

# **Culturas, Identidades e Litero-Línguas Estrangeiras**

Atas do I Colóquio Internacional  
de Línguas Estrangeiras

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## Prefácio

Num mundo indubitavelmente global, a aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras (LE) revela-se cada vez mais imprescindível e urgente. A crescente mobilidade internacional a par da conseqüente cidadania europeia e mundial concorrem para a promoção inevitável da diversidade linguística e para o desenvolvimento de competências comunicativas e interculturais, tão apregoadas pelos órgãos de governação educativa europeus.

Neste contexto, o Conselho da Europa, com a criação do Portefólio Europeu de Línguas, incentiva a aprendizagem de várias línguas estrangeiras não só dentro e fora do sistema escolar, mas também como meio de facilitar a mobilidade global, implicando inevitáveis e necessárias adaptações linguísticas ao país de acolhimento. Neste sentido, o processo ensino/aprendizagem das línguas estrangeiras deve ter também em conta a necessidade de incorporar elementos culturais e literários na prática letiva pela sua pertinência no desenvolvimento de competências linguísticas.

Também o Quadro Comum Europeu de Referência para as Línguas (QECR) veio impor transparência, uniformidade e coerência nos níveis de competência a alcançar nas línguas estrangeiras com vista a uma aprendizagem cada vez mais próxima de contextos reais de comunicação, sustentada por uma abordagem comunicativa. Além disso, novos métodos de ensino pretendem melhorar eficazmente a relação dos aprendentes com as línguas estrangeiras.

Desta forma, colocam-se novos desafios ao ensino das línguas estrangeiras não apenas em Portugal, mas também a nível europeu, visando potenciar a relação sociolinguística e cultural que subjaz à aprendizagem das línguas estrangeiras. Neste contexto, o Colóquio Internacional de Línguas Estrangeiras (CILE) foi pensado e organizado no sentido de se constituir como uma visão abrangente sobre as múltiplas facetas das línguas estrangeiras, que vai para além de questões meramente linguísticas. “De uma língua para a outra: percepções culturais e linguísticas” constituiu, portanto a grande linha orientadora do Colóquio. As expressões culturais, literárias e artísticas fluem natural e inevitavelmente das línguas, daí a facilidade em atribuir um duplo sentido à sigla CILE que pode também simbolizar culturas e identidades, assim como a fusão das literaturas e línguas estrangeiras, consubstanciada no neologismo *litero-línguas*.

Este volume resulta, portanto, das comunicações apresentadas no I CILE (2015) e norteia-se pelos seguintes objetivos: reunir investigação no sentido de discutir questões da atualidade no domínio das línguas e nas suas diversas manifestações; dar voz a tendências recentes no ensino das línguas; partilhar experiências de ensino; refletir sobre os desafios do ensino das línguas estrangeiras não apenas em Portugal, como a nível internacional; debater o uso da LE como ferramenta de sobrevivência para uma integração no mundo novo, problematizando, nesta sequência, a questão identitária.

Pelas razões infra expostas, organizamos o presente volume tendo em conta as diferentes áreas interdisciplinares que guiam a prática das LE. Assim, os artigos obedecem à seguinte disposição temática:

**Cultura e literatura:**

- “Jorge Semprun et Elie Wiesel: le choix du français pour témoigner une expérience concentrationnaire”, Ana Maria Alves
- “Estudios Culturales y ELE: ¿matrimonio de conveniencia?”, Blanca Ripoll Sintes
- “George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language”. Euphemisms and metaphors in wartime Britain”, Elisabete Mendes Silva

**Didática das línguas:**

- “Mindful (Re)Considerations for Young Learner English Classes”, María del Carmen Arau Ribeiro
- “Terminologie et didactique des langues : le mariage est-il possible pour un meilleur enseignement de la traduction?”, Christine Deschamps

**Estudos de caso no ensino de Línguas Estrangeiras:**

- “The ReCLes.pt CLIL Project in Practice: Teaching with results in Higher Education”, María del Carmen Arau Ribeiro, Margarida Morgado, Isabel Chumbo, Ana Gonçalves, Manuel Moreira da Silva e Margarida Coelho,
- “Evaluating Projects involving ICT and Task-Based Language Teaching”, María del Carmen Arau Ribeiro, Maria Paula Martins das Neves, Luísa Queiroz de Campos e Walter Best
- “Needs of Higher Education Students as regards Language Examinations”, Cristina Perez-Guillot e Julia Zabala-Delgado

**Novas tecnologias na sala de aula:**

- “Las Nuevas Tecnologías para el Desarrollo de la Expresión Oral Fuera del Aula”, Tamara Aller Carrera
- “Twitter in the Language Learning classroom at the university: an experimentation for Dynamic and Authentic Assessment”, Annamaria Cacchione







# Jorge Semprun et Elie Wiesel: le choix du français pour témoigner une expérience concentrationnaire

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## Résumé

Notre article s'attachera à analyser le recours à la langue française dans l'œuvre littéraire de deux rescapés des camps de concentration durant la II<sup>e</sup> Guerre Mondiale: Jorge Semprun et Elie Wiesel.

Nous verrons que la langue française constitue une sorte de refuge pour ces deux écrivains car elle permet de prendre de la distance avec les événements vécus. De cette façon cette langue « étrangère » permet de se réapproprier le passé et d'exprimer la douleur de la mémoire. L'utilisation du français a donc permis à ces écrivains de se mettre à distance entre un sujet trop difficile à aborder dans leur langue maternelle, servant ainsi de filtre, permettant de maîtriser une réalité autrement insoutenable dans leur langue maternelle. De cette façon, l'écriture en français prend la valeur du salut au sens existentiel. Cependant, elle fait revivre les douleurs et les angoisses.

D'autre part, nous verrons que les auteurs expriment à la fois l'impossibilité de communiquer l'expérience des camps et la nécessité impérieuse de témoigner. Comme le dit Wiesel à Semprun dans *Se taire est impossible*: « Se taire est interdit, parler est impossible » (1995).

**Mots-clés:** Guerre, exil, témoin, mémoire, langage.

## Abstract

Our paper will analyze the use of the French language in the literary work of two survivors of concentration camps during the Second World War: Jorge Semprun and Elie Wiesel. We shall see that the French language constitutes a sort of refuge for these two writers because it allows to distance oneself from the events experienced. In this way, this “foreign” language makes it possible to reappropriate the past and to express the pain of memory. The use of French has thus allowed these writers to distance themselves from a subject that is too difficult to approach in their mother tongue, thus serving as a filter, enabling them to master an otherwise unbearable reality in their mother tongue. In this way, writing in French takes on the value of salvation in the existential sense. However, it revives the pains and anxieties. On the other hand, we shall see that the authors express both the impossibility of communicating the experience of the camps and the imperative necessity of testifying. As Wiesel says to Semprun in *Se taire est impossible*: “To be silent is forbidden, to speak is impossible” (1995).

**Keywords:** war, exile, witness, memory, language.

« On n’habite pas un pays, on habite une langue.  
Une patrie, c’est cela et rien d’autre. » (Cioran, 1987, p. 21)

Cette citation d’Emile Cioran nous renvoie d’emblée vers le thème du bilinguisme, mais aussi vers le thème de l’expérience individuelle ou collective d’exil, de l’apprentissage d’une langue étrangère comme refuge, comme intégration, mais surtout comme instrument, comme langue de communication qui sert à raconter les drames, les tragédies vécues.

Pour illustrer ces thèmes, nous prendrons ici le cas de Jorge Semprun et d’Elie Wiesel. Le premier fut emprisonné à Buchenwald de 1944 à 1945 comme résistant communiste espagnol militant en France, tandis que le deuxième fut, avec sa famille, déporté en 1944 à Auschwitz puis à Buchenwald.

Il s’agit, ici, de tracer le parcours de deux hommes aux destins incomparables, deux hommes exilés, obligés, par les circonstances de la guerre, à apprendre une nouvelle langue pour s’intégrer mais surtout pour survivre. Ces deux survivants ont préféré se taire et laisser le temps s’écouler avant de pouvoir raconter leur expérience concentrationnaire. A propos de cette décision, Semprun écrit dans *Le grand Voyage*:

J’ai brusquement pris une décision. Il faut dire, elle mûrissait déjà en moi, cette décision. (...) J’ai pris la décision de ne plus parler de ce voyage, de ne plus jamais me mettre dans la situation de parler de ce voyage. D’un côté, je savais bien que ce ne serait pas possible, à tout jamais. Mais, au moins, une longue période de silence, des années de silence sur ce voyage, seigneur, c’était la seule façon de s’en sortir. (Semprun, 1963, pp. 124-125)

Cependant, tôt ou tard, le témoignage doit se faire et il se fera par le recours à la langue française. Le témoignage de tout le tragique et le dérisoire de leur existence comme rescapés des camps de concentration durant la II<sup>e</sup> Guerre Mondiale sera donc fait dans leur langue d’adoption.

Dans le déroulé de cet exposé, nous verrons que la langue française constitue une sorte d’abri pour ces deux écrivains car elle permet de s’éloigner d’une expérience concentrationnaire. L’apprentissage de cette langue leur donne la possibilité de remémorer leur passé récent et de le raconter. L’emploi du français concède à ces deux rescapés l’opportunité de témoigner leur vécu et d’exploiter une réalité qui était, à leurs yeux, insoutenable dans leur langue maternelle. Le souvenir absolument marquant et douloureux de cet évènement n’empêche pas Semprun et Wiesel de revenir sur leur passé car, « le devoir de mémoire (...) ne consiste pas à se remémorer sans cesse blessures, souffrances, humiliations, frustrations, mais à toujours en tenir compte » (Ricœur, 2002, p. 8).

Prenons tout d’abord le cas de Semprun. Partagé entre plusieurs cultures, divisé territorialement et linguistiquement, l’auteur se voit morceler entre trois langues – l’espagnol sa langue maternelle, l’allemand qu’il avait appris oralement sous l’autorité de gouvernantes germanophones qui l’accompagnèrent lors de sa première enfance et le français la langue de son pays d’adoption, d’exil ou il se réfugie à l’âge de quinze ans après avoir fui le régime de Franco avec sa famille.

Confronté, pour une première fois, au statut d'étranger, Semprun décide de s'approprier la langue française au plus vite afin de rester incognito et éviter tout type de xénophobie. Dans *Adieu, vive clarté...*, il souligne ce fait quand il affirme « pour préserver mon identité d'étranger, pour faire de celle-ci une vertu intérieure, secrète, fondatrice et confondante, je vais me fondre dans l'anonymat d'une prononciation correcte » (Semprun, 1998, p. 87).

Ce sujet est repris dans *Le grand Voyage* où Semprun défend, encore une fois, garder en secret son identité :

Je n'ai pas envie de lui expliquer pourquoi je parle tout à fait comme eux, (...) sans accent, c'est-à-dire, avec un accent bien de chez eux. C'est le plus sûr moyen de préserver ma qualité d'étranger, à laquelle je tiens par-dessus tout. Si j'avais de l'accent, ma qualité d'étranger serait dévoilée à tout moment, dans toute circonstance. Elle deviendrait quelque chose de banal, d'extériorisée. (Semprun, 1963, p. 119)

Dans un entretien que l'écrivain a accordé au journal *L'Express* en mai 2010, Semprun parle de son expérience de partage entre ses univers culturels et notamment ses langues.

Je pourrais très bien dire que je suis français et aussi espagnol. Si l'on me pose une question sur l'identité nationale, je répondrais que je n'ai pas d'identité fixe et que c'est très flou pour moi. En arrivant en France en 1939, à la fin de la guerre civile, avec ma famille, je connaissais à peine le français. Des aînés m'ont orienté dans mes lectures et j'ai découvert la beauté du français à seize ans avec André Gide, André Malraux, Louis Guilloux, Jean Giraudoux, des écrivains très différents. J'ai cru à un moment donné que je retrouvais une nouvelle patrie et que je pouvais dire, en reprenant la formule d'un Thomas Mann: " Ma patrie, c'est la langue française".<sup>1</sup>

Se sentant « dépaycé dans cet exil forcé, l'auteur cherche rapidement à trouver des repères, à se rapprocher de la langue et de la culture qui l'avait accueilli »<sup>2</sup>. L'apprentissage de la langue française était donc inévitable comme il le souligne dans *Le Mort qu'il faut* :

[...] je disais que la langue française était la seule qui ressemblât à une patrie, pour moi. Ce n'était donc pas la loi du sol, ni la loi du sang, mais la loi du désir qui s'avérait dans mon cas décisive. Je désirais vraiment posséder cette langue, succombé à ses charmes. (Semprun, 2001, p. 83)

Semprun choisit donc le français pour témoigner son expérience d'enfant de la guerre civile espagnole, de résistant, de déporté à Buchenwald, de rescapé. De la sorte, il inscrit ses écrits dans la transmission d'une mémoire collective, mais surtout

<sup>1</sup> Riglet, Marc (2010). *Jorge Semprun et l'écriture de l'Histoire in l'express.fr* [disponible le 14 mai 2010 URL: [http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/decès-de-jorge-semprun-l-écriture-de-l-histoire\\_891830.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/decès-de-jorge-semprun-l-écriture-de-l-histoire_891830.html)]

<sup>2</sup> Voir URL : <http://carnets.revues.org/1054> [disponible le 31 mai 2016].

dans la reconstruction d'une identité brisée par son expérience concentrationnaire. D'après l'auteur, cette épreuve permet de « raconter bien, (...): de façon à être entendu » (Semprun, 1994, pp. 135-138). Ainsi, il rend compte de la représentation de l'expérience de la déportation à Buchenwald (1944-1945), du trauma que fût cette épreuve dans un corpus de quatre récits *Le grand voyage* (1963), *Quel beau dimanche!* (1980), *L'Écriture ou la vie* (1994) et *Le mort qu'il faut* (2001). Dans ses écrits, on assiste au déclin de son identité qu'il récupèrera 50 ans plus tard dans le parcours de rédaction d'une réalité qu'il mêle à la fiction. Dans *Le Grand voyage*, Semprun montre le sérieux de l'épreuve concentrationnaire dans la reconstruction de la réalité par le recours à l'imagination et à la mémoire: « *Il n'y a pas de doute, ni Gérard, ni son copain n'auraient pu faire preuve d'une telle imagination, cette réalité de l'orchestre du camp, cette réalité se trouve encore, pas pour longtemps il faut le dire, au-delà des possibilités de l'imagination* » (Semprun, 1963, p. 278).

Encore à ce propos, Semprun affirme dans *L'écriture ou la vie* qu': « “[o]n peut tout dire de cette expérience à condition de transformer l'œuvre de témoignage en un objet artistique, un espace de création » (Semprun, 1994, p. 23) et ajoute « seul l'artifice d'un récit maîtrisé parviendra à transmettre partiellement la vérité du témoignage » (*idem*, p. 26).

L'auteur est dans ce sens convaincu que seul le langage littéraire, avec ses artifices multiples, peut atteindre la vérité de l'expérience du génocide. Ainsi, et reprenant le concept de mémoire exemplaire emprunté à Tzvetan Todorov (2004), concept qui cherche à comprendre l'évènement afin d'en tirer une leçon ou bien de le transformer en exemple, Semprun le survivant, l'écrivain est convaincu que le souvenir de la mémoire traumatique peut se transformer en projet d'écriture. Dans son ouvrage *L'écriture ou la vie*, il défend ce dessein:

J'imagine qu'il y aura quantité de témoignages ... [...] Tout y sera vrai ... sauf qu'il manquera l'essentielle vérité, à laquelle aucune construction historique ne pourra jamais atteindre, pour parfaite et omnicompréhensive qu'elle soit ... [...]. L'autre genre de compréhension, la vérité essentielle de l'expérience n'est pas transmissible ... Ou plutôt, elle ne l'est que par l'écriture littéraire [...] Par l'artifice de l'œuvre d'art. (Semprun, 1994, p. 167)

Au sujet de ce projet, Françoise Nicoladzé, auteur de *La deuxième vie de Jorge Semprun*, affirme que l'idée d'écriture de Semprun représente une « recherche identificatoire » (Nicoladzé, 2006, p. 109), ou une « quête sans fin du moi perdu » (*Id.*, *Ibid*). Quête que Semprun s'efforce de préciser, recherche d'identité qui l'emmène à questionner le contenu de ses œuvres. Dans cet ordre d'idées, l'auteur précise sa difficulté dans *L'Écriture ou la Vie*:

Pourtant, un doute me vient sur la possibilité de raconter. Non pas que l'expérience vécue soit indicible. Elle a été invivable, ce qui est tout autre chose, on le comprendra aisément. Autre chose qui ne concerne pas la forme d'un récit possible, mais sa substance. Non pas son articulation, mais sa densité. (Semprun, 1994, p. 23)

Ainsi, de façon intelligente, Semprun fait lucidement face « au déploiement funeste du mal absolu » (Semprun, 1994, p. 338):

Il y aura des survivants, certes. Moi, par exemple. Me voici survivant de service, opportunément apparu [...] pour [...] raconter la fumée du crématoire, l'odeur de chair brûlée sur l'Ettersberg, les appels sous la neige, les corvées meurtrières, l'épuisement de la vie, l'espoir inépuisable, la sauvagerie de l'animal humain, la grandeur de l'homme, la nudité fraternelle et dévastée du regard des copains. Mais peut-on raconter ? Le pourra-t-on ?  
Le doute me vient dès ce premier instant. (Semprun, 1994, p. 25)

Seul un témoin survivant peut se poser cette question « peut-on raconter ? ». Ainsi, tout en exploitant l'expérience vécue, il propose une réflexion du récit de déportation tout en se dépouillant de la posture de victime pour pouvoir témoigner. A ce propos, Tzvetan Todorov soutient dans *Face à l'extrême* qu':

Il n'y a aucun mérite à ce que l'on s'installe une fois pour toutes dans le rôle de victime, rôle devenu moralement confortable une fois que le danger est passé. Il y a en revanche un mérite incontestable qui consiste à passer de son propre malheur, ou de celui de ses proches, au malheur des autres, de ne pas réclamer pour soi le statut exclusif de l'ancienne victime. (Todorov, 1994, p. 311)

Semprun raconte, témoigne tout en utilisant la langue de l'autre. Même s'il domine le code linguistique qu'il a appris pour rester dans l'anonymat, le survivant garde toujours un statut d'étranger. Il s'engage, cependant, a un devoir de mémoire. Il se propose de relater ses souvenirs dans un esprit ouvert parlant non seulement de lui, mais des victimes dans leurs généralités, évoquant, de la sorte une mémoire collective.

En ce qui concerne Elie Wiesel, originaire de Roumanie, issu d'une famille juive orthodoxe, l'écrivain et philosophe rapporte, dans ses écrits, son expérience concentrationnaire durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Rescapé de la Shoah, il consacre son œuvre à relater son expérience vécue au camp de Auschwitz-Birkenau, dans lequel il a été déporté à l'âge de 15 ans, puis Buchenwald. Sorti vivant, des camps de la mort, Wiesel se souvient qu'il était « devenu un tout autre homme [...] ». Une flamme noire s'était introduite dans [s]on âme et l'avait dévorée » (Wiesel, 1969, p. 48). Wiesel a besoin d'une phase de silence de dix ans, avant de commencer à écrire, pour « être sûr qu'[il] pourrai[t] dire ce qu'[il] avai[t] à dire » (Cohen, 1987, p. 41).

Cette expérience traumatique qui a bouleversé à jamais cet homme provoque chez l'auteur le besoin inéluctable de témoigner car il s'agit à présent, d'une question de devoir. Devoir de mémoire que Primo Levi, autre témoin de cette atrocité, explique: « J'ai porté à l'intérieur de moi cette impulsion violente et j'ai écrit tout de suite, dès mon retour. Tout ce que j'ai vu et entendu, il fallait m'en libérer. De plus, sur le plan moral, civil, politique, témoigner était un devoir » (Levi, cité dans Mertens 2003, p. 14).

Tout comme Levi, Wiesel est convaincu que le devoir de transmettre aux nouvelles générations la mémoire d'une atrocité vécue est absolument inévitable, il

le défend d'ailleurs dans *Paroles d'étranger*: « (...) pour le survivant, écrire n'est pas un métier mais une obligation; un devoir » (Wiesel, 1982, pp. 11-12). Cette tâche n'est pas évidente pour tous les hommes et femmes qui ont vécu une expérience comme celle-ci, néanmoins, ils n'ont pas hésité à témoigner. Nous « pourrions citer le cas des écrivains rescapés, les écrivains-témoins comme Jean Améry, Paul Celan, Primo Levi, déportés à cause de leur judéité, ou bien ceux qui, à cause de leur engagement politique, - tout particulièrement, Robert Antelme -, David Rousset ou Eugen Kogon, ont pu revenir des camps nazis » (Alves, 2015, p. 122). Pour ce qui est de leur témoignage, Maurice Blanchot défend qu'il ne s'agit pas uniquement:

[d'] un témoignage sur la réalité d'un camp, ni une relation historique, ni un récit autobiographique. Il est clair que Robert Antelme, et sans doute pour beaucoup d'autres, se raconter, témoigner, ce n'est pas de cela qu'il s'est agi, mais essentiellement parler: en donnant expression à quelle parole? Précisément cette parole juste où Autrui, empêché de se révéler pendant tout le séjour des camps, pouvait seul à la fin être accueilli et entrer dans l'entente humaine (Blanchot 1992, p. 197).

Rappelons les paroles de Robert Antelme, dans son avant-propos, qui tente de rapporter ce qu'il a vécu: « Comment nous résigner à ne pas tenter d'expliquer comment en étions-nous venus là ? Nous y étions encore. Et cependant c'était impossible. A peine commençons-nous à raconter, que nous suffoquions. A nous-mêmes, ce que nous avions à dire commençait alors à nous paraître inimaginable » (Antelme, 1957, p. 9).

Cette difficulté de raconter est ressentie par tous ceux qui ont vécu l'horreur gigantesque de cette expérience concentrationnaire. De retour dans un passé récent, Wiesel s'efforce de communiquer aux jeunes cette expérience douloureuse et ces jeunes montrent un intérêt profond car d'après lui: « ils se disent que c'est leur dernière chance d'écouter un témoin. [...] ils écoutent avec une curiosité saine, avec leur âme, avec leur regard. Ils écoutent avec leur être, parce qu'ils savent que c'est une expérience qu'ils ne connaîtront jamais » (Semprun & Wiesel, 1995, p. 15). Il s'agit ici de partager, de faire connaître à cette nouvelle génération une « juste mémoire », un témoignage qui constitue la structure de transition privilégié entre mémoire et histoire comme le défend Paul Ricœur (2000).

Dans son œuvre, mais aussi dans diverses interviews, Wiesel commente l'importance du devoir et souligne, à plusieurs reprises, le fait qu'il ne faut pas oublier la mémoire même si celle-ci est douloureuse et « vulnérable » (Semprun & Wiesel, 1995, p. 17). Il renforce d'ailleurs cette idée d'une émergence mémorielle lorsqu'il soutient que: « Se taire est interdit, parler est impossible » (*Id.*, *Ibid.*). L'importance du témoignage est donc inévitable « plus le temps s'écoule après Auschwitz, plus il s'avère indispensable de *le reparler* » (Mertens 2003, p. 51).

Wiesel décide alors de raconter son expérience concentrationnaire tout d'abord en Yiddish, la langue des survivants avec qui il partage la même souffrance. Dans ses mémoires, il explique le choix de cette langue:



J'ai besoin du yiddish pour rire et pleurer, célébrer et regretter. Et pour me plonger dans mes souvenirs. Existe-t-il une meilleure langue pour évoquer le passé avec son poids d'horreurs ? Sans le yiddish, la littérature de l'Holocauste n'aurait pas d'âme. [...] Si je n'avais pas écrit mon premier récit en yiddish, les livres qui lui succédèrent seraient restés muets. (Wiesel, 1994, pp. 407-408).

Le Yiddish est pour lui une langue qui le rapproche de son passé qu'il nous rapporte dans son premier livre publié en 1956 *Un di Velt Hot Geshvign* (*Et le Monde était silencieux*) basé sur ses souvenirs de déportation. Une adaptation de ce livre sera traduite en français sous le soutien de François Mauriac qui signera la préface de ce roman intitulé *La nuit* (1958). Ce récit autobiographique sera suivi d'autres ouvrages en français s'éloignant, de la sorte, du Yiddish qui est, d'après l'auteur, une langue remplie de « mots démodés, inutiles sous leurs fards multiples, lâchés au-dessus des cimetières d'exilés » (Wiesel, 1983, p. 9).

D'après Marie Bornand « c'est dans la langue de l'exil que Wiesel se fait porte-parole de la langue des morts: sa langue est morte et il doit s'en faire le témoin. Mais il ne peut le faire que dans la langue de son exil, sinon sa voix serait privée d'audience, adressée uniquement à un public de morts » (Bornand, 2004, p. 108).

En 1970, Wiesel révèle à Harold Flender, journaliste qui était venu l'interviewer, qu'il écrivait ses livres en français pour une seule raison: « c'est le langage que j'ai acquis immédiatement après la guerre, en protestation. [...] J'ai choisi le français comme un refuge, et ce que j'ai lu plus tard en littérature et philosophie a été en français » (Flender, 1970, p. 9). En 2003, lors d'un entretien avec Ion Mihaileanu, journaliste du magazine hebdomadaire *Le point*, l'auteur affirme, encore au sujet de son choix linguistique, « Je cherchais une langue. Cette langue me cherchait aussi. Il y a eu une sorte de fusion, de mariage entre cette langue et moi » (Mihaileanu, 2003, p. 9). On sous-entend que le français est devenu pour l'auteur une langue d'asile, elle représente un nouveau départ, un désir de reconstruction, de « résurrection après sa libération du camp nazi de Buchenwald »<sup>3</sup>:

Choisir le français relevait du défi, je crois. [...] Au retour de ma déportation, à seize ans, j'avais pris en horreur ma langue natale, les Hongrois s'étant montrés tellement cruels envers les Juifs! Et je voulais montrer que j'étais entré dans une ère nouvelle, pour me prouver à moi-même que j'étais vivant, que j'avais survécu. Je tenais à rester le même, mais dans un autre paysage. Et la langue française constituait ce nouveau paysage (Cohen, 1987, pp. 72-73).

Cette fracture entre sa langue maternelle et le choix d'une nouvelle langue – la langue française- amène l'auteur à trouver « une nouvelle maison... La langue est devenue un havre, une nouvelle possibilité, un nouveau monde<sup>4</sup> ».

Cette langue va lui donner la possibilité de se détacher de sa langue maternelle

<sup>3</sup> Voir URL: [http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/elie-wiesel-un-lien-fort-a-la-france-et-au-francais-03-07-2016-2051552\\_3.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/elie-wiesel-un-lien-fort-a-la-france-et-au-francais-03-07-2016-2051552_3.php) [disponible le 3 juillet 2016].

