension, improving, reading

RESUMEN

Este estudio se basa en un proyecto de investigación-acción relacionado con el uso de música clásica para mejorar la comprensión lectora en la clase de idioma extranjero, llevada a cabo a nivel universitario en la ciudad de Ambato, Tungurahua, Ecuador. Se analizó la necesidad de que los estudiantes mejoren la destreza de la lectura, en vista de que los jóvenes en esta sociedad no han estado acostumbrados a desarrollar hábitos de lectura, incluso en su propio idioma. Se consideró tanto esta razón, como los resultados de los estudiantes en los ejercicios de comprensión lectora aplicados antes y después de exponerlos al uso de música clásica en el aula, los cuales fueron evaluados mediante una comparación entre las diferentes experiencias reveladas en las encuestas aplicadas y los reportes de calificaciones. La conclusión resalta que existió una significativa mejora en el desempeño académico de los estudiantes, cuando se sintieron cómodos en su ambiente de clase mientras escuchaban música clásica. A pesar de que las investigaciones, científicamente, no han logrado comprobar que el uso de música clásica pueda mejorar la comprensión lectora en la clase de idioma extranjero, existen estudios relacionados al uso de la música clásica en la educación y el proceso de aprendizaje, relacionados al tema de este estudio, que han ayudado a concluir que se necesita más investigación en esta área específica.

Palabras clave:

comprensión, lectura, mejorar, música clásica.

INTRODUCTION

The need of university students for developing reading skills has been noticed for more than fifteen years of being an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher, and in the Ecuadorian society, people tend to have insufficiently developed reading habits and motivation from early stages, even in their mother tongue. Regarding this aspect, the latest census performed in Ecuador, to people older than 16 in Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Machala and Ambato, demonstrated that

El 26,5% de los ecuatorianos no dedica tiempo para leer, de ellos el 56,8% no lo hace por falta de interés y el 31,7% por falta de tiempo. Según el estudio, el 50,3% de los ecuatorianos lee de 1 a 2 horas a la semana [26,5 % of Ecuadorians do not dedicate time to reading; from them, 56,8% do not do it due to lack of interest, and 31,7% due to lack of time. According to the study, 50,3% of Ecuadorians read 1 to 2 hours per week]. (INEC, 2012)

Consequently, this problem gets additional complexity when it is a foreign language, especially at a university level. Therefore, students of EFL need external motivation in the skill of reading, to foster their concentration and achieve higher results in their academic performance and obtain advanced levels of retention of what they have read. This research intended to discover to what extent the use of classical music in the EFL classroom encourages university students to improve reading comprehension in their language class.

Motivation and good stimulation are important in the learning process, especially of a foreign language; therefore, the classroom environment is an element to be analyzed. Regarding this topic, suggest creating a safe, welcoming learning environment, where all students feel safe and welcome; teachers have the duty to make sure students feel comfortable in a respectful and friendly environment, concluding that

Reading in any language has a crucial role to play in creating independent learners and increasing their educational attainment. Reading is the basis of a student's success at all levels of education. Developing good reading habits is vital to a child's future – not just academically, but in everyday life as well. Students with good reading habits learn more about the world around them and develop an interest in language and in other cultures. Reading leads to asking questions and seeking answers, which expands students' knowledge on a constant basis (Teacher Education through School-based Support in India, 2016)

Nowadays, as a result of research that has been performed, it is possible to see the truth in Plato's statement "musical training is a more potent instrument than any other for education" (Harris, 2009, p. xi), as neuro-musicology studies the form in which music affects the brain. Ramos (2008, p.6) for instance, states that music is in the environment, all around us, and the voice is the first musical instrument possessed by humans; consequently, the qualities of sound and its effects in learning are possible to be investigated, as people musically express themselves in an improvised voice with everyday objects.

To illustrate the latter, Canal & Cabacés (2009, p. 6) indicate there are professions in which the voice is frequently used: actors, narrators, teachers, singers, among others; their tone of the voice makes their work attractive; consequently teachers, have a gift in their hands due to through their communicative activities they are able to use the language of music.

Regarding teaching and the learning process, teachers have been using different types of activities to reach students' attention and motivation, being as creative as possible to motivate their students in order to achieve higher results in the skills of the language they aim to teach. Motivation and good stimulation therefore, are important in the learning process. This is the case of music, which is suggested to be used from early stages.

The well-known philosopher Nietzsche stated that "without music, life would be a mistake" (Berlioz, 2002, p.91); thus, he suggests that babies need to be prepared from the mother's uterus, due to the fact that the hearing system, from very early stages, starts to get vibrations that are transformed into sounds approximately between the fifth and the sixth month of pregnancy. The baby is not able to interpret the sounds; however, the baby is capable to recognize and process them, once being born.

Consequently, music during childhood is an important stimulus. For example, Canal & Cabacés (2009, p.9) state that babies are very receptive to music even before they are born; after birth, they experience different types of contact with music; through the lullabies, they learn melodies, and perceive the movement from balancing; later, children produce their own sounds, not only with their voice, but also with their body and objects that are around them. These examples are expressions of how music is important in human life, and how it is acquired from early stages.

The music of Mozart for instance, has been studied for decades due to its strong influence in children since pregnancy. The so called 'Mozart effect', first proposed by Rauscher et al in 1993,

has been under investigation regarding the influence of his music in children and their brain; however there has constantly been the question of why Mozart, and what is special in his music. To respond to these questions Berlioz (2002, p.93) states Tomatis' studies, claiming Mozart to have been virtuous in the neurovegetative system and a specialist in functional neurologist, transmitting special vibrations that evidence the creative potential of people. Moreover, Jaušovec, Jaušovec, & Gerlič (2000), studied the influence of Mozart's music on brain activity in the process of learning, based on the Mozart effect, concluding that his music activates task-relevant brain areas, which enhances the process of learning spatio-temporal rotation tasks.

Regarding the effect music has in learning, Habermeyer (1999, p.25) states that music is a power vehicle to reach knowledge and academic success, not only a form of art which adds aesthetic experiences to life. For instance, studies using other types of music have been proven to be effective in learning; one example is the research performed by Cripe, 1986, testing children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and rock music, who demonstrated a decreased level of activity in those children, and an increasement in attention span. This is to say that scientists, neurologists, and researchers that study the effect of music in the brain, have started to reveal the potential that music has in the development of human beings.

Additionally, concerning music perception, Corrigan & Trainor (2011), state that music training, especially in children, predicted academic achievement; measured in two aspects: through standardized tests and grade reports from school. Another example of the relationship between music and reading is found in Tsang's (2011, p.30) study, where he proved that music training improves music perception skills, which are associated to reading.

The skill of reading therefore, has been demonstrated to involve reasoning, and imagination of abstract situations; on the other hand, music is perceived by Habermeyer (1999, p.39) as a powerful tool to increase the temporal-spatial reasoning, which is the ability to perceive, with accuracy, the visual world and form mental images of the objects; aspects that are close related to reading.

Consequently, spatial reasoning, and its relationship with music, is relevant to be mentioned when referring to reading, as this skill is an abstract activity; therefore, what teachers aim to achieve with their students is forming a visual image of what students are reading, knowing that music contributes to it. Regarding this field "studies have shown that young children who take keyboard

lessons have greater abstract reasoning abilities than their peers, and these abilities improve over time with sustained training in music" (Rauscher & Zupan, 2000)

Music, therefore, has been used for learning purposes. The use of classical music, for instance is illustrated by Habermeyer (1999) through the findings of researchers from the University of California and Wisconsin, who specified that "listening to classical music increases memory and concentration; learning how to play a musical instrument has verified the increase in the spatial reasoning", proving that music benefits students who have lack of confidence, disabilities, and learning problems. To illustrate what happens in the brain, she states that the left, right, anterior and posterior parts of the brain are involved in music, explaining why people learn and retain information in an easier way when learning is marked by music.

Furthermore, throughout history, classical music composers, have used their sounds to be identified with certain characters from a narrative; Cabacés-Vilaplana (2008, p.54) discuss the following as examples of the latter: Prokófiev, for instance wrote a piece for a narrator and an orchestra called Peter and the olt; in his work, there are several characters, each one of them represented by a specific musical instrument, or a group of them, as well as a specific musical tone. Another example can be found in the Disney film Fantasia, an illustrated narration through images, giving life to Paul Dukas' symphonic scherzo called The wizard's apprentice which was based on Gothe's ballad, the story is about an old wizard that wants to imitate his master.

Additionally, parents' support at home is important when children are in school; learning could be supported with the use of classical music according to the topics studied in class. Some specific examples could be considered the moment children are studying: The bumblebee flight from Rimsky-Korsakov when studying bees, where children are able to visualize the sound of the bees through their imagination; another example is The carnival of animals from Camille Saint-Saëns, where children are able to guess thirteen animals that appear in the tune, therefore learn through music; finally The planets by Gustav Holst, when children are studying the universe, as there is a representation of the Solar System and each one of its planets seen from Earth, with their astrological character (Habermeyer, 1999, p.226).

Stated above, the use of classical music for learning purposes, especially to children, has been a matter of research; the best example is the above-mentioned 'Mozart effect'; however, regarding language learning, Dr. Lozanov, who has been studying music, the brain, and language learning for decades, developed a methodology for teaching foreign languages that used baroque

music. According to Walker (1993), Lozanov suggested the use of certain Baroque pieces to master foreign languages with more effectiveness, recalling what they have learned in the foreign language, even when they had not studied it for four years. Dr. Lozanov studied foreign language instruction through the use of what he called Suggestopedia, defined as “a system of suggestive-accelerative learning and teaching techniques professing such a claim; Lozanov claims that a 1,000% increase in learning is possible with Suggestopedia” (Dipamo & Job, 1991).

Since research has shown that music affects the brain scientists have discovered that “music has the capacity to train the brain for levels of thought that are superior. Those types of thought include solving problems; inferring information; getting conclusions;

comparing and contrasting similarities; synthesising and evaluating information” Habermeyer (1999, p.32), these aspects are remarkable for this study, especially due to the fact that reading, including in a foreign language, requires the previously mentioned actions from the brain.

Restating the objective of this research, to discover whether students, when exposed to listening to classical music while performing reading activities in the classroom, improved in their foreign language reading comprehension activities in order to achieve higher results, it has been based on supporting studies related to the use of classical music in education and the learning process, explained together with the analysis of the information obtained from the results of this project and supported with previously performed studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on an Action Research project carried out in a university of Ambato, Ecuador, which intended to discover to what extent the use of classical music in the EFL classroom encourages university students to improve reading comprehension in their language class.

The term action research was first used by Lewin “to describe research that will help the practitioner by providing clarity about what is to be done in complex situations” (Baumfield, Hall, & Wall, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, Efron & Ravid, (2013, pp. 2-6) stated that, according to Lewin, action research is an inquiry conducted by educators in their own settings with the aim of advancing their practice and improving their student’s learning. It emphasizes the role of practitioners in conducting investigations in their classrooms and schools; the members of the group that intend to be changed should participate in the action research. This is the case of the thirty-three students of upper-intermediate level from the previously mentioned university who were the participants of this action research project.

Consequently, this type of research is conducted in a classroom; consequently, “The starting point for AR (Action Research) is identifying a problem you want to focus on” (Burns, 2009, p.32). Therefore, the need of students for developing reading comprehension in the language classroom was established; as a result, is essential that teachers start applying the use of reading material in the classroom habitually. This is, reading activities which were meant to be applied once a week as part of the curriculum, for this project they were performed two or three times instead.

Afterwards, following Guskey’s suggestion (2002, p.50) that

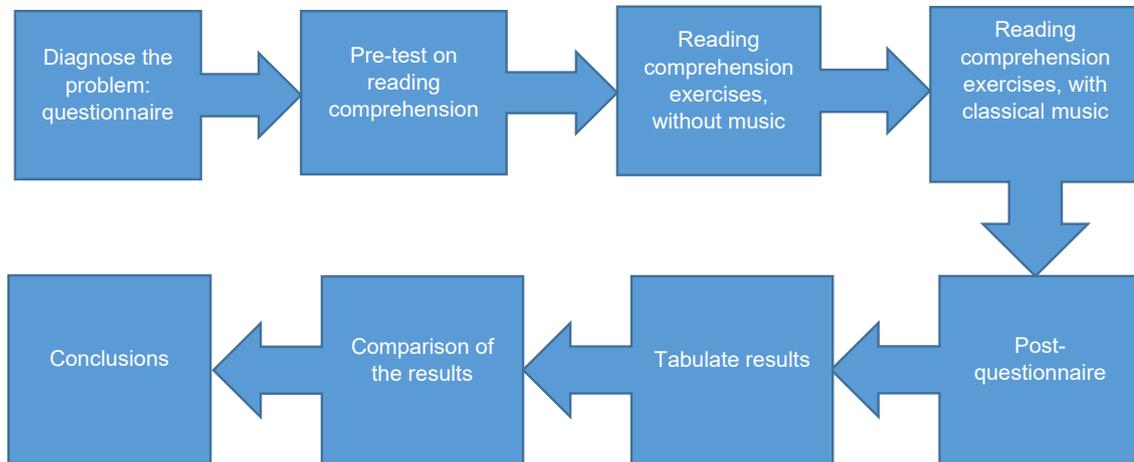
“using appropriate pre- and post-measures provide valuable information”, comprehension questions were applied to the students to obtain a grade from their understanding of the reading text, first without being exposed to classical music; subsequently, with similar type of texts, comprehension questions were asked again, this time using classical music as background while students were reading, to analyse whether the results are different in both stages. Questionnaires were once again applied to the students to check how they feel about this activity in terms of comprehension, to know if they feel they are improving or not, and then compare that with the obtained results from the exercises previously applied to them.

Stated above, it was important to select the sample group to work with; therefore, the chosen group was a class of thirty-three students of upper-intermediate level from the previously mentioned university. The way in which the study was developed, based on the teacher’s experience in classroom management was the following: to start, students were given time to read with short pieces of classical music as background, which means that they were not exposed directly to reading whole long texts with classical music, they started with short exercises, improving the level of retention. Subsequently, the texts were longer and the time of exposure to the classical music was increased, until reaching students read whole texts in English with classical music as background. The stages covered in this action research project were: the first one, to diagnose the problem with a questionnaire given to students; afterwards, a pre-test on reading comprehension applied to the students. Subsequently, students were given reading comprehension exercises on the topics the syllabus of the class, without the use of music, which is the usual environment they have when reading. Later, the use of

classical music in the classroom was introduced, while students were reading the same type of texts, to compare the differences. At that point, the questionnaires, applied to the whole class and

the results, were tabulated. Finally, a comparison of the results obtained from the exercises and the questionnaires was analysed to get the correspondent conclusions.

Figure 1. Stages of the Action Research project to find out whether students, when exposed to listening to classical music while performing reading activities in the classroom, improved in their foreign language reading comprehension activities



Source: made by the author, based on Burns (2002), and Guskey (2009)

The tools used to develop this action research project were the reading materials that were part of the textbook and workbook, Passages 2; extra reading materials related to the class topics; the previously selected classical music tracks; reading comprehension questions for all the chosen exercises; and the questionnaires applied to each student before and after being exposed to the use of classical music in the foreign language classroom. In these questionnaires, applied to all the thirty-three students of the classroom, students were asked to answered about their perception when reading without music and with classical background music; whether they found any difference in their concentration, and retention of the reading texts in English;

and, to conclude, students responded to whether classical music contributed to comprehend their reading texts when they were exposed to listening to classical music while performing reading activities in the classroom.

Once the scenario in which this action research took place, there is a need to explain that when classical music was played, it was necessary to select appropriate pieces of music, and the length of the music tracks. Both depended on the type of reading exercises students would be exposed to, and their difficulty. The following are the examples of the music themes played to the students for the purpose of this research:

Figure 2. Pieces of classical music chosen to be played as part of the Action Research Project

AUTHOR	COMPOSITION /PIECE
Johan Sebastian Bach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerto N° 2 Brandenburg-third movement • Toccata and fugue in D minor • Suite N° 2 in B minor for flute and strings
Ludwig Van Beethoven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Elise • Fifth Symphony-first movement • Sixth Symphony-first movement • Ninth Symphony-Ode to joy
Johannes Brahms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hungarian Dance N° 5 in G minor
Friederick Chopin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waltz Opus 64 N°1 – The minute Waltz • Polonaise in A major, opus 40 N°1, Raindrop Prelude
George Friederick Handel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water music, Alla Hornpipe • Music for the fireworks • The Messiah, Alleluia chorus
Joseph Haydn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symphony N°94 – Surprise-Second movement • The hymn to the Emperor

Source: developed by the author, based on music pieces suggested by Habermeyer (pp. 205-216), and Berlioz (pp.38-50)

Figure 2. Pieces of classical music chosen to be played as part of the Action Research Project

AUTHOR	COMPOSITION /PIECE
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonata in D for two pianos, K488 • Symphony N° 40-first movement • A little nocturnal serenade • Rondo alla Turca
Maurice Ravel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolero
Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bumblebee flight
Franz Schubert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military March N°1 • Unfinished symphony-first movement
Johann Strauss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Danube • Radetzky March
Igor Stravinsky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian Dance • Tarantella
Piort Tchaikovsky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nutcracker • The sleeping beauty
Giuseppe Verdi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigoletto-La Donna e Mobile • La Traviata-Libiamo ne'lieti
Antonio Vivaldi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four seasons-spring

Source: developed by the author, based on music pieces suggested by Habermeyer (pp. 205-216), and Berlioz (pp.38-50)

RESULTS

The following is the analysis of the results obtained from the answers students provided in the questionnaires applied to them at two different stages of the process: the first one before the research started, and the second one after they were exposed to perform reading activities with the use of classical

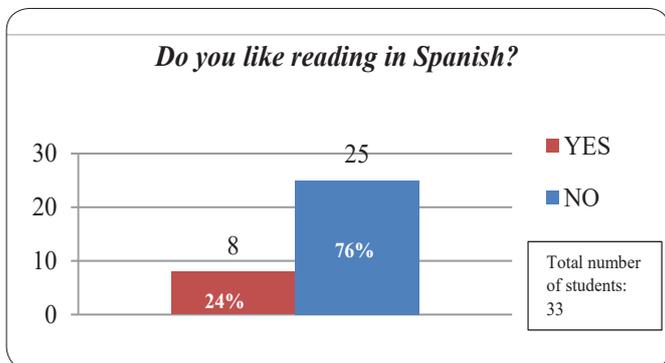
music as background. Due to the fact that statistics in Ecuador (INEC, 2012) demonstrated that 26,5 % of Ecuadorians do not dedicate time to reading, the first group of questions asked about student's likes regarding the skill of reading, their feelings while reading in English.

Data obtained from the questionnaires handed in to the total of thirty-three (33) students before using classical music in the EFL reading class.

QUESTION 1:

Do you like reading in your native language (Spanish)?

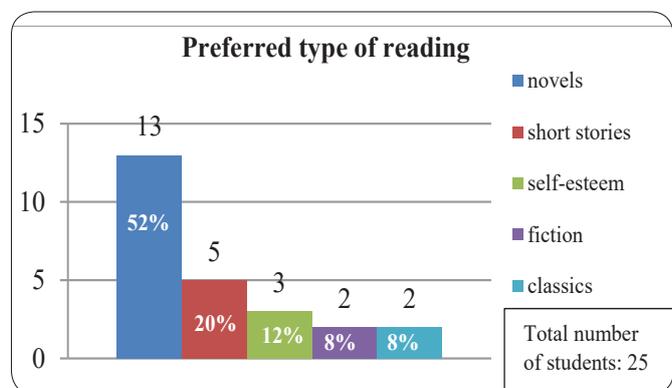
Figure 3: Question 1 - Stage 1



Source: developed by the author, based on Question 1-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

When the answer was affirmative, the following question was required to be answered: What kind of texts do you prefer to read in in your native language (Spanish)?

Figure 4. Question 1 - Stage 1

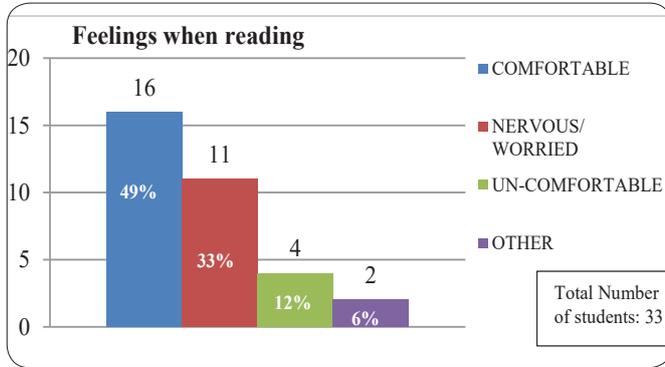


Source: developed by the author, based on Question 1-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 2:

How do you feel when reading texts in the foreign language you are studying (English)?

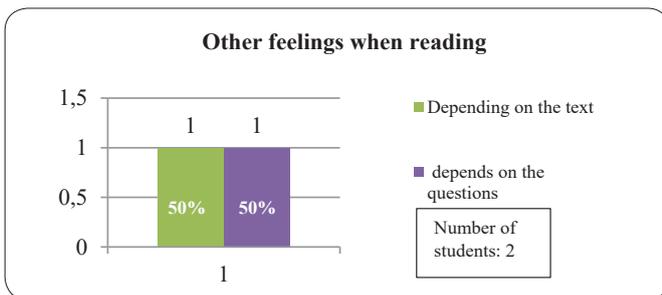
Figure 5: Question 2 – Stage 1



Source: developed by the author based on Question 2-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

The following is the representation of the answers when students marked Other as a response to question 2:

Figure 6: Question 2 - Stage 1

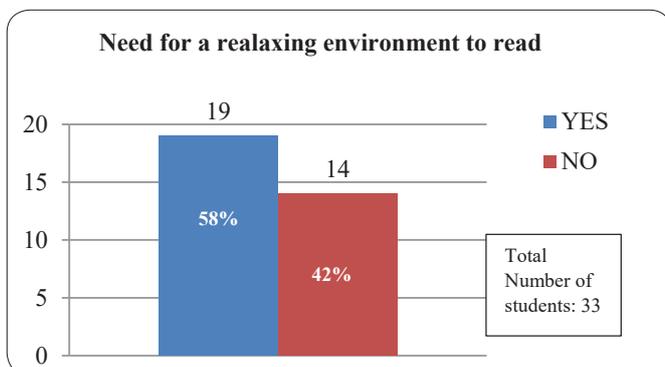


Source: developed by the author based on Question 2-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 3:

Do you need to feel in a relaxed environment in order to read in the foreign language?

Figure 7: Question 3 – Stage 1

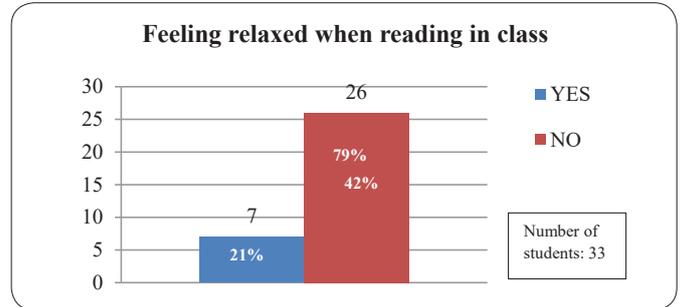


Source: developed by the author based on Question 3-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 4:

When you read texts in your English class, do you feel relaxed?

Figure 8: Question 4 - Stage



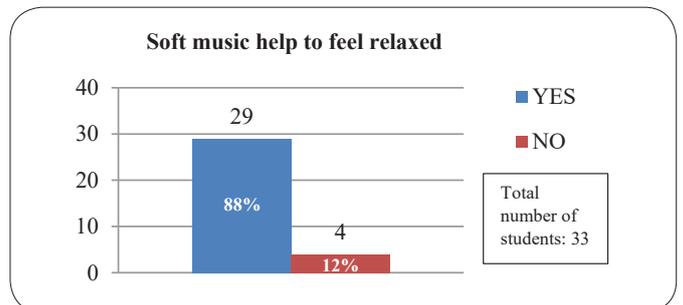
Source: developed by the author based on Question 4-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

This second group of questions asked about student's perception regarding the use of music to feel relaxed, concentration, comprehension, retention of texts in the EFL class.

QUESTION 5:

Do you think soft music in the language class may help you feel relaxed?

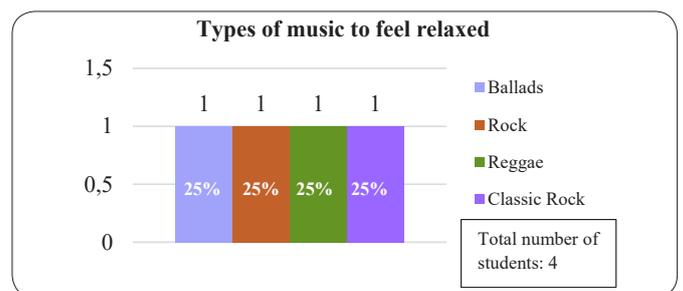
Figure 9: Question 5 - Stage 1



Source: developed by the author based on Question 5-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

When the answer on the previous question was NO, students were required to answer the next question: What kind of music helps you feel relaxed in a language classroom?

Figure 10: Question 5 – Stag 1

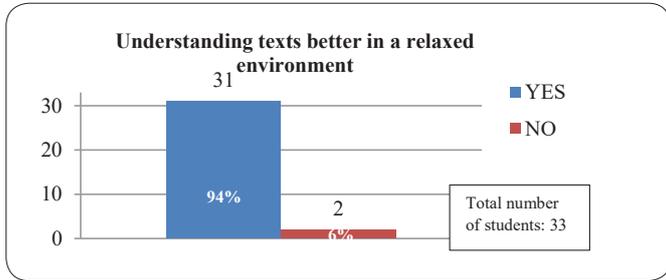


Source: developed by the author based on Question 5-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 6:

Do you understand better texts in the foreign language (English) when you are in a nice and relaxing environment?

Figure 11: Question 6 - Stage 1

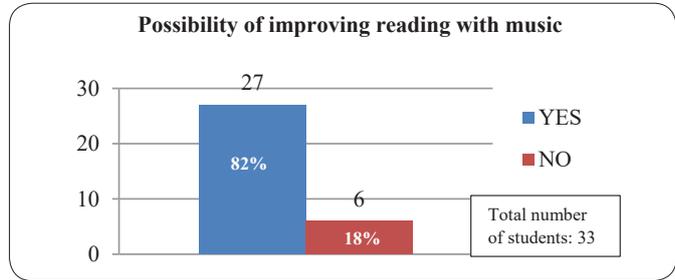


Source: developed by the author, based on Question 6-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 7:

Do you think it is possible to improve your reading skills in the foreign language (English) if you listen to background music?

Figure 12: Question 7 - Stage 1



Source: developed by the author, based on Question 7-Stage 1 from the questionnaire applied to students

Once having analysed the results from the questionnaire before the process of using classical music in class, it is time to analyse the results of the scores students achieved in the reading exercises applied to the them during this first stage, without using classical music as background.

Figure 13. Scores obtained in the 10 reading exercises applied without the use of classical music- Stage 1

STUDENT N°	Reading Exercise N°									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	SCORE / 10									
1	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	6	7	6
2	6	6,5	6	7	7	6	7	6	6	7
3	7	6	6	7	6,5	6	6,5	7	6	6,5
4	6	7	6	6,5	6	6	6	7	6	6
5	7	6	7	7	6	7,5	6	6	7	6
6	7	7	6	6,5	7	6	6	7	6	7
7	6,5	7	7	7,5	6	7	6,5	7	7	6
8	7,5	6,5	7	7	6	7	6	6,5	7	7
9	6	7,5	6,5	7	7	6,5	7	7,5	6,5	7
10	6,5	6	7,5	6	6	7,5	7	6	7,5	6,5
11	7	6,5	6	6	7	6	6,5	6,5	6	7,5
12	7	7	6,5	6,5	7	6,5	7,5	7	6,5	6
13	7	7	7	7	6,5	7	6	7	7	6,5
14	6,5	7	7	7	7,5	7	6,5	7	7	7
15	7	6,5	7	6,5	6	7	7	6,5	7	7
16	6,5	7	6,5	6	6,5	6,5	7	7	6,5	7
17	7,5	6,5	7	7	7	7	7	6,5	7	6,5
18	7	7,5	6,5	6	7	6,5	6,5	7,5	6,5	7
19	7	7	7,5	7	7	7,5	7	7	7,5	6,5
20	6	7	7	7	6,5	7	6,5	7	7	7,5
21	6	6	7	7	7	7	7,5	6	7	7
22	6,5	6,5	6	6,5	6,5	6	7	6	6	7
23	7	6,5	6	7	7,5	6	7	6,5	6	6
24	7	7	6,5	6,5	7	6,5	6	7	6,5	6
25	6,5	7	7	7,5	7	7	6	7	7	6,5
26	6	6,5	7	7	6	7	6,5	6,5	7	7
27	7	6	6,5	7	6	6,5	7	6	6,5	7
28	6	7	6	6	6,5	6	7	7	6	6,5
29	6,5	6	7	6	7	7	6,5	6	7	6
30	7	6,5	6	6,5	7	6	6	6,5	6	7
31	6	7	6,5	7	6,5	6,5	7	7	6,5	6
32	6,5	6	7	7	6	7	6	6	7	6,5
33	7	6,5	6	6,5	7	6	6,5	6,5	6	7
Average per exercise	6,6	6,6	6,6	6,7	6,6	6,6	6,6	6,6	6,6	6,6

TOTAL CLASS AVERAGE
(in the 10 reading exercises applied without the use of classical music)

6,6 / 10

Source: developed by the author, based on the Scores the 33 students obtained in the 10 reading exercises applied before using classical music as background

The graphic above clearly demonstrates that, in the first group of ten reading exercises applied to students without using classical music in their EFL classroom, the scores achieved by students are below seven point five points over ten (7,5/10), even though the reading exercises were appropriate for their level of English, as the activities were taken from the textbook and workbook they used for their classes, Passages 2.

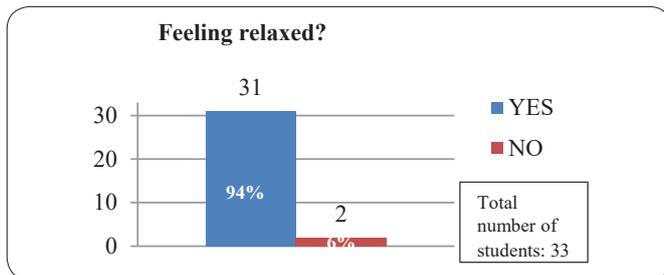
On the other hand, the following are the results obtained from the answers to the questionnaire given to students after they were exposed to the use of classical music as background while performing reading exercises.

Data obtained from the questionnaires handed in to the total of thirty-three (33) students after being exposed to using classical music in the EFL reading class.

QUESTION 1:

Did the use of soft, low music in your English class help you feel in a relaxed environment?

Figure 14: Question 1 - Stage 2

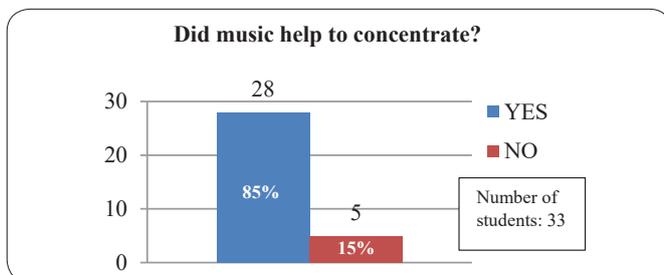


Source: developed by the author based on Question 1-Stage 2 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 2:

Did the use of soft, low music in your English class while you read help you concentrate better?

Figure 15: Question 2 – Stage 2

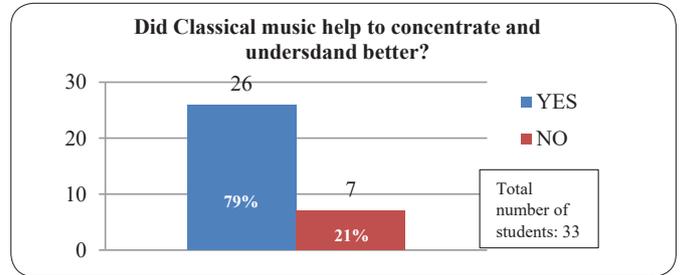


Source: developed by the author based on Question 2-Stage 2 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 3:

Did the use of background classical music while reading text in your English class help you concentrate more and understand the texts in the foreign language in a better way?

Figure 16: Question 3 – Stage 2

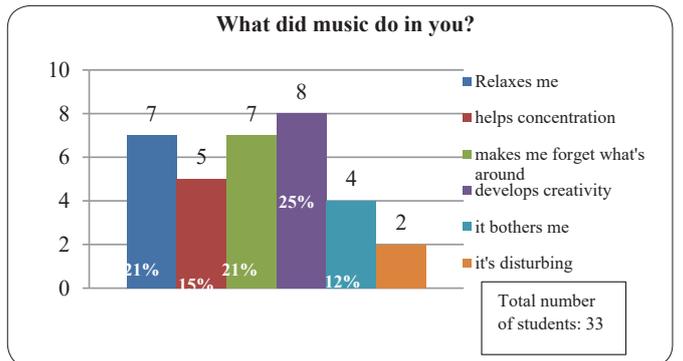


Source: developed by the author based on Question 3-Stage 2 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 4:

What do you think the use of classical music while reading in the foreign language did in you as a student?

Figure 17: Question 4 – Stage 2

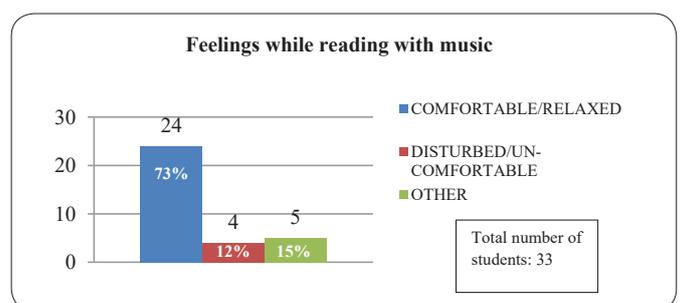


Source: developed by the author based on Question 4-Stage 2 from the questionnaire applied to students

QUESTION 5:

How did you feel when reading texts in English while listening to classical background music?

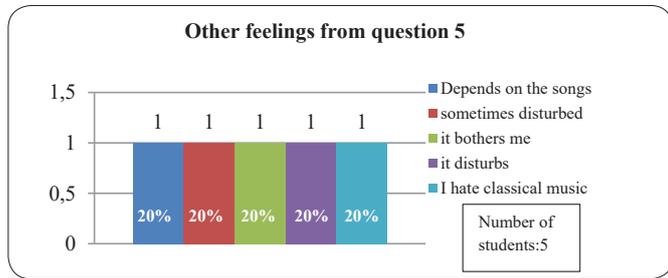
Figure 18: Question 5– Stage 2



Source: developed by the author based on Question 5-Stage 2 from the questionnaire applied to students

When the answer of the students in the previous question was Other, these were the responses they provided:

Figure 19: Other feelings from question 5 – Stage 2



Source: made by the author, based on Question 5-Stage 2 from the questionnaire applied to students

It can be visualized in the previous graphics, that students' answers reflect a positive attitude towards the use of classical music in their language classroom when performing reading activities. Students expressed that they indeed experienced a difference when they were exposed to reading with music rather than when they did it without music; they showed improvement in concentration, therefore, comprehension of the texts.

Once the results from the questions asked to the students after being exposed to the use of classical music in their EFL class when performing reading activities, it is time to analyse the scores obtained on the reading exercises applied to the students during this stage, in order to compare them with the scores from the first stage.

Figure 20. Scores obtained in the 10 reading exercises applied with the use of classical music- Stage 2

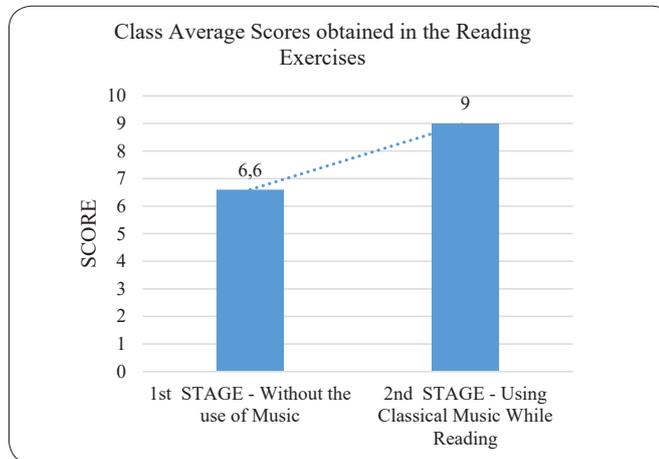
STUDENT N°	Reading Exercise N°										TOTAL CLASS AVERAGE (in the 10 reading exercises applied without the use of classical music) 9,0 / 10
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
	SCORE / 10										
1	8	8,5	9	10	8,5	8,5	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	
2	8,5	9	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	
3	8	8,5	8,5	9	8,5	9	8,5	9	8,5	9	
4	7,5	9	9	9	9,5	8,5	8	8,5	9	9	
5	9	10	8,5	8,5	9	10	8,5	9	10	8,5	
6	10	8,5	9	9	10	8,5	9	10	8,5	9	
7	8,5	7,5	10	8,5	8,5	7,5	10	8,5	8,5	8,5	
8	9	9	8,5	9	8,5	9	8,5	8,5	9	9	
9	8,5	8,5	9	10	9	8,5	7,5	9	8,5	10	
10	9	9,5	9	8,5	8,5	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	8,5	
11	10	9	8,5	8	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	9	8,5	
12	9	9	9,5	9	9,5	9	9,5	9	9	9	
13	7,5	8,5	9	8,5	9	8,5	9	9	8,5	8,5	
14	9	8	9	9,5	8,5	8	9	8,5	9	9,5	
15	8,5	9,5	8,5	9	8	9,5	8,5	8	9,5	9	
16	9,5	10	8	9	9,5	10	8	9,5	10	9	
17	9	8,5	9,5	8,5	10	8,5	9,5	10	8,5	8,5	
18	9	9	10	8	8,5	9	10	8,5	9	8	
19	8,5	10	8,5	9,5	9	10	8,5	9	10	9,5	
20	8	9,5	9	10	10	9,5	9	10	9,5	10	
21	9,5	9,5	10	8,5	9,5	9,5	10	9,5	9,5	8,5	
22	10	9	9,5	9	9,5	9	9,5	9,5	9	9	
23	8,5	9,5	9,5	10	9	9,5	9,5	9	9,5	10	
24	9	9	9	9,5	9,5	9	9	9,5	9	9,5	
25	10	8	9,5	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	9	8	9,5	
26	9,5	9	9	9	8	9	9	8	9	9	
27	9,5	8,5	8	9,5	9	8,5	8	9	9	9,5	
28	9	9,5	9,5	9	8	9,5	9	8,5	9,5	9	
29	9,5	9	8,5	8	8,5	9,5	9	8,5	8,5	8	
30	9	10	9	9,5	9,5	9	8	9,5	9	9	
31	8	8,5	9,5	9,5	9,5	9	8,5	8	9,5	8,5	
32	9	9	9,5	9	8	9,5	9	9,5	10	9,5	
33	8,5	8,5	9	9,5	9	9,5	9,5	9	9	10	
Average per exercise	8,9	9,0	9,1	9,1	9,0	9,0	8,9	9,0	9,1	9,1	

Source: made by the author, based on the Scores the 33 students obtained in the 10 reading exercises applied after using classical music as background

Clearly, in this second group of ten (10) reading exercises applied to students using classical music, as the above graphic demonstrates, students improved their grades significantly from the previous stage, reaching grades from seven point five points over ten (7,5/10) to ten points over ten (10/10) in spite of the

fact that their readings were at the same level. In the latter stage, students were exposed to using classical music while reading in their EFL classroom, achieving higher scores in their reading activities in class, as expressed below.

Figure 21: Comparative Scores



Source: made by the author, based on the class average scores obtained in the two stages of the project: without the use of music, and using classical music while reading

DISCUSSION

As stated above, in the last decades there has been a tendency in researching about what effects music has in the brain, either referring to the effects music has in children from early stages, or to the influence music has in education. There are studies related to music having a close relationship to the mind, to the soul, and others to learning, supporting the use of music, for learning and for reading. In the latter aspect, Habermeyer (1999, p.60) states that parents, and how they raise their children, influence on how they are going to grow up from early stages; therefore, their children are able to feel their parents' presence from their mother's uterus, which has a positive influence in the babies' future.

Regarding the use of music as a tool in the classroom and for reading Berlioz (2002, p.12) mentions that "sounds, apart from their capacity to transmit aesthetic values and the possibility to increase our motor capacity, can improve our health, control stress, and is able to stimulate intelligence, as it arouses the comprehension of abstract things." This statement is closely related to the skill of reading, due to it refers to something abstract that is process in the mind; therefore, music and sounds contribute to stimulating comprehension of texts while students are reading, which was a matter of analysis in this study. This

theory is supported with the studies performed on Mozart's music, explained above, which guided this research throughout its process.

Furthermore, regarding the use of classical music, the suggestion made by Habermeyer (1999, p.205) to parents and teachers is that, when choosing classical music to play, they should choose pieces that are played by orchestras instead of instruments' solos, pieces that are agile, entertaining, and lively; and when presenting symphonies, the best idea is to play the fastest movements first. This method of exposure will attract learning through music, which this project aimed, consequently, the pieces of classical music were carefully selected to be played in the classroom for the purpose of this study.