<sup>4</sup> Traduction de l'auteur de: « meant a new home ... The language became a haven, a new possibility, a new world » dans Wiesel, E. (1985). *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*. New York: Holocaust Library. p. 10.

qui porte le poids de la Shoah et qui le « baignait dans le mysticisme » (Mihaileanu, 2003, p. 9). Le français est pour lui le contraire de ce qu'il avait connu jusqu'alors pendant « toutes [s]es aventures intérieure » (*Id., Ibid.*). Cette langue d'accueil est, pour l'auteur, la langue de sa « formation intellectuelle » (Kolbert 1996, pp. 51-64), langue qu'il découvre à l'âge de 17 ans:

J'ai appris cette langue tard, à une époque où j'avais besoin d'une autre langue, comme d'un autre foyer: la langue française est devenue mon foyer. Mon tuteur, celui qui m'a enseigné le français, fait découvrir Racine, Pascal, Sartre et Camus, était un homme exceptionnel, François Wahl, que l'œuvre de secours aux enfants (OSE) avait engagé pour nous aider dans nos études. Pour moi, apprendre la technique de l'explication de texte fut une chose assez facile: c'était presque l'étude du Talmud !<sup>5</sup>

Par sa lecture de certains auteurs de littérature moderne française, il se laisse influencer par l'existentialisme de Sartre mais aussi par l'humanisme de Camus ou encore par Malraux. Il comprend qu'il s'agit d'une langue « cartésienne, logique » (Mihaileanu, 2003, p. 9). D'après Wiesel « transformer, retraduire en français les notions, les concepts, les découvertes, les secrets du monde mystique, c'était une gageure, un pari, donc ça [l]'a tenté » (*Id., Ibid.*). Quelques années plus tard, Fabienne Dumontet auteure d'un article intitulé « Elie Wiesel: C'est la langue française qui m'a choisi », paru dans le journal *Le Monde*, raconte que l'écrivain rescapé « revendique, aux côtés de ses attaches juives, "sa place dans la culture française" et sa "loyauté au style classique". "C'est cette langue qui m'a choisi", répète-t-il encore aujourd'hui. Une langue qui a représenté pour lui le comble de la rationalité, dès qu'il a commencé à l'apprendre adolescent, en 1945, réfugié en France après l'horreur des camps d'Auschwitz et de Buchenwald »<sup>6</sup>.

En termes de conclusion, nous pouvons affirmer que la « vérité essentielle de l'expérience » concentrationnaire (Semprun, 1994, p. 136) de ces deux auteurs, témoins rescapés, est transmise par la parole et par l'écriture dans une langue que tous deux ont choisie: la langue française. Le choix d'apprendre une nouvelle langue pour témoigner leur histoire récente a été adopté afin de créer de la distance face à ce temps de souffrance, d'obscurité, de silence, de réalité insoutenable qu'ils ne pouvaient raconter dans leur langue maternelle. Cette verbalisation du vécu, cette parole testimoniale, nous est donnée par le récit de Semprun et Wiesel dans une approche intimiste, personnelle. Ces deux hommes, inconnus l'un de l'autre en 1945, et qui se sont pourtant croisés à Buchenwald, se retrouveront, quelques années plus tard, en 1995, pour remémorer cette épreuve douloureuse. De cette rencontre, il nous faut absolument retenir cet enseignement: « le besoin de raconter aux «autres» a acquis chez nous, avant comme après notre libération, la violence d'une impulsion immédiate, aussi impérieuse que les autres besoins élémentaires » (Levi, 1999, p. 8) c'est pourquoi « Se taire est impossible ».

<sup>5</sup> Voir URL: <http://www.lepoint.fr/actualites-chroniques/2007-01-17/elie-wiesel-le-sage-et-la-fo-lie/989/0/9722> [disponible le 17 janvier 2007].

<sup>6</sup> Voir URL : [http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2010/10/07/elie-wiesel-c-est-la-langue-francaise-qui-m-a-choisi\\_1421483\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2010/10/07/elie-wiesel-c-est-la-langue-francaise-qui-m-a-choisi_1421483_3260.html) [disponible le 7 octobre 2010].

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# Estudios Culturales y ELE: ¿matrimonio de conveniencia?

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## Resumen

Este breve trabajo pretende ofrecer a la comunidad de profesores de Español como Lengua Extranjera en el ámbito universitario una propuesta teórico-práctica a modo de unidad didáctica comprendida en la disciplina de Historia Cultural Española. La unidad pivota en torno a tres disciplinas artísticas (cine, artes plásticas y literatura) para acercar a los estudiantes extranjeros un movimiento global como lo fue la Vanguardia del Surrealismo, a partir de los ejemplos concretos de tres grandes artistas: Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí y Federico García Lorca.

**Palabras clave:** ELE, Surrealismo, Historia Cultural.

## Abstract

This paper intends to provide the teaching community of Spanish as a Foreign Language within Higher Education with a theoretical and practical proposal that consists of a unit plan for the course of Spanish Cultural History. The unit covers three artistic disciplines (cinema, plastic arts and literatura) to enable foreign students to become familiar with a global *avant-garde* movement such as Surrealism, based on specific examples from three artists: Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca

**Keywords:** Spanish as a Foreign Language, Surrealism, Cultural History.

## 1. Propedéutica

¿Es suficiente el conocimiento lingüístico de un idioma para que un hablante no nativo pueda articularse comunicativamente como si lo fuera? ¿Bastan los conocimientos sintácticos, léxicos, gramaticales, para moverse en una lengua extranjera con comodidad y solvencia? La comunidad docente sabe que no y por tal motivo, muchos de los programas universitarios no oficiales dirigidos a estudiantes extranjeros combinan asignaturas como Conversación o Gramática, con materias como Literatura o Cultura. En esos casos, el profesor debe asumir dos parámetros iniciales para diseñar los contenidos de su asignatura: 1) existirá una distancia notable entre el dominio idiomático y el nivel de madurez intelectual de sus interlocutores, los estudiantes; y 2) en el contexto de estudiantes no europeos, hallará una importante brecha entre los referentes culturales y el conocimiento del mundo que tiene él, el docente, y los que tienen sus alumnos.

Llegados a este punto, debemos preguntarnos: ¿son la distancia idiomática y la cultural un obstáculo para la transmisión de la Historia Cultural de un determinado territorio, estado o nación? A salvar este escollo debe encaminarse el particular diseño de la materia que realice el docente. En este capítulo, ofreceremos, justificaremos y desarrollaremos una unidad didáctica que persigue dicho objetivo.

Para el establecimiento de un sucinto marco teórico que nos permita enfrentarnos a nuestro propósito pedagógico, nos hemos encontrado con cierto vacío académico referido al enfoque global de la Historia Cultural en el aula de Español como Lengua Extranjera (ELE, a partir de ahora). Sí existen aportaciones a propósito de la utilización del cine como herramienta de aprendizaje (Davis, 2011, pp. 1489-1491; López Vázquez, 2012, pp. 167-172), de la conjugación entre el cine y la literatura (Hernández Mercedes, 2014, pp. 18-24), y de la intersección entre el cine y la historia en la clase de ELE (López Fernández, 2010).

Quizá no estaría de más definir la óptica de la Historia Cultural, para lo cual es fundamental recabar en el ensayo de Peter Burke, ¿Qué es la Historia Cultural?, en el que se acerca a la descripción de “cultura” como un “vasto repertorio de objetos (imágenes, herramientas, etc.) y prácticas (conversación, lengua, juego)” (Burke, 2006, p. 45). Porque, efectivamente, los objetos y representaciones de la amplia perspectiva de la Historia Cultural nos surtirán, en el contexto de la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera, de multitud de recursos.

## 2. Las Vanguardias: Cine, Literatura y Bellas Artes. Un caso práctico

La unidad didáctica que les presentamos se ha construido para estudiantes del nivel B2, según el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas, y está diseñada en el marco de la asignatura “Historia de la Cultura Española” del Programa Dartmouth College-Universitat de Barcelona. En este aspecto, cabe destacar que son estudiantes que llevan a cabo sus cursos universitarios en Estados Unidos, si bien pueden proceder de muy variados orígenes a lo largo y ancho del planeta; los denominadores comunes son siempre un similar nivel idiomático y una gran capacidad de trabajo, de autonomía personal y de curiosidad por adquirir conocimientos. Por el contrario, el docente puede contar con un número variado de estudiantes de un año para otro (entre 10 y 25 por grupo), y una formación universitaria muy diversa (que necesariamente debe utilizarse como baza, como hallazgo para el grupo-clase, y no como lastre) y, en consecuencia, con intereses personales muy distintos.

Llevo implementando la materia y esta unidad didáctica, concretamente, desde hace tres años, período durante el cual he adaptado y mejorado las actividades para adecuarlas al logro de los objetivos pedagógicos. Es obvio que la asignatura de “Historia de la Cultura Española” no es un mero pretexto para el aprendizaje lingüístico: si bien es una herramienta fundamental para reforzar las habilidades comunicativas (orales y escritas) y el nivel léxico, en Historia de la Cultura el docente debe transmitir una forma completa de ver el mundo, la particular óptica desde la que los hablantes construimos nuestra forma de contemplar la realidad y de interactuar con ella.

En cuanto al desarrollo de las clases, entendemos que es un requerimiento propio del perfil de estudiante del siglo XXI combinar la exposición de conocimientos teóricos con la práctica de los mismos y con el apoyo de material audiovisual. Asimismo, creemos que el auténtico aprendizaje, el que permanece a pesar del paso del tiempo, es el aprendizaje significativo (en el sentido fijado por David P. Ausubel en *Adquisición*

y retención del conocimiento, 2002). Para ello, es esencial involucrar al grupo de estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje. La particular naturaleza idiosincrática del sistema educativo estadounidense nos brinda estudiantes que, por norma, son muy activos en clase y que tienen asumida la participación dinámica como rutina habitual. A su vez, es imprescindible en el aula la evaluación competencial. Ciñéndonos al marco educativo europeo, el docente evaluará al alumno a partir del desarrollo de las competencias fijadas en los planes docentes. En este sentido, nos quedamos con la interesante definición de Gérard Scallon (en *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans une approche par compétences*, 2004, p. 107) que prioriza la capacidad de un estudiante para “movilizar” sus saberes y su saber hacer en diversos contextos, bien se hayan adquirido dichos saberes por recursos propios como por recursos externos.

Además de los contenidos, el profesor evaluará competencias comunes como:

- 1) Capacidad de aprendizaje y responsabilidad (capacidad de análisis, de síntesis, de visión global y aplicación de los conocimientos en la práctica; capacidad de toma de decisiones y de adaptación a nuevas situaciones).
- 2) Capacidad comunicativa (capacidad de comprender y de expresarse oralmente y por escrito en catalán, castellano y una tercera lengua, con dominio del lenguaje especializado; capacidad de buscar, utilizar e integrar la información).

Y, asimismo, contemplará la competencia transversal siguiente:

- 3) Actitud crítica y capacidad de síntesis para identificar los conceptos que remiten a las claves ideológicas y estéticas de cualquier producto cultural.

A la hora de configurar el temario de la asignatura, se optó por un parámetro diacrónico que resiguiera los grandes hitos de la Historia Española, sus luces y sus sombras, con calas puntuales en momentos cronológicos que permitan abordar una visión más amplia y desarrollar una reflexión de alcance global.

En este sentido, les resulta siempre de gran interés la unidad temática acerca de las Vanguardias Artísticas Europeas, que centramos en el caso de Salvador Dalí y el Surrealismo, y que nos permite trabajar de forma interdisciplinar, aunando materias como el Cine, la Literatura y las Bellas Artes.

### 2.1. Estructura y método

Para comenzar, consideramos ineludible partir de una Introducción histórica que describa cómo las vanguardias artísticas europeas surgen en el intervalo de tiempo que media entre el acontecer de las dos grandes guerras mundiales. Cómo, de alguna forma, esa voluntad de ruptura, de cambio con los paradigmas anteriores, resulta, no de un mero capricho, no de un juego, sino de una profunda reflexión acerca del ser humano y de cómo la profunda crisis de valores que lleva padeciendo desde finales del XIX ha conducido a Europa a la bancarrota moral de un conflicto entre naciones. Se citan las principales vanguardias artísticas europeas (cubismo, dadaísmo, futurismo, surrealismo) y se proyectan ejemplos de obras de arte o se explican los procesos de creación dadaístas, que son siempre un recurso muy efectivo para provocar la distensión y el humor en el aula. Ante la proyección de imágenes, el docente ofrece



siempre un espacio medido (5-10 minutos) para el comentario, las preguntas o el debate, por parte del grupo clase.

A continuación, nos centramos en la definición del Surrealismo. A priori, es fundamental llevar a cabo unos minutos de lluvia de ideas: el sustantivo “surrealismo”, así como el adjetivo “surrealista”, son términos de uso común en español coloquial, de forma que han ampliado su base de significado a otros contextos. La lluvia de ideas permite saber el conocimiento léxico que tienen los estudiantes y permite contrastar ejemplos sintácticos de esos distintos contextos de aplicación. Después del debate entre los estudiantes, el docente explica el surgimiento histórico del movimiento de vanguardia del surrealismo, así como su etimología (‘surrealismo’ o ‘súperrealismo’). Es decir, cómo en un contexto de ruptura para con el paradigma sociomoral de la burguesía europea, los jóvenes surrealistas pretendían, con las teorías freudianas como base, lograr la liberación moral del ser humano a partir de la quiebra de las cadenas impuestas por el entorno social; o cómo en un contexto de crisis de valores espirituales, los jóvenes vanguardistas querían recuperar al niño que llevamos todos dentro para devolver la ingenuidad, la pureza, a la vida del hombre.

El docente debe enumerar los distintos tabúes y prejuicios contra los que luchaban los creadores surrealistas (morales, sociales, religiosos, sexuales...) y explicar los diversos procedimientos creativos que seguían para romper, desde el mismo proceso de creación, con todas esas cadenas. Normalmente, nos centramos en la descripción de la escritura automática y en las herramientas de la libre asociación y de la analogía. Estos dos últimos recursos nos servirán para construir proteicos ejercicios orales de trabajo léxico. Para que entiendan cómo funciona la libre asociación, les explicamos el poema de las vocales de Rimbaud y, *a priori*, realizamos el experimento de preguntar de qué color es la vocal “e”, que siempre les parece verde, sea cual sea su procedencia y su idioma materno. A partir de esa explicación, llevamos a cabo el ejercicio oral: el docente plantea una imagen o concepto y crea una cadena con los estudiantes, de forma que cada uno una al concepto anterior una imagen a partir de la libre asociación. Seguidamente, se les fija la diferencia entre analogía y metáfora. Para romper con la rutina anterior, se crean parejas entre los estudiantes para que jueguen a crear analogías con conceptos cotidianos (el docente puede restringir el campo semántico, por ejemplo, o reducirlo a los objetos presentes en el aula).

Con estas actividades se potencia, desde el primer momento, la participación dinámica en clase, se rompe el hielo inicial, y se trabaja con la facultad imaginativa y, sobre todo, con el nivel léxico.

El momento histórico de las Vanguardias es especialmente fecundo a la hora de plantear una unidad didáctica interdisciplinar, pues contaban con una idea global, totalizadora, del Arte. Así, trabajaremos con tres disciplinas fundamentales: las bellas artes, la literatura y el cine.

El ejemplo literario escogido será el volumen *Poeta en Nueva York* de Federico García Lorca; el cinematográfico, *Un perro andaluz*, de Luis Buñuel (con escenografía de Salvador Dalí); y el pictórico, *El gran masturbador*, del pintor catalán. La idoneidad de los tres ejemplos no solo es de fondo, en lo que respecta al contenido y a su representatividad como obras surrealistas, sino que se publicaron, expusieron



o proyectaron en el mismo año de 1929: el gran año del Surrealismo español. La sincronía de las tres obras ayuda a los estudiantes a comprender los diálogos que se establecían coetáneamente entre los creadores, que, además, tuvieron especiales relaciones personales (Lorca y Dalí, Dalí y Buñuel).

## 2.2. La literatura y las vanguardias históricas

La elección de *Poeta en Nueva York* no solo es acertada por la calidad intrínseca de los poemas, sino porque a los estudiantes norteamericanos les resulta particularmente interesante ver cómo un español contempló una ciudad que les es familiar a casi todos y cuya historia (en especial, el crack del 29) conocen de antemano. De alguna forma, se acelera la empatía entre el conocimiento que el profesor propone y los estudiantes del aula. Se lee, explica y comenta el poema “Danza de la muerte” en clase, a partir de los siguientes factores:

- a) Significación histórica del título (tradición literaria)
- b) Definición léxica de todas las dudas que presenta el poema
- c) Interpretación de las imágenes
- d) Conclusiones de lectura

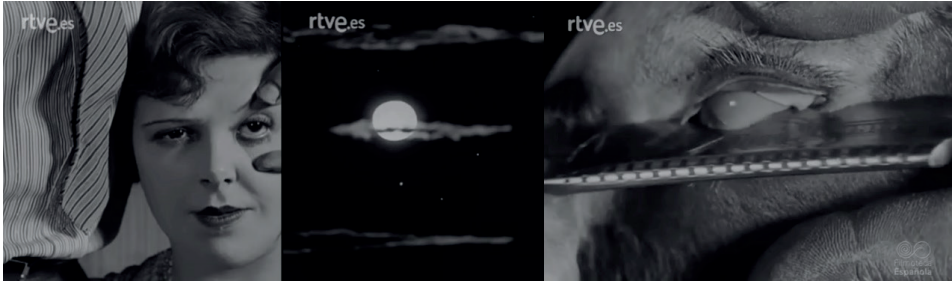
La duración de esta actividad siempre depende del nivel idiomático de los estudiantes, de su bagaje cultural y de su particular sensibilidad hacia el género lírico, pero no está de más que el profesor destine media hora de clase a su realización.

## 2.3. La escuela de la mirada: el cine

El segundo ejemplo de arte surrealista, el cinematográfico, se articulará a partir de la proyección de la película *Un perro andaluz* de Luis Buñuel, que dura aproximadamente veinte minutos y está disponible, en una buena versión remasterizada por la Filmoteca Española, en la página web de YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOoL8nCAMUU>). La utilización de películas, cortometrajes o documentales en la clase de aprendizaje de idiomas está ampliamente avalado por estudios académicos. Destaca la aseveración de Sherman que establece que el cine “proporciona un amplio y actualizado conjunto de material lingüístico compuesto de acentos, vocabulario, gramática y sintaxis, y todo tipo de discursos; mostrándonos la lengua en la mayor parte de sus usos y contextos, algo que ni el libro de texto ni el aula pueden hacer” (Sherman, 2003, p. 2). El caso de *Un perro andaluz* no responde a estos beneficios, pues estamos ante un ejemplo de cine mudo. Sin embargo, la visualización gráfica de las nociones teóricas del principio de la clase bien vale su inclusión en el aula de ELE.

El profesor se detendrá en tres secuencias:

- 1) Secuencia de la navaja de afeitar (Minutos 1'-2'05"): si no han visto antes la película, suele ser una escena de gran impacto y muy útil para explicar la utilización surrealista del miedo, del dolor y del asco como mecanismos de liberación íntima del individuo.



**Figura 1.** Secuencia de la navaja de afeitar (minutos 1'-2'05'')  
(Fuente: Filmoteca Española. Modificada: elaboración propia.)

- 2) Secuencia de asociación de imágenes por analogía (Minutos 5'30''-5'55''): se les recuerda la actividad previa y se comentan las características que permiten a Buñuel enlazar una imagen con otra (forma, color, textura...).



**Figura 2.** Secuencia por analogía (minutos 5'30''-5'55'')  
(Fuente: Filmoteca Española. Modificada: elaboración propia.)

- 3) Secuencia sobre los tabúes sexuales (Minutos 8'-11'35''): secuencia que surge de la erotización de la muerte y que continúa con el arrastrado, por parte del actor protagonista, de los tabúes sociales conectados con el sexo (religión, muerte, pecado). A esa lista cabe añadir los dardos envenenados a Federico García Lorca (asno y piano) y el cameo del mismo Salvador Dalí, disfrazado de sacerdote.





**Figura 3.** Secuencia sobre los tabúes sexuales (minutos 8'-11'35'')  
Fuente: Filmoteca Española. Modificada: elaboración propia.

El profesor puede dedicar unos minutos (10-15') a la reflexión en torno a la película, a las sensaciones experimentadas y a la posible intención del director aragonés, Luis Buñuel, a la hora de crearla.

#### 2.4. Salvador Dalí, surrealista universal

Por último, nos centramos en el ejemplo pictórico: *El gran masturbador* de Salvador Dalí. Se proyecta la imagen de la obra y se lleva a cabo una rueda de reconocimiento de todos los objetos que aparecen en el cuadro. Es interesante que introduzcamos a los alumnos en el conocimiento de las principales pinacotecas españolas, para incentivar su visita siempre que sea posible; así, es recomendable proyectar las imágenes acudiendo a la página web del museo que alberga la obra, que en el caso de *El gran masturbador* es el Museo Reina Sofía (<http://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/visage-du-grand-masturbateur-rostro-gran-masturbador>).

El profesor debe lograr que todos los estudiantes participen e identifiquen al menos un objeto, que deberán anotar para confeccionar un listado (10-15 minutos). A continuación, se les pide que intenten establecer una clasificación temática de los objetos del cuadro (5'). La finalidad de esta actividad radica en acercar a los estudiantes al universo de imágenes, temas y motivos propio de Salvador Dalí: el mundo de la fertilidad y del erotismo (huevos, conchas, atributos sexuales humanos); los miedos singulares (insectos); el dolor (anzuelo); el tema de la soledad; etc. El profesor debe guiar la puesta en común (10-15') para que el grupo clase alcance la interpretación correcta de la obra de arte.

Finalmente, como actividad para fijar los contenidos, se les pedirá que, en parejas, elaboren una lista de características comunes a los tres ejemplos (10 minutos).

Como actividad de consolidación, se propondrá a los estudiantes que, en el plazo de una semana, entreguen un comentario de otra obra pictórica de Salvador Dalí (800 palabras) donde demuestren haber asumido los contenidos explicados.

En función de la naturaleza del grupo clase, esta propuesta didáctica se desarrollará a lo largo de una clase y media o de dos clases (de una hora y media cada sesión).

### 3. Conclusiones

Como ha podido comprobarse, la interdisciplinariedad del enfoque de la Historia Cultural es completamente adaptable a los objetivos de la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera. Permite aglutinar muy distintos materiales, a partir de los cuales se trabajan habilidades como la comprensión lectora, la expresión oral, el desarrollo de la imaginación y de la sensibilidad artística. Asimismo se amplía el nivel léxico de los estudiantes. Y, en definitiva, se les abre una ventana a un particular momento histórico de nuestro país y a uno de los engranajes que puede permitirles comprender cómo habitamos el mundo.

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## George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language". Euphemisms and metaphors in wartime Britain

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### Abstract

Language and politics are two inextricable concepts for George Orwell, who, writing during and after the 2nd World War context in Britain, criticised the vagueness, the excessive use of phraseology and the powerful influence of metaphors in political language. According to the author: "In our own time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible (...). Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness." (Orwell, 2000, p. 356). In a decaying time when the general political atmosphere was therefore negative, the language was also unscrupulous as it suffered from the schizophrenia, vagueness, metaphorical style and lies that defined politics in post-war Britain (Orwell, 2000, pp. 348-9). An opponent of inkhorn terms, Orwell loathed the use of the hundreds of foreign words and phrases current in English and believed that the English language, or as he highlights, "Saxon words", would cover the needs of political writers instead of Latin or Greek or/and other loans. In this article, we intend to analyse Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English language", focusing on the English political context of that period, as well as to scrutinise Orwell's idea of language concreteness by delving into metaphorical phraseology and the inkhorn controversy. We will also emphasize Orwell's contemporary relevance.

**Keywords:** phraseology, metaphors, English language, politics.

### 1. Introduction

George Orwell, a pseudonym of Eric Blair, was born in 1903 and died in 1950, having therefore witnessed the bloodiest events in Europe and in the world in the first half of the twentieth century, namely the two World Wars and the Spanish civil war. These events would definitely shape his character not only as a writer but also as a person. As a result, he became one of the most influential writers describing the 1930s and 1940s, of such importance to understand the twentieth century, even though he was not the most prolific of writers (Ingle, 1993, p. viii). Ironically, his other works would only be studied after the publication of *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). The former brought him fame and the latter would ultimately consolidate his success, though only posthumously. Widely read around the world, more than 50,000 copies of *Nineteen Eighty Four* were sold in America in 1984 (Ingle, 1993, p. viii). This shows the scope and relevance of the work a few decades after it had been published.

Nonetheless, nowadays Orwell is again on the roll as he has been much referred to by the world press and opinion makers regarding US President's populism. As Donald Trump is constantly turning fire on the media, he is undeniably threatening, and thus severely putting at stake, individual freedom and freedom of the press so much



acclaimed by the US Constitution. The Orwellian ideas of doublethink, doublespeak and alternative truths or facts, as depicted in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, are now being recovered and are under the press spotlight (Hern, 2017; Swayn, 2017).

*Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* were written under the auspices of the Second World War and they represent two severe attacks and criticisms on totalitarianism, fascism and communism. The most popular Orwellian phrase, ‘Big Brother is watching you’ has become part not only of the English language but of numerous languages. Peculiarly, this phrase is now more than ever tremendously contemporary as our individuality is thoroughly scrutinised. New words and phrases such as CCTV cameras, terrorism, Islam, Taliban, Isis, just to name a few, became part of our everyday lexicon.

Even nearly 70 years after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty Four*, the phrase still echoes in democratic countries as a warning against the dangers of totalitarian political regimes and of the schizophrenia associated with the total control of one’s individual freedom. In addition, because the idea of fear about terrorism has been widely instilled in people’s minds, scapegoating is conducted by right-wing populists against, mainly, every Muslim who, most of the times, are not to blame. This metonymical style makes the language of current times rather inceptive and thus extremely powerful as Islamophobia has been much endorsed by the western world.