Finally, the results of this action research project have clearly demonstrated that, when choosing the appropriate pieces of classical music to expose students to reading exercises in the EFL classroom with it use, there was a significant improvement in their scores, compared to the scores obtained in the stage where students experienced non-exposure to classical music when reading.

CONCLUSIONS

The action research project, which intended to discover to what extent the use of classical music in the EFL classroom encourages university students to improve reading comprehension in their language classroom, based its purpose on the need of university students for developing reading skills, as Ecuadorians have insufficiently developed reading habits from early stages. Once the study and its results were analysed, they contributed to reaching the following conclusions:

- When exposed to the use of classical music while performing reading activities in the EFL classroom, students achieved higher results in this second stage; consequently, it supported students to acquire higher standards of comprehension when reading the foreign language. The scores obtained in the exercises applied to students in the second stage, after using classical music, support this statement, where they achieved scores from eight (8,0) to ten (10) in the reading exercises, with a class average of nine points over ten (9/10); compared with the first stage, where students obtained lower scores, from six (6,0) to seven fifty (7,5), and a class average of six point six points over ten (6,6/10).
- Students who were subject of this study realized there was a significant difference between reading with classical music and without background music, and expressed their preference towards the stage when they were exposed to the use of classical music while performing reading activities in the EFL classroom. This is supported with the answers of the questionnaire in the second stage, where

students' answers to questions 1, 2, 3 obtained 94%, 85% and 79% in the affirmative answers.

- Additionally, results from this research confirmed that students felt comfortable, or relaxed, in their classroom environment, when exposed to the use of classical music while performing reading activities in the EFL classroom, due to answers for question 5 from the questionnaire showed percentages of 73% towards feeling comfortable or relaxed.
- Finally, students stated that reading with classical music contributed to improve their concentration, therefore obtain higher scores on their reading tasks in the classroom, which is possible to visualize in the answers of questions 3 and 4 from the second stage questionnaire, where 79% of them stated music encouraged them concentrate and understand better; as well as in question 5 where 21% stated that music relaxed them, 15% answered it contributed to concentration, 21% said it made them forget what is around, and 24% stated that it facilitated to develop creativity; and supported once again, with the scores obtained in the second group of reading exercises (11-20), reaching a class average of nine points over ten (9/10).

These conclusions, therefore contributed to recommend that further research should be performed in the specific field of EFL teaching, and its relationship with fostering reading with the use of classical music.

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GRAMMAR VIDEO LESSONS TO FOSTER INDEPENDENT LEARNERS IN THE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

LECCIONES CON VIDEOS DE GRAMÁTICA PARA PROMOVER APRENDIZAJE INDEPENDIENTE EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Martha Lara-Freire; Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo; Riobamba-Ecuador
mlaraf@epoch.edu.ec

Gloria Escudero-Orozco; Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo; Riobamba-Ecuador
iescudero@unach.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the impact in the implementation of the flipped classroom to improve the low development of cognitive skills in the students and to promote the autonomous learning in 30 English as a Foreign Language students of Level Four in the English Center at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo through grammar video lessons. The proposal consisted of eight grammar video lessons based on the syllabus designed for this level. These videos became both, a valuable tool to foster independent learning and a strategy to flip the traditional classroom, which allowed additional time to work on practical activities in the classroom, considering that the theory was taken outside the classroom. The instruments applied in this research were initial survey, satisfaction survey, pre-test, and post-test. The initial survey and the pre-test determined the necessity students had to consolidate their knowledge regarding grammar and apply those contents into a real life context. The post-test results revealed that there was a meaningful improvement in the level of grammar knowledge, which was demonstrated in the results analysis and interpretation. Once the study ended, the students concluded that the grammar video lessons were effective and useful to achieve independence in learning the English grammar rules. Students who were part of the intervention reached a level of autonomous learning which influenced markedly in the students grades as showed in the interpretation and analysis of the results. Additionally, students felt motivated because they had less "homework." Thus, it was concluded that the grammar video lessons foster independent learning.

Key words:

independent learning, grammar video lessons, flipped classroom.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo de investigación analiza el impacto de la implementación de la clase invertida en el aula de Inglés para mejorar el bajo desarrollo de las habilidades cognitivas de los estudiantes y promover el aprendizaje autónomo en 30 estudiantes de inglés como Idioma Extranjero, perteneciente al Cuarto Nivel del Centro de Idiomas de la Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo aplicando videos de gramática. La propuesta consistió en ocho lecciones de gramática, basadas en el sílabo establecido para éste nivel, estos videos consistieron una valiosa herramienta para fomentar el aprendizaje autónomo y una estrategia para cambiar el aula tradicional, dedicando más tiempo de la clase a la ejecución de actividades prácticas, puesto que la teoría gramatical se trasladó fuera del aula. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron: encuesta inicial, encuesta de satisfacción, pre-test y post-test. La encuesta inicial y el pre-test mostraron la necesidad de los estudiantes por consolidar sus conocimientos de gramática y tener la habilidad de aplicarlos en situaciones de la vida real. Los resultados del post-test revelaron una mejora significativa en el nivel de conocimientos gramaticales lo que se comprobó en el análisis e interpretación de resultados. Al finalizar la investigación los estudiantes concluyeron que las lecciones de gramática en video fueron efectivas y útiles para lograr independencia en el aprendizaje de reglas gramaticales del idioma Inglés. Adicionalmente los estudiantes se sintieron motivados puesto que los "deberes" disminuyeron. Se concluye por tanto que el uso de lecciones gramaticales en video promueve el aprendizaje autónomo.

Palabras clave:

aprendizaje autónomo, lecciones de gramática en video, clase invertida.

INTRODUCTION

Nizar (2015) states that students appreciate being given educational capsules in a similar way to eat fast food. Based on this statement, this paper analyzes the facts that made the researchers propose this investigation on video grammar lessons to foster independent learners. Additionally, it describes the theories that scientifically support the proposal and discusses the results from an objective and real point of view comparing them with results of other studies which apply the same variables. Furthermore, this presentation creates awareness about the need students have to become independent learners (Zhen, 2014), as well as the urgency of teachers' commitment to push students toward that independence (Hammond, 2015). Finally, the research question seeks to know whether the implementation of the flipped classroom model through grammar video lessons as homework train independent learners.

This study acquired a high level of importance due to the problems to be solved and the results that can be generalized and used by other professors in any other educational background. During the research the fact that students' poor development of cognitive independent skills affected their learning was identified. Furthermore, the major problems at the beginning of the semester were that students lacked engagement with the learning-teaching process and it was difficult for them to acquire the ability to create their own knowledge and critical thinking. Additionally, a considerable amount of students under intervention showed insufficient autonomous learning and they had difficulties to identify the role of the teacher as a facilitator of the knowledge (Ellis, 2004). According to the researchers and other faculty's point of view, even teachers struggle with their responsibility in giving students the necessary tools to become active participants in the learning process (Murphy, 2016). The fact that classroom climate affects the student's ability to learn independently was additionally considered (Alpha Omega Academy, 2012). Therefore, proving the hypothesis, which facilitated upright a solution to this problem, implied to seek deeper on student's perceptions of how knowledge is acquired, the roles they were willing to take in order to satisfy their needs and what results of the intervention they are able to apply along their learning process.

Additionally, it was observed that the majority of students were visual learners, this fact is supported by a research developed by the group of StudyMode in which they proved that approximately 65% of the population are visual learners (Kydiam, 2018). Besides, it is important to mention that, nowadays, young people prefer technology to printed material, as shown in the study by Solano, Cabrera, Ulehlova, Espinoza (2017) in which 89% of

the participants agreed that technology is effective to improve English language knowledge. Therefore, the general objective of this study was to create video lessons of the grammar contents studied in English Level 4 at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo as instruments for fostering independent learning. The specific objectives were to use the video grammar lessons to diminish the in-class theory time making a way to take that acquired knowledge into practice and to give students the opportunity to learn grammar in a non-traditional way by combining virtual education with face-to-face activities while motivating self-study. The achievement of these objectives helped to reach a better comprehension of the generalizations discussed in this article.

The first variable is the so-called independent variable, which deals with video grammar lessons with focus on the flipped classroom model and the second variable, known as dependent variable has to do with independence, specifically to develop the necessary cognitive skills required for independent learning. The first variable was additionally used in the study by Ílin (2013), An Action Research: Using Videos for Teaching Grammar in an ESP Class presented by in which it is shown that 80% of students nowadays prefer learning grammar using videos.

Flipped classroom was developed in 2007, the founders are Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams, both science teachers. They were not taking full advantage of the face-to-face time with their students and realized that when they sent homework they were not physically there to guide their students; all those situations contributed to the Flipped Classroom model creation. The concept of flipped class is this: which was traditionally done in class is now done at home, and which was traditionally done as homework is now completed in class (Sams & Bergmann, 2012: 145).

Furthermore, the founders of this model started to record the theory or lecture on videos and podcasts for their students to have the opportunity to watch them as many times as they needed, at their own pace, and in the comfort of their homes. Moreover, several studies dealing with the same variables refer to technology as the main tool to work with the flipping approach (Han, 2015; Chen Hsieh, 2016). The latter one showed results that students outperformed the pre-test with a mean of 93 compared to 73.

On one hand, grammar video lessons, which are recorded materials carried out by the class tutor with content based on the syllabus and on student's needs, have to be designed with specific features such as an adequate length. It is essential to

have the singularity to catch student's attention, in order to get them involved in the teaching-learning process. Due to this fact, the teacher became easily reachable. Students were able to turn on, mute, rewind or repeat the class at will (Young, 2017). Seeing a video of the content class is to have the same impact as the one of teaching one to one; something that it is challenging to achieve in a public school setting.

On the other hand, authors refer to independent learners as a student with the ability to take charge of one's learning (Carl, 2016) and it is necessary to comprehend that circumstances and learning style play a crucial role, as age and maturity do (Alpha Omega Academy, 2012). When a student becomes an independent learner, he or she exhibits features such as curiosity, persistence, autonomous comprehension, critical thinking, accountability, self-examination, and self-motivation and are capable to choose their own study strategies. This is remarkable because it's difficult for teachers to design tasks specifically directed to one or other student. The tasks done at home have to match the level of proficiency with focus on production (Harvey & Ckie-Wolfe, 2007). Lastly, providing effective feedback contributes positively to this independence.

Additionally, it is necessary to highlight some results from other researchers. For instance, Han (2015) points out that autonomy was gained once the teacher created more opportunities for meaning-focused output and this was clearly identified when students submitted more work than the teacher expected. Furthermore, when the tutor planned for them to look for resources that possibly facilitate them learn independently they enthusiastically look for learning activities that worked for them and that were valid to share with others. The second

study developed by Hsieh, Wu, & Marek (2016) remarks that doing autonomous activities, student's motivation and active participation notably increased and additionally, their knowledge of the content managed in class significantly improved. Finally, the study by Sung (2015) suggests that it is necessary to make students realize that they are able to learn by themselves, becoming active participants in the class.

The context in which the research was applied, the findings on students' survey and tests made of this study a tool which takes EFL students and teachers to the next level, switching from traditional to flipped classroom. These showed that students who participated in the intervention evidenced a significant improvement in their grammar knowledge as detailed in the pre-test and post-test results.

According to Boulhuis and Voeten (2001), cited by Meyer, promoting independent learning requires a new role for teachers, a flip from traditional transmission of information to a process-oriented teaching, which ensures that students are actively involved in the learning process (Meyer, 2010). It is crucial to mention that the striking angle about this study is to identify how everything fits, equally considering the teacher's and the students' role changes. The dependent learner is a passive recipient of knowledge, who accepts the teacher as the expert in the learning process; whereas the independent learner is active in directing and regulating his or her own learning and becomes the expert. Furthermore, the ability to blend processed information and processing information without teacher intervention sets the independent apart from the dependent learner (Meyer, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The background of this proposal draws on EFL students enrolled in Level Fourth at a public undergraduate school. The equivalence of this level is A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students come 4 hours weekly to class and taking the English program is a mandatory requirement for them to graduate. Before graduating, students are supposed to reach B1 level. The sample was thirty students; in this group, 50% of students were male and 50% female. They had different cultural backgrounds and different levels of knowledge. A considerable amount of students had issues in studying English continuously and for the majority of them the proposed method was unfamiliar; however, they agreed on the importance of using technology in the classroom and the necessity of becoming independent, active learners. Due to these facts, the following research question was formulated: to

what extend does the use of grammar video lessons recorded by the researcher foster independent learning? It is necessary to emphasize that the course content was designed with a grammar-based syllabus (Nunan, 2002) and the tutor had to create her own material and implement her own methodology.

Furthermore, a previous-research stage was planned to identify the problem. Once this problem was identified, a problem-tree was structured in order to establish the cause and effect, as well as the possible solution for it (Barreto, 2018). Moreover, it is essential to remark that the research design was quasi-experimental because the study was empirical and aimed to analyze the impact of the intervention on the target group. The experimental and control were chosen and the research was developed in natural educational scenarios.

In order to prevent bias, the control group, which was not exposed to the intervention, belonged to a different teacher, not the researcher; whereas, the experimental group was intervened by the researcher. The experimental and control groups had 30 students from different cultural and educational background. For that reason, an initial survey and a pre-test were applied at the beginning of the intervention. It was clear that students had not developed the necessary cognitive skills required for independent learning; therefore, the researcher chose the flipped classroom as the method to solve this problem.

This idea is definitely innovative, challenging, and motivating, and therefore the researcher reordered eight grammar video lessons for the English Fourth Students. The videos were based on the grammar contents planned in the syllabus: Wishes in Present, Past and Future; Zero Conditional, First Conditional, Second Conditional, Third Conditional and Adjective clauses. The series were divided into two categories: lecture and exercises; the purpose was for students to understand the grammar rules first by watching the grammar video lessons created by the teacher and practice what they learnt in class with the teacher's guide afterwards.

RESULTS

The initial survey determined that students were aware that watching video lessons help them to learn English since 91% of the surveyed answered yes. Therefore, it was essential that students had the videos available all the time; for that reason, first, the researcher opened an account on YouTube to upload the videos and the videos were also included in the Virtual Classroom students had for the English class.

Regarding the evaluation and monitoring, the teacher used the WSQ chart, which students had to fill in and discuss it with the teacher and the class the next day. In this chart, students had to write information about what they Watch and include the name of the video. Afterwards, students needed to Summarize the new content they learned and finally, they wrote Questions they still had about the topic. Once the teacher read the questions, 10 minutes from the class were taken for effective feedback. In this time, the teacher reinforced the information or knowledge students already had and then started with the practice.

As the flipped class model was implemented, the main focus was on practice: the researcher created worksheets to work with the students in class. The emphasis was on letting students take an active part in their learning and notice the necessity to learn by themselves. Furthermore, the researcher used the YouTube Teacher Channel and a Virtual Learning Environment to have the videos available for students to watch at their own pace. In addition, for recording the videos, the researcher had the support of students and teachers of the Graphic Design School, who allowed her to record in their studio; making an enormous contribution to the video quality.

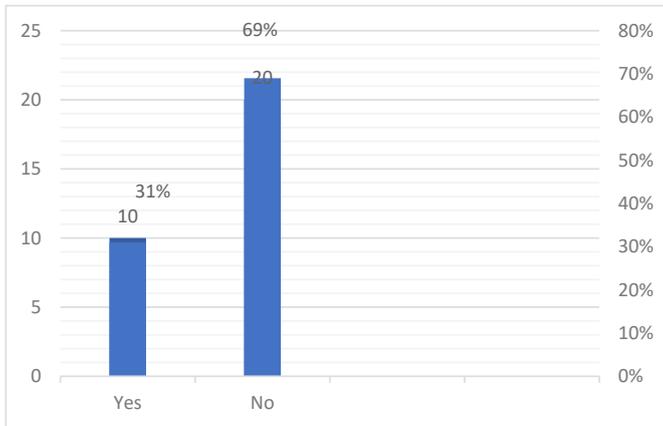
Additionally, the videos were recorded on a CD, in order to let students to use them without Internet access. It is crucial to mention that 90% of the sample had Internet access i.e. except for one student in the experimental group who had to work offline.

Concerning the statistics, the T-test also known as Student's T-Test was applied because it compares two averages and establishes the difference from each other; besides, it verifies the significance of the differences to make sure that they are accurate (Stephanie, 2018). This statistic was applied to tabulate and analyze the results of the pre-test and post-test, both were given online by using the Virtual Classroom created for this purpose. The test had 31 questions, which focused on the grammar contents assigned for Level Fourth: Wishes, Conditionals, and Adjective Clauses. The results evidence a noticeable difference between the control and the experimental group, since the control group students only went from 1,48 / 10 to 2,68 / 10, whereas the experimental group students' scores were 1,00 /10 to 7,00 /10. Besides the inferential statistic, the descriptive one was additionally considered to analyze the results from the initial and satisfaction surveys taken by the experimental and the control group students. In the satisfaction survey, the students verified the efficiency of the grammar video lessons' use to learn grammar for 26, 67% of the students they were good and for the 56,67% were excellent.

Moreover, at the first stage of the research the problem was identified by elaborating a problem tree, which showed three relevant findings: low level of intrinsic motivation to learn English, insufficient use of technology as part of the English classroom, and the necessity to look for new methods or strategies to teach grammar. In this stage, the researchers also took advantage of the data gathered through observation and the notes in the logbook.

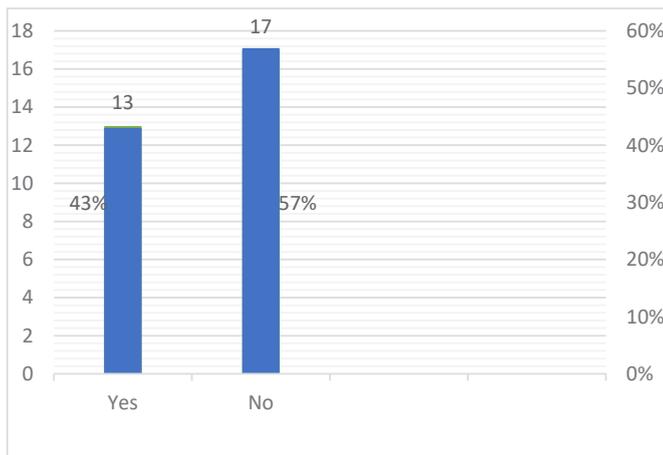
The next step was to apply the initial survey to have a clearer idea of the chosen groups (experimental and control) needs. Different interesting facts were found and they are detailed in the charts below:

Figure 1: Percentage of students who had heard about flipped classroom at ESPOCH level four.



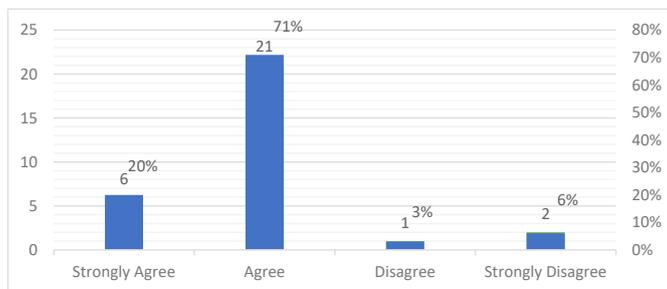
Source: Survey applied to students by the author.

Figure 2: Percentage of students whose teachers have used grammar video lessons at ESPOCH.



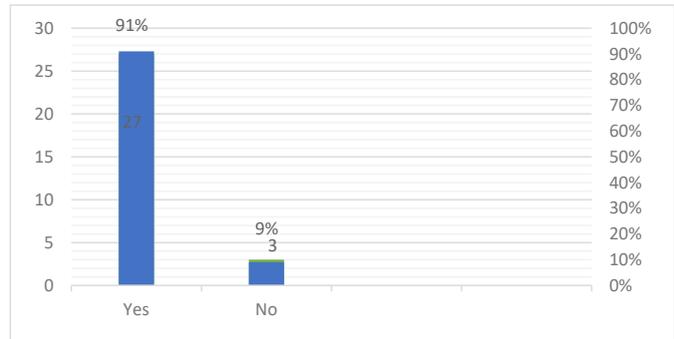
Source: Survey applied to students by the author.

Figure 3: Percentage of students who think video lessons could be helpful to learn grammar at ESPOCH.



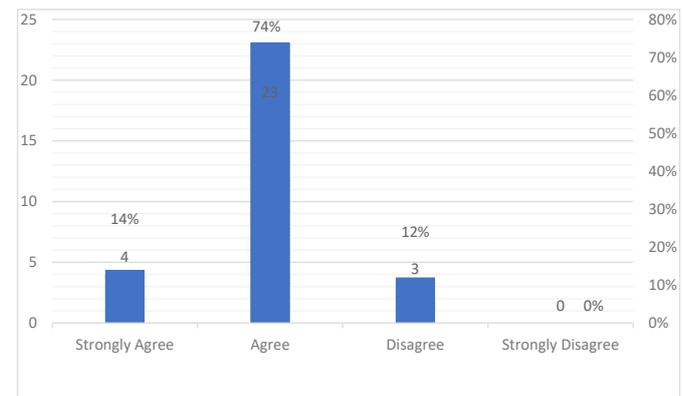
Source: Survey applied to students by the author.

Figure 4: Percentage of students who think that classes should be directed to production more than to content.



Source: Survey applied to students by the author.

Figure 5: Percentage of students who think that one of the teacher's goal should be to foster independent learners.



Source: Survey applied to students by the author.

In the initial survey, which students completed on-line (google drive), the most relevant findings were the following: 57% of students mentioned that they had not heard about flipped classroom, 69% of students stated that their teachers had not used video lessons to teach grammar, 91% of students considered that grammar video lessons could be helpful to learn grammar, 74% of students agreed that English classes are to focus on production rather than content, and 71% of students were aware of the importance to foster independence in the learning process.

After applying the post-test, the pre-test and post-test results, from experimental groups and control group were tabulated; these results are detailed in the following table.

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test applied to students to identify their grammar knowledge and progress.

N° students	Pre-Test				N° students	Post-Test			
	Control Group		Experimental Group			Control Group		Experimental Group	
30	Mean Value 1,48	Percentage 14,80%	Mean Value 1,00	Percentage 10,00%	30	Mean Value 2,68	Percentage 26,80%	Mean Value 7,00	Percentage 70,00%

Note: This table shows the average of grammar knowledge improvement.

Source: Results thesis "Flipped teaching implementation to improve students' high order thinking skills"

The average for the control group in the pre-test was 1.48; whereas, in the experimental group, it was 1, 00; these results suggested that the level of the experimental group was lower than the control one. In the post-test the control group average was 2.68 and the experimental group average was 7.00. These results showed that the experimental group students' knowledge

about grammar improved significantly.

Finally, the results of the satisfaction survey, which was applied at the end of the intervention, were analyzed. This instrument results are detailed below.

Table 2: Level of satisfaction of using videos to learn grammar

	1	2	3	4	5	DA	Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Does not apply	
Using video lessons to introduce new grammar content is an effective technique?	0	0	1	18	7	4	30
How useful were the video lessons to learn grammar?	0	0	3	11	12	4	30
How would you rate the content of the videos?	0	0	1	8	17	4	30
How would you rate the quality of the videos (audio, image)?	0	0	1	6	19	4	30
The video lessons were enough to understand and apply the grammar contents.	0	1	2	18	5	4	30
How useful was the WSQ chart for understanding the grammar content in the video lessons?	0	1	4	16	5	4	30
Based on your experience would you recommend the use of the grammar video lessons in the English classroom?	0	0	1	13	12	4	30
To what extend did the grammar video lessons contribute to the development of the activities in the class in an autonomous way?	0	0	3	17	6	4	30
Overall, how satisfied were you with the grammar video lessons?	0	0	4	14	8	4	30

Note: This table shows the students answers regarding the use of grammar video lessons.

Source: Satisfaction survey

The parameters considered for the survey were strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree or disagree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5): a number of students equivalent to 70% of students agreed that using video lessons to introduce grammar content was an effective technique, 46% of students strongly

agreed on the usefulness of video lessons to learn grammar, and 42% agreed as well. The majority of students considered that the content of the videos was excellent, and the same percentage agreed that the image and audio were also high quality, 88% of students stated that video lessons were enough to understand

and apply the grammar content, 81% considered that the WSQ chart was useful for understanding the grammar content in the video lessons. Students who recommended the use of grammar video lessons in the English classroom was 96%, and 88% of them recognized the high contribution of the video lessons in

the development of activities in the class in an autonomous way. Overall 85% of students felt satisfied with the grammar video lessons used as a tool to develop independent learning cognitive skills.

DISCUSSION

Teachers are always innovating by finding new methods and strategies to motivate students to learn English. However, learners are not conscious of the need to speak a foreign language. Numerous students take English classes as a requirement to graduate from the different undergraduate programs. In general, students consider English as one of the most difficult subjects to study. For that reason, it is predominant to give them reasons to learn and master this language. Students need to acknowledge the importance of English to study a master's degree, to be granted an international scholarship in the most recognized universities around the world, read and understand books, and the experience of interacting with English speakers through social networks.

Various statements about the technology in the 21st century have been made; however, it is possibly complicated to introduce it in the classroom; nevertheless, it is essential to remember that technology transforms the classroom experience from a classic teacher-centered into a student-centered experience with students taking a more active role in their learning. Some of the constraints teachers face when inserting technology in the classroom were limited time, limited experimentation, and inefficient training for teachers. Despite the attraction technological activities add to the lesson, planning the activities in the Virtual Classroom require extra time. The teacher has to administrate the classroom and choose the most effective activities to reach the main goal, which is motivating students to learn English. While technology keeps evolving, English teachers have limited possibilities to stay updated about managing new technologies and the technical support they are able receive at the work place. Since the main qualification of an English teacher is not mastering the use of new technologies in time, there are several possibilities to get effective training in the area of recording videos and managing Virtual Classrooms efficiently.

The first related study mentioned in the introduction of this paper showed how students had to record their activities as homework (Han, 2015). In contrast to this study which used grammar video lessons that students had to watch. They are similar in terms of measuring the effects of creating independence in learning, which, in fact, was proved once student exhibited a high level of independence by doing the task voluntarily and repeatedly

without any inhibition at the end of the interventions. The second comparison is made between the article Using the flipped classroom to enhance EFL learning and the present study, they concentrated on improving independence to increase knowledge, however the former one focused on motivation which in fact proved to be a key point to create students' autonomy.

Different ideas have been pointed out about the flipped classroom model, which in fact, and based on evidence, is successful. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to discuss some findings from studies related to traditional classroom models (Kaye, 2008), especially to those for which it is claimed the flipped classroom is not able applied. For instance, in the study Flipped in communication: A flipped classroom experience the author points out that students working with flipped classrooms do not create opportunities to engage in real communication, which sometimes is not accurate (Olsen, 2018). In fact, this study contradicts this view because the flipped classroom has to do with blended learning and since this study concentrated on watching the theoretical part at home, the real communication indeed happened in class. In addition, the environment flowed smoothly creating natural interaction with other learners.

Furthermore, Tarhini (2014), stated that another disadvantage of the flipped classroom model possibly includes little or no in-person contact with the faculty member. Conversely, during the project intervention, the teacher was able to answer questions about what they had problems to understand, discuss in class the student's doubts, points of view and feedback from students' WSQ chart. This process facilitated the teacher to have more control over the aims, the pace and the materials. Another benefit of traditional classroom over the flipped classroom method is that it provides students with a fixed schedule and specific periods dedicated exclusively to learning (Paduraru, 2008) which is probably certain, since with flipped classrooms procrastination can become a common attitude while traditional classrooms preserve a feeling of real time (Paduraru, 2008). Finally, learning about technology is conceivably a drawback for flipped classrooms teachers who are less technologically literate and this class approach probably becomes time consuming, adding more workload to teachers. However, since teachers do not have to worry about other problems such as mixed-abilities

classrooms, late arrivals and misbehavior as happens in on-site classrooms, the use of their time in managing the technology is likely compensated. Finally, every approach presents pros and

cons, then it is necessary for teachers to analyze the population's features and evaluate which approach will suit the intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

After developing the study and analyzing the research question, the conclusions are the following: there was a need to change the way the English classes were being developed to emphasize autonomous learning with activities outside the classroom. These activities did not necessarily have to be homework. Various students agreed with this proposal and it was proven that the use of grammar video lessons recorded by the researcher fostered independent learning.

Taking the in-class theory out of the classroom by blending the English learning brought effective and productive results in the students' performance. Therefore, the usage of grammar video

lessons and the flipped classroom model proved to be effective to promote autonomy in learners, according to what it was shown in the post-test results where the experimental group outperformed the control group. Additionally, according to the satisfaction survey, a considerable number of students strongly agreed that the benefits of watching a video and using the WSQ chart is the practice they get, which is more effective than the practice achieved while they are in class. They explained that this procedure is quite different from what it is done in the traditional classroom where they listen to the teacher and rarely have the chance to practice what they learn in a real environment.

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PLANNING LESSONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING: A WAY TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

PLANIFICAR LECCIONES PARA EL DESARROLLO DEL PENSAMIENTO CRÍTICO UNA MANERA DE MEJORAR LOS RESULTADOS DE APRENDIZAJE EN EL AULA DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Wilma Guadalupe Villacís Villacís; wilmagvillacisv@uta.edu.ec
Cynthia Soledad Hidalgo Camacho; cs.hidalgo@uta.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

Encouraging critical thinking (CT) in the EFL classroom is something that every professional in the educational field should be responsible for. The aim of this paper was to make an analysis of different studies on the topic. The methodology used was based on a descriptive study through the analysis of several primary sources such as research papers on the topic that have been published in scientific journals, books, records of organizations, among others. These sources lead to the identification of important elements in a lesson plan for critical thinking: elements of thought, intellectual standards and intellectual traits. Writing good learning objectives is just as important as selecting effective activities and determining ideal assessments to facilitate that teachers and students perceive what is to be achieved in the class and how. Aligning the tenets of critical thinking when planning a lesson promotes real learning in our students through the achievement of effective learning outcomes. In conclusion, critical thinking skills need to be developed in daily basis rather than as a part of isolated lessons that uncommonly take place.

Keywords:

Critical thinking, Bloom's Taxonomy, Intellectual Traits, CT strategies, Assessment

RESUMEN

El estimular el pensamiento crítico (CT) en el aula de enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, es responsabilidad de todo educador. El objetivo de este documento académico es realizar un análisis de diferentes estudios del tópico. La metodología usada se ha basado en un estudio descriptivo de análisis de algunas fuentes de información primarias como: investigaciones acerca del tópico que han sido publicadas en revistas científicas, libros, registros de organizaciones, entre otros. Estas fuentes guían a la identificación de elementos importantes para un plan de clase con enfoque al pensamiento crítico: elementos del pensamiento, estándares intelectuales y rasgos intelectuales. El escribir buenos objetivos de aprendizaje, es tan importante como es el escoger actividades efectivas y determinar la evaluación ideal para que educadores y estudiantes puedan percibir qué será alcanzado en la clase y cómo. Al alinear los principios de pensamiento crítico, estaremos incentivando en nuestros estudiantes aprendizaje real a través de la consecución efectiva de logros de aprendizaje. En conclusión, las destrezas de pensamiento crítico necesitan ser desarrolladas a diario, más que dentro de una lección aislada que no se realiza regularmente.

Palabras claves:

Pensamiento Crítico, Taxonomía de Bloom, Rasgos intelectuales, Estrategias para pensamiento Crítico, Evaluación

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest challenges that teachers have is to work with students that are not critical thinkers. Whether teaching content or a new language, teachers generally encounter situations where such processes are not as meaningful as they should, due to the lack of the stimulus to think or act critically, as expressed by Fiallos (2017). This situation characterizes lessons in primary schools, high schools and university. Students struggle when they do research, ask questions and make decisions autonomously. Learners are used to receiving information from the teacher considering it as the absolute truth. Their role in the classroom is reduced to being information receivers, which is not acceptable.

Active involvement leads students to produce high quality thinking and enables them to assess their knowledge, as well. Undoubtedly, competent students in a global society are proficient communicators, creators, critical thinkers, and collaborators: the Four Cs (Roekel, 2011, p.7). In this regard, Spahiu and Spahiu (2013) stated the relevance of the role of the teacher to achieve satisfactory results in the teaching and learning process. In other words, teachers are required to reflect on how to foster critical thinking in their classroom by cause of the fact that critical thinking skills, just as any other skills, are to be developed or modified in the classroom.

In various teaching scenarios the analysis, synthesis or evaluation of information on the part of students is minimum. Moreover, educators are required to place value on opportunities to generate environments where learners participate in activities which promote higher order thinking. Another key thing to

remember is the necessity to consider the teachers' own critical thinking skills. Choy and Oo (2012) corroborate that teachers are not critically reflective. In fact, teachers are absorbed by how they are assessed by their students and superiors, which undoubtedly affects teaching.

The information taken into account for this literature review was previously analyzed in means of relevance, date of publication and impact. This study exposes the elements for a lesson plan to develop critical thinking, starting by establishing the importance of writing a well-structured objective that is essential to reveal what is expected to be achieved with students at the end of the lesson. Broadbear (2012) has documented the necessity to contemplate elements such as Bloom's taxonomy, intellectual traits, intellectual standards and CT strategies to write a proper objective for a critical thinking lesson.

Aside from a well-structured lesson plan, assessment is an essential element that aims to foster an effective teaching-learning process. This literature review promotes the improvement of learning outcomes by making the relationship between critical thinking and real assessment noticeable. Moreover, there is evidence that suggests that if critical thinking skills, the capability of analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information are considered, real learning occurs. Likewise, it is important to remember that real learning involves raising vital questions, formulating problems, gathering and assessing information, adopting a point of view, communicating effectively, among other implications found in critical thinking assessment (Paul & Elder, 2016, p.3).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the principal concepts of critical thinking which have propelled to the forefront in investigations on how to improve learning process and students' learning outcomes are examined as a combination of well written objectives, standards, strategies and assessment that provide the proper groundwork to plan lessons on. This paper conveys information from different authors who recognize the relevance of planning a lesson for critical thinking.

2.1. Critical thinking

There are multiple concepts and interpretations about the topic. However, remarkably numerous authors highlight the correlation between higher order thinking skills such as analysis

and evaluation and critical thinking. Undeniably, a critical thinker is a person who raises questions and solves problems; gathers and assesses important information from the immediate context to improve processes and reaches higher levels of thinking. In this regard, Elder (2007), as cited in Vdovina and Cardozo (2013) stated:

Critical thinking is a self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. People, who think critically, consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably and emphatically. They are aware of the inherently flawed nature of human thinking when left unchecked. (p. 55-56)

Similarly, McPeck (2016) describes critical thinking as a quality of human beings which involves the skills and abilities that are necessary for engaging learners in activities. These activities are always done in relation to subject areas, they never happen in isolation. Consequently, it is vital that teachers include techniques and strategies that help learners develop higher order thinking and critical thinking which are seen as a form of problem solving (Chinedu, Kamin, & Olabiyi, 2015).

The cognitive level normally developed in teaching scenarios is ineffective. In fact, high levels of comprehension are not emphasized in the learning process. Learners are involved in activities that require memorizing information or answering questions of lower-level thinking. Findings evidence that this matter seems to be a worldwide problem (Freatat & Smadi, 2014 p. 1806). Bloom (1956), cited by the same authors, asserts that teachers focus more on making students remember, understand and apply. These skills keep learners in the fundamental stages of critical thinking. Students, on the other hand, need to go through processes that require analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating from them. These cognitive skills or strategies are the core elements to design a lesson plan if critical thinking is the aim in the learning process. Halpern (2007) as cited in Kadel (2014) surmises:

Critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned and goal-directed – the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihood, and making decisions, when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task. (p. 58)

Based on this definition, the role of the teacher in a lesson for critical thinking is of a facilitator, which consists of leading students to the discovery of knowledge. Therefore, the tasks are meaningful and elicit active participation on the learners. Moreover, it has been proved that higher order thinking skills need to be developed on the foundations of solid lower order thinking skills. An individual reaches the levels of evaluation and creation, once the cognitive processes of knowledge, comprehension and application have been successfully expanded (Kadel, 2014).

2.2. Lesson planning for critical thinking

Establishing the differences between a traditional lesson and a critical thinking lesson is essential. Students have the teacher's guidance all the time and follow instructions in a traditional lesson. Expressing ideas, thoughts or feelings is not a

student's alternative (Spahiu & Spahiu, 2013). A lesson plan with a critical thinking focus expects students to make judgments about what they learn, based on either internal or external criteria (Lord & Baviskar, 2007). Lesson plans for critical thinking are typified by a wide variety of topics, areas of study and activities which include lots of creative thinking, well-reasoned responses and the argumentation of all the ideas presented well during interaction (Lara, 2007).

One of the responsibilities teachers have in educational institutions is lesson planning. Duncan and Met (2010) manifested that lesson planning helps to ensure that classroom instruction aligns with the curriculum goals and objectives. For this reason, the teacher's awareness of the general and specific objectives of the curriculum is mandatory to select the techniques and strategies for critical thinking. For these reasons, a lesson plan for critical thinking is required to contemplate various components that are systematically combined to drive learners from lower level thinking to a higher level thinking (Hughes, 2014). These elements are Bloom's taxonomy, intellectual standards, intellectual traits, critical thinking techniques and strategies as well as a good assessment to measure the learning outcomes.

2.2.1. Bloom's taxonomy

Critical thinking is closely linked to higher order thinking. Therefore, levels of cognition are to be distinguished. Munzenmaier and Rubin (2013) state that the aim of Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy was to find a common language that experts in education could use to write and measure educational objectives. This taxonomy organizes educational goals into a hierarchy whose four principles show emphasis on the cognitive process along with psychological, behavioral and procedural processes. The principles that guide the development of this model contemplate categories which entail student behaviours, logical relationships, understanding of psychological processes and the description of value judgments (p.3).

According to Krathwohl (2002) these categories have a connection to the multi-level model which shows the classification of thinking in six cognitive levels of complexity ordered from concrete to abstract levels. In this respect, Forehand (2005) manifested that in the model, the lower order thinking levels include: knowledge, comprehension and application. Higher order thinking involves analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This taxonomy is an enormous contribution to education because it guides teachers in lesson planning. In other words, teachers who aim at reaching the highest level of thinking through a plan are to entail techniques that make learners solve problems, use creativity and evaluate processes.

On this subject, Munzenmaier and Rubin (2013) illustrate the three domains of Bloom’s taxonomy and give a brief overview of the cognitive domain which is knowledge-based; affective domain which is based on attitude and the psychomotor domain

that is physical skills-based. These domains are essential when educators design their lessons where it is required to contemplate criteria such as contents, the affective and psychomotor fields to get a holistic educational approach.

Table 1. Three domains of Bloom’s taxonomy

Domain	Overview	Abilities
Cognitive	Content and intellectual knowledge: What do I want learners to know?	Conceptualization Comprehension Application Evaluation Synthesis
Affective	Emotional knowledge: What do I want learners to think or care about?	Receiving Responding Valuing Organizing Characterizing
Psychomotor	Physical/mechanical knowledge: What action(s) do I want learners to be able to perform?	Perception Simulation Conformation Production Mastery

Source: Taken from Munzenmaier and Rubin (2013, p. 5)

2.2.2. A lesson with a critical thinking objective

Once the topic has been chosen, the next step to plan a lesson for critical thinking is to write the learning objective. This component is of paramount importance because it communicates what the teacher expects from learners. Additionally, objectives must be specific, outcome-based and measurable. Heinich, Molenda, Russell and Smaldino (2001), as cited in TEAL Staff (2010, p. 3) consider the ABCD as a proper model to write objectives. This model aligns well to the characteristics of a plan for critical thinking, as well as to Bloom’s taxonomy. An ABCD objective has 4 different components: Audience, Behavior, Condition, and Degree.

According to Vdovina and Cardozo (2013), the ABCD Model provides a good framework, since it contains indispensable elements to design a lesson. A good number of teachers consider that cognition is the only area they have to develop; nevertheless, there are other areas such as emotions and attitudes in learning that are to be emphasized. The parts of an ABCD objective are:

- Audience that describes who the user of the instruction is.
- Behavior that is observed and measured, which is the knowledge or skill demonstration in any of the domains of learning: interpersonal, affective, cognitive or psychomotor.
- Condition that refers to the tools used in the completion of the proposed task.

- Degree that sets the standard for acceptable performance, which can be related to quality, time, accuracy, among others.

An example is provided to illustrate the elements:

Table 2. Example of the elements found in the objective

Objective: Learners will identify the major muscles of the thigh with 100% accuracy when provided with a diagram	
Audience	Learners
Behavior	will identify the major muscles of the thigh
Condition	when provided with a diagram
Degree or Quality	100% accuracy

Source: Adapted from Ferguson (1998 p. 88)

Additionally, Van Melle & Pinchin (2008) indicated that a learning objective is a statement that describes what the learner is able to do upon the completion of a learning experience. Therefore, writing an effective objective is essential. Likewise, Ferguson (1998) mentioned that “objectives are statements of desired, observable, teachable, learnable behaviours that are evidence of learning” (p.87). These objective characteristics contribute to the design of better lesson plans, selection of materials and good assessments to measure learning outcomes.

Subsequently, the objective is properly written and shared with the students. Thus, they know what it is expected from them. A learning objective for a lesson based on higher order thinking skills is characterized by analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information according to Bloom's taxonomy, the classification of levels of behavior in learning (Yang, 2009). This classification guides teachers through the designing of tasks, for instance: discussing theoretical situations, predicting and drawing conclusions based on information given, assessing value and ideas, as well as making choices to justify answers.