Acclaimed a writer who denounced and understood the real essence of the Soviet world, Orwell became crucial reading. Still, his literary legacy extends far beyond the two renowned abovementioned works. Besides revealing himself a cunning novelist, we must also mention the importance of his essays, war commentaries broadcast at the BBC, literary and film reviews, so revealing of the author’s life and true personality. Timothy Garton Ash (1998) underlined this much specific intertwining liaison as one of the reasons for his success as a writer. To the question “Why Orwell?”, and not other better writers, Garton Ash pointed out the close relationship between life and his works, as he argued the following:

The pure literary merit of any individual piece becomes secondary as you navigate the intimate infolding of life and work. You discover multiple connections: between the books Orwell reviewed and those he wrote, between his own love life and those of his characters (...). (parag. 5)

As an essayist, Orwell wrote acute and pungent essays regarding the economic and social crisis that England was living in the 1930s and 1940s. From politics to children literature, leisure or other daily aspects of life, Orwell managed, in his essays, to capture the essence of popular culture of his own time, reaching thus a wider audience that would also identify with the writer. Robert Pearce (1997) gave him the epithet of an “elastic brow” being “surely one of the most remarkably broad-sighted and acute historical witnesses of our time and our world in the first half of the twentieth century” (p. 4). To Jeffrey Meyers (2000, p. 266), Orwell had the ability to transform the essay, which normally lacks the glamour and grandeur of a novel, into something deep, serious and vivacious.

*Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*, two of Orwell’s most acclaimed works, will

not represent the crux of this article, despite their implicit importance, but we will focus primarily on one of Orwell's political essays: "Politics and the English Language" first published in April 1946 in the London literary magazine *Horizon*. We will analyse Orwell's essay from linguistic and cultural viewpoints, focusing on the English political status quo of the period Orwell lived in, as well as highlight Orwell's solutions to the problem of language vagueness and slovenliness, in an attempt to get rid of metaphors and ambiguity in the political language of his own time.

## 2. The political context: the role of writers in the war period

A left-wing man, as he was a confessed socialist, Orwell believed that, in a political period as they were living during the war, even (or especially) writers could not become alien and indifferent to the dangers of totalitarianism and therefore needed to take a stand with their major weapon: writing.

Orwell's true nature was to become a writer, as he confessed in "Why I Write" "From a very early age, perhaps the age of five or six, I knew when I grew up I should be a writer" (Orwell, 2000, p. 1). Indeed a critical writer and with a profound sense of aestheticism, Orwell always devoted himself to writing good prose free of venalities and with a political purpose claiming that "no book is genuinely free from political bias" (p. 4). In a very turbulent warfare period, Orwell could not have only written ornate or merely descriptive books. Quite on the contrary, his political loyalties forced him "into becoming a sort of pamphleteer", as he specified in "Why I Write" (Orwell, 2000, p. 4) in 1946.

Looking back to what he had then already written, Orwell (2000) stated in that same essay that:

Good prose is like a window pane. (...) looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a political purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally. (p. 7)

The writers could not keep out of politics in a period in which language was at the service of propagandistic demands to meet totalitarian goals, being hence deceitful, as Orwell (2000) confirmed:

The great enemy of clear language is insincerity, when there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words, and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink. (p. 357)

The main *leitmotiv* of Orwell's writings was, in fact, to transform political writing into an art (Orwell, 2000, p. 5), however always telling the truth without violating his literary instincts. For that purpose, language clarity was the key to exposing lies in a period of downright propaganda.

## 3. Metaphorical phraseology and ambiguity in political rhetoric

A political text reflects an intimate and unavoidable link between language

and ideology. According to Adrian Beard (2000), it is how language, a means of communication, is used that we are able to understand “how the ideas have been shaped” (p. 18). Thus “language reflects the ideological position of those who have created it” (p. 18). Rhetorical devices such as metaphors and metonyms are frequently used in the language of politics. Beard (2000) upheld the idea that “a metaphor is deeply embedded in the way we construct the world around us and the way that world is constructed for us by others” (p. 21).

Carmine Gallo (2016) also stressed the power of metaphors in political life throughout history. Not only are they very fierce and influential tools in the propagandistic political language, but they are also the strongest allies of political campaigns, ultimately setting the terms to victory. In *Ted Talks*, James Geary (2009), emphasizes the idea that “metaphors trigger analogies and open the door to discoveries”, unveiling a quite defined path backed up by the metaphor itself. To Geary:

[A] Metaphor lives a secret life all around us. We utter about six metaphors in political language. Metaphorical thinking is essential to how we understand ourselves and others, how we communicate, learn, discover and invent. But metaphor is a way of thought before it is a way with words. (min. 0:11)

Similarly, Orwell was pretty aware of the ubiquity of metaphors in political language. The famous Party slogans in *Nineteen Eighty Four* “War is Peace, Freedom is slavery, Ignorance is Strength” (Orwell, 2009, p. 6) utterly exemplify the pervasiveness of a metaphor.

According to Orwell’s definition, “all issues are political issues and politics was a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia” (p. 357); therefore, language, if being at the service of propagandistic demands, must suffer and turn itself into very bad condition: “When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer” (p. 357). According to Edmund Fawcett (2014), “Orwell dwelt on the use and abuse of words in politics” (p. 333) and, in the essay “Politics and the English Language”, “Orwell expressed perhaps his single strongest conviction (...) that bad speech could lead to political folly, violence and oppression” (p. 333). Nonetheless, “Politics and the English Language” represents an attempt to shed some light on the falsities of political messages covered up by figures of speech, such as metaphors, euphemisms and specific phrases.

In “Politics and the English Language”, Orwell shows evidence of the decline of the English language as a result of the decadence of dictatorial regimes and inappropriate usage by tradition and imitation. Corrupted language was therefore the result of mainly political and economic wrongdoings. According to Orwell, the prose of his time was not concrete and was filled with meaningless words often used in a “consciously dishonest way”, for example words such as *democracy*, *freedom*, *patriotic*, *justice*, *equality*, just to name a few (p. 353).

Orwell’s belief was that the abusive and inappropriate use of metaphorical phraseology turned the language into something imprecise and rendered to a staleness of imagery as it was easier to use worn-out metaphors than inventing new



phrases. Orwell called them “dying metaphors” being “twisted out of their original meaning without those who use them even being aware of the fact.” (p. 351), e.g. *toe the line, ride roughshod over, stand shoulder to shoulder with, play into the hands of, no axe to grind, fishing in troubled waters, on the order of the day, Achilles’ heel* (p. 351). Orwell added another example just to make his point clear, *the hammer and the anvil*, stating that the expression was wrongly used as it implies that the anvil suffers the most harm and not the other way round as it happens in real life (p. 351).

Another common and decayed technique was the use of operators or verbal false limbs, consisting mainly on the elimination of simple verbs such as *break, stop, spoil* or *mend*. It was very common in political speech for a verb to become a part of a phrase: *render inoperative, militate against, prove unacceptable, exhibit a tendency, serve the purpose of*, for example. Simple conjunctions and prepositions were also replaced by phrases such as: *with respect to, having regard to, the fact that, in the interest of, by dint of, on the hypothesis that* (p. 351). The passive voice replaced the active voice and noun constructions were used instead of gerunds.

Words like *exhibit, exploit, virtual, promote, constitute, utilize, eliminate, liquidate* replaced simpler ones and “try to bring scientific impartiality to biased judgments” (Orwell, 2000, p. 352). This is what Orwell named pretentious diction, resulting in language slovenliness and vagueness.

Orwell illustrated these language “tricks by means of which the work of prose is habitually dodged” (p. 352) with five passages, of which we reproduce two here, the first stated by Professor Lancelot Hogben and the second reproduced in a Communist pamphlet:

2. Above all, we cannot play ducks and drakes with a native battery of idioms which prescribes such egregious collocations of vocables as the Basic *put up with* for *tolerate* or *put at a loss* for *bewilder*. (...)

4. All the ‘best people’ from the gentlemen’s clubs, and all the frantic Fascist captains, united in common hatred of Socialism and bestial horror of the rising tide of mass revolutionary movement, have turned to acts of provocation, to found incendiarism, to medieval legends of poisoned wells, to legalize their own destruction to chauvinist fervor on behalf of the fight against the revolutionary way out of the crisis. (pp. 349-350)

These are just two good examples of the mental vices language was suffering then. Orwell was very critical about the lack of precision these examples display. Orwell (2000, p. 355) advised Professor Hogben to find the meaning of ‘egregious’ in a dictionary. As Professor Hogben disapproved the usage of everyday phrases, such as *put up with* or *put at a loss*, egregious was not probably the best adjective to define them.

Concerning the other example, Orwell criticised the “accumulation of stale phrases” that “choke” the writer of the pamphlet “like tea-leaves blocking a sink” (p. 355).

#### 4. The Inkhorn controversy: standard English versus loan words

The inkhorn controversy dates back to the sixteenth century, a period of considerable scientific, cultural, social and political changes. Consequently, language would also become permeable to inevitable transformations. During the sixteenth century and early seventeenth, this dispute over language expansion and inkhornism (Crystal, 2003, p. 61) was much debated by the language purists and the defenders of the use of loan words. The latter believed that the words of the vernacular language, i.e. English, did not conform to the scientific discoveries or were not adequate when translating classical works. Therefore, Latin and Greek words and other loan words were added. In fact, throughout the sixteenth century, the English language became widely accepted and suffered many changes at all levels. During the Renaissance, many new foreign borrowings entered the language. In opposition, the language purists believed the texts should be written in English so that the new learning could be “brought within the reach of the English public” (Crystal, 2003, p. 60). Consequently, Latin was gradually losing its status as the language of scholarship, as David Crystal (2003) so well put it:

The controversy over which kind of English lexicon to use should not be allowed to obscure the fact that English was now widely accepted as the language of learning. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the situation had been very different, with Latin still established as the normal language of scholarship. All over Europe, vernaculars were criticized as crude, limited, and immature. (p. 61)

Sounding much like 16<sup>th</sup> century scholars defending the use of Saxon words and opposing all the inkhorn terms that entered the language during the scientific revolution of the period, Orwell (2000) also stood against the use of borrowed adjectives, such as: *epoch-making, historic, epic, triumphant, inexorable, veritable*, “used to dignify the sordid process of international politics” (p. 352) and other archaic words, for example: *realm, throne, chariot, glorify war, sword, shield, jackboot, clarion, trident* (p. 352).

Orwell despised the fact that Latin, Greek and other foreign words were used to give just an air of culture and elegance. He highlighted these words as examples: *cul de sac, ancien régime, deus ex machina, mutatis mutandis, status quo, Gleichschaltung* (p. 352). Orwell (2000) explained the reason in the following statements:

Except for the useful abbreviations, i.e., e.g. and etc., there is no real need for any of the hundreds of foreign phrases now current in English. Bad writers, and especially scientific, political and sociological writers, are nearly always haunted by the notion that Latin or Greek words are grander than Saxon ones, and unnecessary words like expedite, ameliorate, predict, extraneous, deracinated, clandestine, sub-aqueous and hundreds of others constantly gain ground from their Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers. (p. 352)

Orwell (2000) parodied this language vagueness by translating what he considered a passage of good English into the modern English of the worst sort. The verse from *Ecclesiastics* stated the following:

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. (p. 353)

And the version in modern English would be something like this:

Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account. (p. 353)

Used mainly to deceive people, political language is liable to a lifeless, imitative style at the service of a vicious orthodoxy. The mechanic repetition of such phrases turns human beings into some sort of dummies and machine-like individuals. The archetypal example of this language is brilliantly represented in *Newspeak*, the propagandistic euphemistic language promoted by the dictatorial regime of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty Four*. “Doublethink”, “Big Brother is watching you” or “two plus two equals five” are recurrent phrases designed to curb freedom of speech and thought. Therefore, Orwell sets forth the idea of truth manipulation in wartime by exploring the meaning of the words democracy and fascism. That is, Orwell wanted to expose the idea that, in totalitarian states, the (wrong) idea of democracy could be indoctrinated and he believed that if the dictators imposed their own idea of democracy this would lead people to believe that they were actually in the best of political systems. Brainwashing, keeping people in ignorance were somehow two effective methods for the spread of their own version of the truth. That was why the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty Four* was so important.

According to Orwell, in post-war period, political speech and writing were largely “the defence of the indefensible”. Consequently, “political language has to consist mainly of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.” (p. 356). The author presented some examples of this type of language: *pacification* – what really means is defenceless villagers are bombarded from air; *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers* means elimination of unreliable elements. Nowadays, politicians and world leaders call it collateral damage, as Adrian Beard (2000) so well explained, reporting to the 1990s:

The shadow boxing of party politics, with its metaphor of battle, becomes less gung-ho when real victims in real wars are to be explained away. In the 1990s dead civilians became ‘collateral damage’ in a form of political language which wanted to hide the horror, while mass education (and often murder) of civilians belonging to the other side became ‘ethnic cleaning’. (p. 22)

The mixture of vagueness, slovenliness and lack of precision which shows sheer incompetence is, according to Orwell, the most marked characteristic of modern English prose and of any kind of political writing (p. 350). Nonetheless, Orwell believed the process of transforming the slovenliness and bad habits of the English language into something clear, perceptible and uncorrupt was reversible.

Despite being sloppy and corrupt, language could be cured from its main illnesses. Orwell (2000) defended the use of standard English and set some rules which represent the antidote to the poisonous threats to language, namely:

- i) Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- ii) Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- iii) If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- iv) Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- v) Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- vi) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous. (p. 359)

## 5. Conclusion

Orwell strongly defended that decayed metaphors, idioms, euphemism, and other vague language, “verbal refuse”, as the author ultimately abridged it, should be sent to the litter bin where they belong. The essay “Politics and the English Language”, even though written down in 1946, still bears some resemblance to our current political situation and remains fairly current. The rules that Orwell gives us should also be applied in our written language, political or not, and the use of euphemisms and metaphors is abundant in a world where the different cultures are becoming more and more suspicious of one another as terrorism is creating a whole new language. Metaphors are still uttered as an effective language weapon to persuade millions of people to adhere to defensive and therefore ruthless political discourses. The discourse of national populisms supported by biased ideologies is channelled into people as they fear individual difference, ultimately thinning out in the conformity of the multitudes, a danger that John Stuart Mill (1997) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also alluded to and warned against.

Orwellism is more than ever a much resounding language brand, as the expressions the author coined mainly in *Nineteen Eighty Four* or *Animal Farm* bear a strong resemblance to our current society being at the forefront of debate worldwide.

Cristopher Hitchens (2002) highlighted first and foremost Orwell’s pledge to individual freedom and language as a promoter of truth:

Orwell’s ‘views’ have been largely vindicated by Time, so he need not seek any pardon on that score. But what he illustrates, by his commitment to language as the partner of truth, is that ‘views’ do not really count; that it matters not what you think, but how you think; and that politics are relatively unimportant, while principles have a way of enduring, as do the few irreducible individuals who maintain allegiance to them. (p. 150)

To conclude, Orwell’s victory, appropriating Hitchens’s expression (2002), was the triumph of individual freedom, decency, straightforwardness, linguistic simplicity and clarity over falsity and language manipulation.

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# Mindful (re)considerations for young learner English classes

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## Abstract

Reconsidering what primary school English teachers know about learning and teaching, this paper proposes and discusses a number of key questions developed over the course of a teacher training course for young learner English classes in Portugal. From a practical hands-on perspective, these concerns range from creating a favorable learning environment and teacher training to autonomy and the exercise of creativity, musicality, and prosody at the initial learning stages. Consider for example the fact that the social structure inherent to a culture has the power to condition the context of creativity and possibilities for true communication, effectively rendering the communicative events prepared by foreign language teachers either useful or useless. Despite the prominence of syntax in most textbooks, semantics, musicality, prosody, and pragmatics carry a significant weight in learner competences; as such, teacher preparation includes harnessing opportunities for learning with creative and engaging activities that reach far beyond the learners' ability to fill in the gap. A final reconsideration involves the degree of fluency required for working with young learners and debates the relative importance of compassion and ability to connect with the students in comparison with knowing how to speak correctly, concluding with suggested ongoing activities provided for non-native teachers to develop their own level of language competences.

**Keywords:** young learner English, teacher training, EFL, creative language teaching.

## 1. A creative disposition towards teaching

Jack Richards' (2013, p. 1) keynote address at the City University of Hong Kong focused on "one quality among the many that characterize effective teachers – the ability to bring a creative disposition to teaching". His talk acknowledged that, while creativity had been previously within the domain of fashion and literature, it is now everywhere and everyone aspires to be working creatively, from politicians to industry leaders and to educators. As an educational construct, he explained, students exposed to creativity in teaching are afforded the opportunity to develop not only improved problem-solving skills but also the discernment required for taking risks, dealing with ambiguities, and using both metaphor and analogy. Richards also points out the potential for more effective discovery of patterns, which can include what is seen, heard, and felt as well as number systems, rhyme, and rhythm (cf. Burken & Coon, 2008).

Richards' expert opinion on creativity coincides with the present mindful (re) considerations of what primary school English teachers need to know about learning and teaching. The practical hands-on perspective on the key questions discussed in this article was developed throughout a teacher training course for young learner English classes in Portugal. The audacity to create a favorable learning environment in the

classroom is a primary concern, followed by issues of autonomy as well as musicality and prosody at the initial learning stages. The article concludes with a number of final reconsiderations on ongoing activities to develop language competences.

## 2. Creating a favorable learning environment

Given that the social structure inherent to a culture has the power to condition the creative context and the possibilities for true communication, it can effectively render either useful or useless the communicative events prepared by foreign language teachers. When faced with a culture-bound, established teacher-student hierarchy, the mindful teacher will be further challenged to provide opportunities for young learners of English, especially in terms of creating true moments of meaningful communication and construction of meaning. Compassion for young learners as they embark on the daring adventure that language learning represents is always called for, but especially important when the cultural expectations do not prepare students for meaningful interaction and connection with the teacher.

The dual concepts of *community of practice* and *language users* are valuable references in concerted efforts to create a favorable learning environment. Briefly explained, when a teacher determines to enforce the classroom space of a foreign language class as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & WengerTrayner, 2015; Morgado et al., 2015; Arau Ribeiro et al., 2016; Wapinska, 2016), students are invited to become a respected part of a learning community where the language and culture are practiced. To further enhance the experience, the teacher can conceptualize each and every participant (include the teacher him or herself) as a language user (cf. Cook 2002; Moore & Dooly 2010; Arau Ribeiro 2015), such that the shared responsibility for participating in the classroom activities extends to everyone, not just those students who stand out as the “good” language learners. Considering students as *language users* rather than *language learners* is more than mere rhetoric; it is a constant reminder of the teacher’s responsibility in providing relevant opportunities to actually use the target language.

Self-assessing the relevance of the theme for the month or week or the topic of a particular learning activity can give the teacher valuable predictive information about the potential engagement of language users in the classroom. As a valuable characteristic for all a teacher does and what is asked of students, relevant material can elicit increased agency and voice from engaged and, thus, actively participating students. Providing challenges, motivation, and focus in the classroom are constant strategies that can be adopted to create an encouraging environment for using the target language. The classroom should also provide a variety of possible forms of activities that attract the multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999) and learning styles (cf. Briggs Myers & Myers, 1980; Kolb, 1984; Felder & Silverman, 1988) of each and every student. As such, for the more visual students, use *realia* and let them draw, sculpt, and see. For those students who are more introverted, a strengthened understanding of what constitutes participation will be beneficial. Participation can include moments when a student demonstrates effective listening skills or when one student relinquishes the floor so that another can participate,

equitably dividing opportunities to speak. Participation also can consist of writing in online discussion boards and other written forms of expression, like journaling, reporting, or analyzing. Young e-sports fans in the classroom, the gamers of today, are not afraid of failure the way past generations were (and are) and/or have been anxious about pressing the wrong buttons since today's youth, accustomed to the iterative engagement with gaming and gamification itself, have become familiar with the benefits of a second and even a third life. These gamers interpret their apparent "death" in a game as merely leading to the next new opportunity to start again where they left off. In fact, gamification (Prensky, 2005; Zichermann, 2010) not only has repercussions on student behavior but in consumer behavior as well, with important ramifications for behavioral sciences, from which teachers can learn immensely.

Some teachers are concerned about students who may know more than they do but the solution involves the community of practice and language users since these students with high language competence can be assigned roles as peer mentors within the classroom and their language insights can be valued and respected. Errors in language use are natural and recognizing that we all make them is a decisive step toward embracing language use as a means of communication rather than as an end in itself. The mindful teacher will encourage the entire community of practice – including all the students and the teacher as defined above – to better reflect on their individual plans for improving language competence and rejoice in personal as well as community improvement and progress.

### **3. Beyond the textbook in the creative language classroom**

While syntax is the focus of most learner textbooks for foreign language, other aspects of language determine competence, such as semantics, musicality, prosody, and pragmatics. As such, maximizing opportunities for learning with creative and engaging activities that reach far beyond the learners' ability to fill in the gap will be fundamental for any teacher in training.

When young learners can grasp the musicality and the phraseology specific to English, they will have made significant progress in learning more about the language. Teachers can facilitate Awareness through activities that include kinesthetic or tactile learning, with motion and movements that enhance mind-body relevance, like clapping and stomping for stressed syllables or physically rising and falling with intonation patterns. Rounds and musical fugues, like the traditional song *Row, row, row your boat*, are a natural source of repetition, where one student or group of students begins and then is rhythmically followed at an interval that encourages listening carefully to the other singers so that everyone fits appropriately into the pattern established. Poetry, rap, jazz chants, and singing in general contribute to language awareness, focusing attention, motivating and creating an enjoyable learning environment. Recent research by Good et al. (2014, p. 627) found that long-term results in young learners in a "sung condition" specifically affected their ability to recall language patterns and pronounce English vowel sounds, while memory of the rhythmic structure could also contribute to language learning. Detractors who find that music in the classroom tends toward mayhem will find support in Mercado et al.

(2001, p. 438), who affirmed that, for less competent speakers, issues of musicality, intonation, and phraseology are irrelevant.

However, given that learning for children must be fun to be effective (Gladwell, 2000, in Sugar & Kostoroski Sugar, 2002, p. xv), music quite simply represents a non-threatening learning activity that children already love and which enhances connections, creativity, and autonomy (cf. Lee & Lin 2015 for a comprehensive review of the literature on music in the language classroom). Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), creator of the eponymous teaching method in music, was not only a Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist but also a philosopher, a linguist, and a pedagogue. Notably, users of the Kodály Method for Music Education have demonstrated that creativity is not just spontaneous originality but rather that “[c]reative efforts are intentional” (Elliott, 1995, p. 222). As such, there are many steps in the creative learning process, be they physical, spiritual, or mental, and engaging in creative activity may not be immediately enjoyable for everyone.

Nevertheless, despite initial reticence, creativity can and should be learned and any time is a good time for practicing in the classroom. To enhance language learning within a creative construct, the concept of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) suggests that the ideal would be for students to practice communicating in the face of a challenge and in the purposeful application of their competences. According to this Czech researcher, whose extensive interviews with musical and artistic geniuses around the world led to his multiple perspective paradigm on the features of flow, which in turn allow for the ideal conditions for creativity. He determined that the combination of compounded features ranges from complete involvement in an activity, a sense of ecstasy, and great inner clarity to knowing that the required competence to carry out the activity is within reach and that the activity is accompanied by a sense of serenity and timelessness. Without intrinsic motivation, however, none of this can occur. He also identified the importance of feedback and the relevance of an understanding of the rules of the given context in which the participants have the opportunity to exert some kind of control, setting up their own goals and concentrating on applying new skills. Every creative construct reveals the dual characteristics of presenting a challenge and requiring the exercise of the student’s existing abilities and skills, which is a helpful consideration for classroom planning.

#### **4. Creative teacher training without a teacher**

While teacher training may repeatedly emphasize the deep-seated obligation for demonstrating compassion for students embarking on the daring adventure of language learning, training also focuses on constructing connections with students in relevant and meaningful communication. To participate best in the construction of meaning, mindful teachers will aim to maintain or even improve their own linguistic competences by practicing in many ways, including both oral and written types of language activity, from reception and production to mediation/interaction.

The suggestions that follow deal more with speaking, reading, and writing; nonetheless, listening itself is a competence and active listening will prove to be a helpful communicative activity; on the other hand, as demonstrated in the section

titled *Tips for Educators* by the best-selling author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (Cain, 2012, pp. 348-349), introversion is not something that needs to be cured since social skills can be taught, much like teaching math or reading. Instead, as listeners, introverted students and even teachers may not be particularly interested in movement, stimulation, and collaboration, perhaps favoring listening to lectures readily available in MOOCs and videos online, or reflecting on and producing independent projects.

Mindful teachers will want to maintain or even improve their own linguistic competences by practicing in many ways, including both oral and written language activity types, from reception and production to mediation/interaction. The Pleasure Principle, generally understood as the instinctive search for pleasure and avoidance of pain, can be understood as the compulsion to work with what one likes most. As such, teachers are well-advised to follow through on their interests by reading insatiably and even developing new interests through actually listening to themselves. While some teachers feel that they must constantly be speaking as a model, research has found that most classrooms are characterized by a lack of quality in teacher talk, also discussed in the literature as teacher talk time (TTT) versus student talk time (STT) (cf. Lynch, 1996; Scrivener, 2005). It may be helpful to regularly include storytelling and questioning to focus on improving the quality of TTT in the classroom.

For written communication, truly writing by hand instead of typing or touching a keyboard is a reliable though now much-ignored metacognitive strategy according to recent neurophysiological research by Anne Mangen and Jean-Luc Velay at the Reading Centre of the University of Stavanger and the University of Marseille, respectively, since the motor activity provides cognitive feedback to the brain and enhances learning through sensorimotor involvement and perception (cf. Mangen, in *The University of Stavanger*, 2011). Then, beyond the pleasure principle, the compulsion to repeat can be understood as part of the human psyche (Freud, 1920, in Dufresne, 2011), which can work in the teacher's favor when (inter)acting in deliberate language use practice.

Digital literacy, an obligatory competence for teachers who aim for relevance, understood here as activities and topics that are useful, appropriate, and closely connected to the learners' reality, in communicating with young learners, has been recognized for over a decade, since the BBC's £150 million investment in the creation of a digital curriculum (BBC News World Edition, 2003), especially recognizable through the resulting catchphrase "Engage me or enrage me" (Prensky, 2005), where engagement in the gaming or e-sports culture occurs through ideas rather than simply through graphics and there is no shortage of concentration as long as the learners are engaged. Teachers who are less familiar with digital learning can have a direct experience when they participate in online communities for language learning, such as Live Mocha or Steve Kaufmann's LingQ or even receive corrections on their individual writing artefacts from native speakers at Lang-8. Babel is constantly looking for voluntary online tutors or teachers can try to learn the SRS (spaced repetition system) at Anki – flashcards 2.0.

Learning still more languages is an effective way to promote more multilingualism

in the world, at a time when the President of the European Language Council (Conceição, 2016) recommended more multilingualism as a solution to dealing with more interculturality. Practicing other languages can occur through intercultural exchanges that can be arranged virtually via [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and in person via [couchsurfing.com](https://www.couchsurfing.com) or alternatively through the open source online version of Learning with Texts (LWT) by J. Pierre, at [fluentin3months.com](https://fluentin3months.com), to name just a few resources that teachers in training have used concurrently with this researcher's course.