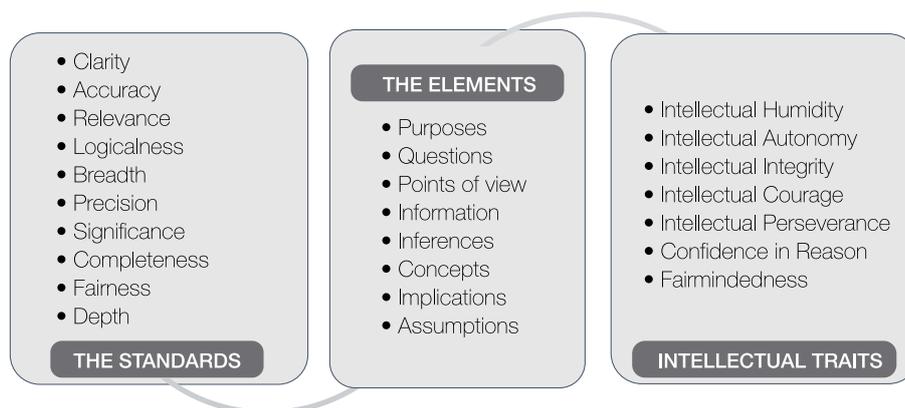
2.2.3. The components of thinking: intellectual standards and traits

In connection with this point, Scriven and Paul (1987) as cited in Xu (2011, p. 136) provided the most relevant characteristics of critical thinking and intellectual standards. They described critical thinking as the intellectual process of actively conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information

gathered from, or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

As stated by Paul, Scriven and Michael (1987), the elements of thought have a close relationship with the intellectual standards. In fact, the standards must be applied to the elements of thought while we learn to develop the intellectual traits, as it is illustrated in figure 1. Within the elements of thought we have purpose, questions, points of view, information, inferences, concepts, implications and assumptions. Learners who use critical thinking while completing their assignments demonstrate that they understand the purpose of it and are able to find what the issue or problem in a given situation is. Once the problem is found, critical thinkers appreciate the depth and the breadth of the problem and show to be fair-minded about it. These types of learners can identify relevant points of view and show empathy either providing information that opposes or information that supports those points of view.

Figure 1. Standards, Elements of reasoning and Intellectual Traits



Source: Based on Paul and Elder (2006, p. 21)

In this respect, Snyder and Snyder (2008) noted that “merely having knowledge or information is not enough. To be effective in the workplace (and in their personal lives), students must be able to solve problems to make effective decisions; they must be able to think critically” (p. 90). Solving a problem is the onset of critical thinking skills. In this regard, Boettcher (2010) acknowledged the idea of the development of thinking through reasoning work by the learner, just as when solving problems or puzzles.

Human beings are involved in activities related to family or friends, education or personal reflection. Intellectual standards are necessary for cultivating the intellect and living a rational life. Therefore, teachers are responsible for cultivating the intellect in students with the development of activities and tasks that provoke higher order thinking in learners through the art of

asking questions (Paul & Elder, 2013)

2.2.4 Intellectual Standards

Regarding intellectual standards, Michael (2012) postulates that critical thinking involves not only analyzing and identifying arguments; but discovering and overcoming prejudices and biases, developing reasons and arguments in favor of what is believed, considering objections and making rational choices. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2010) contemplate at least nine essential intellectual standards which are essential to promote reasoning in everyday situations. In order to interpret how intellectual standards are involved in critical thinking, varied questions are formulated to guide students in the solution of problems, as it is exposed in table 3:

Table 3. Questions that lead to problem solving

Questions	Intellectual Standards
Could you elaborate further?	Clarity
How could you check on that?	Accuracy
Could you be more specific?	Precision
How does that relate to the problem?	Relevance
What factors make this a difficult problem?	Depth
Do we need to look at this from another perspective?	Breadth
Does all this make sense together?	Logic
Is this the most important thing to consider?	Significance
Do I have any interest in this matter? Is it possible that I am biased?	Fairness

Source: Taken from Paul and Elder (2006, p. 14)

In addition to that, Vincent and Rudinow (1990) support that individuals who are critical thinkers do not have the right to embarrass or humiliate others or to impose their ideas. Instead, critical thinking aims to provide people with practices that contribute to the society and education with the improvement of knowledge. Moreover, critical thinkers autonomously apply intellectual standards to their elements of reasoning to develop intellectual traits (Bailin, Case, & Daniels, 1999)

2.2.5 Intellectual traits

Generally, intellectual performance is associated to the improvement of abilities; however, intellectual works are closely linked to dispositions of the individual, which are stable traits that guide people’s performance (Perkins, Tishman, Ritchhart, Donis & Andrade, 2000). This is as well replicated

by Holyoak and Morrison (2005) in their review that showed that effective teaching demands judgment and decision making from fair-minded people. These standpoints assuredly recognize the relevance of the qualities of mind and character that a critical thinker possesses.

In this regard, intellectual traits or the traits of mind and character are important dispositions that allow proper decision making; therefore, they develop ethical performance. Those ethical performers, who are considered critical thinkers, adequately evaluate ideas and beliefs to cultivate a fair mind. Conjointly, they are disciplined and self-directed and effective communicators. All these characteristics are part of the model of critical thinking which involves elements that are interdependent (Paul & Elder, 2013). In other words, the application of the standards of thinking to the elements of thinking results in the development of important intellectual traits that are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Intellectual traits and their purposes

Intellectual Trait	Purpose
Intellectual integrity	to hold oneself to the same standards of behavior to which others are held
Intellectual fairmindedness	to have an unbiased point of view
Intellectual courage	to questions beliefs in face of new information or evidence
Confidence in reasoning	to rely on critical thinking and trust results
Intellectual perseverance	to continue to struggle with confusion, frustration or uncertainty to gain understanding
Intellectual humility	to know the limits of one’s knowledge
Intellectual autonomy	to think independently through questions and problems
Intellectual empathy	to consider others’ points of view

Source: Based on Paul and Elder (2006, p. 15)

2.2.6 Techniques and strategies to Critical thinking

Devising techniques and strategies to develop critical thinking involves varied aspects; for instance: participation, interaction, reflection, deep analysis and questioning of the

information subject of study (Brookfield, 2015). Those aspects contribute to foster critical thinking as a result of the involvement of students in the learning process, which encourages them to take responsibility for their active engagement in the activities developed during the lesson.

The main technique that strengthens critical thinking is Socratic questioning (Hong & Jacob, 2012). Likewise, Paul and Elder (2006) indicate that it is unimaginable that someone who is a critical thinker can lack the disposition to ask questions in depth. Moreover, the authors state that the theory behind Socratic questioning is relevant if it triggers in learners the desire to ask questions systematically and deeply. In summary, Socratic questioning is a discussion in which a person inquires in a disciplined way; while a leader manages the discussion where all the people who are involved in the conversation participate. Thought is stimulated by questioning, as long as that process causes the analysis of information and its quality (Elder & Paul, 1998). The main characteristic of the Socratic questioning technique is guiding students through the discovery of knowledge (Delic & Becirovic, 2016).

Another technique that applies Socratic questioning is the debate, which is an activity where learners ask questions that go beyond the explicit information. Aspects such as clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness are inquired. According to Tawil (2016) "debating fosters open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, analyticity, systematicity and confidence of reasoning" (p. 25). This technique leads learners to reach an increased level of positive perception and self-efficacy.

Using techniques and strategies that effectively move learners towards critical thinking is a responsibility of all educators. A common problem in the classroom is the approach used by the teacher. Lessons are characterized by the lecture format. A considerable part of the reasoning, questioning and thinking are done by the instructor, instead of being done by the learners. Consequently, the lecture format is not an effective method, provided that critical thinking is to be developed in the classroom. Duron, Limbach and Waugh (2006) indicate that active learning makes the course worthwhile for both: teachers and students. In an active learning environment, learners think critically because they are the ones who process the information in the way they prefer. They are capable of reflecting on their own learning and comparing their understanding with what their classmates are achieving.

The aforementioned techniques respond to what is explained in Bloom's taxonomy, which classifies activities according to their level of difficulty and categorizes the cognitive processes in humans (Bloom, 1956). For instance, remembering, understanding and applying belong to low level thinking skills and consequently these processes require less thinking (Frehat & Smadi, 2014). On the other hand, analyzing, evaluating

and creating demand high levels of thinking. This taxonomy substantiates the outbreak of the theory of critical thinking. To make a relevant contribution to students, teachers have the responsibility to give learners plenty of opportunities to engage in higher order thinking. These higher order thinking processes instigate critical thinking (Duron, Limbach, & Waugh, 2006).

2.2.7 Assessment in a CT lesson plan

All thinking process is made of the elements that constructed it. Paul and Gerald (1991) define the elements of thought as building blocks of thinking that shape reasoning. According to the authors, human beings reason to achieve something or satisfy a desire. Therefore, when there is a cognitive process a question or a problem is solved. For this reason, not only one skill is evaluated while critical thinking is assessed; but a number of skills resulting from the articulation of all the elements of thought. These elements allow learners to distinguish types of information, identify evidence and speculations, recognize main concepts, see relationships between situations and topics and find implications and consequences.

Decisions on how to assess learning are suggested to be made before the selection of strategies and techniques for critical thinking. In the same way, what evidences meet the expected learning objective are also to be identified (Edmonds, Hull, Janik, & Rylance, 2005). Depending on the objective, formative or summative assessments are selected. In fact, assessment tools and assessment criteria are determined once the other elements of a lesson plan for critical thinking have been incorporated. In fact, Beaumont (2010) emphasizes the importance of the involvement of students in the decision of what assessment techniques are to be used. Furthermore, assignments and tasks meet four criteria: meaningfulness and attempt to be related to solid and important concepts; proper use of cognitive skills; intellectual standards and questions that are reasoned judgmentally and supported with evidence of what has been done, as the result of the learning process.

Similarly, Weimer (2013) strengthens the position that when teachers assess learning outcomes associated with critical thinking, it is necessary to highlight the critical thinking principles. This means that assessing critical thinkers involves awareness of different processes. Furthermore, critical thinking skills relate to other vital student learning outcomes: metacognition, collaboration and creativity, in other words, it further promotes higher order thinking skills (Kadel, 2014).

III. CONCLUSION

Fostering Critical thinking in a classroom is possible when the lesson plan entails essential elements such as: Bloom's taxonomy, intellectual standards, intellectual traits, critical thinking techniques and strategies, as well as a good assessment to measure the learning outcomes. In the same sense, writing effective learning objectives is of paramount importance within this design. Shirkhani and Fahim (2011) conclude that teachers achieve learning objectives through the realization of tasks and the usage of suitable assessment practices that are interconnected. In fact, Ferguson (1998) notes that educators who develop skill in formulating adequate learning objectives experience satisfaction with learning situations and the obtained learning outcomes.

The enhancement of critical thinking in an EFL classroom is the predominant purpose for language teachers. This improvement is feasible when there is involvement of learners in research and the application of knowledge. One important consideration is that learners are the discoverers of information, rather than passive receptors (Snyder & Snyder, 2008, p.97). The achievement of critical thinking skills is possible when teachers acknowledge all the elements involved in the process and incorporate them in a lesson plan in a daily basis. A formative process not only includes cognitive processes yet affective and psychomotor domains. Therefore, effective assessment results in a more challenging practice; however, more fruitful. Provided that all these considerations are made, the EFL teaching-learning process is strengthened, and consequently meaningful to learners.

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COMMUNICATION-ORIENTED LESSONS: MOVING FROM COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING TOWARDS TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION

LECCIONES DE COMUNICACIÓN ORIENTADA: DE ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAJE COMUNICATIVO HACIA INSTRUCCIÓN BASADA EN TAREAS

ABSTRACT

Communicative-oriented language teaching methodologies need to have a central role in the current foreign language education. In fact, language teachers are expected to shift away from traditional language teaching methods that have proven to be ineffective for language learning. Nowadays, a movement, which favors and embraces interaction, communication, and negotiation of meaning, is growing in language education; therefore, pre-service and in-service teachers of English need to be responsive to and become aware of the importance of these key aspects. With these notions in mind, the present article can be seen as a contribution to help language teachers to gain an understanding of key theoretical notions related to the emergence of communicative language teaching and its most well-known methods – CLT and TBLT. Additionally, this work analyzed CLT and TBLT as these two language teaching methods are not opposing but in line with the communicative approach. The importance of implementing communicate-oriented lessons into the English classroom was also examined. In this sense, a table made up of specific guidelines was elaborated by using works of leading experts in language teaching and learning. The table is intended to help teachers to be better equipped to design and implement TBLT lessons into the classroom, which may have a positive impact on foreign language learning.

Key words:

communicative classroom, interaction, language teachers, lesson design, tasks

RESUMEN

Las metodologías comunicativas de enseñanza de lenguas necesitan tener un papel central en la educación en idiomas extranjeros. De hecho, se espera que los profesores de idiomas se alejen de métodos de enseñanza tradicionales, las cuales han demostrado ser ineficaces en el aprendizaje de lenguas. En la actualidad, un movimiento, que favorece y acepta la interacción, comunicación, y negociación de significado, está creciendo en la educación en idiomas. Por lo tanto, los profesores de inglés en formación y en ejercicio deben ser receptivos y estar conscientes de la importancia de estos aspectos claves. Con estas ideas en mente, este artículo puede ser visto como una contribución para ayudar a profesores de idiomas a entender de una mejor manera nociones teóricas claves relacionadas a la aparición de la enseñanza comunicativa de lenguas y de sus métodos más conocidos – CLT y TBLT. Adicionalmente, este trabajo analizó CLT y TBLT debido a que estos dos métodos de enseñanza de lenguas no son opuestos sino que están en consonancia con el enfoque comunicativo. La importancia de la implementación de lecciones comunicativas en la clase de inglés fue también examinada. En este sentido, una tabla compuesta de directrices específicas fue elaborada a raíz de trabajos de expertos destacados en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas. La tabla está destinada a ayudar a los profesores a estar mejor equipados al momento de diseñar e implementar lecciones basadas en TBLT en el aula de clase, lo cual puede tener un impacto positivo en el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero.

Palabras claves:

clase comunicativa, interacción, profesores de idiomas, diseño de lecciones, tareas

INTRODUCTION

It is imperative that English as a foreign language (EFL) practitioners have a solid understanding of communicative language teaching methodologies, as they facilitate student language learning. Thus, this paper puts forward an analysis of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which is known to be a descendant of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Demirezen, 2011). In this sense, it is pivotal to point out that both of these language teaching methods came from a similar theoretical foundation.

It is worth noting that CLT is viewed as a broad, philosophical approach for language teaching and learning, while TBLT is regarded as a realization of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus design and methodology (Nunan, 2004). One of the greatest differences between these two language teaching methods lies in the notion that tasks play a central role in TBLT as they provide a context that activates the learning process and promotes second language (L2) learning in the classroom (Izadpanah, 2010). Furthermore, research (e.g., Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Ruso, 2007) indicates the effectiveness of TBLT in L2 pedagogy. Therefore, TBLT positively impacts language classroom instruction, because TBLT emphasizes the use of authentic language through communicative, meaningful tasks aimed at developing L2 effectively and enhancing target language use among students.

With the purpose of gaining an understanding of TBLT, key theoretical information as well as study results, indicating its effectiveness, are to be highlighted. In addition to that, the different types of tasks and the framework of lesson design within TBLT methodology, consisting of three major phases, teacher and student roles, procedural options, and the participatory structure, will be provided and analyzed. As a result, it is expected that EFL instructors will obtain a better picture on how to go about designing and delivering more meaningful and communicative-oriented language instruction. As TBLT methodology provides language teachers with clearer guidelines, especially in terms of lesson design, communication and interaction are more likely to occur in the language classroom. In this regard, it is crucial that language teachers plan and deliver their lessons directed by TBLT rather than their instruction is centered on CLT alone, since it provides general guidelines only and lacks a specific methodological framework to employ it in the classroom.

In the attempt to equip language teachers with the necessary knowledge and tools to implement communicate lessons based on TBLT, a table, which details key information of practical aspects of TBLT methodology, was elaborated as part of the present article.

The table makes evident that this communicative language teaching method provides a greater variety of learning activities and better overall guidance for teachers than other language teaching methods (as suggested by Cook, 2001). The framework of lesson design and methodological procedures allow teachers to build a language curriculum centered around tasks (Ellis, 2003). By learning about these key aspects, EFL teachers are to be prepared to begin shaping a communicative classroom grounded in TBLT, where students have ample opportunities to actively engage in authentic communication by achieving a goal, performing and/or completing a task.

It is crucial that teachers, from the EFL context, create and implement classroom instruction based on communication and interaction by using teaching methodologies aligned with the communicative approach. This is of great importance since there is empirical evidence indicating that the use of traditional teaching methods (based upon focus on grammar, translation, and teacher-centered) hinder students' command of the English language, especially because of a lack of the development of listening and writing skills among students from rural and public schools in Azogues, Ecuador. Moreover, it has been found out that teachers, from the above-mentioned setting, need to improve their pedagogical knowledge or competences to facilitate effective language learning among their students. The shortage of English teachers in the public sector and the lack of meaningful professional development and training on the current, communication-oriented curriculum to in-service teachers are at the center of the previously mentioned issues (Ortega, 2017; Ortega & Auccahuallpa, 2017).

A close look at communicative and contemporary language teaching: CLT and TBLT

The Direct Method, the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audiolingual Method were used in the last decades, and their main objective was to help L2 learners to gain a solid understanding of grammatical structures. In this regard, the aforementioned methodologies were common in the field of foreign language education, which had no positive effects on the development of oral communication among learners due to the fact that they were mainly asked to memorize language points and grammar rules (Diaab, 2016). As a consequence, the Communicative Approach (CA) appeared in the late 1960s, and it was grounded in study results in second language acquisition; its course of action became extended in mid-1970s (Demirezen, 2011). Moreover, the main focus of the CA is on

the communicative phase or dimension of a target language. With this notion in mind, the language teaching methodologies, which evolved from the CA, were as follows: the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Demirezen, 2011; Nunan 2005).

Demirezen (2011) agreed that CLT evolved from the Communicative Approach, and it was firstly introduced as a language teaching methodology in the field of English as second language (ESL) in the United Kingdom in 1970s. Since the beginning of its emergence, the major goal behind CLT has been to facilitate the development of L2 learners' communicative ability, as it places special emphasis on authentic language use for communication and the use of real-life situations that promote meaningful interaction among language learners, as pointed out by Brandl (2008). It is also paramount to state that two CLT forms or versions are distinguished – its weak version provides learners with plenty of learning opportunities in order to use a second or foreign language for communication along the teaching-learning process. Within this version, meaning-based learning and communicative activities have a central role. With regard to the strong version, Howatt (1984) stated that language learning and/or acquisition takes place by means of communication. Therefore, it is crucial to bear in mind these two versions with the aim of gaining a better understanding of CLT.

It should be noted that language learners are likely to develop their communicative competence through in-class instruction based on TBLT and CLT or when these two language teaching methodologies are combined in the classroom setting. In that regard, Izadpanah (2010) and Richards (2006) have asserted that TBLT can be regarded as an extension of the CLT trend. Additionally, Ellis (2003) observed that the strong version of CLT is represented by TBLT, and its major characteristic entails the use of communicative tasks in the language classroom instruction. These kinds of tasks are major components of TBLT and can be used as units to organize a L2 course (Littlewood, 2004). In addition to that, student-centered approach and authentic communicative purposes for language use are fostered in the TBLT classroom (Izadpanah, 2010); therefore, the main connection between CLT and TBLT is that both of them are centered on communication and interaction.

There are key ideas, regarding the interconnection between TBLT and CLT, that are worth discussing. For instance, according to Nunan (2004), CLT needs to be understood as an overarching language teaching methodology; notwithstanding, TBLT is acknowledged as an attainment of CLT theory at the moment of designing course syllabus and implementing communicative

language teaching methodology in the L2 classroom. Furthermore, scholars (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2001) hold the view that TBLT and CLT both are grounded in similar, overarching principles and that these two language teaching methodologies encourage language teachers to implement communicative-oriented lessons into the classroom, which help language learners achieve learning goals. Littlewood (2004) went on to explain that there are similarities between CLT and TBLT, as language learners' lived experiences, interests, desires and needs must lead a classroom instruction based upon either of these communicative language teaching methodologies.

The relationship between CLT and TBLT was highlighted above, and this paper now discusses CLT solely and then TBLT. This is necessary in order to gain a solid understanding of their premises, characteristics, and principles, and consequently foreign language practitioners will be equipped with the necessary information to better take theory into practice in their classrooms. In this sense, it should be restated that CLT can be viewed as a more general language teaching methodology, whereas TBLT provides foreign or second language teachers with more guidance on how to go about planning and delivering communicative-oriented lessons.

When CLT is analyzed, it is paramount to bring into discussion the major assumptions and principles behind this key language teaching methodology. With regard to assumptions, Ahmad and Rao (2013) and Al-Twairish (2009) pointed out that a second or foreign language is acquired when L2 learners take part in a process of communicating in the target language. In addition to that, these authors indicated that in a CLT classroom L2 learning is facilitated when students engage in collaborative learning activities, interaction, communication, and negotiation and sharing of meaning. Moreover, learners need to be provided with plenty of opportunities in which they can make use of the target language in a creative manner and make errors, as especially the production of errors constitute a normal part of the learning process and, in fact, learners should not be afraid to make mistakes in the language classroom. Concerning the fundamental principles of CLT, it is key to take into account that structure-based teaching methodologies do not provide learners with meaningful and communicative learning opportunities, but CLT does provide with lots of opportunities for (second/foreign) language learning. Richards (2006) noted that the key principles behind CLT are as follows: the main focus of language learning is authentic communication, a provision of lots of opportunities for trying out what learners know and are able to do is essential, a tolerance of L2 learners' is needed as this may be evidence of their communicative competence development, guidance and personalized attention for helping learners develop both

accuracy and fluency, use of inductive learning for grammar instruction, and development and enhancement of the major language skills. Regarding the last principle, Savignon (1997) commented that within a communicative classroom context L2 learners need to develop effectively their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, and such development is at the center of the CLT methodology because they altogether facilitate learners to achieve communicative competence.

In order to design and implement classroom instruction based upon CLT in an effective manner, it is crucial to switch away from a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered learning. Therefore, as pointed out by Prasad (2013) identifying students' communicative needs and interests as well as developing such identified needs and interests through meaningful and authentic language use inside and outside the classroom are the fundamentals for effective decision making from a CLT perspective. Furthermore, Prasad (2013) added that in order to do so, foreign language teachers need to implement into their lessons content that is likely to have relevant connections with L2 learners' interests and lives. In addition to that, it is paramount to help learners embark on the task of personalizing their learning, so that they need to be given plenty of opportunities to perform different tasks with their acquired knowledge and developed skills.

Claims of the effectiveness of CLT and TBLT are well-documented in research studies. Concerning CLT, many authors' research findings (Ahmad & Rao, 2013; Efrizal, 2012; Al-Twairsih, 2009; Mohd et al., 2007) have shown that it helps L2 students enhance their English language skills, especially it has a positive impact on the development of speaking and listening skills by means of language use for meaningful communication. Furthermore, language classroom instruction based on CLT facilitate students to develop self-confidence and increase their motivation. Greater participation, authentic preparation for every day communication outside the classroom, and development of communication strategies are also encouraged and promoted in the CLT classroom. Consequently, these studies on CLT have revealed that it has several different positive effects on students' L2 learning process than traditional language teaching methodologies, such as the Audiolingual Method and the Grammar-Translation Method.

There is also significant empirical evidence (e.g., Ismaili, 2013; Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Ruso, 2007) of the positive impact of TBLT on student language learning. Ismaili's (2013) study reported that TBLT provided students with meaningful learning opportunities to make use of the English language at school. Additionally, it was shown that task-based activities enhanced student-student interaction and the speaking ability among the

participants. In addition, the study participants enjoyed learning the target language and became motivated as a result of engaging in authentic, real-life tasks within a relaxed classroom context. It was concluded that TBLT lessons create a meaningful and suitable context for L2 learning, and this is conducive to help English students to attain communicative competence (Ismaili, 2013).

Aliakbari and Jamalvandi's (2010) research study was carried out to determine how effective TBLT role-play instruction would be to enhance English learners' speaking ability and to what degree this kind of instruction would improve the before-mentioned language ability. The study results indicated that role playing directed by TBLT facilitates EFL students to better achieve oral ability within the EFL classroom context. In another study on TBLT, carried out by Ruso (2007), it was found out that task-based activities helped improve student language learning in the classroom. It also facilitated English learners to experience better motivation and performance due to the fact that TBLT lessons provided the study participants with lots of opportunities for using and practicing the target language in an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. The participants of the study expressed their satisfaction because TBLT lessons created and added variety to the language learning process, led to the enhancement of L2 performance, and fostered greater engagement and motivation towards EFL learning.

Essential information of task-based language teaching (TBLT)

With the aim of having a clear picture of TBLT, it is essential to take into account definitions of it given by leading scholars in the field of SLA. For instance, Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated that TBLT is an approach that gives learners plenty of opportunities for using the target language in an authentic, natural, and interactive manner as they try to complete a task; this in turn facilitates understanding and expressing meaning in the L2 classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2001) explained that TBLT is a language teaching approach in which tasks have a central role, because they are the starting point for lesson planning and delivery in the language learning classroom. In addition to definitions behind TBLT, Izadpanah (2010) stated that the popularity of this important communicative language teaching approach lies in the premise that a more authentic language use is fostered when task-based learning activities are incorporated into the classroom setting. With these notions in mind, it is believed that TBLT has provided a different perspective for language teaching and teaching. Additionally, Nunan (2004) agreed that TBLT has a major role in current L2 pedagogy, mainly because content is selected through a needs-based

approach, communication and interaction alike are emphasized for an effective acquisition of L2, language itself and the learning process are at the center of ample learning opportunities in which learners constantly engage in the classroom, meaningful language use is favored along the learning process and it is connected and emphasized to take place beyond the classroom as well.

Along the following lines, key aspects of TBLT are to be analyzed; these aspects refer to the most important principles and purposes behind TBLT, as well as what an actual task is and its varied types of tasks. In addition, its framework for lesson design will be highlighted. This information is intended to help EFL teachers to implement lesson directed by TBLT into classroom practice in an effective manner.

The main principles and purposes concerning TBLT will then be examined in this article. With regard to its principles, Nunan (2005) indicated the following: a) in order to help learners move on with greater autonomy and understanding in L2 learning lots of instructional practices are needed, b) learning activities and tasks should be created based on the previous ones to come up with systematic task chains, c) student language learning needs to be maximized by recycling different language points and structures, d) a developmental learning process is needed to build linguistic competences among L2 learners, e) language learning takes place effectively when learners are engaged and they use the target language as actively as possible, f) lessons should include both grammatical structures and how they are used communicatively, and g) learners should engage in learning opportunities that utilize and foster their imagination and creativity rather than engage in drills and passive practices only as part of their teacher's lesson. Concerning the rationale behind TBLT, Ellis (2000) stressed based on Willis' 1996 work the following key and well-defined purposes: confidence should be given to learners for using their acquired L2 knowledge and skills, spontaneous or natural interaction is important for L2 students to experience in the classroom, providing opportunities aimed at learning how alike meanings or viewpoints are expressed among peers, target language should be employed cooperatively and purposefully, meaningful or relevant interaction is at the center of the language learning process so that students do not say isolated words or short sentences only, and communication strategies must be implemented into the classroom and employed by L2 learners.

As it was mentioned previously, the term task has a central role in TBLT methodology. In this regard, key notions concerning the definition of task itself and the TBLT varying types of tasks are to be examined in the following lines. According to Izadpanah (2010), from a TBLT perspective the L2 learning process is activated and

promoted through the use of tasks in the classroom. As affirmed by Nunan (2004), the central idea, behind the term task, refers to a communicative language use derived from the implementation of tasks into the classroom where greater emphasis is centered on meaning than forms or structures. Nunan (2004) went on to explain that a task within TBLT involves creating, communicating, and practicing in the target language in a learning atmosphere where sharing meaning is more important than the mastery of grammar. In order to plan and deliver effective TBLT lessons, it is also pivotal to learn about the different types of tasks. In this sense, Jost (2003) and Willis (1996) suggested these different key tasks, along with examples for each one of them: fact-finding and brainstorming are regarded as listening tasks; ranking, categorizing, and classifying are regarded as sorting and ordering tasks; matching and finding differences are considered as comparing tasks; examining unreal and real situations fall within problem solving tasks; exploring personal or family experiences, describing and narrating past and current events and explaining viewpoints may be utilized as sharing lived experience tasks; ordering and sorting, comparing and contrasting, and problem solving are referred to as creative tasks. With the aim of designing and implementing TBLT lessons effectively, it is imperative for EFL teachers to take into account the above-mentioned information. In this way, their lessons can be comprised of both actual tasks and varied types of tasks in order to activate, facilitate, and promote consistent L2 learning in the classroom.

Putting theory into classroom practice: TBLT lessons

It is imperative to examine the TBLT framework of lesson design, as it provides specific guidance or clear guidelines that help EFL teachers to put the theoretical information behind TBLT methodology into practice in the language learning classroom. In addition, if EFL teachers carefully analyze and use the guidelines that make up the framework, they will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to shift away from traditional language teaching methods and embark on creating TBLT lessons in a meaningful manner. The framework was proposed by Willis in 1996, and it is made of these three components or phases: pre-task, main task or task cycle, post-task or language focus. The framework at hand is made up of three phases, which are given in detail below, and it is important to know that the below table was elaborated using Ellis' (2006) work and Willis' (1996) work. Specifically, Willis' (1996) work was used to obtain the information with regard to the TBLT different phases and the teacher's and students' roles and Ellis' (2006) work was consulted to acquire the information needed for the procedural options for each phase in the framework.

Table 1. Classroom framework of communicative lessons: Facilitating language teachers to design and implement communicative-oriented lessons based on TBLT.

Phase or Component One: pre-task					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing and exploring the topic itself and the task Highlighting key words, helpful phrases, and statements related to the topic with the entire class Helping learners explore and understand the language needed to carry out the task and perform outside the classroom Providing clear instructions of the assigned task that will be performed in the classroom 					
Roles of the participants					
Teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explores the topic 		Learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write useful vocabulary words and expressions / phrases Try to gain understanding of the individual task 			
Optional procedures for phase one					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting and supporting students in carrying out a task that looks like the proposed main task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This procedure is carried out through in-class interactions; here the teacher asks questions for guidance in the achievement of the established task outcome among learners Demonstrating how the task could be conducted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping students become familiar and employ a strategy or varied key strategies Involving learners in non-task learning activities aimed at facilitating task performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping learners lower their cognitive or linguistic burden Coming up with organized ways or a structured plan pertaining to the task topic Previewing vocabulary words and key, helpful phrases Supplying L2 students with ample opportunities to plan how to conduct the proposed task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic and unguided planning procedures Emphasis on content itself vs. emphasis on linguistic forms: guided planning Allocation of time, participation and organization 					
Phase or Component Two: main task or task cycle					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the task is carried out in different grouping configurations, such as in small groups students negotiate how their report will be done using the things they have learned students elaborate oral presentations or pieces of writing to share their learnings or discoveries it also offers L2 students a holistic experience with regard to language use 					
Phase components					
Setting up the Task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students use whatever language they already know and/or are able to master, while they attempt to achieve the task outcome 		Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has a central part in the cycle and it comes after the task and before the final report Students are supposed to work on reports in an effective manner and to take advantage of the given learning opportunities 		Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students report their findings as naturally as possible KIt provides students with a natural stimulus and an opportunity to enhance their language skills 	
Roles of the participants					
Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students
supervises and fosters interaction and communication	perform the assigned task ideally in small groups	acts as a language adviser by providing helpful pieces of advice at all times	get ready to report to peer classmates	has the role of a mediator and provides feedback whenever it is needed	hand in written reports and/or present reports orally

Phase or Component One: pre-task					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing and exploring the topic itself and the task • Highlighting key words, helpful phrases, and statements related to the topic with the entire class • Helping learners explore and understand the language needed to carry out the task and perform outside the classroom • Providing clear instructions of the assigned task that will be performed in the classroom 					
Roles of the participants					
Teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores the topic 		Learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write useful vocabulary words and expressions / phrases • Try to gain understanding of the individual task 			
Optional procedures for phase one					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assisting and supporting students in carrying out a task that looks like the proposed main task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This procedure is carried out through in-class interactions; here the teacher asks questions for guidance in the achievement of the established task outcome among learners 2. Demonstrating how the task could be conducted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping students become familiar and employ a strategy or varied key strategies 3. Involving learners in non-task learning activities aimed at facilitating task performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping learners lower their cognitive or linguistic burden • Coming up with organized ways or a structured plan pertaining to the task topic • Previewing vocabulary words and key, helpful phrases 4. Supplying L2 students with ample opportunities to plan how to conduct the proposed task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and unguided planning procedures • Emphasis on content itself vs. emphasis on linguistic forms: guided planning • Allocation of time, participation and organization 					
Phase or Component Two: main task or task cycle					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the task is carried out in different grouping configurations, such as in small groups • students negotiate how their report will be done using the things they have learned • students elaborate oral presentations or pieces of writing to share their learnings or discoveries • it also offers L2 students a holistic experience with regard to language use 					
Phase components					
Setting up the Task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use whatever language they already know and/or are able to master, while they attempt to achieve the task outcome 		Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has a central part in the cycle and it comes after the task and before the final report • Students are supposed to work on reports in an effective manner and to take advantage of the given learning opportunities 		Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students report their findings as naturally as possible • Kit provides students with a natural stimulus and an opportunity to enhance their language skills 	
Roles of the participants					
Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students
supervises and fosters interaction and communication	perform the assigned task ideally in small groups	acts as a language adviser by providing helpful pieces of advice at all times	get ready to report to peer classmates	has the role of a mediator and provides feedback whenever it is needed	hand in written reports and/or present reports orally

Note. This table was created by using key information from the works of two leading experts, Jane Willis and Rob Ellis, on second language instruction. Thus, the information regarding the phases of the TBLT framework and the roles of the teacher and students was adapted from Willis (1996) and the information concerning the procedural options for each phase in the framework was adapted from Ellis (2006).

Key remarks and learnings regarding TBLT and CLT to take into account

First and foremost, TBLT is linked to the overarching philosophy of the communicative approach, and it is descendant of the CLT methodology. That is to say, CLT and TBLT are two language teaching methodologies that can help foreign language teachers to elaborate communicative-oriented lessons; therefore, they are interconnected in nature as both of them facilitate and promote L2 learning communicatively. In addition to that, they both are grounded in the same principles and have overall characteristics in common (Demirezen, 2011; Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Their most common and important features are as follows: fostering a communicative use of the target language among L2 learners, prioritizing student-centered lessons, and identifying and addressing students' needs and interests along the teaching-learning process (Littlewood, 2004).

Secondly, the methodological principles and theoretical concepts behind CLT are essential because of their great importance in current L2 classroom practice. In this regard from a CLT perspective, it is pivotal for L2 students to become engaged in communication and interaction as these two aspects facilitate L2 learning, the use and development of all the major language skills need to be integrated over the course of student language learning, the creative use of L2 should be emphasized and error production should be seen as a natural part in the gradual

process of language learning, student engagement in authentic communicative interactions is essential to take place in the classroom, and the foundation for lesson planning and delivery is based on the communicative needs and interests identified among students (Prasad, 2013; Richards; 2006).

Third, TBLT goes further than CLT due to the fact that it is recognized as an attainment or accomplishment of CLT theoretical claims at the levels of syllabus and lesson design and, above all, actual communicative language teaching methodology in classroom practice. This key realization, which is evident in the TBLT framework of lesson design, supports and guides language teachers to create a more communicative instructional practice. Consequently, the use of tasks is crucial in the language classroom, as they activate and promote student learning and help elaborate language curricula based on interaction and communication (Izadpanah, 2010; Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003). Therefore, the above-mentioned TBLT framework provides teachers with detailed guidance or specific guidelines to facilitate and promote students' language learning, which is more likely to take place when the pre-task, main task, and post-task phases are implemented successfully into classroom instruction. Moreover, when language teaching is directed by TBLT, teachers elaborate and implement effective task-based lessons. In fact, these kinds of lessons need to be the foundation for current L2 curricula with the aim of fostering effective student language learning worldwide in the 21st century.

CONCLUSIONS

In language classrooms, it is paramount for teachers to be updated to the new trends in L2 pedagogy and implement the most effective teaching practices. In this regard, language teachers can better help their learners get the most out of in-class lessons and undergo meaningful, positive language learning. These, in turn, facilitate the enhancement of foreign language proficiency among (English) language students at different educational levels.

In this respect, the information highlighted in this paper is fundamental towards facilitating language teachers gain a solid understanding of CLT and TBLT and their alignment with the communicative approach. The former provides overarching principles, notions, and concepts for an effective communicative classroom practice, whereas the latter provides specific methodological procedures and lesson design guidelines that aid teachers in building a more communicative and interactive classroom.

By having EFL teachers become confident with the framework of lesson design within TBLT methodology, by means of the crucial information and the table included in this paper, they are to be empowered to shift away from dominant, traditional language teaching. Consequently, with the aid of all the components of the table, language teachers will find it less difficult to know how to go about designing and implementing communicative-oriented lessons based on TBLT.

All in all, it is essential to take into account that these two key language teaching methodologies, CLT and TBLT, have an important role in contemporary foreign language instruction. Thanks to the creation of the TBLT framework of lesson design, foreign language teachers have specific guidelines in order to craft actual communicative classroom instruction. Within the context of a communicative classroom, language students can experience relevant, meaningful learning experiences that help them create their own meaning in the target language inside and beyond school.

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DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION: PRODUCTIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WITH HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

INSTRUCCIÓN DIFERENCIADA: DESARROLLO DE HABILIDADES PRODUCTIVAS CON ESTUDIANTES COLEGIALES Y UNIVERSITARIOS

Nelly Patricia Galora Moya; Language Center – Universidad Técnica de Ambato;
np.galora@uta.edu.ec;

Miryan Consuelo Salazar Tobar; Language Center – Universidad Técnica de Ambato;
mc.salazar@uta.edu.ec

ABSTRACT

The Differentiated Instruction (DI) approach addresses individual learner's needs in a mixed ability class by focusing instruction on student learning profiles. The purpose of this study was to describe the effects of the implementation of four DI strategies suggested by Herrera (2011) in order to analyze their impact on students' productive skills within two different educational settings: the high school and university. A total of 105 students and two English teachers participated in this study. An online survey assessed learners' perceptions of the DI strategies. The results confirmed that the 4 DI strategies implemented in both settings had a positive effect on the development of students' writing and speaking skills. This study concluded that there is not a universal, one-size-fits-all strategy for teaching that includes all students. In-depth knowledge of students' needs, and interests is a starting point for addressing instruction in a more effective way. Finally, the DI approach is starting to emerge in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms, and teachers are showing interest in applying the corresponding strategies as an aid to student learning.

Keywords:

content, differentiated instruction, learning strategies, process, student-centered teaching.

RESUMEN

El enfoque de instrucción diferenciada (ID) aborda las necesidades individuales de los alumnos en una clase de habilidades mixtas enfocando la instrucción en los perfiles de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El propósito de este estudio fue de describir el efecto de la implementación de las cuatro estrategias ID sugeridas por Herrera (2011) para analizar su impacto en las habilidades productivas de los estudiantes en dos entornos educativos diferentes: el colegio y la universidad. Un total de 105 estudiantes y dos profesores de inglés participaron en este estudio. Una encuesta en línea evaluó las percepciones de los alumnos sobre las estrategias. Los resultados confirmaron que las 4 estrategias implementadas en los dos contextos tuvieron un efecto positivo en el desarrollo de las habilidades de escritura y expresión oral de los estudiantes. El estudio concluyó que no existe una sola estrategia universal para la enseñanza que incluya a todos los estudiantes. El conocimiento profundo de las necesidades e intereses de los estudiantes es un punto de partida para abordar la instrucción de una manera más efectiva. Finalmente, el enfoque de ID está comenzando a surgir en las aulas de Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) y los maestros están mostrando interés en aplicar las estrategias correspondientes, con el fin de apoyar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave:

contenido, estrategias de aprendizaje, instrucción diferenciada, proceso, enseñanza centrada en el estudiante.

I. INTRODUCTION

English has long been taught in Ecuador as a foreign language (EFL) in all educational levels, such as pre-school, basic general education, upper-secondary and higher education. However, effective learning has been impeded by traditional language teaching methodologies, inappropriate language assessment and low level of command of the language on the part of the teachers. A study carried out in Loja-Ecuador by León (2013), based on classroom observations, concluded that most English classes used the grammar translation method with virtually no class participation because teachers were largely unfamiliar with different teaching methods and terminology: a situation that has characterized EFL classrooms in Ecuador for many years.

Since 1992, efforts have been made to reform the English Curriculum with varying degrees of success. These have included a developmental reform on language skills teaching. In 2012, a new National English Curriculum was based on a more communicative-functional language approach, aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In addition, there was a focus on teacher development, part of which involved initiating The Go Teacher Scholarship Program. In this program, Ecuadorian teachers were sent to American universities, where they were first exposed to the DI through Tomlinson's work. During the program, teachers were challenged to reflect on the one-size-fits-all teaching approach that had characterized EFL in Ecuador, and to move towards more meaningful tailored-learning activities suggested by Herrera (2011) and applied at Kansas State University.