Among the studies that have characterized “good” teachers (cf. Miller, 1987; Gibbs & Habeshaw, 2003; Salter, 2013), recent findings support a combination of passion and enthusiasm with an “engaging personality, knowledge, and pedagogical skills” (Benekos, 2016, p. 225). While the first three qualities seem to be intrinsic, knowledge and pedagogical skills can clearly be learned. As teachers, it is useful to explore a variety of ways to impart knowledge and develop teaching expertise. For example, the discovery of the didactic cooking shows à la Julia Child, where steps for reaching an objective, in this case the recipe of the day, are visually demonstrated with a clear narrative, with an explanation at the very popular site, [www.kahnacademy.com](https://www.kahnacademy.com), where Sal Kahn's narrative tutorials are consistently paired with sequential graphic accompaniment. Purposeful listening along with replication or improvisation of a similarly organized presentation (even muting the sound to follow the visual representation) provides an updated model for language use.

A final note for pursuing ongoing individual teacher training is reserved for TED talks, the event phenomena that covers technology, education, and design. Not without a hint of irony, the E has been described as “edutainment” or, more specifically, “online commodified edutainment through ‘discourse technologies’” (Santini, 2014), where Sir Ken Robinson's early talk “Do schools kill creativity?” (Robinson, 2006) tops the list of the most popular talks of all time, with over 45 million views at the time of publishing. Mindful teachers who value learning and sharing will appreciate the opportunity to listen to and learn from experts who re-shape information into something that may sound like fiction with what Santini (2014) describes as *discursive democratization*. In this congenial style aimed at problem solving, listeners feel engaged in topics whose relevance is made evident by skilled public speakers, exemplifying this art for teachers to emulate in the pursuit of language competence. Researchers have debated this tendency toward informality (cf. Smith, 2003; Leech, 2003), finding that at least three “-izations” are responsible – Americanization, colloquialization, and democratization (Nokkonen, 2015, p. 55). This overarching characteristic of TED talks seems to reflect important semantic and sociolinguistic alterations also found in gender-related practice. Note that the absence of overt power markers – for example, the preferred use of *should* and semi-modals over the deontic *must* (idem.) – represents today's sociolinguistic tendencies in English, which avoid making a forceful claim to power.

The relations between languages are emphasized by the colossal effort of the TED talk transcription translation project – through which talks are voluntarily translated into more than 100 languages – while the expert speeches provide learner access to a variety of discourses (Piorecký, 2015), including political, professional, media, artistic, and literacy discourse. The potential for diversity in exposure to language models



may provide valuable support for non-native speakers who, as language teachers, aim to maintain relevancy as language users in a swiftly changing world.

## 5. Conclusions

Working with seasoned and novice teachers in training, a common question that arises is “How will I know what to do when...?” This article has proposed a number of suggestions on how to build a foreign language classroom, for example, by engaging students in creativity to enhance language learning in the face of a challenge and doing work that falls within their individual perceptions of their abilities. Teaching creatively can motivate students and create a favorable environment for learning which, through practical approaches toward the concept of a *community of practice* and the notion of the *language user*, can more effectively focus on communication. Successful implementation of these conceptual features in the classroom will become evident in the students’ behavior and their demonstrated responsibility for their own learning.

Note that, by getting “out of the textbook” to teach more semantic and prosodic features of the language and to include body-mind activities, students are further encouraged to participate physically in the classroom, where activities go beyond the pencil and paper and sitting at a desk. Finally, awareness of a foreign language cannot rely exclusively on verbal behavior, be it spoken or written, but must also contemplate non-verbal expression, all of which can be regularly trained in independent efforts by mindful teachers who notice that traditional conventions are being replaced with recognizable language norms which will then be shared in the community of practice and learning that they have created in their own language classroom.

“That which is essential cannot be seen with the eye.

Only with the heart can one know it rightly.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

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# Terminologie et didactique des langues : le mariage est-il possible pour un meilleur enseignement de la traduction ?

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## Résumé

Cet article se propose d'étudier la question des relations entre terminologie et didactique des langues et de présenter plusieurs projets de recherche en cours qui désirent mieux articuler les avancées dans les deux champs afin d'améliorer la formation en traduction.

**Mots-clés :** terminologie, didactique des langues, formation en traduction.

## Abstract

This paper aims to study the relationships between terminology and language teaching and to present several research projects that wish to better articulate the progress in the both fields in order to improve the translation training.

**Keywords:** terminology, language teaching, translation training.

## 1. Introduction

Dans cet article<sup>7</sup>, nous nous proposons d'analyser les synergies qui peuvent être établies entre terminologie et didactique des langues étrangères dans l'objectif de dépasser le dialogue de sourds qui caractérise trop souvent la relation entre ces deux disciplines pourtant essentielles pour un meilleur enseignement de la langue de spécialité mais aussi de la traduction spécialisée.

Si la didactique des langues de spécialité ne peut ignorer les apports provenant des études menées en terminologie, cette dernière ne peut en aucun cas oublier l'une des finalités de son travail. En d'autres termes, il ne s'agit pas de limiter le champ d'action de chacune des deux disciplines mais plutôt de promouvoir un enrichissement mutuel qui ne pourra que favoriser la didactique de la traduction spécialisée.

Pour exemplifier nos propos, nous évoquerons les travaux que nous menons autour de la langue juridique et que nous pensons également développer pour la langue du tourisme dans le cadre d'un projet international né à l'Université de Florence (Italie). Dans ces travaux, nous cherchons à réunir les dernières avancées de la recherche en terminologie et en didactique des langues et d'en proposer des applications concrètes pour l'enseignement de la traduction spécialisée.

En termes méthodologiques, notre recherche s'organise en plusieurs phases. La première, après l'identification des principaux besoins et difficultés des apprenants

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face à l'apprentissage de la langue de spécialité et de la traduction de textes spécialisés, consiste à décrire et analyser, sur la base d'un corpus textuel bilingue (PT-FR pour la langue juridique) ou trilingue (PT-FR-IT pour la langue du tourisme) certains phénomènes discursifs et terminologiques comme les collocations. La deuxième étape renvoie à la didactisation des faits discursifs et terminologiques étudiés pour prendre la forme soit d'un exercisier, soit d'un dictionnaire terminologique d'apprentissage, tous disponibles online. Finalement la troisième étape concerne 1) l'application pratique de ces produits dans le cadre de plusieurs cours de français de spécialité dispensés à ILNOVA, institut de langues de l'Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Français juridique I et II et Français pour le tourisme), compléments optionnels pour les étudiants en traduction de la FCSH ou pour les traducteurs déjà en exercice, et 2) l'analyse critique de l'expérimentation de ces mêmes produits afin de les optimiser ultérieurement.

## 2. L'objet d'étude et les objectifs de la recherche

Dans le cadre de nos recherches, nos efforts se concentrent particulièrement sur l'étude de la collocation verbale que nous considérons comme étant une combinaison non libre constituée d'une base (terme), choisie librement et d'un collocatif (verbe) qui permet d'attribuer un sens spécifique à l'expression et relevant à la fois de la terminologie et du discours, de l'axe paradigmatique et de l'axe syntagmatique.

Il faut noter que cette collocation implique souvent l'utilisation à la fois de la langue générale (verbe) et de la langue de spécialité (N = terme) et que, dans la plupart des cas, le verbe acquiert une acception spécialisée en contact avec la base de la collocation.

- prendre

*prendre = saisir*

*prendre une photo = photographier*

- casser

*casser = briser*

*casser un jugement = annuler un jugement*

*casser un fonctionnaire = rétrograder un fonctionnaire*

La collocation verbale est, sans aucun doute, l'une des structures qui posent le plus de problèmes aux traducteurs, notamment quand il faut choisir le collocatif correct à associer au terme. Il est important de souligner qu'il existe, en effet, une certaine restriction quant au choix du verbe collocatif. N'importe quel verbe synonyme ne pourra se substituer au collocatif d'usage (voir les exemples de « photographie » et « photocopie » ci-dessous), comme chaque verbe collocatif admis encadrera la collocation dans un type de discours particulier, du plus au moins spécialisé (voir exemple de « assurance » ci-dessous).

- photographie

*prendre une photo(graphie)*  
*faire une photo(graphie)*  
 \**tirer une photo(graphie) vs tirar uma fotografia*  
 - photocopie  
*faire une photocopie*  
 \**prendre une photocopie*  
 ?*tirer une photocopie vs tirar uma fotocopia*  
 - assurance  
*Contracter une assurance* (discours spécialisé)  
*Souscrire une assurance* (discours spécialisé)  
*Prendre une assurance* (discours vulgarisé)

Ainsi, « la maîtrise d'une langue passe par la maîtrise de ses collocations » (Lerat, 1995, p. 102) et une meilleure description des collocations s'impose donc pour pallier les manques constatés au niveau des ressources terminographiques et pédagogiques et pour permettre, dès lors, une optimisation de la formation en traduction. C'est ainsi que nous avons pour objectif de réaliser, sur la base de cette description collocationnelle, plusieurs produits numériques à caractère pédagogique, qui puissent aider le (futur) traducteur dans son travail et/ou sa formation. Certains de ces produits ont déjà été réalisés ; d'autres sont sur la voie de l'être.

### 3. Les corpus textuels

Pour réaliser cette description, nous avons à notre disposition deux corpus textuels multilingues comparables.

Le premier, bilingue, reprend des ouvrages en portugais et en français destinés aux étudiants en droit et donc marqués par le discours scientifique pédagogique. Ce corpus, appelé JURIPOR/JURIFRAN, comporte 700 000 mots.

Le deuxième, trilingue, est en cours d'élaboration. Il regroupe des guides touristiques en français, en portugais et en italien, sur les villes de Paris, Lisbonne et Florence/Pise, textes marqués par le discours de vulgarisation scientifique, du moins en ce qui concerne le domaine relatif à l'histoire de l'art. La partie française comporte déjà plus de 125 000 mots.

En plus de ces deux corpus comparables, nous disposons d'un autre, mais cette fois-ci, parallèle, reprenant toujours des guides touristiques italiens et leurs traductions respectives en français et en portugais.<sup>8</sup>

Lors de la constitution de ces différents corpus, nous privilégions les textes rédigés suivant la norme française et portugaise, laissant de côté, du moins temporairement,

<sup>8</sup> Un corpus à la fois parallèle et comparable, de plus grande envergure, est en train d'être constitué à l'université de Florence et regroupe des textes sur l'histoire de l'art et sur le patrimoine culturel florentin en huit langues (allemand, anglais, chinois, espagnol, français, italien, portugais, russe). Postérieurement, il nous sera également possible d'utiliser l'ensemble de ce corpus à des fins de recherches.

les textes relevant des variantes francophones et lusophones. Il est pertinent de noter à ce propos qu'il est particulièrement difficile de trouver des textes rédigés en portugais européen en format numérique – sur Internet ou ailleurs.

Les différents corpus comparables ont été traités avec les logiciels Hyperbase 9.0 d'Etienne Brunet de l'Université de Nice<sup>9</sup> et TernoStat Web 3.0 de Patrick Drouin de l'Université de Montréal<sup>10</sup>. Pour le corpus parallèle, l'aligneur de textes HyperMachiavel, développé par le laboratoire Triangle de l'ENS de Lyon<sup>11</sup>, est le logiciel sélectionné afin de répondre de manière satisfaisante à nos objectifs de recherche.

#### 4. L'analyse des données discursives et terminologiques

Comme déjà évoqué, nous nous intéressons particulièrement à la question des collocations verbales, véritables pièges pour le traducteur. Nous les relevons, dans les corpus, à partir du terme, mais aussi à partir du verbe grâce aux différents programmes de concordance disponibles. Suite à cela, nous procédons à un minutieux travail de sélection, sur la base de critères de fréquence, de figement mais aussi sur la base de critères terminologiques et didactiques.

En ce qui concerne les critères didactiques, nous privilégions les structures qui :

- répondent aux besoins et aux objectifs des (futurs) traducteurs. En ce sens, le choix pour tel ou tel type de textes à introduire dans le corpus sera fondamental pour l'obtention de résultats qui puissent apporter leur contribution à une réponse satisfaisante à ces mêmes besoins et objectifs.
- mettent en évidence les questions de para-synonymie. Dans les exemples suivants, les verbes sont apparemment synonymes mais le choix du collocatif n'est pas aussi libre qu'on ne pourrait le penser.
  - *modifier une loi* vs *\*altérer une loi* – mais on utilise le verbe *alterar* en portugais.
  - *approuver un traité* vs *ratifier un traité* – ici les deux collocations renvoient à des réalités bien distinctes.
- soulignent les problèmes de polysémie interne.
  - *consacrer un code* vs *consacrer un principe*
- possèdent une forte charge socio-culturelle, pouvant se révéler opaques pour les (futurs) traducteurs.
  - *casser un arrêt, une décision* – Cour de cassation
- sont des faux amis et sources de mauvaises traductions
  - *celebrar um contrato* vs *\*célébrer un contrat*
  - *conclure un contrat* vs *\*concluire um contrato*

Pour l'étude de ce type de collocation (V + N), nous nous basons principalement

<sup>9</sup> Voir <http://ancilla.unice.fr/> (consulté le 06.01.2017).

<sup>10</sup> Voir <http://termostat.ling.umontreal.ca/> (consulté le 06.01.2017).

<sup>11</sup> Voir <http://triangle.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?article1631> (consulté le 06.01.2017).

sur les travaux de Gaston Gross, Pierre Lerat et Marie-Claude L'homme qui proposent, pour l'analyse de ces structures, la théorie des schémas d'arguments (Gross 1994, 2010, Lerat 2002, 2006, entre autres) avec l'identification des types d'arguments/ classes d'objets ou celle de la structure actancielle (L'Homme 2012, 2016, entre autres) avec l'identification des actants.

- <personne physique ou morale> *conclure* <contrat>
  - *Un consommateur*     *conclut*     *un contrat*
  - *Une entreprise*                     *un accord*
  - une convention*

Remarquons que ces dernières années, il existe un intérêt croissant pour la question du verbe en terminologie. Nous citerons particulièrement les travaux de Marie-Claude L'Homme et de son équipe à l'Université de Montréal.

## 5. La didactisation des données discursives et terminologiques

Pour la didactisation des collocations, nous nous sommes inspirée de diverses théories linguistiques, appliquées notamment à la terminologie, comme les fonctions lexicales de Mel'čuk (1993, 1995, entre autres) et les théories des schémas d'arguments et des structures actancielles, mentionnées ci-dessus. Suivant celle des fonctions lexicales, il est possible de classer les collocations suivant une liste d'étiquettes sémantiques. Ainsi, pour exprimer le 'début' d'une source du droit, nous avons, entre autres, *adopter une loi, rendre un jugement, célébrer un contrat, dresser un acte* et pour indiquer la 'fin' de celle-ci, *abroger une loi, casser un jugement, rompre un contrat, annuler un acte*.

Les informations retirées de ces analyses sont tout à fait pertinentes pour l'enseignement/apprentissage de la langue de spécialité mais également pour la traduction. Elles permettent de bien appréhender l'emploi des termes en discours.

Nous sommes également attardée sur la question de:

- la nominalisation: si on peut, par exemple, nominaliser sans problème la collocation verbale *ratifier un traité*, dans d'autres cas, la nominalisation est impossible sans prendre le risque d'un glissement sémantique (*affecter un acte* – *affectation*).
- le degré de figement: certaines collocations verbales connaissent un degré de figement plus élevé entre ses différents éléments, comme c'est le cas dans *entériner une jurisprudence* où la substitution de l'un des éléments est assez difficile.
- la para-synonymie: *ratifier* vs *approuver un traité*, exemple cité ci-dessus.
- la polysémie interne: *édicter une règle* vs *édicter une peine, consacrer un code* vs *consacrer un principe*, exemple déjà cité également.

### 5.1. Exercisier « Terminologie juridique française »

Pour la langue juridique, les données obtenues des différentes analyses ont été converties en un exercisier disponible sur une plate-forme d'apprentissage en ligne et destinée aux étudiants inscrits en Français juridique, cours offert par ILNOVA, institut de langues de l'Université Nova de Lisbonne.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 1. Exercisier 'Terminologie juridique française'

Les exercices ont été élaborés à l'aide du logiciel Hot Potatoes<sup>13</sup> et organisés sur une plate-forme Moodle créée à cet effet. Au nombre d'une petite centaine, ils sont tous autocorrectifs et correspondent aux catégories mentionnées ci-dessous :

- JQuiz (QCM, questionnaires à réponse courtes)
- JCloze (textes à trous)
- JMatch (exercices d'appariement)
- JMix (puzzles)
- JCross (mots-croisés)

Dans ces exercices, les collocations sont souvent présentées dans leur contexte discursif, sur la base d'exemples repris du corpus et l'approche privilégiée est l'approche onomasiologique. Il existe également des aides, des commentaires et même la possibilité d'échanges (a)synchrones avec l'enseignant. À la fin, en guise de tâche finale, l'apprenant est amené à construire son propre dictionnaire d'auto-apprentissage des collocations juridiques.

L'exercisier suit la structure suivante:

- Exercices sur le degré de figement
- Exercices sur les para-synonymes
- Exercices sur la polysémie interne

<sup>12</sup> Cet exercisier a été présenté dans deux articles récents (DECHAMPS 2013 et 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Logiciel disponible à l'adresse suivante : <https://hotpot.uvic.ca/> (consulté le 06.01.2017).



- Exercices sur la valeur sémantique des collocations (fonctions lexicales)
- Exercices sur la structure actancielle
- Exercices sur les nominalisations
- Exercices de traduction PT-FR
- Exercices sur collocations et discours

## 5.2. Dictionnaire d'apprentissage des collocations juridiques

Ce dictionnaire d'apprentissage des collocations juridiques se trouve encore dans une phase embryonnaire. Néanmoins, un prototype a été élaboré grâce à une application gratuite disponible sur Internet, Linguae 0.15 Beta<sup>14</sup> et selon les principes établis par les linguistes Jean BINON/Serge VERLINDE (2006) et Dirk SIEPMANN (2006).

Vu la pertinence des informations recueillies dans le corpus JURIFRAN/JURIPOR pour l'élaboration notamment de l'exercisier présenté précédemment, il nous semblait important de convertir ces données en un dictionnaire qui pourra être bientôt consultable sur Internet.<sup>15</sup>

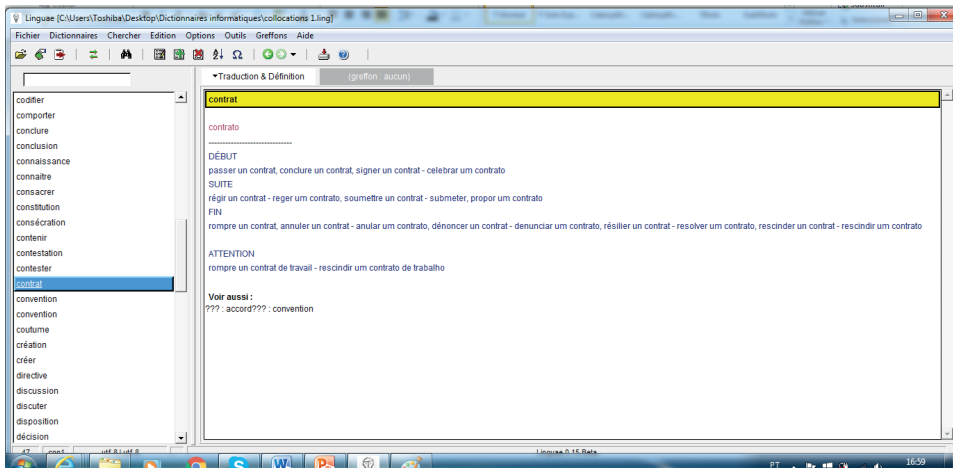


Figure 2. Dictionnaire d'apprentissage des collocations juridiques

## 5.3. Dictionnaire multilingue de la langue du tourisme – Lessico dei Beni Culturali

En ce qui concerne la langue du tourisme, nous participons actuellement à l'élaboration d'un corpus<sup>16</sup> et d'un dictionnaire terminologique multilingue de *biens culturels* dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche international basé à l'université de Florence (Italie). Notons que ce dernier ouvrage – en format électronique – ne se

<sup>14</sup> Application disponible à l'adresse suivante : <http://linguae.stalikez.info/> (consulté le 06.01.2017).

<sup>15</sup> Pour une plus ample présentation de ce projet dictionnaire, nous renvoyons le lecteur à DECHAMPS (à paraître – 1).

<sup>16</sup> Corpus déjà mentionné dans la note 1 du présent article.

limite pas à la seule description des collocations<sup>17</sup>, se présentant comme une base de données lexicographiques assez complète.

Sur la base des données reprises dans ce dictionnaire, nous pensons également créer un exercisier semblable à celui qui a déjà été fait pour la langue juridique (voir point 5.1.) et destiné aux étudiants du cours de Français pour le tourisme.

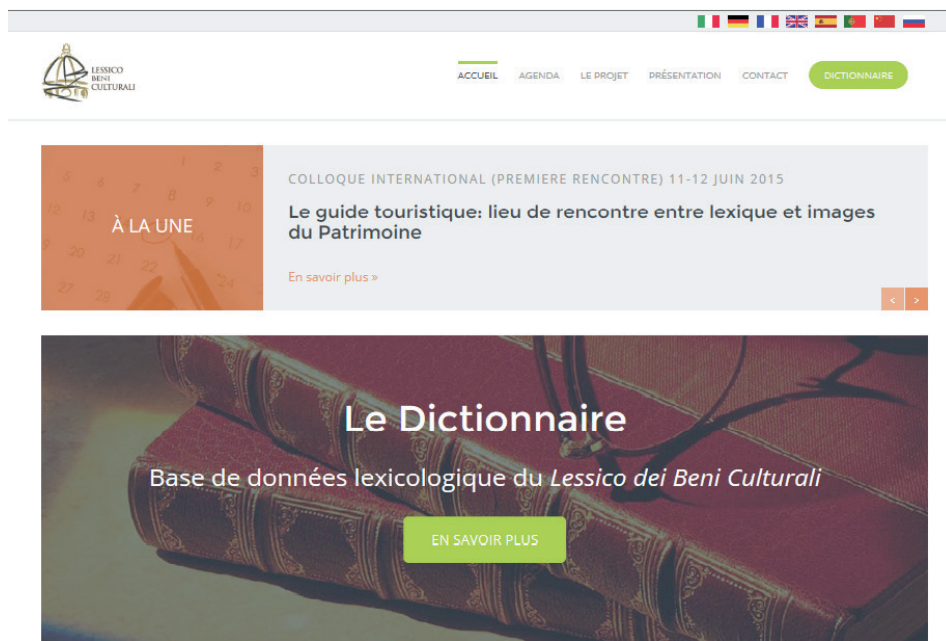


Figure 3. Base de données lexicologiques ‘Lessico dei Beni Culturali’

## 6. Analyse critique des produits pédagogiques conçus

Il est évident que les produits présentés ici, même les plus aboutis, sont loin d’être excellents et méritent une réflexion constante afin de les améliorer. En ce qui concerne l’exercisier « Terminologie juridique française » qui est aujourd’hui le produit le plus avancé, il a déjà été utilisé par plusieurs groupes d’étudiants en français juridique et en traduction juridique, professionnels ou non de la traduction. Après avoir pris conscience du phénomène collocationnel qui caractérise la langue du droit, tous ont ressenti le besoin d’en savoir plus afin d’améliorer leur maîtrise de la langue. Leurs divers commentaires sur les exercices proposés nous ont permis de procéder à quelques modifications en vue de l’optimisation du produit.

<sup>17</sup> Pour une première analyse des collocations dans la langue du tourisme, nous renvoyons le lecteur à DECHAMPS (à paraître – 2).

## 7. Conclusion

L'idée qui sous-tend nos recherches est d'éviter les cloisonnements qui existent trop souvent entre différentes disciplines et de créer, au contraire, des synergies entre celles-ci afin de tenter de répondre à des manques attestés, dans le cas présent, en didactique des langues de spécialité et de la traduction spécialisée.

La collaboration entre terminologues, spécialistes, traducteurs, enseignants et didacticiens est indispensable pour développer de produits pédagogiques de qualité qui puissent améliorer la formation. En effet, les apports de la linguistique de corpus, de l'analyse sémantique, de la lexicographie/terminographie d'apprentissage, de la didactique des langues étrangères sont fondamentaux pour la conception de produits de qualité. Nous pensons en avoir montré ici de bons exemples ou, du moins, avoir ouvert la voie pour des pistes de travail menant à ce « mariage » tant désiré.

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# The ReCLes.pt CLIL project in practice: Teaching with results in Higher Education

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## **Abstract**

Based on the project partially funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), the ReCLes.pt CLIL initiative created communities of practice and learning for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Higher Education. The project was implemented in six polytechnic institutes in Portugal to support and develop teaching in English based on a methodology that integrates content and language while attending to learners' needs in both areas. Despite the growing number of English as a Medium of Instruction classes in Higher Education, there remains a paucity of CLIL in the country, both at this and at other levels, although neighboring Spain, for example, has demonstrated an ample use of the CLIL approach, especially in primary and secondary schools. This paper provides an opportunity to get to know these communities of practice and learning in Higher Education to better understand the various ways of dealing with this concept, involving not only the English teachers but also the specific subject teachers in training. This contribution also covers the basis for this training, how the groups are formed, ways to make them work, and best practice as well as results related to monitoring and assessment over the initial three years of the project. The variety of topics and tools created for the 33 piloted modules by these communities of CLIL practice and learning have been published as part of the project. In many cases, continue to be specifically designed and then implemented and assessed in Portuguese Higher Education based on the *ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide* (Morgado et al., 2015).

**Keywords:** Content and Language Integrated Learning, Portuguese Higher Education, Community of Practice, Polytechnic Institutes.

## 1. Introduction

The ReCLes.pt CLIL project is an ongoing applied research project on the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in six Higher Education (HE) polytechnic institutes in Portugal. The innovative approach in the Portuguese context reflects the scarcity of the use of CLIL in HE. The project addresses undergraduate and graduate courses taught through English by reinforcing strategies for developing students' foreign language skills, apart from their regular English classes, and provides teacher training for professors and lecturers in HE to develop competence to teach in English and participate in CLIL communities of practice. The project received support from the FCT for a seven-month period as identified best practice in Higher Education in Portugal, comprising a review of the literature, the *ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide*, training courses, the implementation and assessment of CLIL modules to identify areas of improvement and best practices, and motivation for the local, national, and international communities of practice and learning.

The project has been developed through the Association of Language Centers in Higher Education in Portugal – ReCLes.pt – and its general design is linked to not only the specific context in Portuguese HE and the respective linguistic policies at these HEs but also the extensive literature review on CLIL experiences in HE all over Europe. Six HE polytechnics were involved – the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies and the Polytechnics of Bragança, Castelo Branco, Guarda, Porto, and Portalegre.

This article will firstly provide a theoretical background for the main topic, followed by an explanation of the methodology, then proceeding to a section focusing specifically on how the project was implemented in the participating institutions. Results and a brief discussion are interlaced within this part since the results differ from school to school. The conclusion includes a set of recommendations and ideas for the improvement of the communities of practice and learning.

## 2. Background

To establish some key concepts for the aim of this project and also to establish the specific terminology in the field, let us consider that some of the lesser known precepts in HE are that (i) teaching through English implies readjustments to educational methodologies and (ii) that HE language and content professors and lecturers (hereon referred to as *teachers*) also need to adjust their (academic) cultures *of* and *for* learning when they replace their mother tongue with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in their adoption of a CLIL approach – the integrated learning of content and language – and thus focus on student needs in terms of learning not just content but also culture, cognition, and communication.

A keener focus on the foreign language needs of students and on scaffolding techniques is needed when teaching in a language that differs from the teachers and students' mother tongue. Adopting CLIL means the fundamental embrace of code-switching as positive for acquiring and using domain-specific terminology and classroom instruction language, both implicitly when preparing classes and explicitly, for example, when teaching.



Thirdly, when used as a medium of instruction, English as a foreign language carries with it cultural assumptions of *what can be said* and *how it need to be taught*, learned, and shared in the community of practice and learning made up of CLIL teacher trainers, content teachers in training, and students. Smit and Dafouz (2012, p. 3) claim that English used as a lingua franca in tertiary education combines “the shared linguistic repertoire available to the interlocutors in multilingual educational settings with their expertise in the respective content area and its genre-specific conventions”. As in any other attempt to describe cultural dimensions, while some CLIL products, practices, people, communities, and some perspectives are made explicit through research and practice, many perspectives may remain invisible or intangible. As a result, underlying perceptions and attitudes are affected, such as highly contextualized academic cultures of learning, with direct and indirect forms of participating in CLIL. Similarly, negotiations needed to move from one set of practices to another; HE teachers may need to “give up” content topics from their syllabus because they may not make sense in English; scientific terminology may or may not gain space, depending on the domain. Much of this is visible, but parts of it are also invisible in the sense that content teachers hardly ever consider that they use a particular language and discourse to teach or that learning is about grasping the specific discourse of a particular subject, or being able to use a meta-language through which to think and reason.

Moore and Dooly (2010) call on Wenger’s (1998) notion of Communities of Practice (CoP) to highlight that CLIL operates within the new paradigm of the language user in subject-specific fields of knowledge that could be considered highly-contextualized communities of practice, where it makes no sense to separate the content from its linguistic paradigm. Form and meaning have to be negotiated together and knowledge is shaped in that complex interrelation (Moore & Dooly, 2010, p. 76). This position is based on current theories of knowledge which understand disciplines as social fields of practice, whereby language used in research and in the classroom within a certain study area constitute social practices embedded in particular contexts. They comprise “formal structures of knowledge and practices, and actors who share interests and norms (whether explicit or tacit) of knowledge production and communication” (Freebody et al., 2008, p. 191) as well as dissemination of that knowledge, for example, through teaching. There will be, according to Freebody et al. (2008, p. 192), preferred genres within each study area and favored interpretive frameworks as well as the tendency to “register combinations, ways of coordinating knowledge in language and image, ways of using abstraction and technicality”, which are often built on cross-cultural and bilingual approaches.

### 3. Methodology

The aforementioned theoretical issues support the framework for the ReCLes.pt CLIL project, which was put into practice across three stages. The first stage, during the academic year 2013-2014, focused on the need, detected across Portuguese polytechnic institutes, to assess the readiness of these HE institutions to engage with the CLIL approach in order to meet their internationalization strategy. Initial studies also explored how foreign languages are taught within these schools and the

existence and extent of language policy as well as the perceptions of governance and teaching staff of their own foreign language competences and those of their students. The aim was to start a debate and reflection on linguistic policies and the best ways to teach and learn in and through a foreign language, in this case English. Two questionnaires following Jensen and Thøgersen (2011) were used to assemble relevant data on the foreign language practices in these HE institutions. International offices, governing bodies, and teachers were interviewed and asked to describe the courses taught in English and other foreign languages, the number of international students, and their ability to participate in classes in Portuguese.

The second stage of this applied research (also in academic year 2013-2014) aimed at training CLIL teachers and creating a CLIL community of practice in Higher Education institutions through the ReCLes.pt network. During this stage, the collaborating partners prepared for training future CLIL teachers by laying the theoretical and practical framework for teacher trainers of this community and preparing adequate CLIL teaching materials and resources. Based on publications and papers/posters as well as multiple meetings (skype and face to face), and from best practice examples (in a shared database of related research), the partners used collaborative writing to produce a CLIL manual for teacher trainers – the *ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide – Creating a CLIL Learning Community in Higher Education* (also available online at <http://recles.pt/> under the tab Publications), which aims at facilitating the creation of CLIL modules and materials adapted to particular study areas and the preferred collaborative modes of each of the participating HE institutions.

This CLIL Training Guide uses the organizing principle that, in a CLIL construct, English is not used for communication alone, but to mediate knowledge, i.e. learning as a sociocultural construction of knowledge for which “students need opportunities to construct their own understanding of subject community knowledge, using appropriate frames of reference and vocabulary under expert tutelage” (Moate, 2010, p. 3).

In this stage, the *ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide* served as a guide for the local 10-hour training courses running in each participating institution, with 20 additional hours dedicated to assisted preparation of modules to be carried out by participating teachers in a classroom context. The teacher training courses, which took place from September to December, 2014, were carried out by the ReCLes.pt language specialists in each HE polytechnic and directed at other specialist staff previously identified and invited to take part in the project. The training sessions were run in a Community of Practice format (Wenger, 1998; Moates, 2010), where both the English language teacher and the specific subject teachers worked collaboratively in developing competences to use cognitive and social constructivist educational strategies to create, organize, implement, and assess a CLIL module in their own classes. In some of the local teacher training courses, the voluntary subject teachers’ English level was tested and accepted based on a minimum B2 CEFR level.

A key factor in this process that was especially valued by the subject specialists was the opportunity and time given to consider and discuss particular contexts for their respective subject areas (content organization models, methods used, forms of interaction with students, among others) as well as their own experience and

expectations regarding the prospect of teaching *through* English in order to identify how best to adequate these aspects to the CLIL framework. In an individual training log, one of the data collection tools used, a specialist teacher called attention to the fact that “the opportunity to talk about our difficulties and doubts in a friendly and known environment is very important.”

Before, during, and after the implementation of the modules (until the end of academic year 2014-2015), all specialist teachers also responded to pre- and post-implementation questionnaires and were interviewed after implementing their CLIL module. Students also completed a questionnaire about their own experience as learners in these CLIL modules.

## 4. The project in practice

The project was implemented in six different institutions following the CLIL framework and the ReCLes.pt CLIL project methodology. The specific characteristics of the community of practice and learning at each polytechnic are described in this section along with the unique CLIL modules created.

### 4.1. Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies

At the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (*Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril* – ESHTe), there were five specialist teachers selected to be a part of the first CLIL community of learning and practice. Some of the participants had previously taken part in a C1 conversation course organized by the ESHTe a couple of years earlier, while the others were assessed for speaking and writing to guarantee a minimum of B2 level in English. These specialist teachers, from areas as diverse as Event Management, Tourism and the Environment, Microbiology, Business Strategy, and Nutrition, completed the 10-hour training course divided in four weeks with an English language teacher who guided them through CLIL using the resources and methodologies outlined in the *ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide* (Morgado et al., 2015).

During the training sessions, which were based on a collaborative approach, many pedagogical concerns arose as part of the CLIL methodology. Specialist teachers were particularly concerned about the changes they would have to make in the syllabus to accommodate more student-centered strategies; they were apprehensive about the number of students in each class as well as students’ receptiveness to CLIL, namely in regard to assessment; and they also questioned the fact that adapting their classes to a foreign languages was going to be time-consuming, especially due to the scaffolding activities they had to envisage with students showing a wide range of learning styles and multiple intelligences. The teachers also found that they needed some support from an English language teacher throughout the implementation phase. Despite their B2-C1 level of English, some teachers also admitted having some difficulties in using classroom language in English, which was an aspect that was also addressed in one of the training sessions. These were concerns shared not only in the sessions but also registered on the individual training logs which were completed at the end of each session to provide more specific feedback about the activities conducted and the discussions that took place.

Throughout the training sessions, specialist teachers also had the opportunity to bring specific examples from their projected CLIL modules to get some advice and ideas from the rest of the participants about the best ways to adapt the content into CLIL classes where the exclusive focus was neither the content *per se* nor the development of specific competences needed in the specific subject, but the development of student skills in the English language. In addition, this adaptation also required a clear understanding and integration of cultural aspects (where code-switching in the classroom is sometimes necessary for a clear understanding of the specific or technical vocabulary in the Portuguese context) and more opportunities for communication through a greater focus on student-centered strategies. In general, specialist teachers valued these training sessions not only because they were introduced to the CLIL approach, which was new for them since they were only acquainted with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), but mostly because of the breadth of the discussion about pedagogy and teaching/learning methodologies, which they had never experienced, especially with such a diverse group of colleagues.

Between January and April 2015, six CLIL modules were implemented at ESHTe (in all the above-mentioned subjects, some repeated in the day and evening courses, with the exception of Microbiology), in a total of 18 hours (with sessions ranging from 2 to 3 hours each), and involving a total of 151 students from the 1<sup>st</sup> study cycle degrees in Cookery and Food Production (1<sup>st</sup> year), Hotel Management (3<sup>rd</sup> year), and Tourism Management (3<sup>rd</sup> year). In addition, though not considered in the scope of the ReCLes.pt CLIL project, the language teacher who conducted the CLIL training sessions also implemented the CLIL approach in a 3-hour seminar of the 1<sup>st</sup> study cycle degree in Tourism Information (3<sup>rd</sup> year) and in a 4-hour seminar on Markets and Trends of the PhD in Tourism, involving nearly 40 students.

Some of the methodologies adopted included collective creation by the students, for example, of the evaluation structure for an event through a problem-based learning (PBL) approach that simultaneously promoted the students' discussion skills and elicited specific cultural aspects associated with event management and production (in the degree in Event Management). Another application incorporated the analysis of specific codes of ethics and a cross-debate about tourism and sustainability which fostered the students' reading and oral communication skills (in Tourism and the Environment). Yet another example was the small-group tasks that required students to critically analyze hotel mission statements, thus promoting reading and oral discussion skills along with the construction of an understanding about what a company's mission statement should include (in Business Strategy). A final example was a critical discussion on carbohydrates followed by students' written reports about the subject (in Nutrition).

All these modules were monitored onsite either by the supporting English language teacher or by one of the peer specialist teachers, which gave each teacher first-hand critical comments on their modules and suggestions for improvement. In general, with the exception of students who assessed themselves as having a A2-B1 level and clearly experienced some difficulties in expressing themselves in English, students were very satisfied with their experience as CLIL learners and with the activities developed and, thus, supported the implementation of future CLIL

modules although they also showed some concerns about how assessment would be implemented in subjects being taught through a foreign language.

One of the main concerns after this implementation of specific CLIL modules rests on the absence of an institutionalized language policy that would clearly outline the future approach to CLIL and to subject classes to be taught through a foreign language. Concerns voiced by different members of the academic community identified hindrances to classes fully-taught through English as either the students who are less competent in the English language or how the needs of students who would still wish to be taught in their mother tongue would be met. Other problems identified were related to the assessment which could be conducted in a foreign language and the fact that many of the school's teachers are not proficient in English. As a result, in the following academic year (2015-2016), , and following a written and oral placement test in July 2015 given to more than 50 volunteer teachers, the school offered three English language courses for teachers and academic staff in each semester.

Implementation of CLIL-based courses at ESHTe has developed a renewed informal school culture, with more colleagues from different subject areas now collaborating in research papers and presentations in English, more colleagues speaking in English with one another during class breaks and lunch breaks organized for the sole purpose of communicating in English.

#### 4.2. Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco

The CLIL community of practice and learning at the Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco met over a semester, negotiating their content-specific cultures, their learning and teaching assumptions, and their explicit and implicit uses of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) within a CLIL approach among colleagues and with students during the piloting of the CLIL modules they had created.

The teacher practices included shared products, such as the verbal interactions during the 10-hour face-to-face teacher training sessions, as well as teaching logs, pre- and post-training questionnaires and *can do* lists, CLIL modules designed and piloted with students and post-piloting interviews, which will be presented through three case studies.

##### *Case study 1*

Case study 1 refers to a senior lecturer from the Agriculture College who devised a module on Pesticide Labels. With over 30 years of teaching experience, his English language self-assessment was an overall C1+ (CEFR), with C2 for listening and C1+ for reading. Before the training sessions, his self-assessment revealed confidence in his pedagogical skills, with the exception of *maintaining students' interest when teaching in English* although he revealed less confidence in materials to be used in class, terminology, and lecturing in English, including preparing notes or reacting to students. He also expressed concern with the lack of ability to explain language patterns to be able to give linguistic feedback to students.

After the training course, most of these aspects scored higher than before

although he still did not feel capable of giving linguistic feedback to students. During the post-piloting interview, however, he offered comments that relate to language, for example, that students had never heard of some of the irregular plurals in English that were needed to speak about the topic (e.g. *fungus-fungi*), which shows that he had explicitly thought about the learners' abilities and needs in FL.

#### Case study 2

Case study 2 refers to a senior lecturer from the School of Technology, specialized in Industrial Engineering, who developed a module on 3D Printing. With over 20 years of teaching experience, his self-assessed was a C1 level of English. He started by expressing concern that he would not be able to assess the students' levels of English for technical terms or maintain student interest when teaching through English since he might not be as expressive or engaging as in his mother tongue. He also expressed concern with explaining language patterns and giving linguistic feedback to students.

All these concerns diminished by the end of the training, with the exception of his ability to explain language patterns or giving linguistic feedback to students. In the post-piloting interview, he considered the overall training experience to be particularly interesting from a pedagogical perspective and as a teaching experience. He even noted that he had not found it more difficult to express his ideas effectively in a foreign language after all. Although classroom interaction and feedback from students was diverse (ranging from very good to indifference) in his six pilot graduate and postgraduate classes, he felt he would like to continue to experiment with CLIL by working in tandem with the English for Specific Purposes teacher who had collaborated with him in the planning and writing of the module.

#### Case study 3

Case study 3 refers to a content teacher from the School of Management, with over 12 years of teaching experience, who self-assessed himself at a B1-B2 level, despite being bilingual Portuguese and English, born and educated in South Africa. For his module on Time Management, he initially felt a lack of confidence in both assessing students' levels of English and correcting or making suggestions on students' written assignments, a confidence that was gained through the training course.

Like the teachers in case studies 1 and 2, he expressed concern regarding language-based rather than content-based aspects of CLIL teaching, such as being able to explain language patterns and give linguistic feedback to students or prepare written tests in English. Contrary to the experience of others, after the training, he felt less confident in several aspects, as if the piloting experience had opened his eyes to additional complexity, namely in adapting materials for CLIL and in aspects of his use of EMI, such as finding appropriate vocabulary when preparing written materials in English; identifying authentic material with the appropriate language level for his students; or creating own materials (worksheets, presentations, diagrams, hand-outs) in English to be used in class. His confidence also decreased slightly regarding his ability to prepare lecture notes in English; maintain student interest; explain himself clearly in class; answer student questions clearly when unprepared; and give appropriate examples spontaneously.

Nevertheless, during the post-piloting interview, he noted that his preparation



and implementation of the CLIL module had been very successful overall and particularly interesting as a teaching experience. In contrast to the teachers in case studies 1 and 2, he did not believe that he had developed more interactive and student-centered teaching methodologies or used more electronic media than when teaching in Portuguese nor did he believe that CLIL methodologies and strategies were very different from the ones he uses when teaching in Portuguese. This may be due to the fact that his own learning experiences were in South Africa, where perhaps learner-centered lessons are more common, and his bilingual competences in English and Portuguese.

### 4.3. Polytechnic Institute of Guarda

Before creating the teacher training group for CLIL at the *Instituto Politécnico da Guarda* (IPG), the Director of the School of Technology and Management (ESTG – Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão) prepared a list of the teachers whom she hoped would be qualified for the training – a level set at B2 (Coyle, 1999, 2008; cf. Gierlinger on the L4C approach to include CLIL teachers of other levels), based on enrollment by international and ERASMUS+ students so that they could have more regular access to English-taught classes (Wachter & Maiworm, 2008; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Wachter & Maiworm, 2008, 2014). Simultaneously, the Portuguese host-school students could be exposed to quality teaching of these subjects through a foreign language (FL). English was selected as the target FL in response to the new linguistic diversity in the classroom and for greater internationalization, a direct result of the Bologna Agreement and its aims to harmonize the European Higher Education Area through a European credit transfer system and better conditions for student and staff mobility (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Morgado et al., 2015).

The teachers on the original list were filtered for B2 level (CEFR) and four were selected to join the community of practice and learning established at the ESTG-IPG, where their respective areas would be developed to equip them with strategies for teaching through English, with recourse to a range of scaffolding possibilities for their students to practise with the ICT-based strategies that helped to focus on the new terminological base of the content area to be acquired.

From Accounting to three different areas of Engineering – Civil, Environmental, and Computer – the content teachers and the language teaching specialist met over the course of 10 hours to debate and develop their skills. An area of great concern was the participants' own linguistic competence and the probability of finding students who would have greater skills in English, which was met by the concept of the language user (cf. Cook, 2002; Arau Ribeiro, 2015a, 2015b). The sheer usefulness of being able to use the FL as a means of communication, rather than as an end in and of its own, freed these teachers from these implied constraints and gave new meaning to their role in the CLIL classroom where they could be mediators and facilitators instead of role models for English usage. This constructive approach toward language use in the classroom which would not be strictly monolingual allowed for resort to the plurilingual resources of each of the participants – teacher and students. Together they could negotiate meaning in a relevant context that opened the possibilities

for more student contributions in class since they also embraced the objective of communication through the FL. Of special note was one student who alleged to never having had any English before but who was appropriately scaffolded in his learning experience with financial statements to carry out the project and present his results in English.

In considering the terminologically-based scaffolding activities, the use of word frequency lists and clouds was a motivating way to select out and visualize the terminology that would be most impactful for a given learning module. Some students realized that they actually had previous knowledge on a topic, the memory of which was reconnected for use in a specific task. Along with activation of this previously-acquired knowledge, it was also solidified through description, explanation and discussion to enhance understanding of the requisite vocabulary and its related ideas/concepts. Then, the information was specifically applied in a context specific to the areas under study, such as the financial statements referred to above or equations to calculate appropriate foundation in Civil Engineering.

Following the new Bloom's taxonomy of learning, students used the information in a new way, interpreting diagrams, scheduling maintenance appropriately, demonstrating their calculations, or choosing adequate tools to execute a project, to name just a few ways that new and remembered information could be exercised. To focus on higher order thinking skills (HOTS), activities were devised to encourage analysis, evaluation, and creation of new points of view or even new products, learners were asked to justify their decisions and recommendations, and then demonstrated the ability to distinguish between different parts of the processes that they had constructed.

In a computer course, students simulated meetings with their non-tech clients to explain and adjust their preparations for a database under construction. The client was played by the guest English teacher, who acted like the most difficult of business partners to provide opportunities for the students, in the role of computer software consultants, to solve problems spontaneously and in a fashion that could be considered reasonably coherent. Environmental Engineering students received support with rich images that prompted discussion and elicited the vocabulary that would appropriately describe the difficult ecological notions that concern all like-minded world citizens on planet Earth. Classroom observation notes recorded the fact that students were at first reticent to participate in a classroom situation which was initially interpreted as evaluative of their English level but were soon convinced that using their own levels of English was in fact the means to an end of working with a new and fascinating subject that has its own jargon and specialty language that would be obligatorily represented in the context of subject-specific formats.

The teachers participating in the community of practice and learning were excellent partners, debating, and discussing the joys and difficulties of relaying concepts and ideas through a language that is not their own. Their mutual trust and willingness to share in an open community of practice and learning was a promising beginning for this pilot phase of the project. Future communities of practice may be composed of less-willing participants, who may feel threatened by the need to communicate and



teach their subjects through English. Hopefully, the lessons learned and the models established through the CLIL ReCLes.pt project will remain an inspiration, supported by a desire to improve teaching methods and language competence in general.

#### 4.4. Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre

At the *Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre* (IPPortalegre), the five specialist teachers who were invited to participate in the 10-hour CLIL training course were selected for their experience in teaching ERASMUS students and for their proficiency in English (C1). The organization and content of the CLIL course modules and the resources used in the training sessions were mostly adapted from the *ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide* (Morgado et al., 2015) and complemented with resources and materials related to the particular specialized areas of the specialist teachers, namely Marketing and Advertising, Painting, Sculpture and Artistic Education, Cinema Studies, Psychology and Special Needs Education, and Industrial and Quality Engineering.

As a result of the CLIL ReCLes.pt training course, five CLIL modules were implemented at IPPortalegre although only two of them during the pre-established time span of the project. The planning of each CLIL module required additional hours (face-to-face meetings and e-mail exchanges) of collaborative work between the language specialist and the content teacher, mostly to explore the best way to scaffold the English materials to be used in class. This enriching collaborative process entailed the negotiation of some content topics and a close joint work ethic to adapt materials aimed at scaffolding student skills in learning English and specialty content. Thus, in the CLIL modules on Team Work in Early Intervention and CLIL in Primary Education, a long technical text was cut into sub-topics and re-arranged with summary titles; a list of procedures replaced a long descriptive paragraph; keywords were provided or highlighted in the text and synonyms inserted in parentheses; graphic organizers were added to better explain a more complex paragraph and post-reading activities with summary and gap-filling exercises were suggested as enrichment and synthesis of the content topic.

The data collected with the tools used for monitoring the implementation of the modules (CLIL module planning template, questionnaire to assess the CLIL module for teachers and for students, interview with content teachers) point to a very positive view of the CLIL module pilot experience, both for the teachers and students. Content teachers reported an overall very optimistic teaching experience, including the perception that the methodologies adopted for their CLIL modules facilitated the learning of the content in question and enhanced their participation in class.

Teachers highlighted as particularly positive the collaborative experience with the CLIL teacher trainer, an improved understanding of the students' language needs, and the fact that they had developed more student-centered methodologies than when teaching in Portuguese. Contrary to the expectations expressed after finishing the ReCLes.pt CLIL training course, the time spent preparing and adapting material was no longer perceived as a drawback or a difficulty for using a CLIL approach in the future.

As for the students, a few mentioned as less positive the inadequacy of the

materials used in the CLIL module for their own level of English, their uneasiness with participating in class in a foreign language, and an increased difficulty in expressing their ideas in English. Nevertheless, most of the students mentioned that, in comparison with learning in Portuguese, in the CLIL pilot module they had participated more in the different activities and had worked more extensively in collaboration with other colleagues. They also acknowledged that their understanding of both the specialty content and language had been enhanced by the classroom methodologies used. Particularly positive, and despite the complaints documented above, was the fact that some students with less English competence (eg. A2.1) were highly motivated with the CLIL strategies, as they felt they had been able to overcome the challenge of reading, understanding, and synthesizing a technical text in English.

In general, the subject specialists at IPPortalegre reported that the ReCLes.pt CLIL training course offered them a broad overview of the CLIL theoretical framework, its educational and pedagogical potential, and a comprehensive variety of teaching strategies and innovative pedagogical practices to use in their future classes taught through English and even in Portuguese “to work in class or individually”. Aspects central to the CLIL approach, such as highly interactive, student-centered communication in the classroom, the use of scaffolding strategies to enhance language and content acquisition, and the promotion of student autonomy and critical thinking skills were also recognized. Moreover, content teachers asserted the intention of integrating this new knowledge into their future teaching practice, thus affirming in the questionnaires that “the new tools in electronic media will be used to new approaches in my courses”; they also expressed willingness to continue exploring the CLIL approach further and in a broader forum, commenting that “it will be very good to have more workshops with a big group of our colleagues to discuss all these subjects before real application”.

The concerns voiced were mainly regarding the assessment of student levels of language and the choice and adaptation of materials to their needs. The data collected in the pre- and post-training assessment questionnaires by the specialist teachers indicate that, on the whole, the CLIL training course afforded teachers a more positive attitude towards foreign language learning as a lifelong activity for both students and teachers and gave them more confidence in their ability to learn the strategies and tools to use a CLIL approach in their classes.

#### **4.5. ISCAP-Porto Polytechnic**

The implementation of the CLIL project at ISCAP (Porto Polytechnic) was and is still necessarily different from what our partners are doing, due to the fact that the ISCAP content teachers have been teaching Erasmus students in English for a number of years. Due to this scenario, a slightly different strategy has been adopted to articulate the syllabi of the English language classes with those of the content classes so that the English classes would integrate content-specific materials and the content classes would apply linguistic strategies.

With this approach in mind, the organization of a CLIL learning community at ISCAP based on ReCLes.pt project also pursued the purpose of contributing to

improve the teaching and learning process of our Erasmus Students, following the established training model. Some teachers who had been teaching in English in our existing Erasmus syllabus, and who assessed their English at a B1/B2 level, were invited to join the project and the CLIL teacher training sessions.

The community of practice and learning met four times to complete the 10 hours of training. When asked to describe their reasons for joining the course, they indicated that they had all been teaching Erasmus students for some years and had never reflected on any different approaches than those already used to teach their respective content in Portuguese.

As a first step, an explicit introduction to CLIL, both as a concept and as a practice, provided teachers in this learning community with an understanding of CLIL and its principles. Due to their previous experience with Erasmus students and working in English, their initial view was that the preparation of their lectures and materials in English was an easy task and they were rather at ease with most of the topics raised during the teacher training course. In the pre-training self-assessment, 50% of the participants were quite able to select their materials, create their own materials to be used in class, spontaneously react to student activity, and evaluate their students' work although they found it rather difficult to explain themselves clearly in class. However, the training sessions resulted in their development of a more critical analysis of their activities in the classroom. In fact, by the end of the course, some of the participants said that it was now more difficult to identify whether their own material had the appropriate level of English and a greater challenge to adapt the original materials to student needs.

Overall, the reflections of the participants at the end of the course are varied but also predictable. For the E-commerce teacher, CLIL sessions helped increase her awareness of issues related to identifying and adapting class materials to an appropriate level of English. She felt better prepared to master terminology and design original materials as well as comment on and correct students' linguistic performance. For the Statistics teacher, CLIL sessions were especially relevant to help maintain students interested by using more authentic materials in English and also by providing feedback on their linguistic competence. She is convinced that quality will thus be more similar to that of her classes in Portuguese.