1.1 Differentiated Instruction

In the late 1990s, Tomlinson, (1999) defined DI as a process of tailoring instruction to meet individual needs by using ongoing assessment and flexible grouping where students support each other and share responsibility. Additionally, Tomlinson stated that DI is not a matter of creating more individualized lessons, but rather of paying attention to students' learning styles, needs and learning preferences (Tomlinson, 2000).

Heacox (2002) defined DI as the instruction which meets students' level, needs, learning styles and interests, while Willis (2000) argued it is a pedagogy in which teachers adapt instruction to encounter students' differences. Furthermore, Dixon (2014) stated the importance of teacher training on DI strategies in order to implement them effectively, and to address their students' needs and support their learning difficulties. Once they know how to meet their learners' needs through the

use of DI, teachers are better prepared to manage mixed ability classes (Weiner, 2003). Similarly, Gieh-hwa (2014) contended that having teaching experience with DI strategies engages learners and encourages language development. Meanwhile, one caveat raised by Hogan (2014) was that implementing DI in the class may be challenging because it involves radical changes to teachers' teaching routines and methodology.

1.2 How to differentiate Instruction

Roberts (2012) suggested three simple ways to differentiate instruction in the classroom: differentiation by outcome, by teaching method and by task. Bearing in mind these three aspects in everyday planning, teachers would be considering students' needs. Tomlinson (2013) and Weselby (2014), on the other hand, recommend four ways to differentiate instruction: based on content, process, product, and affect/environment.

A further consideration is that of implementing DI with flexible grouping. Here, teachers organize the class in groups, in which learners interact in pairs, in small groups or work as a whole class. Long & Porter (1985) stated that working in groups is an effective interaction pattern, students learn and support each other and a positive work environment for teachers is created, where students pay full attention during the learning process (Gieh-hwa, 2014) and Oxford (1997) argued that working in groups promotes cooperation rather than competition. Additionally, teachers may encourage peer feedback on errors made by group members, while by working in pairs or small groups, student frustration at not being able to act or participate spontaneously may be mitigated. These views were supported by Tomlinson (2003) and Crandall & Arnold (1999) who stated that by having flexible grouping in the EFL classroom, teachers meet their students' different learning styles, different personalities, while allowing high achievers to consolidate their knowledge by helping low achievers to succeed in learning.

Another way to differentiate instruction is by using Blooms' Taxonomy model. Blaz (2013) contended that this allows the teacher to examine and differentiate the level of challenge in learning tasks. When the teachers assign tasks, it is required to employ several strategies to support differentiated teaching and learning. These tools contribute to effective differentiation in distinct ways. For example, Armstrong (2016) and Skehan (1998) categorize tasks in the classroom as open-ended, structured or teacher fronted, and delivered to small groups or as pair-work. At all times, tasks are mandatory to be designed according to students' proficiency levels and learning styles.

A third way to differentiate classes is by process. In this regard, Borja, Soto & Sanchez (2015), stated that choosing materials which meet students' readiness level and interests guarantee that learners perform speaking and writing tasks. For instance, during the speaking task, the researchers provided visuals such as pictures, posters and videos to evaluate students'

oral performance with a checklist. Furthermore, they gathered student profiles to learn about students' interests, learning styles and language skills. Students performed role-plays, debates, discussions and interviews based on different topics they felt interested in.

II METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine the effects of the implementation of DI strategies on students' speaking and writing skills within two different educational settings: the high school and university. Specifically, it sought to address the following research question ¿ To what extend do the four DI strategies impact on the students' writing and speaking skills?

2.1 The study context

Two public institutions were used for the study. From the Technical University of Ambato (UTA), 105 students were chosen as participants: 64.76% were male and (35.24%) were female and all were between 15-23 years old. Their level of English language proficiency ranged from beginner A1 (69%) to upper intermediate B2 (29%) and advanced C1 (2%). The students who attend the English courses in this Center are from both private and public high schools. It is important to mention that all English courses are aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. According to these standards, students must acquire a C1+ level to be awarded a certificate of proficiency or expertise in English.

The second state setting was Neptalí Sancho high school, from which 90 students were chosen as participants: 75.5% were male and 25.5% were female, with a large number of students coming from indigenous ethnic groups. The age range varied between 12 -18 years, all of beginner level A1 English language proficiency. The majority came from poor families and they have few opportunities to interact in English: 85% of the students were assessed as not being motivated to learn English

In order to provide accurate differentiation, information on student's needs, cognitive abilities, socioeconomic background and learning styles was of vital importance. Roberts (2012) contended that this is a crucial step if the teacher is to know the students' learning profiles to be able to meet their needs

and foster their learning. To this end a survey was carried out to gather significant information on all of these areas that would support the implementation of DI strategies.

2.2 The Instructors

The instructors sample included 2 English teachers who work at Language Center. Both teachers taught A1 English level (beginner) at the UTA, while one of the teachers worked at the high school as well. Both were assessed as highly experienced (more than 15 years of teaching), and highly qualified (trained to master's degree level).

2.3 The questionnaire

In order to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of DI strategies in improving students' speaking and writing skills within the two different educational settings, all students completed an end-course questionnaire to assess their perceptions of the implementation of DI strategies in productive-skills development.

The questionnaire was delivered in Spanish to ensure full comprehension of all the items. Question 1 was related to the students' acceptance level and preference about DI strategies for developing their writing skills. Question 2 ranked on a Likert scale the effectiveness of the foldables technique to develop speaking skills. Question 3 ranked the effectiveness of the magic book strategy for improving the quality of writing skills. Question 4 rated student acceptance of the U-C-ME strategy for improving writing skills. Question 5 evaluated the effectiveness of the pictures and words strategy for fostering student interaction in pairs or in groups. Finally, Question 6 rated student acceptance level and preferences about DI strategies for develop speaking skills.

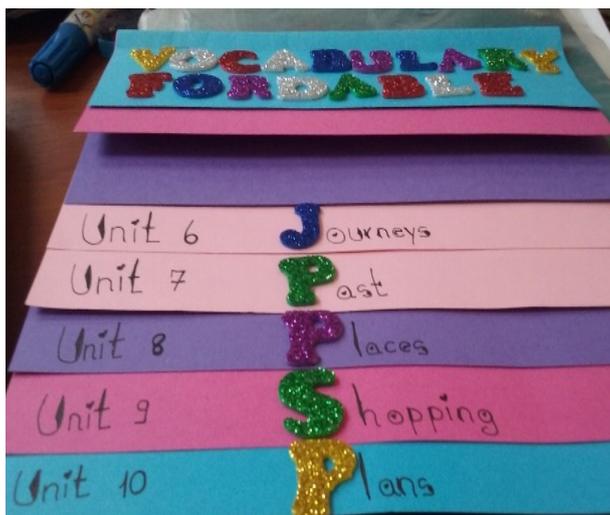
III RESULTS

3.1 DI Strategies for the development of Productive skills

The four strategies were taken and adapted from Herrera, Kavimandan & Holmes (2011), and were implemented in the English classes in both educational settings. Prior to implementation, students from both the high school and university were given instruction on how to use each DI strategy, including clear examples to follow.

The first, referred to as foldables, is a visual, auditory, kinesthetic and interpersonal strategy in which Learners develop their writing or speaking skills. This note-taking aid promotes collaborative and independent learning and fosters the thinking and writings skills of students and the ability to store and remember information. However, it is important teachers know their students' learning styles in order to plan their lessons effectively and provide the most meaningful activities and tasks (Zhou, 2011)

Title: Foldable strategy used in the study



Source: Photo 1 taken by the author based on student's final product

Strategy number two was Uncover ideas, concentrate on the topic, Monitor Understanding, evaluate learning (U-C-ME). This strategy is designed for visual and interpersonal learners and encourages communication between peers. Learners analyze and synthesize information from a written text by taking notes by a non-standard method. This strategy encourages student engagement and creativity, as well as facilitating the monitoring of their learning. The need for the successful learning of communicative skills is the goal of all English language instruction, and this may be achieved by using strategies that allow learners to develop their language and critical skills at the same time (Jabeen, 2014).

Title: The U-C-ME strategy used in this study



Source: Photo 2 taken by the author based on student's final product

The third, referred to as The Magic book, is a strategy best suited to visual, kinesthetic and interpersonal learners. Learners' attention and retention of information increased, and it may be considered a tool for learning, applying and recycling vocabulary from previous lessons.

Title: The Magic book strategy used in this study



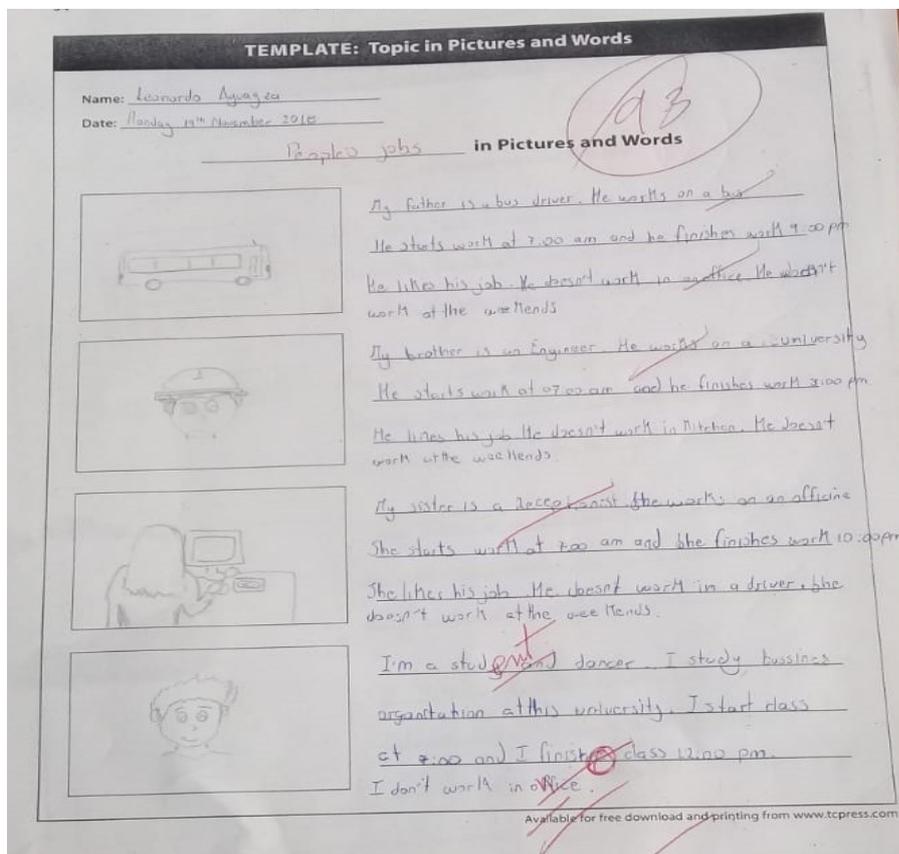
Source: Photo 3 taken by the author based on student's final product

Strategy number four was referred to as The Topic in Pictures and Words. This strategy caters to visual, auditory, interpersonal and kinesthetic learning styles. It develops the skills of retelling, synthesizing and summarizing information through interaction

with a text. Additionally, it promotes discussion about the text content using pictures made by students. This strategy is effective for learners because it aids speaking and writing through

pictures. This follows Hamner's (2010) recommendation that teachers design activities to promote speaking and writing skills.

Title: The Topic in Pictures and Words strategy used in this study



Source: Photo 4 taken by the author based on student's final product

IV DISCUSSION

The data from the questionnaire revealed that in general the implementation of the foldable strategy developed the students' writing skill. In the high school: 37 out of 90 students used the foldables to write in English which means 41,1%. Additionally, foldables allowed them to draw, connect their ideas and write their paragraphs with accuracy and fluency. At the same time, by using the foldables, students became actively involved when interacting in pairs and small groups. There was also a significant acceptance of the foldables at the university: 35 out of 105 students which means 33,3% chose the foldables as their favorite strategy for writing. This strategy offered students from both educational settings opportunities to practice writing using words or phrases they were learning (Harmer, 2010). In the implementation of the Magic books for developing students' speaking skills, at the university: 28 out of 105 students chose the magic books to develop their fluency this represents 26,6%.

Students found that talking about their last vacation, families, daily routines, and favorite hobbies was facilitated by using the clues on the magic book to talk about each topic. Furthermore, the magic books encouraged shy learners to perform their speaking tasks with more confidence and supported their interaction with classmates. Furthermore, in the high school: 21 out of 90 students found the magic books a useful strategy for developing their speaking skills. This group represents 23,5% of the total population.

The U-C-Me strategy developed students' analysis and synthesis as well as encouraged their creativity by asking and answering question. In the high school: 17 out of 90 students used this strategy as an aid to perform speaking activities in small groups which means 18,8% of the total population. However, at in university: 25 out of 105 students enjoyed using this strategy

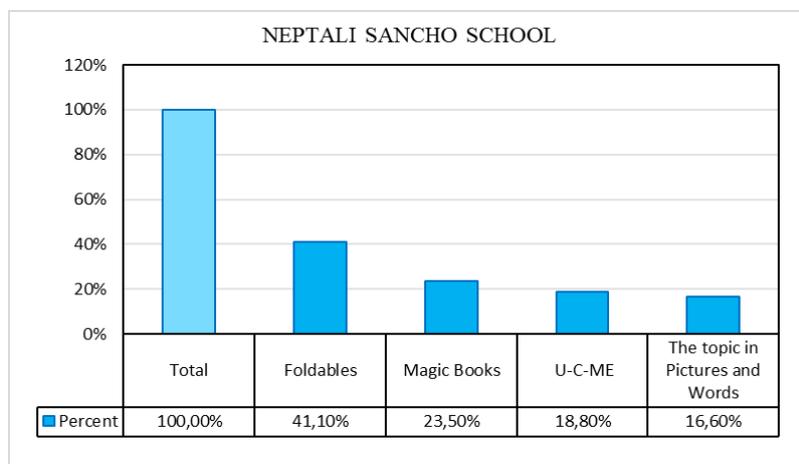
because this strategy allowed them to develop authentic communication in pairs and in groups, it represents 23,8% of the total population. In addition, using It allowed learners to develop their background knowledge and understanding of the content -area topic.

The fourth strategy implemented was the Topic in Pictures and words, it stimulated students' mental imagine representing their understanding of the topic with a drawing. It developed learner's language skills to articulate personal connections when sharing the information. In the high school: 15 out of 90 students selected this strategy to develop writing and speaking skills, it represents

16,6% of the total population whereas at the university context: 17 out of 105 students found this strategy useful because they were provided with opportunities to interact with the text at a personal level, they discussed their understanding with their peers. This result represents 16,3% of the total population.

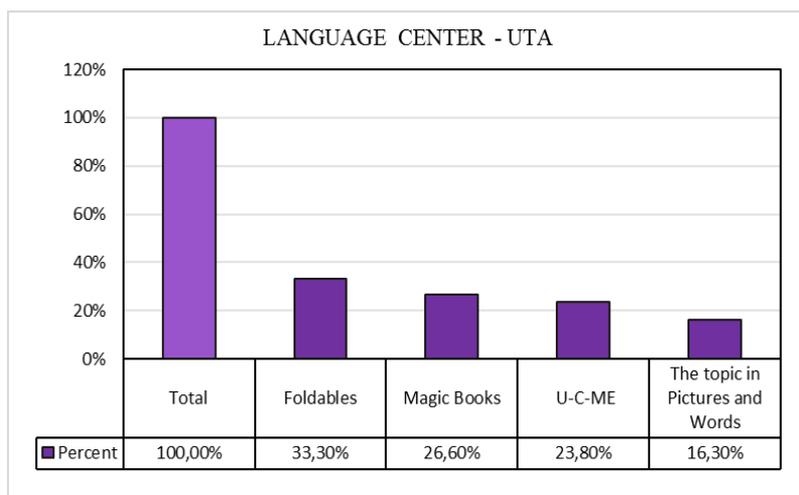
The data obtained which was related to use of fordable strategy in the high school showed that 37 of ninety respondents (41,10%) found it more appealing. It is assumed hand on activities provided learners more opportunities to exploit their learning styles as well as to foster their communicative skills.

Figure 1 Results of DI strategies implementation in the High School



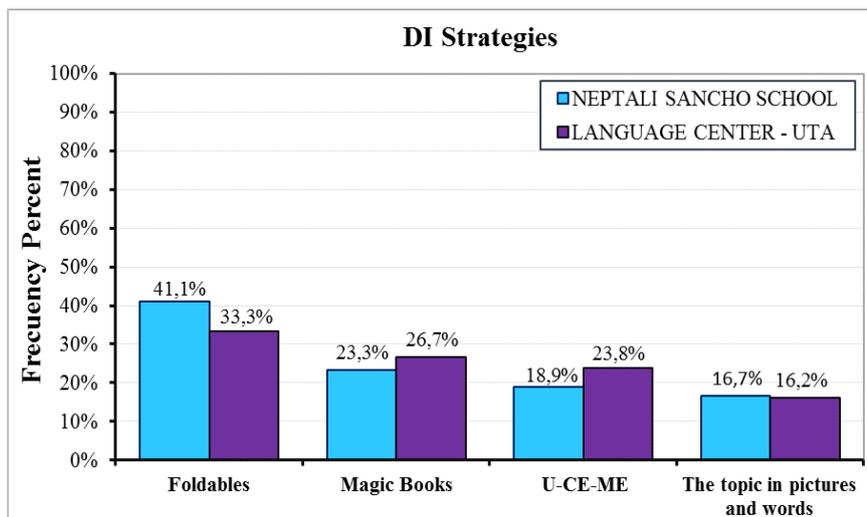
Source elaborated by the authors based on students' questionnaire

Figure 2 Results of DI strategies implementation at University



Source elaborated by the authors based on students' questionnaire

Figure 3 Comparative Results of DI strategies implementation



Source elaborated by the authors based on students' questionnaire

V. CONCLUSION

This paper intended to answer the following research question ¿To what extent do the four DI strategies impact on the students' writing and speaking skills? The results of this study show that the implementation of the four DI strategies had a positive impact on the development of the productive skills in the high school and at university. Specifically, the tools facilitate students learning by increasing their motivation and class interaction. At the same time, the analysis of the strategies focused on the study lead to the conclusion that there is not a universal, one-size-fits-all strategy for teaching, capable of including all students equally, however, a variety of strategies is required to meet the range of needs and learning styles typically present in the classroom. In-depth knowledge of student needs and interests is the basis for designing the package of strategies to be implemented.

It is important to remember that implementation of DI requires

major changes in teaching practices and curriculum design. This is especially true in the aforementioned contexts, since such approaches have not featured in the traditional teaching methods of the wider educational system here. Awareness of DI approach and practical techniques are required to become part of initial teacher training as well as continuous professional development programs whether the strategies pretend to have any impact on English language instruction in Ecuador. These impediments, together with the strategies analyzed in this study are distinctive of teaching and learning throughout the Ecuadorian public education system. Although, they could be considered representative of the situation in much of Latin America. Future analysis of further DI strategies, applied to a wider range of age groups and proficiency levels, may allow a more detailed understanding of the relation between specific approaches and different learner profiles; this would include a study of the quantifiable effects on achievement of each strategy.

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LEARNING A LANGUAGE OF TWO ALPHABETS: PRACTICAL APPROACHES IN HIRAGANA AND KATAKANA ACQUISITION FOR BEGINNER LEARNERS OF JAPANESE

APRENDIENDO UN LENGUAJE DE DOS ALFABETOS: ENFOQUES PRÁCTICOS DE APRENDIZAJE EN HIRAGANA Y KATAKANA PARA PRINCIPIANTES DE JAPONÉS

Ryota SAITO; Osaka University; ryotapanama@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Japanese language has a 128 million speakers and has 3.99 million learners in the world. In Ecuador, however, there only six institutions offer Japanese classes with 150 learners. This small number of learners may be due in part to geographic and cultural distance, as well as the economic and political circumstances separating Ecuador and Japan. However, the uniqueness of the linguistic characteristics of Japanese is also a major factor influencing learner reluctance. One of the principal characteristics of this language is its three writing systems: *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji*. This paper outlines the linguistic characteristics of Japanese, focusing on *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji*, and sets out the difficulties which learners experience in this area. In the second part, with reference to these characteristics, the study introduces class activities to show how learners may acquire the basic characters of the writing systems as an important first step in learning Japanese, with the aim of reducing the burden on the acquisition process. Through this research, the importance of peer-learning and collaboration between learners and teachers is highlighted as a means of facilitating approaches to the teaching and learning of Japanese.