The Public Relations teacher found that CLIL sessions helped her improve her teaching of Erasmus students in general. She emphasized her growing ability to identify an appropriate level of English and her own class explanations as the areas in which the course was more helpful. Finally, the Financial Mathematics teacher considered CLIL sessions a powerful contribution to her teaching of Erasmus students in general, highlighting her use of technical vocabulary and terminology as the areas in which the course was more decisive.

As an overall result, data confirm that the content teachers are now more aware of the importance of their role as CLIL teachers and feel they can improve their teaching resources also by collaborating with the English language teachers. Another interesting result is the fact this course greatly contributed to reinforce interdisciplinarity within ISCAP by opening a space for the possibility of collaboration

and joint work between colleagues of the Languages and Culture Department and other departments. In fact, after the course, the English and content teachers decided to collaborate and share contents in order to improve their pre-existing materials. Thus, to further implement the project and the pilot modules, they decided to align the summer semester's B2 and C1 English syllabi with those of content classes in E-Commerce and Financial Mathematics, covering a minimum of 12 hours of the respective courses.

Currently, further CLIL research, training and experiments are being developed at ISCAP, not only to obtain data and feedback but also to further develop the terminology-based approach designed and implemented during the ReCLes.pt CLIL project. Although no assessment tool has been applied yet, feedback from those teachers has been enthusiastic and motivating.

#### **4.6. Polytechnic Institute of Bragança**

Bragança introduced English-taught degrees in 2011 as part of an internationalization policy which began focused on the field of Management and later spread to eight other bachelors and masters-level degrees, attracting both Portuguese and international students. For the ReCLes.pt CLIL project, the degree in International Business Management, with its European label, was chosen for the implementation also because of the expected enrollment of students from different nationalities and backgrounds, which presents a challenge for teachers who use English as a medium of instruction.

The six participating teachers taught the second year of the degree in a number of core areas. They were tested for their language proficiency at level C1, with exception of one highly motivated high level B1, who was nevertheless invited to participate. Despite the teachers' high level of proficiency in English, they were well aware that they lacked some pedagogical preparation to teach through English and that was one of the main reasons why they chose to take part. The concept of CLIL was also a novelty but, after the first theoretical elicitation, they understood that the methodology could work positively for their specific teaching context.

Most of the students also evaluated themselves as level B2-C1, which was validated in their receptive skills. When faced with the students' linguistic self-assessment, the teachers accepted the results but added that many of the students also struggled with terminology and linguistic issues in their assorted mother tongues, explaining that this could have negative repercussions in learning through English.

Five modules were designed and later implemented, specifically in Economy, Auditing, Statistics and Quality Management, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics for Management. The initial difficulties stressed by the teachers when working with a CLIL approach were primarily related to the awareness that the approach to their specific subject area had to be changed and that this would be rather time-consuming. After some negotiation, the group concluded this needed to be done sooner rather than later. The diversity of possible approaches for one topic in a specific subject was regarded as very interesting, as well as the revelation of a set of classroom language skills. Most of the resources proposed during the four

training sessions and through the ReCLes.pt CLIL Training Guide were considered “very useful”. The ICT teacher even made suggestions of other tools which could be used for certain objectives.

Teachers described their overall involvement in the ReCLes.pt CLIL project, for example, as “a wonderful new world” and “highly motivating”. The group became aware that many of the students difficulties throughout their courses were, in fact, related to linguistic issues and that this had received a new impulse and improvement through the CLIL approach.

The main result from the IPBragança community of practice and learning was the introduction of a placement test for all students in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of this degree. If their level is not B2, they are sent for improvement courses at the Polytechnic Language Centre. The teachers have adapted their courses, now clearly distinguishing between objectives and learning outcomes. The evaluation of the courses was also partially changed with the introduction of a practical section which includes scaffolded activities and tasks, like terminological databanks and WebQuests in Micro-Economics.

While implementing their CLIL modules, the teachers were supervised by the language specialist who observed the students’ reactions and the regular procedures of the class. In fact, most of the teachers proposed the ideal situation, where the language specialist would always provide some feedback while the modules were being created and implemented, to contribute to their confidence and provide the opportunity for tandem work among teachers, which was a novelty at the institution.

## 5. Conclusion

During the teacher training course and subsequent CLIL module development, which aimed to be more of a community of practice and learning than an in-service training, English language specialists and content teachers all learned and worked collaboratively. Together, they discovered how to set up CLIL modules that would work for their particular contexts and, in the process, they gained an understanding of how to simultaneously scaffold students in acquiring foreign language competence. The community activities included negotiating and reconstructing subject-matter and enhancing, enriching, comparing, analyzing, synthesizing, and re-dimensioning certain content topics.

One of the major cultural challenges during the teacher training was to facilitate the content teachers’ understanding of the need to focus on the students and on themselves as language users (Arau Ribeiro, 2015a, 2015b; Arau Ribeiro et al., 2015c). Despite their diversity of backgrounds and learning and teaching experiences, most teachers had been unaware of the power of this perspective. Another related challenge was to accept and understand the emphasis on using language for communication and learning about specific subject content and the concomitant use of scaffolding to support learning.

Because scaffolding is not limited to text or corpus analysis of language features like lexis and grammar, the CLIL approach requires negotiation across cultures of and for learning and teaching. The ReCLes.pt CLIL communities of practice and learning

in Higher Education invited content and language specialists to join in a common goal of designing effective courses to be taught through English. This collaborative interdisciplinary approach to teacher training brought participants together to acknowledge and define the communication and cultural discourses needed by all those involved – the students, teachers, and researchers – in their particular academic, professional, and scientific contexts.

The ReCLes.pt CLIL project is, as stated at the beginning of this article, an ongoing project which has given rise to a community of practice and learning in Higher Education across Portugal. In the institutions involved, teachers have recognized the benefits of having gained a new perspective on how to teach through a foreign language and have acknowledged this perception as a challenge for improving their teaching on a daily basis.

Many Portuguese HE institutions consider that both internationalization and teaching in English has also given rise to a new target audience. As such, knowing how to teach through English is a recognizable plus for the careers of participating specialty teachers; taking on this challenge – whether individually or institutionally – may constitute an overall pedagogical innovation and improvement for Higher Education.

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# Evaluating projects involving ICT and Task-based language teaching

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## Abstract

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is central to promoting student-centered learning and enhancing student autonomy. Despite successfully leading both reluctant and willing learners to interact, act and communicate, task-based learning is still not widely applied in foreign language classes at any level in Portugal so the participation of this country, leading nine others in a wide-ranging EU-funded study to blend the advantages of TBLT with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the foreign language classroom. This paper will discuss how this team of external reviewers analyzed the quality of ICT-based learning tasks prepared and piloted for the project, from understanding the criteria for constructing good projects to assessing and evaluating them. Weaker points will be identified and addressed in order to understand how they should be improved and strengths will be looked at in order to emphasize best practices in future projects.

**Keywords:** TBLT, ICT, language learning, CEFR, project assessment.

## 1. Introduction

This article aims to review the results of a revision of tasks proposed within a language learning project which involved ten countries and received European Union funding. The focus of the tasks is three-fold, drawing on a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach with appropriate consideration for the level of the proposed Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-based task learning projects according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). ICT has been the focus of other projects with EU funding, one of which was Interactive Technologies in Language Teaching (iTILT) which ran as a 2-year European Lifelong Learning project from 2011 to 2013. While the focus of iTILT was the more specific use of whiteboards, the project on Pan European Tasks for Language Learning (PETALL), which ran from 2012 to 2015, opened the field to a greater variety of ICT and, in December 2016, was awarded the reputable European Languages Label (ELL) by the Portuguese Erasmus+ Agency. The authors of the present article were nominated to the team of external reviewers responsible for analyzing the quality of ICT-based learning task prepared and piloted for the PETALL project. Perhaps more importantly, these researchers offered concrete ideas in the identification of opportunities for improvement of these tasks so that interested

teaching practitioners can better understand the processes involved in participating in similar multicultural and multilingual projects.

## 2. The project

As an LLP transversal KA2 project funded with support from the European Commission (Reference number: 530863-LLP-1-2012-1-NL-KA2-KA2MP), PETALL aims to encourage the use of ICT-based tasks in the language classroom and provide examples of good practices in technology-mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) that can be easily used in different languages and educational contexts, with explicit classification within the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). António Lopes at the University of Faro, Portugal, coordinated the PETALL consortium of ten partners in tandems across Europe, including Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Serbia, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Portugal, for example, worked in tandem with both Spain and the United Kingdom in a process loosely described as triangulation. With this geographical balance of European partners, the transfer of expertise was developed *via* collaborative work among the triangulated countries and between the respective teacher training department at each university and a junior or senior high school with students ranging from 11 to 18 years old.

Each of the ten regional networks developed four ICT-based tasks to be piloted cross-border by the tandem and partner schools whose teachers had been trained for TBLT in the national PETALL teacher training programmes, designed, accredited and conducted through contact learning, blended learning or strictly online as is the case in the Netherlands. These courses united researchers and teachers to provide access to the tandem tech-mediated tasks, which were conceived to be adaptable across cultures and to promote not only mutual understanding but also awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity. Not least important, the teacher trainers aimed to enhance the quality of ICT-based TBLT while developing digital competence for teachers.

The external review team of five was created by joining four professors from the Instituto Politécnico da Guarda (IPG – Guarda Polytechnic Institute), specifically from the School of Management & Technology and one from the University of Belgrade at the School of Philology. The external evaluators were from TELLConsult, the consultancy firm led by the experienced Ton Koenraad, where the acronym derived from the focus on Technology Enhanced Lifelong and/or Language Learning aptly describes the plan of the PETALL project.

## 3. Literature review for TBI/TBLT/TBLL

When the needs of the learners are used to determine the content of the lessons, the approach can be considered to be *learner-centred*, which is the case of task-based instruction (TBI). The application of TBI requires more preparation in advance by the teacher who must clearly determine the key learning questions as well as the related issues and perspectives to be considered in carrying out the

task at hand. Nevertheless, TBI allows the learners to be the primary participants in the act of learning and was featured as a focal component of vocational teaching directed at the military complex of the 1950s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In the 70s and 80s the Bangalore Project (Prabhu, 1987) emphasized competence as well as communication, along the lines of Communicative Language Teaching, and led the teaching community to consider the role of tasks as potentially enhancing of the role of the learner in the language classroom. This perspective was also reflected in Kumaravadivelu (1991), which addressed teacher intention in contrast to learner interpretation in language learning tasks.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, influential books dedicated to the topic were entitled respectively *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching* (Ellis, 2003) and the following year *Task-Based Language Teaching* (Nunan, 2004), which may have influenced the education community to refer more simply to TBLT rather than TBLL and TBLT. Although the former (Ellis, 2003) was an important overarching source for understanding the interplay of research, theory and pedagogy for TBLT and TBLL from the perspective of the teacher as well as the learner, the latter (Nunan, 2004) was in fact a comprehensively revised edition of his previously released *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom* (Nunan, 1989), which was in line with earlier researchers and practitioners (Skehan, 1996; Prabhu, 1987) who laid the groundwork for task-based instruction as it can be applied to language learning and teaching.

TBLT in general can be recognized as an approach which provides learners with a learning context that requires the use of the target language through communicative activities and in which the process of using language carries more importance than mere production of correct language forms (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Willis, 1996). As early as Brumfit (1984), this alternative to traditional language teaching methods incorporated a presentation-practice-production (PPP) orientation for language learners, aiming instead at and striving for functional communicative and collaborative language use (cf. Willis & Willis, 2007).

This triptych approach focuses simultaneously on *language* itself while aiming for *acquisition of* and *performance in* the foreign or second language (FL/L2). Some of the basic premises of TBLT are the identification of specific goals, procedures and outcome and the transparency of these expectations in sharing with the students, which reinforces the learner-centredness of the approach designed around meaningful content-oriented activities. Teachers can opt to use this approach as one of the ways to promote learner confidence and enthusiasm for learning through the language use, interaction and negotiation of meaning. While recognizing the value of both formative and summative assessment, the teaching sessions are divided into opening-performance-ending in a phased pre-task, task itself, and post-task organization, which can be interpreted as Present-Practice-Perform (Ellis, 2003; Van den Branden, 2006, p. 99). These phases can alternatively be implemented as Engage-Study-Activate (ESA) and Clarification – focus-Restricted Use – Authentic Use (CRA) or even a more recent paradigm for PPP – Play-Passion-Purpose (Wagner, 2012).

#### 4. Understanding tasks: the goal(s) of the external review team

Ideally, a task would be a piece of work prepared for students to carry out, with a clear and concrete description and comprehensive specifications related to its content and form. More specifically, and citing Ellis (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2006) defines task as a “workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed” (p. 95).

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), tasks can be divided into language-, learner- and learning-centred tasks. While language-centred tasks “draw the learner’s attention primarily and explicitly to the formal properties of the language”, learner-centred tasks “direct the learner’s attention to formal as well as functional properties of language”. Contrastingly, learning-centred tasks “engage the learner mainly in the negotiation, interpretation, and expression of meaning, without any explicit focus on form and/or function” (pp. 95-96).

Given these interpretations, the reviewers aimed to identify the extent to which the researching professors had successfully constructed learning tasks that used technology to teach foreign language within the context of a TBLT classroom. As such, the reviews were based not only on the task descriptions themselves but also on reported results from data gathered during the pilot implementation phase.

The reviewers started by examining the tasks for their formal aspects, for the features of tasks appropriate to their CEFR level and for their adaptability, described as whether the tasks “travelled” well. In terms of adaptability, a primary concern was their integration into the respective school curriculum and their adequacy to different CEFR levels. Tasks were also evaluated on a yes/no basis in terms of contexts or referents of a cultural nature, as well as their adaptability to other languages (the specific criteria previously assigned by the coordinators of the projects are discussed in another section).

Further evaluation by the reviewers focused on product-product-requirements-situation-theme, detailed task description, resources and task evaluation. These sections were graded on a scale of zero (poor) to three (very good).

The section on product/product requirements/situation/theme was graded according to the degree of clarity with which the description was presented in terms of form, size/length and/ or content. Contrastingly, the section on detailed planning was graded depending on the guidance that was given to students to help them accomplish the task in a structured way. Clear instructions were expected on the quality of working procedures according to the type of task and the target group and on the concrete steps planned.

As for the section on resources, grading was attributed depending on the extent to which a sufficient number of functional sources of information related to the task were provided, such as specific Internet links, information to be retrieved by mail or from databases and non-digital content.

The section on evaluation of the final product, or task evaluation, was graded on the basis of the presentation of clear and specific criteria, explaining the relevant

aspects to be taken into account for students to be able to plan ahead and carry out their work. Criteria included, among others, content adequacy, grammatical mistakes, spelling mistakes, accuracy and fluency levels.

Other criteria, namely timing and sequencing, classroom conditions for carrying out a given task, involvement in processes that were related to solving problems and adequacy to target student age group were a part of the reported results. They were applied during the pilot implementation phase and were assessed through commentaries.

The reviewers were further responsible for the linguistic correction of the task description before translation in the final phase of the project.

## 5. Areas identified for improvement of the proposed tasks

Adding to the results of the review, areas for improvement and strengths were identified. The reviewers first observed that procedures to reach the objectives in the task description were not thoroughly specified and sometimes they were unclear, opening the possibility for negative interference with student input.

The reviewers further observed that the section on teacher evaluation of the tasks as well as the section on resources revealed the greatest need for improvement.

The fact that the task carried out yielded results at a language level appeared to have been given a secondary position and ICT seemed to be the focus of preminent concern. However, ICT constitutes a means to learn the language rather than the objective of learning. Each task would need to be evaluated in relation to the language performance of the students in question. Consider the definition commended by Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 95), proposed by Ellis (2003), as a synthesis of those variously presented in the literature:

[a] task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world... [and I]ike other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes. (p. 16)

However, having language learning as the focus of the task, it is unsettling to observe that many times criteria for evaluation were missing, reflecting a lack of concern with this aspect of learning. Criteria are crucial because they constitute points of orientation. A common error was the oversight of the specific evaluation criteria to be used. At other times the criteria were too vague, lacking precision and clarity in establishing the objective of the assessment. Still other times the competence areas, whether listening, reading, speaking and/or writing, were not specified and, for example, the characteristics of speaking were not detailed in terms of assessment for fluency, range, accuracy, interaction, coherence or even intonation, pitch range, rhythm, stress or gestures, to name just a few (cf. Halliday, 1989, p. 31). Quantification of the assessment criteria was almost always absent and a scoring range (percentage or marks) was frequently lacking.

Other areas for improvement involved awareness of the CEFR levels and timing. In the first case, a lack of correspondence between the objectives of the task evaluation

proposed and the evaluation of the competences at the target CEFR level resulted from a similar lack of criteria for said evaluation. There were other weaknesses connected with adjustment to the CEFR, such as the fact that CEFR levels did not always correspond to the task proposed resulting from imprecision in the defined language level(s). A given task proposed for an A2/B1 level directed at lower level students, for example, would have been more appropriately designated for a B2 level. Another example shows that a task that could be targeted at a B2 level for trainee teachers was not adjusted for younger learners of the language who were not in higher education. Still another example reveals that consolidating activities were targeted at lower or higher CEFR levels. In still another task, competences practiced throughout the task were not fully addressed in the detailed task plan as, for instance, when the single language skill mentioned was writing and the task included an interaction activity that required speaking as well. From the analysis of the task activities and given the different sections where the need for a better articulation with the different aspects of the CEFR was felt, we can conclude that the familiarity with this language learning classification is below desirable.

In the second case, frequently the projection for time was simply not adjusted to the respective task. The amount of time allocated to each task was usually underestimated, not allowing students to carry them out successfully. More time would allow for more thoughtful and considered responses.

## 6. Strengths of the proposed tasks

One of the more apparent strengths of this approach is the fact that the students, members of the computer generation, are said to be very comfortable with information technology as a tool to be used on a day-to-day basis for communication purposes (cf. Tapscott, 1998; Prensky, 2005). Bennett et al. (2008) cautioned that while “such claims may appeal to our common-sense perceptions of a rapidly changing world”, the ‘digital natives’ argument requires more sociological and educational analysis before it can be concluded that these students are in fact more prepared to work with ICT (p. 776).

In practice, however, and once transposed to the language learning classroom, the ICT component was reported to serve as a practical vehicle readily embraced by the students, to carry out the assigned task(s) that lead to language learning improvement. Almost ten years after the objections raised by Bennet *et al* (2008), and in an ever more digital age, the ease of use for the user implicit in these projects is of prime relevance and is a facet of educational policy that will inevitably continue to play an essential role in the future of learning.

The fact that these projects involve a variety of learning activities in the context of the application of different ICT resources, whether it be making a PowerPoint presentation or producing a video that can be uploaded to YouTube to name only two examples, can provide motivation for the learners beyond the conventional classroom textbook. *Digital Literacy* (Freedman, online) documents numerous studies that corroborate the advantages for learners and how teachers can better use ICT & Computing in Education, also the name of a site that is one of the more



comprehensive sources of ideas and strategies for incorporating digital literacy in the classroom. One of the goals of the teacher training modules that preceded the piloting of the tasks was to open horizons for teachers who may have felt uncertain about the use of ICT. Not only did the participants come to recognize that ICT can be an effective aid to teaching, they also found that ICT also comes with the bonus of representing a “language communication tool” with which younger generations have grown up and feel comfortable. Answering the crucial question of how to motivate learners has a built-in factor that is waiting to be explored.

The use of ICT as a tool in the language classroom has the effect of engaging the learners in a process. Consider a project that aims to design and present an online student news bulletin, for example. Such a task implies combining various elements that are not limited to written reporting, but rather a wider diversity of input that may include photography, page layout design, graphic design as well as editing skills. The fact that all of these activities require group work to form the final product, ICT provides clear access to the practical and direct results of their collaborative work.

Encouraging a sense of self-esteem and self-worth is an important aspect that all educators need to take into consideration and act upon if they are to be engaged in a positive learning environment with their students. Again, the use of ICT in the process of learning a language can be positively enhanced by the sense of personal achievement that comes with combining skills that lead to the production of a final product.

Mentoring is another area of education that can be worked into the ICT/language learning construct. Students who are more experienced in working with ICT can take the lead in this specific area and should be prepared to share their knowledge and expertise with their peers, some of whom may not feel as comfortable when working with new technologies – and vice-versa when it comes to language skills.

## **7. Constructing good ICT-based projects for TBLT**

Features that make good ICT-based tasks for language learning are varied. Nevertheless, when the ICT skills are tuned to the proposed language task(s) and the respective CEFR levels are appropriately adjusted to the tasks, the reviewers determined the two central components to be well balanced. Following the criteria established by the coordinators of the project, the reviewing team assessed the projects according to components first related to formality and appropriate target level of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages. Then the question of adaptability addressed whether it “travelled well” across school curricula and different CEFR levels, cultural contexts/referents and languages. The section dedicated to product, product requirements, situation and theme was interconnected with the description of the task and the specifications of the final product or outcomes in accordance with the criteria defined for evaluation, which covered the extent to which clarity was provided for students to plan ahead and actually do their work, be it collaborative or individual. The detailed planning programme questioned the quality of the explanation of working procedures to help students do the task. Finally, the resources were assessed to determine their availability and functional relation to the execution of the task.

Timely preparation for efficient use of the ICT in question was a recurring concern when teachers identified that insufficient time had been foreseen to set the IT in place in advance. As mentioned, a variety of ICT tools were proposed to enhance learner involvement in carrying out clearly presented, well-structured tasks. The activities, when duly timed and carefully programmed in advance, provided opportune moments for working on the target language skills.

Finally, teacher reports revealed gaps in their expertise in working with the CEFR levels. Ongoing training to make familiarity more wide-spread will enable teachers to better consider the appropriate CEFR level when establishing the level of the task and its objectives, in planning consolidation activities and when evaluating.

Many effective tasks involved collaboration, in groups or pairs, including presentation software. The reviewers pointed out that opportunities for peer assessment, which has the perfect fit in collaborative work, had not been sufficiently considered. The participants were encouraged to make the appropriate adjustments given the value of learning to express and accept constructive criticism.

Recourse to images was a strength of the project with most tasks including a component that asked learners to find visuals, like photos, illustrations, graphs, and charts to be used as support to enhance their communication. In the quest for the “right” image to model their messages, learners practiced their selection skills and used their own criteria. The reviewers would have liked to see even more tasks involving recording images, an activity which is progressively more accessible due to generalized mobile phone usage.

The reviewers were also interested in finding more proposed tasks related, for example, to helping learners understand what constitutes original writing and how to avoid “copy/paste”, since plagiarism is facilitated by easy access to writing by others. Another task-type could have focused on understanding the multiplicity of conventions that can be reinforced by effective word- processing, including spell checking and even grammar checking. Other language training tasks with recourse to ICT could include familiarity with conventions through working with online tools like translation software, thesauruses, and dictionaries as well as software for subtitling.

## 8. Conclusions

This article has focused on the results of a pan European project that involved multiple languages for teaching and learning but which had a dual focus on technology- and task-based learning. Some concerns have been raised, which tend to parallel issues raised by Willis (1996) and Ellis (2009), including timing and CEFR-based instructional level, where the time/level required for an activity was largely underestimated or misadjusted. The definition of the task and the related situation at times lacked clarity; nevertheless, the teachers involved in the piloting and in the national teacher training courses described the teaching approach as innovative both philosophically and methodologically. As a result, it may take some time to develop competence and comfort with relinquishing the teacher-dominated classroom and gaining the skills to prepare clear and focused activities that involve student input in their planning. Assessment was largely missing in a number of the proposed tasks



so that, in line with Westhoff (2009), the reviewer team has recommended the inclusion of assessment as a component of the teacher training courses so that their competence is raised in terms of not only *a priori* assessment of language learning but also the committed inclusion of assessment for individual classroom activities.

Little (2016) recently cited a distinct lack of concern in including learner input and responsibility when defining student plans for learning under the TBLT framework. Instead, the teacher as agent selects and designs the tasks in advance, effectively removing any agency in planning by the student. To better encourage future autonomy and, thus, agency in the language users of today, the reviewer team suggests that an appropriate instructional mix of methods for students of any level and age range could extend beyond the traditional PPP (Present-Practice-Production) to incorporate ESA (Engage-Study-Activate) and CRA (Clarification – focus-Restricted Use – Authentic Use) (cf. Harmer, 1998). Contrary to what West (1994, in Lambert 2010) identified as TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason), the pilot implementation of the PETALL tasks were motivating and had a clear purpose, responding to the challenge to adopt tech- and task-based instruction with reference to the CEFR.

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# Needs of Higher Education students as regards language examinations

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## Abstract

Establishing the goals and needs of potential candidates is of the utmost importance when designing a Proficiency exam for language certification purposes. Having a clearly defined testing goal will help us better define our construct and thus allow for a solid validity argument. In our case, as a Language Centre within a higher education institution, our goal when designing such a test is to meet the demands of the university and its members in the European Higher Education Area.

**Keywords:** higher education, students' needs, language examination.

Our study starts by analysing our target population, for which we needed to define the profile of our candidates and determine the sample that was going to be used for research purposes. We decided to use students from our language centre as research population since it was large enough to give us a representative sample and it enabled us to use computer tools that would allow for the automatic processing of the data.

This paper presents the results of our research which have allowed us to define the construct of our test based on the specific needs of our environment.

## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, national educational systems in Europe have operated largely as independent entities at national level with limited cooperation with one another. Cooperation between institutions was established through bilateral agreements between individual universities. The Bologna process (Bologna Process, 1999) and the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) changed this situation so that higher education institutions came to operate not only nationally but also internationally, as part of a broad European network. The comparability of degree structures and the removal of obstacles to the recognition of degrees clearly play an important role in the promotion of academic mobility. However, this academic mobility necessarily entitles the encouragement of foreign language skills amongst the members of university communities.

As a result of this, universities have become aware of the need to implement language policies that respect university autonomy and national educational systems but that at the same time allow higher education institutions to conform to the goals of the guidelines of the Bologna Process and the Council of Europe. These policies should be directed towards promoting teaching and learning of languages but

they should not be limited to those responsible for language programmes, instead, they will need to encompass other institutional actors (Chambers, 2004). Tudor (2005), as part of the programme *European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning among all Undergraduates* (ENLU) carried out a study with thirty-two higher education institutions and agreed with Chambers (2004) in identifying three ways in which these language policies could be managed and implemented: (1) by language centres or language departments at universities, (2) by university managing bodies in charge of implementing university policies, and (3) by a consulting committee with expert members and decision-making bodies. In any of the cases presented, language centres in higher education institutions play an important role in the process as vehicles for the harmonisation of strategies. In the words of Kelly (2004):

Higher education provides a microcosm of the broader picture as Europe attempts to respond to global changes by creating a European Higher Education Area, capable of matching the US and Japan by 2010. That is a tall order and, as the EU Commission has warned, unlikely to be met without urgent reforms. In response, the package of changes known as the Bologna Process is likely to be accelerated, with resulting opportunities and threats (Kelly, 2004, p. 1. cited in Fulcher, 2004, p. 254).

The development of the European Higher Education Area is, therefore, giving rise to a novel academic environment in which both students and staff are likely to find themselves in multilingual and multicultural settings that will call for skills of cultural understanding, adaptation, and mediation, in addition to the more objectively identifiable communicative skills. Interaction is also likely to take place in a language which is not the first language of many participants, and both individuals and institutions find themselves in need of determining the language competence of those individuals ready to take part in such exchanges. Language competence not only needs to be assessed with regards to academic activity, but also with the future goal of integrating graduates and staff alike into a globalised labour market in which foreign language skills are deemed crucial.

As a result, the Spanish Association of Language Centres in Higher Education (ACLES, 2011a), member of The European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), introduced a model for a language examination –CertACLES model (ACLES 2011b) – that would be followed by all higher education institutions pertaining to the organisation and that was intended to allow for the assessment of communicative competence with a standard and comparable framework to which all belonging institutions need to adhere to. This framework is concrete enough to provide a standard tool for measuring language ability while allowing each individual university to adjust its exam to meet the needs of their environment. Each university is therefore in charge of designing its own individual exams which have to comply with the framework but have to take into consideration each particular context, not only in terms of test construct and specifications, but also in terms of administration dates and frequencies.

The Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV) set out to design its exams and adhered to the model in 2011, although in a rapidly changing academic environment

it was soon evident that the needs of its surrounding community needed to be not just assumed but evaluated to further adjust the examination to the real needs of its candidates. It is undeniable that one of the key steps when designing a language proficiency exam is determining the goals and needs of the target population. Defining the objective of a test allows us to adjust its construct to it and thus supports its validity argument once the test is constructed, since “the validity of a test depends not on the test itself but rather on what it is used for” (Alderson, Clapham and Wall, 1995). On the other hand, and in the case of a language centre in a higher education institution, there is also a question of accountability as described by McNamara (2000), which sees ethical testing practice as involving test developers in taking responsibility for the effects of tests. In our particular case, as a public university, this sense of accountability had to be part of our vocation for service to our community and we had to be accountable not only to the people directly affected by the test, but also to those who would use the information our test would provide. In fact, the Governing Council of the UPV had passed a regulation in which it specified that for obtaining a UPV university degree, students needed to accredit a B2 level in a foreign language. English was chosen as the preferred language of choice (BOUPV, 2012) and the information provided by our exam was going to be used, in part and in combination with other methods for certifying their language level, as a pre-requisite for graduation for all our students. This made our test a high-stake examination and in consequence increased our responsibility as test takers and the responsibility of our institution, since our graduates would join the labour market with a language qualification that would have to prove its worth in the face of prospective employers.

## 2. Methodology

Our goal was, therefore, to carry out a needs analysis study as regards language examinations in our institution to be able to further adjust our construct and better respond to the needs of our candidates. In order to do this we needed to set out a procedure that would allow us to do that and for that we needed to: (1) determine our target population, (2) decide on the sample of population that was going to be used for the study, (3) define the content of the survey to obtain the information required, (4) establish the tools that were going to be used to carry out the study, (5) process the data obtained and extract conclusions as regards our examination, (6) implement changes in accordance with the results obtained.

With the purpose of determining our target population, we started by reflecting on who our prospective candidates would be. Our university is located in a large city in Spain and it comprises three campus sites with a total of 36,187 students, 2,843 members of teaching and research staff, and 2,396 administrative and services staff. Consequently, our initial target population was comprised of our own university community, to which we had to add alumni who use the university’s language centre. The relative youth of our exam model and its recent official recognition was recognized by the Spanish Conference of Rectors in 2011 (CRUE, 2011) and by the Regional Government in Valencia in 2013 (DOGV, 2013) – was to be taken into consideration when determining our target population, since our model was probably

not much known outside the university environment and therefore the bulk of our prospective candidates would have some relation to the university. Accordingly, we determined that our target population would be mainly student population, staff and alumni of our university, and students and staff from other universities in the area who do not offer their own language proficiency tests.

Once the profile of our prospective candidates had been established, we had to decide on the sample that would be used to obtain the information we needed, and we needed to do so, taking into consideration both practicality questions and respect for our candidates. As regards practicality, it had to be easy to administer in terms of user friendliness for the administrators and the participants as well as fast and reliable, both in terms of administration and in the processing of results. As regards respect for our candidates, we needed to take into consideration their feelings of anxiety towards a high-stake test such as this one, as well as respect towards the handling of their personal data. Accordingly, we decided against using the candidates of our tests for our need analysis since: (1) we wanted to avoid unnecessary stress on the candidate who could feel intimidated by answering such questions in an exam situation (2) we did not want to use the contact details provided by the candidates for a purpose that was not strictly administering or managing the test, (3) performing the study among our candidates at the time of testing required to do so in paper form, which greatly hindered the data processing process, and (4) performing them among our candidates meant the exclusion of all those individuals who could be future candidates but were not taking the exam when the study was conducted. Thus, we decided to conduct the study among the University's Language Centre student population since it provided a sufficiently large population sample and did not introduce an element of stress for respondents. UPV's Language Centre student population is comprised of university students, lecturers and researchers and administrative and services personnel, as well as university alumni. We considered the profile sample to be representative of our prospective candidate population, and the personal data provided by our students could be used for quality processes within the university, which would allow us to use it in this case without breaching confidentiality regulations. At the same time, the personal data provided by our students included their email addresses, which permitted us to conduct the study using computerized surveys that would allow automatic processing of data.

Having established the profile of our candidate and the sample to be used for carrying out our needs analysis study, we focused on finding the appropriate content and structure to obtain from our participants the information we needed. Since one of our main aims was practicality and for that an efficient processing of data was needed, the study was restricted to seven questions that could be easily implemented and would allow us to find out about:

- Student motivation to learn a language, since it is considered critical for learning success and also helps determine the candidate's final goal as regards official examinations.
- Their attitude towards an assessment exam, since a positive attitude towards an exam implies a lower level of stress and a greater willingness to learn.



- Their intentions when taking an official certification exam, which would provide us with additional information about the goals of our students.
- Their knowledge of the various official language exams available at the university, effectively determining their knowledge of the CertACLES model administered at the university.
- The level to which they aspire within the CEFR framework, giving us information on most required the levels and helping us focus our efforts in developing exams at these levels.

Our next step was to decide on the tools for implementing this survey, and taking into consideration the aforementioned practicality measures, we decided to use the free tool for creating surveys provided by Google, *Google Forms*. This tool allowed us to design a relatively simple survey with automatic data processing and charting, but with a compatible table in Excel format to allow further modification or alternative processing of the data obtained. Likewise, the system also allowed the creation of a link to the survey that could be sent to the student's email addresses from the Language Centre's email address. The fact that the tool involved no additional costs and that it was user-friendly, only requiring a few minutes to be able to start using it, was also a key factor in our decision. Google Forms requires from the individual designing and administering the survey to have a Gmail email account. This email account does not need to be the one used to send the survey to the participants – which was a question of concern for us since we did not want to use an email not belonging to the university – but it is visible on the link sent and therefore needed to have an appearance of reputability. To achieve this, we set up a gmail account for the language centre in which not only the name of the language centre was specified, but also the initials of the university, to make the sender easily identifiable.

Before designing our survey, we had to take into consideration the tool we were going to use, to keep in line with our practicality goal. Google Forms provides for different layouts, allowing sending respondents in different directions depending on the answer and allowing for different types of question formats. The question formats provided are: *Text* -open questions with short answers-, *Paragraph Text* -open questions with longer answers-, *Multiple Choice* -controlled answers where one option is chosen from among several-, *Checkboxes* -controlled answers where users select as many options as they like-, *Choose from a list* - controlled answers in which users select one option from a dropdown menu-, *Scale* -controlled answer in which users rank something along a scale of numbers-, *Grid* - controlled answer in which users select a point from a two-dimensional grid, *Date* -controlled answer in which users pick a date in a calendar-, *Time* – controlled answer in which users select a time of day or a duration of time-. Our initial intention was to use either the *Text* format or the *Paragraph Text* format, preferring the short answers questions for reasons of conciseness. However, we also wanted to favour practicality and easy processing of the information and we realised that using this type of format would not allow for automatic processing of data. In the end and after much consideration, we decided to use a *Multiple Choice* format since it limited the production of the respondents and allowed easier processing. The reason for our decision was that many of our

questions would already have limited answers (some would be yes/no questions and some would comprise a range of pre-defined answers such as the CEFR levels) and this type of question format allowed for the automatic generation of charts and summary of results. In fact, Google Forms can be connected to spreadsheets in Google Sheets, and if a spreadsheet is linked to the form, responses will automatically be sent to the spreadsheet from where information is taken and automatically summarised and presented in a summary of results. We were worried about the questions for which the answers were not going to be limited (i.e. reasons to take an exam) and although we considered we knew the possible answers from our knowledge of our population (and the quality control surveys undertaken in our classrooms annually), we decided to add a field indicating “other” to allow for answers that we had not contemplated. The risk was of course that the number of respondents answering “other” was large, and therefore our results would not be representative, but we decided to take the risk and as we will see, the number of “other” responses was not significant enough to affect the results of our study.

Once these aspects were sorted out, our goal was to design our survey to avoid inconsistencies in its logic which would generate incorrect or falsified information. In order to do so, a diagram was used to establish the structure of the questions and their direction depending on the candidate’s answers. The structure of our final survey can be seen in the figure below:

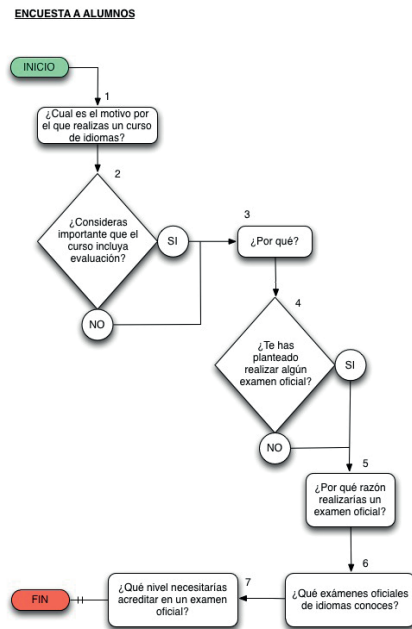


Figure 1. Structure of the survey to study the needs of the candidates to the exam.

As can be seen in the diagram, the structure allowed for the survey to be terminated in case the student had no intention of sitting an official examination, since



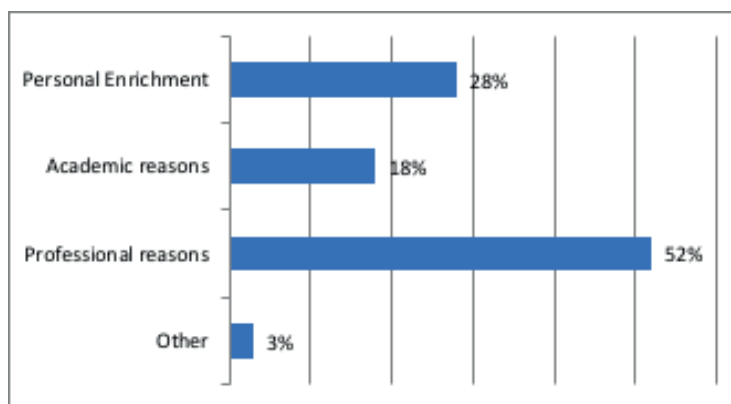
we did not want to obtain information that could falsify our conclusions. However, all students were asked about assessment in the course, since it helped determine their attitude towards assessment and also help them to differentiate between classroom assessment and official examinations, making the following questions about their needs and goals clearer. As mentioned before, we implemented the diagram of our survey into the tool by using a multiple choice format and presenting different pre-designed responses adapted to our environment and population.

Once designed and implemented in Google Forms, we generated the link and sent it to a total of 1,400 students from the Language Centre with a message in which we asked them to participate in helping to study their needs in terms of language certification and improve our service to the university community. As expected, the response rate was not very high and a reminder of the message was forwarded after three weeks. We received 476 responses in total, which given our experience with the response rates of our students to voluntary surveys, seemed quite acceptable.

### 3. Results

Our study provided the following data:

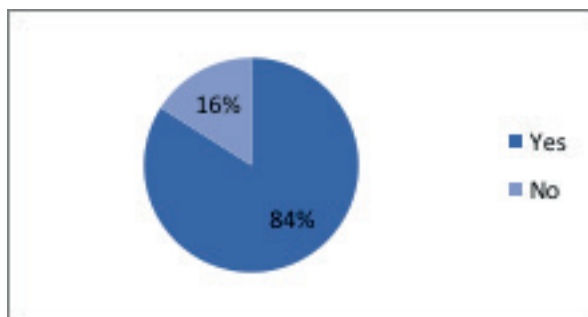
1. Motivation to take a language course: we observed that, as expected in a university environment, 52% of pupils learn a language for professional reasons, followed by 28% of students who do so for personal enrichment. We found surprising the relatively low percentage of students who claim to follow a language course for academic reasons, despite the requirement of a B2 level to graduate in the UPV and the technical profile of the majority of our students who deal with courses delivered in English or using literature in English as the basis for their studies. We venture to guess that some of these students who answered the question citing professional reasons actually considered that their answer implied both options: the requirement for obtaining the degree and their future employment opportunities. This was made more evident when looking at the results to questions six and seven, which as we shall see, address these particular subjects.



Personal Enrichment	<b>131</b>	28%
Academic reasons	<b>84</b>	18%
Professional reasons	<b>249</b>	52%
Other	<b>12</b>	3%

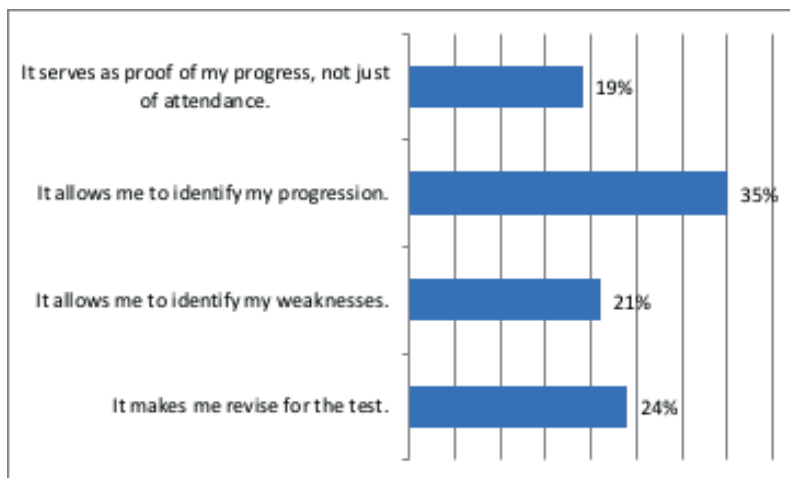
**Table 1.** Survey to CDL (Language Centre) candidates.  
What is the reason you take a language course?

2. Attitude towards an assessment test: within this section, the two following questions were considered: *Do you think it is important for a language course to include an assessment test?* and, *Why do you think it is important for a language course to include an assessment test?* We found out that, generally speaking, attitude towards the tests was good, as was expected in a university environment where testing is part of everyday life. The reason behind this is, as we can see from their answers, that the existence of an examination forces them to set objectives, helps identify their weaknesses and determine the level of progress, as well as providing students with a useful tool to present to external actors to accredit their language level. As we can see, 84% of respondents answered affirmatively and only 16% were against assessment of any kind. It is important to remark here, that we wanted to specify the word “test”, since other types of assessment are conducted in our courses (oral presentations, portfolios, etc.) and we wanted to limit the opinion received to the actual use of tests.



Yes	<b>399</b>	84%
No	<b>77</b>	16%

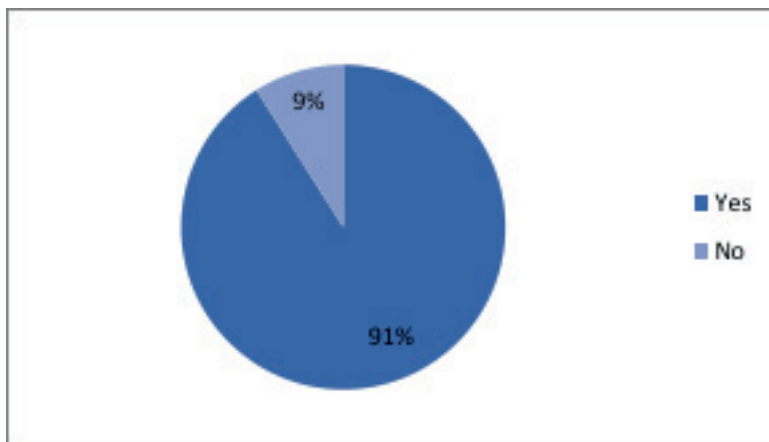
**Table 2.** Survey to CDL candidates. Is it important that the course includes assessment test?



It serves as proof of my progress, not just of attendance.	<b>155</b>	19%
It allows me to identify my progression.	<b>280</b>	35%
It allows me to identify my weaknesses.	<b>169</b>	21%
It makes me revise for the test.	<b>194</b>	24%

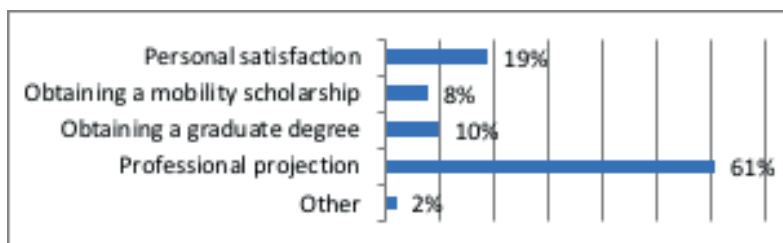
**Table 3.** Survey to CDL candidates. Is it important that the course includes assessment test? Why?

3. Intention and reasons to sit an official language examination: 91% of the surveyed students stated their intention of taking an official examination. It is worth mentioning here that we are witnessing a change in landscape not only in the field of higher education, but also in the orientation of the labour market. As mentioned in our introduction, we are moving towards a global market, where qualifications must be international and professional projection should not be limited by barriers of any kind, either national or language related. This is particularly relevant in the European context, and is reflected in the results of our study, since 61% of respondents chose professional projection as the reason for taking an official language examination. Interestingly, and once again in line with the response we obtained to our first question about motivation to take a language course, achieving a B2 level in line with UPV requirements for graduation does not seem to be the main priority for our candidates, or at least, they do not mention it when questioned about their needs. As we mentioned above, we believe they were considering graduation requirements as a category within the larger field of professional projection.



Yes	<b>433</b>	91%
No	<b>43</b>	9%

**Table 4.** Survey to CDL candidates. Do you intend to take an official certification test?

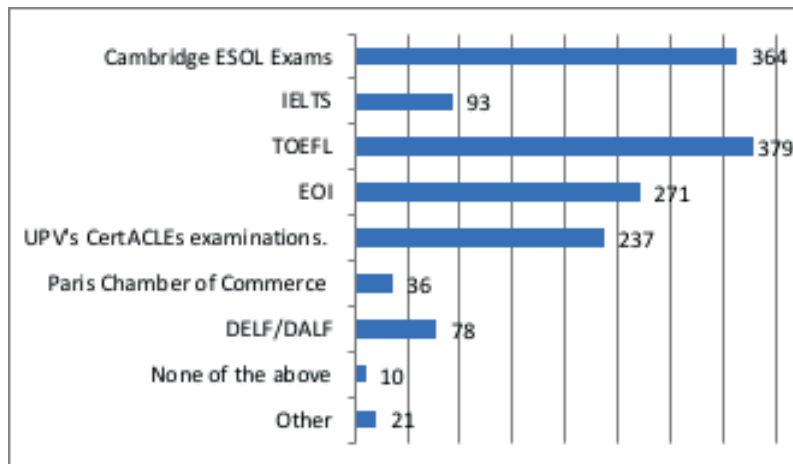


Personal satisfaction	<b>127</b>	19%
Obtaining a mobility scholarship	55	8%
Obtaining a graduate degree	<b>70</b>	10%
Professional projection	<b>411</b>	61%
Other	<b>11</b>	2%

**Table 5.** Survey to CDL candidates. Why would you take an official certification test?

4. Knowledge of official language examinations: the reason for including this question in our study was because we wanted to determine the degree of implementation of the CertACLES certification model amongst our own students. Part of the job when launching a language proficiency examination in a higher education institution was to provide it with face validity (Hughes, 2003), that is, the test needed

to be “apparently” valid in the eyes of a non-expert in the subject matter. This form of validity is essential in the early stages of a test such as ours, as it is a test designed by universities and for universities. Consequently, the members of the university community had to be the first in accepting it as a reliable instrument of measuring language competence, thus endorsing its validity. We observed in the responses that most students claimed to be more acquainted with English tests over tests of other languages, although this was not considered relevant since most of the students amongst whom the study was conducted were enrolled in English language courses. Furthermore, and as expected, most of the students knew about international examinations provided by reputed examining bodies such as Cambridge ESOL, the British Council and ETS (TOEFL exam), followed by the Official School of Languages (EOI) – a nationwide certifying entity in Spain. UPV’s CertACLES certification exams were known by only 237 of the students who answered the survey. Looking at the results obtained and taking into consideration the target population –CDL students –, their knowledge of our language competence exams was relatively low, which evidenced the lack of information provided to our students, or at least, the appropriateness of the means used to disseminate this information. Since we were not aware of such shortcomings, these findings were proven to be very useful in devising an information campaign fitted to our population.

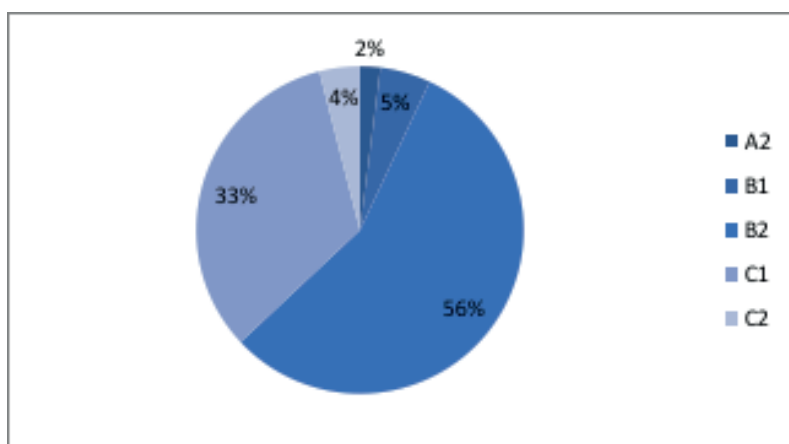


Cambridge ESOL Exams	364
IELTS	93
TOEFL	379
EOI	271
UPV's CertACLES examinations.	237

Paris Chamber of Commerce	36
DELF/DALF	78
None of the above	10
Other	21

**Table 6.** Survey to CDL candidates. What official examinations are you aware of?

5. CEFR level goal: the findings confirmed our initial presuppositions, the majority of our candidates aimed at a B2 level, which corresponds to UPV requirements for graduation. However, it is important to note that a large number of respondents indicated they were interested in obtaining a C1 level. This is in line with the results obtained in previous questions about the motivation to take a course or sit an official language proficiency examination, since in both cases, respondents mentioned work related reasons or career projection reasons, and considering that our students are mostly engineers, it would seem logical that the level required for their integration into the labour market would be a C1.



A2	<b>8</b>	2%
B1	<b>24</b>	5%
B2	<b>261</b>	56%
C1	<b>155</b>	33%
C2	<b>21</b>	4%

**Table 7.** Survey to CDL candidates. What level would you need to achieve in an official examination?

Summarising our results, we can see how professional projection is the main goal of most of our candidates and, therefore, their main reason to sit a language examination would be to accredit their language level with employers. Their attitude towards assessment is positive in general and most of them aim at a B2 level, followed by C1. They were aware of the language examinations offered by international examining bodies and the main national examining body in Spain (EOI) but the spread of CertACLES examinations was relatively low. In view of these results, we set out to adapt our specifications and exam constructs to comply with our findings and allow our test to effectively fulfil the purpose for which it had been created.

#### 4. Conclusions

Once the results of our study were analysed, we reached several conclusions that allowed us to modify not only aspects relevant to the content of our exams but also organisational issues that would allow for a better use of resources and a better service for our users. Namely:

1. According to our results, most of our candidates sit an official language examination to further their professional careers. Taking this into consideration, and even though the construct of our examination was already based on communicative competence, changes were made to the specifications to further incline the balance towards communication:

- Assessment criteria and scales were modified to give more weight to the ability to communicate effectively. The criterion of task appropriateness was modified and additional descriptors were added to give weight to the degree to which the interlocutor/reader received the message. Additionally, the descriptors in the criterion for overall production for productive skills (speaking and writing) was modified to focus on communication instead of grammatical accuracy or lexical accuracy, which were already being assessed within their own criterions. In the speaking section, the descriptors on pronunciation were slightly modified to favour intelligibility over native-like correctness. The criterion for lexical accuracy now introduces a bias towards the ability to transmit the message despite lexical inaccuracies.

- In the information handed in to the raters during the rater training process, an emphasis is given on the importance of communicative language performance. The importance of sociocultural appropriateness is explicitly introduced.

- Communicative tasks were re-designed to focus more on authenticity and to favour topics related to the professional world, although attention is paid to avoiding topics that could benefit professionals in the engineering fields. Although there was a discussion on whether to incline task topics towards the field of most of our target population –engineering–, thus using a majority of factual texts, it was finally decided that since it was a general English test, the number of factual and literary texts would be balanced. Also, tasks are designed to elicit sociocultural appropriate behaviour and the criterion for task appropriateness includes a descriptor to this respect.

2. Since the levels required by our candidates are B2 and C1 of the CEFR (although B2 is the level required to graduate at UPV, international companies encourage C1

certificates and this is consequently the ultimate goal of many of our candidates), the schedule for examinations in the language centre is modified to allow for a higher frequency of B2 and C1 levels without increasing centre resources. In order to do this, B1 level examinations will be held once a year and B2 and C1 will now be held twice a year. Since the interest in A2 examinations was low amongst the sample population in our study but it is still the requirement for some administrative posts in our university, A2 examinations will now be held only on request of the Human Resources Office. This way, more resources are destined to the levels required by our population and fewer resources are spent on levels with low demand.