Key words:

Japanese Language, Writing system, hiragana/katakana, Class Activity

RESUMEN

El idioma japonés tiene 128 millones de parlantes nativos y 3,99 millones de estudiantes en el mundo. En Ecuador, sin embargo, solamente seis instituciones ofrecen clases de japonés con 150 estudiantes. Este pequeño número de estudiantes puede deberse en parte a la distancia geográfica y cultural, así como las circunstancias económicas y políticas que separan Ecuador y Japón. Sin embargo, la singularidad de las características lingüísticas del japonés es también un factor que influye en la reticencia del alumno. Una de las principales características de esta lengua es sus tres sistemas de escritura: *hiragana*, *katakana* y *kanji*. Este artículo describe las características lingüísticas del japonés, centrándose en *hiragana*, *katakana* y *kanji*, y expone las dificultades que los estudiantes experimentan en esta materia. En la segunda parte, con referencia a estas características, el estudio presenta actividades de clase para mostrar cómo los estudiantes pueden adquirir los caracteres básicos de los sistemas de escritura como un primer paso importante en el aprendizaje de japonés, con el objetivo de reducir la carga en el proceso de adquisición. A través de esta investigación, se destaca la importancia del aprendizaje entre pares y la colaboración entre estudiantes y profesores como medio de facilitar los métodos de enseñanza y el aprendizaje del japonés.

Key words:

Japanese Language, Writing system, Hiragana/Katakana, Class Activity

1. INTRODUCTION

Japanese is a language spoken by almost 128 million people within and outside of Japan, and has 3,99 million learners around the world (Ethnologue, 2018). For Ecuadorian people, however, it is not a popular language compared with other languages, such as English, French or Italian. From this perspective, the main objective of this paper is to describe the principal characteristics of Japanese as encountered by

beginner learners, focusing on acquiring hiragana and katakana, together with an explanation of the activities used in class with Ecuadorian learners of the language. Additionally, with the aim of encouraging more academic discussion about Japanese in Ecuador in the future, it is hoped that this report will serve as a first step in this process.

2. THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE LITERATURE REVIEW

The Japanese language has been considered to be typologically unique and, therefore, fundamentally different from Spanish: as Comrie (2010) states, “Japanese is no less typical overall than English.” Kageyama (2010), on the other hand, argues that “Japanese is not ‘special’, but a rather common type of language in terms of word order and other macro-parameters.” This section, through these studies, introduces the basic characteristics of Japanese as encountered by beginner-level students, focusing on its phoneme and word order systems.

2.1. 1. Phoneme

The Japanese language has 23 phonemes: 5 vowels and 18 consonants (Iori, 2007, p. 25).

Every phoneme of a word is, in addition, normally created by a combination of a consonant with a vowel, and one phoneme corresponds to one character as shown in Example (1).

Vowels:

/a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/

Consonants:

/k/, /g/, /s/, /z/, /t/, /d/, /ts/, /n/, /h/, /b/, /p/, /m/, /r/, /j/, /w/, /N/, /Q/, /:/

(1) エクアドル(Ecuador): エ/e/ ク/ku/ ア/a/ ド/do/ ル/ru/

2.1.2. Word order

It is considered that the word order of Japanese is normally subject (S)-object(O)-verb(V) (Takami, 2010, p. 149), in contrast to Spanish S-V-O order (Terasaki, 1987, 2005). Examples (2) and (3) mean, “I eat sushi” in Japanese and Spanish respectively. It is observed, however, that this frequently changes at random in real conversation. Japanese has several particles that inflect

each word to identify its function in sentences, allowing this flexible word order. For example, (1) has two particles は[wa] and を[wo]. The former marks the topic/subject, and the latter the object of transitive verbs. Therefore, Examples (4) and (5) have the same particles as (1), expressing “I eat sushi” in alternative formulations. The Japanese sentences in Examples (2), (4) and (5) were constructed by the author based on Sato (2015, p 1, 2) and the Spanish in Example (3) is based on Terasaki (1987, p 28).

(2)	私は S: watashi wa	すしを O: sushi wo	食べます。 V: tabemasu
(3)	Yo S	como V	sushi. O
(4)	すしを O: sushi wo	私は S: watashi wa	食べます。 V: tabemasu
(5)	食べます。 V: tabemasu	私は S: watashi wa	すしを。 O: sushi wo

Although Examples (2), (4) and (5) all mean “I eat sushi”, there are different implicatures. The sentence information is delivered and understood depending on the information level, the speaker’s perspective, and/or empathy between the participants in the conversation (Takami, 2010, pp. 142-149, 166-173). Nishimitsu (2010) refers, in addition, to a pragmatics perspective, whereby meaning in sentences has both the literal and the conveyed meaning, or conversational implicature. In a conversation or discourse, therefore, a sentence should be considered within its context. For example, in (4), “sushi” comes first, since the speaker would like to emphasize: “what I want to eat is sushi, not other dishes that you have recommended”. In (5), on the other

hand, the emphasis is on whether s/he eats sushi or not. Both of these are different in form and implicature to (2), and these meanings all require a context to be understood naturally.

2.1.3. Writing system

The previous sections observed the Japanese language briefly from two perspectives: phonemes and word order. This part will introduce the three-fold writing system of *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji*, which defines “Japanese as a very rare language in the world.” (Shinozuka and Kubota, 2012, pp. 98-97) Figure 1 exemplifies the use of these three character systems.

Figure 1: Japanese Writing System

私 は エクアドル が 好き です。 watashi wa ekuadoru ga suki desu.	
<i>Hiragana</i> (は, が, き, です): Native Japanese words, conjugation endings and function words not covered by <i>Kanji</i> .	③ 好 ② エ ① 私 き ア は です ド ル が
<i>Katakana</i> (エクアドル): Loanwords and foreign names, onomatopoeia and mimic words.	
<i>Kanji</i> (私, 好): Nouns and stems of verbs and adjectives	

Source: Elaborated by the author, based on Banno et al. (2011)

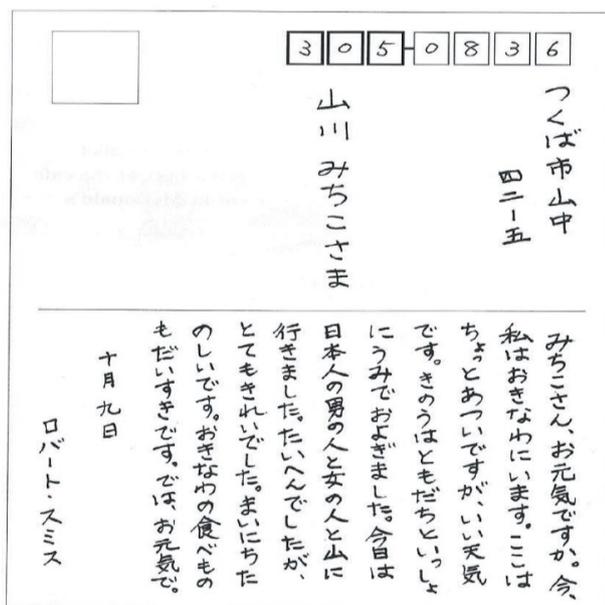
“*Hiragana* and *katakana* work as the alphabet in Japanese and each represents a sound.” (Banno, Ikeda, Ohono, Shinagawa and Tokashiki, 2011, p. 24) There are 46 characters of hiragana and katakana used to transcribe all Japanese syllables. Kanji, “the logographic and ideographic characters which originally come from Chinese characters” (Okada, 2016, p. 7), on the other hand, represents sounds, ideas, meanings and/or notions, and is mainly used for the stems of verbs, adjectives and nouns. In addition, every hiragana, katakana and kanji character has a correct order and direction of strokes when written. Sentences in Japanese may be written in two directions: horizontal and

vertical. Vertical direction sentences are read from top to bottom and right to left, following the sequence ①-②-③ in Figure 1, and horizontal sentences are read the same as in English or Spanish, from left to right as shown at the top of Figure 1. Horizontal direction sentences are often seen in science books and computer magazines, whereas vertical direction sentences appear generally in Japanese literature. In magazines, advertisement posters, newspapers and many other products, however, a mixed style of the two directions may be observed, such as that used in the text shown in Figure 2, which is a page from a text book on Japanese.

Figure 2: Example of the sentences: Horizontal and Vertical

274 ▶ 読み書き編

- C. ロバートさんもおきなわをかきました。
Read the postcard below and answer the following questions in Japanese.
1. ロバートさんは今どこにいますか。
 2. どんな天気ですか。
 3. きのは なにをしましたか。
 4. 今日は なにをしましたか。だれをしましたか。
 5. おきなわの食べものはどうですか。



山 mountain たいへん tough
では、お元気で Take care.

Source: Banno et al. (2011, p. 274)

This section has provided a brief overview of the characteristics of Japanese from three perspectives: phonemes, word order and the writing system, all of which are required in order to have a basic knowledge of the language. The following part will show, through the description of two class activities, how learners start to learn the Japanese language, focusing especially on hiragana study.

2.2. Hiragana Learning

In language teaching, there are two main methods: Direct Method and Indirect Method. The former is a method in which only the target language is used, even in first level lessons. On the other hand, the latter allows the teacher and learner to utilize language common to both as a vehicle for learning. The use of these two methods depends on the class situation and policies

in place in the learning context. Each method has positive and negative aspects and should be used to optimal effect through striking a certain balance, as Tanimori states:

In Japanese language education, the direct method is recommended in many cases. On the other hand, it is effective to utilize the vehicular language to some extent. Moving forward, it will be useful to diversify the methods of instruction that maximize learning outcomes, by utilizing the vehicular language flexibly, while combining various teaching methods.

(Tanimori, 2016, p. 81)

In Japanese language learning, however, there is one element that must be learned as a first step before deciding which method to follow: *hiragana and katakana*.

Figure 3: Lesson 1 of the first level

10 ▶ 会話・文法編

第1課 L E S S O N 1
あたらしいともだち New Friends

かいわ Dialogue

Mary, an international student who just arrived in Japan, talks to a Japanese student.

①

- メアリー: すみません。いま なんじですか。
Mearii: Sumimasen. ima nanji desu ka.
- たけし: じゅうじはんです。
Takeshi: Juuniji han desu.
- メアリー: ありがとう ございます。
Mearii: Arigatoo gozaimasu.
- たけし: いいえ。
Takeshi: Iie.



Source: Banno et al. (2011, p. 10)

Figure 3 is a page of the first lesson from a textbook. The Latin alphabet is used under each sentence to help the learners to identify and pronounce the Japanese characters. After several lessons, sentences then appear as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The lesson 5 of the first level

96 ▶ 会話・文法編

第5課 L E S S O N 5
沖縄旅行 A Trip to Okinawa
おきなわ りょ び び

かいわ Dialogue

① Robert and Ken are vacationing in Okinawa.

- ロバート: いい天気ですね。
- けん: そうですね。でも、ちょっと暑いですね。
- ロバート: わあ、きれいな海!
- けん: 泳ぎましょう。
- けん: ロバートさんはどんなスポーツが好きですか。
- ロバート: サーフィンが好きです。
- あした一緒にやりましょうか。
- けん: でも、難しくありませんか。
- ロバート: 大丈夫ですよ。



Source: Banno et al. (2011, p. 96)

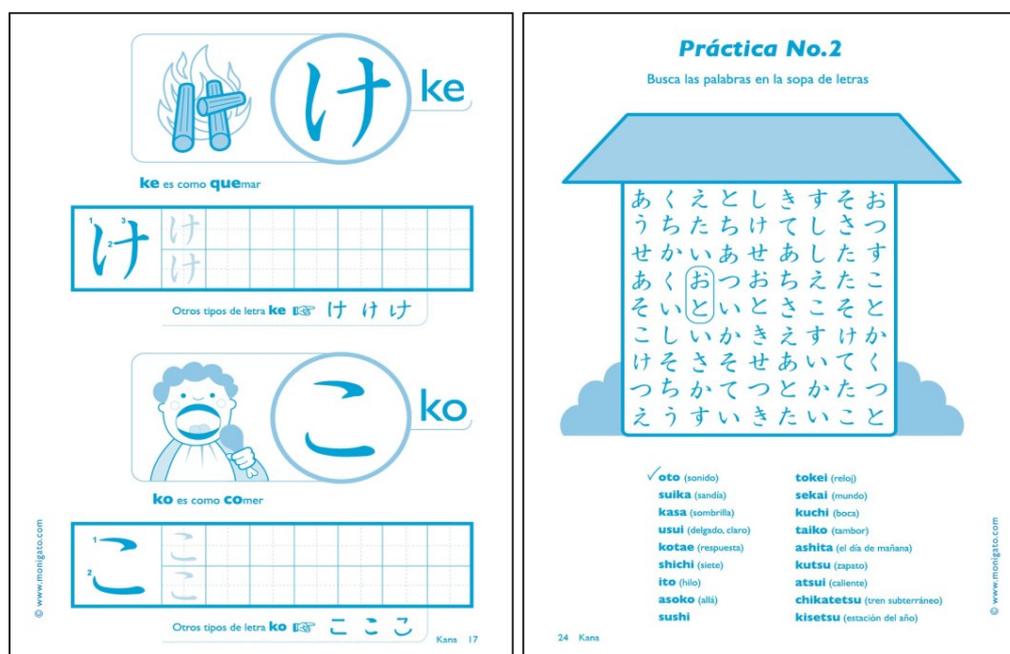
There is no Latin alphabet on this page. This means the learners are forced to read without support, and indeed utilize the characters as well. Therefore, it is essential to introduce hiragana and katakana at the very beginning of the learning process. Through the same approach, learners start to practice kanji later on. This means, as Kobayashi and Zennyoji (2011) contend, hiragana and katakana are an important part of the whole learning process. The following section focuses on hiragana, the most basic character set, with several practice patterns and class activities.

2.2.1. Hiragana Learning: Practice and Exercise

To acquire hiragana, it is clear that learners must make a considerable effort, such as writing repeatedly and/or mechanically. Tsujimura (1995) argues, on the other hand, the importance of communicative games and productive activities for alphabet learning.

Figures 5 and 6 are examples of hiragana practice and a small exercise from a textbook.

Figure 5 and 6: Example of Hiragana practice



Source: Fernández Gutiérrez (2008, p. 17, 24)

Practice in Figure 5 uses a simple and mechanical pattern, but the learners are able to identify hiragana with images to help memorize it. Figure 6 shows a word-search exercise in which learners try to find words by combining hiragana shapes with its sounds. Once the learners have completed these initial practices and exercises, the class moves on to other activities, as described below.

2.2.2. Hiragana Learning: Activities.

The positive effects of using activities for hiragana learning have been presented in various studies. Mitani (2013) and Tsujimura (1995) claim that game activities stimulate the motivation of learners and create a more positive atmosphere in the classroom. Tsujimura (1995) refers to the psychological burden for learners in hiragana learning, and suggests activities which help to

reduce stress and lead learners smoothly to the next step. Tsuru (2005) experiments with several games focused on hiragana acquisition and mentions the effectiveness of dynamic activities in the classroom. With reference to these studies, this section will introduce two activities that are practiced in real classes.

The first activity is Hiragana Concentration. This is a simple card game, known alternatively as Match-Match or Pairs, in which all cards are initially put face down on a surface and participants flip over two cards to find pairs of the same number. In class, it is preferable that learners participate in the preparation of the game, making hiragana cards and organizing rules. Each turn, the learners flip two cards, and they pronounce the hiragana written on the cards. Even when a correct pair of hiragana cards is flipped over and matched, the learners only obtain points if they are able to produce a correct pronunciation.

The procedure of the game is:

1. hiragana cards are prepared by Learners: two cards per character;
2. two cards are flipped to find a pair and pronounce the hiragana written on it;
3. if the pronunciation is not correct, the cards are turned back;
4. if the pronunciation is correct, the cards are retained as one point;
5. play continues until all cards are taken;

Picture 1 is a scene of students playing this game in class;

Picture 1: The learners playing Hiragana Concentration in a class



Source: Photograph taken by the author (2016)

The second game is the Hiragana Back Writing Game. Firstly, the learners form a line facing the blackboard, and the teacher shows a card exclusively to the learner in the last row. S/he identifies the hiragana on the card, then starts to write it on the back of the next person. During the game, talking or looking back is prohibited. At the end, the person in the front row writes

the hiragana on the blackboard and pronounces it. The game ends when they complete all the hiragana that are introduced. This game is effective for learning the right order of hiragana strokes, because every character has its proper order of writing. Therefore, it is impossible for the character to be communicated to the next person if one student writes it incorrectly.

The procedure of the game is:

1. participants form a line;
2. the teacher shows one hiragana card to the person in the last row;
3. each participant writes the character on the back of the next person;
4. The front row student writes the hiragana on the board which has been passed forward by every member of the line, and pronounces it correctly;
5. Play continues until all characters for that day have been completed.

Picture 2 shows learners playing the game.

Picture 2: The learners playing Hiragana Back Writing Game in a class



Source: Photograph taken by the author (2016)

Two class activities for hiragana learning have been introduced in this section. Successful gameplay depends on the teacher introducing hiragana clearly. Mitani (2013) argues that, through her experiment using card games, it was observed that there were a certain number of learners who made mistakes because of the similarity of figures such as [る/ru]-[ろ/ro] and the pronunciation between [し/shi]-[ち/chi] and [す/su]-[つ/tsu]. Miyamoto (2001) mentions in addition, that in his investigation about the hiragana learning process of American children, there is a tendency for errors to occur in both the morphological (figure of alphabet) and syllabic (pronunciation) resemblance between hiragana. In view of this, it is important to highlight to learners common points of confusion of the figures and sounds, such as those described above, both before and after the activities.

All of these games may equally be applied to katakana practice. However, Shinozuka & Kubota (2012) and Okada (2016), in discussing the relative difficulty of the three writing systems and the balance of practice of each, conclude that katakana is the most complex. Shinozuka & Kubota (2012) designed a visual-input test for native Japanese speakers, showing words of eight syllables in hiragana, katakana and kanji. Their findings indicate that katakana is the most difficult to recognize, followed by hiragana and kanji. The study argues that to recognize the meaning of hiragana and katakana words, two processes are needed, which are phonological recognition and subvocalization. Kanji word-recognition, on the other hand, requires a simpler process because it uses logographic and ideographic characters which are recognizable by visual resemblance.

The reason why katakana recognition is more difficult than hiragana, according to the study, is that most words in daily

use are written in hiragana or kanji. Okada (2016) argues that katakana learning is treated as less important compared with hiragana and kanji, because of the lack of an effective method and/or material for instruction. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that “the number of katakana word are increasing rapidly.” (MEXT, 2011, par. 3). Mistakes in the use of katakana are observed more frequently than hiragana in the classroom: learners confuse its figures and break the rules of adaptation of foreign words to the Japanese phonetic system. From this perspective, an effective introduction of both hiragana and katakana is needed in the classroom.

2.2.3. Peer Learning.

For the purposes of this study, two class activities were introduced, both of which are communicative and practical activities for beginner-level classes (there are, in fact, many types of activities, and two were selected as representative, since it is impossible here to describe everything that is commonly used). These two games are effective because of their simplicity, and it is possible for learners to participate in their preparation: Tsujimura (1995) states that the making of materials and helping in class preparation increases learner motivation and allows the best learning method to be identified. According to Tateyama (2007), on the other hand, from the peer learning perspective, it is important and effective that learners share their acquisition process with each other to help build independent learning habits.

Peer learning is an approach whereby learners progress in their acquisition through mutual conversation and the sharing of their experience in the class. In Japanese language acquisition, peer learning has been applied mainly to reading and writing training

for intermediate students. This is due to the “strong trends of Direct Method in Japanese teaching.” (Tanimori, 2016, p. 82) There is no prohibition, however, on using it correctly with any level and any group of learners. Ikehara (2012) argues that peer

learning works positively in hiragana and katakana teaching even at the absolute beginner level, especially when compared with the teacher-centered style. Hence it is important to develop a collaborative mindset for both the learners and teachers.

3. CONCLUSION

In this paper, two principle topics have been set out: Japanese language characteristics and hiragana learning. The first part shared some basic information of Japanese language from the perspective of phonemes, word order and the writing system, highlighting key differences between Spanish and Japanese. Secondly, the process of beginner-level Japanese learning was presented, with reference to the importance of learning the characters as the first step in Japanese acquisition, facilitated by peer learning approaches.

Within that process, two basic class activities were introduced: Hiragana Concentration and Hiragana Back Writing Game. However, there are, as yet, no reliable results on the use of these techniques in the real classroom. Therefore, more integrated studies with statistical data and quantifiable results are required from future research in order to corroborate the approaches outlined in this paper. In addition, there are no existing studies of the problems of hiragana and katakana acquisition focused on native Spanish speakers. From that perspective, there are ample opportunities for future research.

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Paulo (2017) informs, however, that in Ecuador there are just six universities and one private school that have Japanese classes and almost 150 learners in total, so expansion is needed and the provision of greater opportunities of learning. The demand for Japanese may be not as great as for other languages, but it is clear that it exists. Therefore, it will be an honor for this paper to be a part of this movement, allowing Japanese to be ever more widely known, in collaboration with the generous help and kindness of Ecuador.



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