3. As CertAcles UPV exams are not as well known amongst our students as initially thought, a dissemination campaign was organized to make the examination better known within our university community. In order to do this, (1) printed information was prepared and handed in to students requesting information for courses and activities at the beginning of the year, (2) our information screen, located in the entrance hall of the centre, was programmed to show the structure and dates of our exams in regular interval throughout the day, (3) language teachers were instructed to inform students at the beginning of each term of the availability and dates of CertACLES exams, they were also informed about the structure and requirements, since some of our teachers were part time and were not familiar with them, (4) students were given feedback on classroom-based tasks with reference to the requirements of the exams, particularly in the case of level B2, (5) the information on CertACLES exams was placed on the front page of our webpage and regularly posted on our facebook wall, (6) free of cost orientation sessions for the exams were organised at the Language Centre's meeting point, focusing on productive skills.

In summary, our needs analysis study allowed us to better define our examination to fit the needs of our candidates by adjusting contents to increase content validity, modifying rating scales and reassigning resources to optimize their use. By establishing a language proficiency examination fitted to the needs of our university community, we are able to better serve the needs of society by collaborating in the integration of our graduates into a globalised labour market, co-operating with the internationalization of our institution, disseminating the CertACLES national model and finally, assisting graduates, lecturers, researchers and administrative staff in their effort to assimilate into the new panorama defined by the European Higher Education Area.

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# Las nuevas tecnologías para el desarrollo de la expresión oral fuera del aula

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## Resumen

El presente artículo tiene el propósito de fomentar la utilización de las nuevas Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación como estrategia de aprendizaje para el desarrollo de la expresión oral fuera del aula. Esta decisión viene determinada por considerar que no se le dedica la suficiente atención educativa a la destreza más difícil de adquirir por parte del alumnado y de enseñar por parte del docente. Por consiguiente, se plantea una reflexión sobre la necesidad de abordarla didácticamente a través de nuevos y diferentes entornos virtuales de aprendizaje. La dificultad que supone para el profesor poder controlar, monitorizar y evaluar el desempeño y la participación individual de todos los alumnos durante una práctica oral, conlleva a una realización limitada de actividades comunicativas verbales. Por esta razón, los alumnos suelen mostrar una cierta resistencia a la hora de llegar a expresarse y a comunicarse en una lengua extranjera con claridad, seguridad y naturalidad. Ante este contexto, se decidió analizar e investigar una serie de herramientas y recursos tecnológicos, cuya implementación en el aula contribuyese en mejorar la adquisición y el desarrollo de esta habilidad lingüística con el fin de mejorar la fluidez de la expresión oral en estudiantes extranjeros de ELE.

**Palabras clave:** estrategias tecnológicas, podcasting, presentaciones virtuales, narraciones digitales, narrativa audiovisual.

## Abstract

This article aims to foster the use of the new Information and Communication Technologies as a strategy of learning for the development of the oral expression outside classrooms. We took this decision considering that teachers don't pay enough attention to the most difficult skill to develop by the students and to teach by the teachers. Therefore, a reflexion arises from the necessity to approach it didactically through new and different virtual environments of learning. The difficulty lies with the teacher be able to control, to monitor and to assess the development and the individual participation of all the students during the oral practice. This lead to a limited performing of verbal communicative activities. Against this background, the students cannot develop the necessary oral strategies for the development of this skill. For this reason, the students usually show some resistance in the moment of express themselves in a foreign language with clarity, confidence, and ease. In this context, it was decided to analyse and research several tools and technological resources whose implementation in the classroom contributes to improving the acquisition and development of the linguistic skill in order to improve fluency in the oral expression.

**Keywords:** technological strategies, podcasting, virtual presentations, digital storytelling, audiovisual narrative.

## 1. Introducción

Las nuevas Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación han supuesto una revolución y una transformación en los diversos ámbitos de la vida social. La sociedad actual ha sufrido alteraciones en el modo de comunicarse, de socializar, de interactuar e incluso se han modificado los medios más tradicionales empleados para adquirir, transmitir y compartir información. Una acelerada transformación que paralelamente también se ve reflejada en la educación y en el aprendizaje.

La introducción de las TIC en el ámbito educativo supone un gran desafío pedagógico. Un reto que, como señalan Dussel y Quevedo (2010), implica tanto transformaciones físicas del espacio como también la reorganización de los saberes y las relaciones de autoridad en el aula.

La escuela es una institución basada en el conocimiento disciplinar y en una configuración del saber y de la autoridad previa a las nuevas tecnologías, más estructurada, menos exploratoria y sometida a criterios de evaluación comunes y estandarizados. Por otro lado, las nuevas tecnologías –y su lógica de consumo– parecen funcionar sobre la base de la personalización, la seducción y el compromiso personal y emocional, y lo hacen siempre con una dinámica y una velocidad que entran en colisión con los propósitos y “tiempos” de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de la escuela. Estas características implican desafíos muy concretos sobre cómo, dónde, cuándo y quiénes se harán cargo de la introducción de estas nuevas tecnologías en el aula. (p. 11)

Por lo tanto, la incorporación de las TIC en la educación supone la reinención de los conceptos y los métodos de aprendizaje empleados en el sistema educativo. Puesto que su implementación conlleva tanto la reformulación del papel del docente como la adaptación e innovación de las prácticas pedagógicas llevadas a cabo hasta el momento. Una etapa de conciliación tanto para el educando como para el docente que tiene como fin el acoplamiento de los contenidos curriculares a las nuevas estrategias tecnológicas.

Superando las barreras espaciales, la tecnología comienza a tener cabida, paulatinamente, dentro de la dinámica escolar, sin embargo todavía no disfruta de un papel predominante dentro de la práctica educativa debido a como señalan Carneiro, Toscano y Díaz (2009):

Para ello supone configurar un nuevo escenario en las relaciones entre los profesores, los alumnos y los contenidos de la enseñanza, y hacerlo también en la evaluación de todo el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje. Si difícil es cambiar la forma de enseñar, aún lo es más modificar el sistema habitual utilizado en la evaluación. Por ello, la formación de los profesores para que dispongan de las competencias necesarias que les permitan incorporar de forma natural las TIC en su práctica pedagógica constituye la variable fundamental para garantizar el éxito. (p. 7)

Ante este nuevo desafío, las instituciones educativas fomentan la integración tecnológica y promueven el desarrollo de habilidades y competencias digitales

en la planificación curricular para la construcción de los nuevos aprendizajes. Los tradicionales materiales didácticos unisensoriales como son los manuales, los libros de texto, las enciclopedias y los diccionarios son reemplazados por plataformas de almacenamiento, recursos interactivos y recopilaciones digitales multisensoriales. Ante este imparable hecho, los docentes, con mayor frecuencia, se lanzan a la innovación educativa y comienzan a hacer uso de las nuevas herramientas tecnológicas para la elaboración y programación de sus actividades y materiales didácticos.

Para encarar este movimiento de renovación educacional, empiezan a tener su espacio dentro del aula: los blogs, las wikis, las redes sociales y una amplia variedad de websites educativas que ofrecen diversos recursos y materiales curriculares en formato digital. Estos nuevos recursos y herramientas se convierten en materiales didácticos eficaces para la creación de comunidades virtuales de aprendizaje, para la presentación de contenidos educativos, para el seguimiento y tutorización de los alumnos y para la creación de una amplia variedad de actividades interactivas y facilitadoras de alguna etapa del aprendizaje.

Los docentes de lenguas extranjeras, disfrutando de las ventajas y beneficios que aportan estas nuevas herramientas y recursos tecnológicos, vadean por la web y se lanzan en la creación de diversos y variados tipos de actividades lingüísticas, con el fin de que el alumno las pueda realizar de manera flexible, fuera del aula y de forma individual y autónoma. Algunas de estas propuestas de actividades son las que a continuación se mencionan:

- Trabajos individuales o cooperativos de investigación y recopilación de información.
- Actividades en línea para la práctica de la pronunciación y la corrección fonética.
- Actividades dirigidas al desarrollo de la comprensión lectora y auditiva a través de artículos periodísticos, biografías, canciones, podcasts y vídeos.
- Práctica gramatical mediante actividades de corte estructural como son ejercicios de relleno de huecos, repetición de estructuras, sustituciones y transformaciones.
- Adquisición de vocabulario mediante el uso de juegos interactivos como son el quiz, el ahorcado, sopa de letras, adivinanzas y crucigramas.

Estas prácticas lingüísticas tienen como objetivo la asimilación, adquisición y consolidación de aspectos gramaticales, léxicos, ortográficos, fonéticos y culturales. Conocimientos que permiten, principalmente, adquirir, ejercitar y desarrollar competencias lingüísticas, sociolingüísticas y pragmáticas para el tratamiento y mejora de las destrezas de expresión escrita, comprensión lectora y comprensión auditiva.

Sin embargo, en la interconexión tecnología-competencia la práctica de la expresión oral permanece limitada exclusivamente a su ejercicio en el aula, quedando su instrucción reducida a un número limitado de horas lectivas. Esta restricción temporal conlleva la imposibilidad de poder medir y evaluar la participación activa de todos los participantes. Limitación que, además, influye en el desempeño de los



estudiantes debido a la dificultad que les supone poder superar las barreras afectivas que suelen afectar en las transacciones orales realizadas cara a cara, ya sea entre los compañeros o el profesor. Impidiéndoles, de este modo, alcanzar una comunicación espontánea y fluida.

Por lo tanto y para afrontar esta situación, este artículo tiene el objetivo de defender como la tecnología-pedagógica puede aportar diferentes enfoques didácticos para el desarrollo de la expresión oral fuera del aula. Se intentará proyectar una visión más práctica a través del diseño de diferentes tipos de tareas de aprendizaje mediante el uso de una variada serie de herramientas tecnológicas.

## 2. La integración de la expresión oral con las nuevas tecnologías

La expresión oral según muchos investigadores como Arnold, Brown (2000) y Oxford (2000) es la destreza que más ansiedad provoca a los estudiantes, puesto que su desarrollo está íntimamente vinculado con la parte más afectiva del educando.

Las prácticas orales que se realizan en el aula suelen producir en el alumno bloqueos lingüísticos, debido a la invasión involuntaria de sentimientos negativos como son la vergüenza, inseguridad, timidez, nerviosismo, miedo a la equivocación o a la evaluación. Estas reacciones incontrolables provocan que el desempeño quede condicionado por las barreras afectivas y, simultáneamente, perjudica el proceso formativo impidiendo que se produzca un aprendizaje efectivo. Por lo tanto, y como señalan Arnold y Brown (2000) sobre la función que ocupa la afectividad en el aprendizaje de idiomas:

En presencia de emociones excesivamente negativas como la ansiedad, el temor, la tensión, la ira o la depresión, puede peligrar nuestro potencial óptimo de aprendizaje. Las técnicas más innovadoras y los materiales más atractivos pueden resultar inadecuados, si no inútiles, debido a las reacciones afectivas negativas que pueden acompañar al proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas (p. 257)

De este modo, es importante contrarrestar las emociones negativas del alumno con nuevas técnicas y herramientas innovadoras para de este modo estimular y desarrollar sentimientos más positivos como la seguridad, la autoestima, la empatía y la motivación. La preocupación e interés del docente por la dimensión afectiva del estudiante ayudará a que mejore su eficiencia y productividad en el aula, así como aumentará su interés y autonomía en la comunicación oral.

Por lo tanto, la incorporación y aplicación de la tecnología en la práctica oral, además de nuevas oportunidades de aprendizaje, también aporta una serie de beneficios no solo para el formando sino también para el docente:

- Posibilidad de almacenamiento para futuras revisiones y correcciones.
- Retroalimentación de la práctica oral más precisa, mediante la observación más detallada de aspectos del discurso como son la pronunciación, el ritmo, la concordancia, la estructura y la coherencia.
- Eliminación de la presión del tiempo para la preparación del discurso oral.

- Empoderamiento del alumno en su proceso de aprendizaje por la adquisición de poder para la creación de sus propios proyectos orales.
- Favorece la autocorrección, puesto que el alumno puede revisar y corregir los errores cometidos durante su producción.
- Desarrollo de la fluidez mediante su constante ejercitación.
- Ruptura con las barreras afectivas que afectan al alumno en la comunicación realizada cara a cara.

### 3. Herramientas para la práctica de la expresión oral fuera del aula

La web 2.0 proporciona una amplia variedad de herramientas tecnológicas que permiten abordar la práctica de la expresión oral desde un enfoque más interactivo y productivo. La didactización de estas nuevas herramientas y la creación de propuestas pedagógicas tecnológicas son propicias para lograr un aprendizaje diferenciador y significativo en los alumnos. Por lo tanto, se convierte en esencial innovar, crear e implementar nuevos instrumentos educativos, estrategias, materiales y recursos para que la práctica de la oralidad se convierta en un ejercicio creativo, distintivo, motivador y significativo para el alumno.

#### 3.1. Narraciones digitales

*Fotobabble* es una herramienta de la web gratuita que permite poder hacer una grabación de audio e insertarle una imagen o fotografía. Esta peculiar característica aporta una amplia variedad de aplicaciones didácticas en la creación de actividades más descriptivas como pueden ser la descripción de personas, lugares, cosas o situaciones. Sin embargo, por otro lado, también permite la práctica de otro tipo de producciones más creativas como son la narración de cuentos o relatos breves, pequeños textos orales sobre noticias periodísticas o reseñas biográficas.

#### 3.2. Doblaje educativo

El software *Windows Movie Maker* brinda la oportunidad de diseñar, editar y crear todo tipo de videos. Esta funcionalidad lo convierte en un recurso potencial para su aplicación el aula de una lengua extranjera, puesto que ofrece a los docentes una amplia variedad de posibilidades didácticas enfocadas a la narrativa audiovisual.

Este artículo se centra en su uso para impulsar el acercamiento del alumno con el campo de la traducción y la interpretación, mediante una amplia variedad de tareas relacionadas con la explotación de materiales audiovisuales. Dentro de estas propuestas didácticas se encuentran la creación de audio descripciones de una escena, voces solapadas<sup>18</sup>, reconstrucciones de un dialogo, colocación de un audio en una escena muda, realizaciones de doblajes originales o creaciones libres.

La creación y diseño de los guiones originales o inventados tienen como finalidad la interpretación, por lo que el alumno no solamente pone en práctica su competencia

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<sup>18</sup> Voces solapadas o superpuestas que traducen el dialogo original. En este tipo de doblaje se pueden escuchar el dialogo original y su traducción. Técnica más utilizada en el doblaje de documentales.

discursiva oral y fonética, sino que al mismo tiempo ejercita otros componentes del lenguaje oral como son la entonación, el ritmo y la pausa.

### 3.3. Podcasts radiofónicos

En la actualidad la radio escolar es una poderosa herramienta educativa que se encuentra implementada en muchos de los centros educativos a nivel mundial. Desde el punto de vista pedagógico, es el medio digital que más posibilidades educativas y didácticas ofrece. En la actualidad, existen diversas herramientas web gratuitas que permiten recrear un verdadero estudio de grabación en el aula, rompiendo de esta manera con el preconceito de que su introducción y ejecución sean un proceso complicado y laborioso.

*Spreaker Studio* es una aplicación para Android que permite que los alumnos vivan una auténtica experiencia radiofónica. Dentro de las funcionalidades que ofrece la aplicación se encuentran la posibilidad de crear diferentes programas de radio, grabar y transmitir en directo o diferido, realizar mezclas profesionales de voz, música y efectos de sonido y, además, cuenta con la ventaja de poder compartir los podcasts en las redes sociales.

Desde una visión más didáctica, se pueden proponer diferentes tipos de actividades radiofónicas que pueden ser de carácter individual o incluso proyectos colaborativos. La propuesta más completa es la creación de diferentes programas radiofónicos, donde cada alumno o grupo de alumnos son los responsables de la producción y transmisión de su sección. Pueden ser secciones fijas o variables, las cuales dependerán de las necesidades curriculares del profesor. Algunas de las propuestas radiofónicas pueden ser: crónicas del aula, reportajes o presentaciones de personajes famosos o históricos, espacios informativos de actualidad, programas culturales, radio-teatro, leyendas, cuentacuentos y un apartado cooperativo de debates y entrevistas.

A través del podcasting se trabajan todas las competencias comunicativas de forma conjunta e integrada, concediéndole mayor importancia al desarrollo de la expresión oral. Paralelamente, contribuye en promover la autonomía, la independencia e incentiva la autoproducción del alumno, puesto que se convierte en el personaje principal y en el responsable por la elaboración de su guion, la estructuración de las ideas y la planificación de su intervención.

### 3.4. Presentaciones virtuales

*Movenote* es una herramienta que permite realizar presentaciones verbales en formato de video. La innovadora y creativa manera de realizar las exposiciones orales a través de grabaciones previas rompe con los medios y el método más clásico de la comunicación realizada delante de toda la clase.

Las presentaciones en público en una LE suelen generar estados de bloqueo, nerviosismo y ansiedad en el alumno. Para la superación de estos obstáculos se convierte en una necesidad que el alumno desarrolle habilidades personales como el control al miedo escénico, serenidad y confianza. La posibilidad de ensayar y grabar las presentaciones en un espacio fuera del aula contribuye a que el alumno desenvuelva estados anímicos más positivos como la tranquilidad y la seguridad discursiva.

En las presentaciones virtuales también tienen cabida los recursos de apoyo visual como son documentos en PDF, ilustraciones, esquemas, gráficos, tablas de datos o diapositivas. Este acoplamiento es debido a que la herramienta también permite la subida de todos estos elementos y su sincronización con la grabación realizada en video. Los trabajos creados quedan automáticamente almacenados y se pueden compartir en las redes sociales o también insertar en una página web o blog para su futura visualización y corrección.

#### 4. Conclusión

La tentativa de expresarse en una lengua extranjera que no se domina a la perfección provoca un sentimiento de vulnerabilidad en el alumno. Aparte del dominio lingüístico, el alumno también ha de desarrollar otras habilidades personales como es la tranquilidad, la seguridad, la espontaneidad y la naturalidad. Estados emocionales y actitudes que favorecen tanto la dimensión afectiva del alumno como mejoran las capacidades cognitivas, permitiendo, de este modo, la adquisición y el procesamiento de los conocimientos a través de la percepción de estímulos y sentimientos positivos.

Las TIC se pueden considerar una herramienta pedagógica que puede contribuir a alcanzar el fin educativo en el desarrollo de la expresión oral, vinculando la afectividad con la efectividad del aprendizaje. Su uso favorece la superación de los factores afectivos que sufren los alumnos a la hora de hablar en público, así como ayuda a potenciar la participación y la creatividad en las producciones orales.

Para concluir, este estudio se ha destinado a ofrecer nuevos recursos tecnológicos a los docentes de lenguas extranjeras, así como una reflexión sobre las carencias y dificultades, tanto del profesor como del alumno, para la puesta en práctica de la expresión oral en el aula. Por lo tanto, se invita al replanteamiento de los medios y estrategias utilizados hasta el momento y se aconseja la implementación de las nuevas herramientas tecnológicas como un elemento reforzador para el aula fuera del aula.

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## Twitter in the language learning classroom at the university: An experimentation for dynamic and authentic assessment

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### Abstract

This contribution describes an experimentation involving two classes of basic Italian as L2 during the A. Y. 2014-15 I term at the University Complutense of Madrid. Within a general MALL and BYOD approach, Twitter was adopted as an in-classroom tool for language learning Dynamic and Authentic Assessment, aiming at boosting the learning success and overall language proficiency. Students' satisfaction, engagement factors and levels have been measured via a post-intervention questionnaire, showing general positive outcomes. Final formal summative assessment also showed very positive general results and opened the way for further investigations.

**Keywords:** Mobile Language Learning, Higher Education, Dynamic Assessment, Authentic Assessment, Neuroscience of Learning.

### 1. Introduction

This contribution is about an experimentation that took place during the first term of the 2014-15 Academic Year at the Complutense University of Madrid with two classes of basic Italian as L2. The experimentation was based on the use of Twitter as a tool to implement the principles of Dynamic and Authentic Assessment. Some key results of the experimentation have been presented and discussed in Cacchione (2015), focusing on aspects such as creativity, engagement and overall learning success.

The use of Twitter in the language classroom was conceived as a tool for applying the principles of Dynamic and Authentic Assessment at the same time. There are two main innovative features in this approach: 1) the association of Dynamic (DA) and Authentic Assessment (AA), that normally are applied separately, 2) the use of Twitter as an evaluation tool.

In the next sections, each of these factors will be explored, with a view to a better understanding of the experimentation theoretical background. Therefore, firstly, the main principles and references of the DA will be presented; secondly, the same will be done with AA, and a comprehensive overview of the two will be provided to see where the experimentation can be positioned due to its characteristics. Afterwards, the description of the experimentation will highlight its core features in relation to creativity and engagement, seen as relevant aspects of successful learning.

The discussion of the experimentation results will allow its general evaluation shaped as a SWOT analysis and taking also into consideration some key evaluation models by Feuerstein et al. (1988), Poehner (2008), Gulikers et al. (2004) and

Cacchione (2015). In this way, besides the description of the experimentation, a set of key practical indications will be provided, in order to promote further applications and development of this and similar projects.

## 2. The theoretical background

### 2.1. Overview of the experimentation

As mentioned above, the experimentation involved two classes of basic Italian as L2 during the A. Y. 2014-15 I term at the University Complutense of Madrid. The first class took place within the Modern Languages and Literatures degree (Faculty of Philology). Its curriculum comprises at least two courses of Italian L2, up to eight in the case of Italian as Major Language (from A1 to C2 CEFR level). It was composed of thirty-two students and they all (but one) had no previous linguistic competence of Italian. The second class took place within the Musicology degree (Faculty of History and Geography). Its curriculum comprises only one basic course of Italian L2, conceived to provide the students with linguistic notions to understand key music related lexicon coming from Italian. The size and composition of the second group was similar: about thirty students and no previous knowledge of Italian. This course was fifteen hours shorter than the first one.

The experimentation was conducted in the following way.

At the very beginning of the course, the teacher explained that Twitter was intended as a tool to practice Italian during the lesson, by creating tweets with the *pieces of language* learnt in the classroom. For an easier retrieval, a specific hashtag was ideated collaboratively for each class: #itagnoloUCM<sup>19</sup> for the first group and #musitalia<sup>20</sup> for the second.

Even if tweets could be created at any time and possibly also outside the class timetable, two or more specific moments were allocated during the two-hour lesson to tweet (re)using lesson contents. Tweets, labeled with the class hashtag, were projected on the classroom TV screen and could be seen as soon as they were created. In this way, they were commented and possibly integrated and/or corrected by the teacher and/or students in real time, creating threads or just giving space to grammatical or cultural debates. Sometimes, tweets were created outside the classroom, for example by students who could not attend and wanted to participate from home. After the official closure of the course, and just during the week before final examinations, the teacher provided grammatical tips to the first group.

For the Musicology class, a special activity was organised on the 20th of October 2014, with the aim of stimulating the creation of content and possibly incorporating music-related input. The activity consisted of a fifteen minutes tour inside the faculty building, searching for interesting and possibly funny things (people, situations) to

<sup>19</sup> The hashtag comes from the contraction of two words: Italian(o) and Spagnolo (Spanish), an invented but quite common word to indicate the code-mixing phenomenon by learners of both languages, due to their similarity. The suffix, UCM, is the acronym of the University Complutense of Madrid.

<sup>20</sup> The hashtag is the contraction of music and Italia/Italy.

show and briefly describe via Twitter. This activity was not planned in advance: it was proposed to re-activate a flat lesson and was broadly based on the scavenger hunt activity described in Petersen et al. (2013).

## 2.2. Dynamic assessment

The experimentation aimed at stimulating language learning and promoting the achievement of better results while keeping track of the whole process in real time. This twofold purpose strictly links the learning process to the evaluation process, aiming at performing them both simultaneously. In this sense, the most appropriate theoretical framework is that of Dynamic Assessment.

Dynamic Assessment represents a view on assessment and teaching in which instruction or feedback is intertwined with assessment or testing. As van der Veen et al. (in press) point out, it has received a great deal of attention in the educational sciences and language assessment literature roughly over the past three decades<sup>21</sup>. For the present work, we refer mainly to Poehner (2008), whose book provides an extensive account of the main theoretical, methodological and practical issues concerning DA.

DA is considered to have been founded by Vygotsky (1978), even if the term has been introduced by Luria (1961). In the Vygotskian perspective, interpersonal activity plays a major role in the development of higher mental functions. Social interactions – conversations, negotiations, games, task performances etc. – are the way we acquire, internalize and develop complex cognitive functions and skills, especially when we are children. That is the main reason why teachers have to promote – and take an active part in – interactions in the classroom in order to foster children’s cognitive development. The classroom and the classroom daily life are seen as a socio-cultural privileged environment, where all kind of activities can contribute to the growth of each student. In this sense, assessment is not ontologically different from any other activity – such as reading or listening or playing – but, on the contrary, being integrated with the activity of instruction, can be a powerful means for development. This vision leads to a radical revision of the traditional conceptualization of assessment, where assessment and instruction exist in a quite irreconcilable dichotomous relationship.

Employing again a Vygotskian expression, Poehner says that “the key to a monistic view of assessment and instruction is providing learners with mediation, or appropriate forms of support, in order to simultaneously understand and promote their abilities” (2008, p. 13). The dynamicity of DA is therefore given by being embedded into the whole learning process, dynamic itself, but also by the average DA triadic format, composed of a pre-test, followed by a teaching/learning moment and closed by a post-test phase – also referred to as a sandwich-scheme. While definitions of DA as opposed to static assessment have been questioned and criticized in favour of a less dichotomic opposition between DA and non-DA (see again Poehner 2008, 13, discussing Sternberg and Grigorenko 2002), it is generally accepted that DA is not focused on helping learners to get through the task assigned but on promoting

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<sup>21</sup> They make reference to Elliot, 2003; Leung, 2007; Lidz, 1991; Poehner, 2008; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002.



their development instead. This is a crucial point, as it can be easily misleading in its formulation (Poehner 2008, p. 81):

Another consequence of teachers lacking a theoretical understanding of learner development is that their feedback during assessments may be focused on helping learners to “get through” the task at hand rather than to develop abilities that transcend any given task (Poehner and Lantolf, 2005, pp. 27-28). Poehner and Lantolf argue that these differing orientations to classroom interactions by distinguishing the concept of scaffolding from the ZPD. The term scaffolding analogizes the assistance given to learners struggling with difficult tasks to the structural support used to erect buildings (Wood et al., 1976).

In other words, if a teacher gives an exercise or a test to the class and, passing through the desks, helps someone in difficulty by giving a hint or even the right answer, in order to help him/her finish it, this is not a development-oriented activity and, therefore, it is not a DA but, possibly, a form of scaffolding. DA is not focused on completion, but on the process itself. This can come into conflict with organisational and/or political and/or personal teaching habits: “traditional teaching agendas that include rigid goals and timelines (e.g., completing task X and moving to task Y before Friday) are anathema to development” (Poehner 2008, p. 82). As pointed out at the beginning of the quotation above, this could also be related to an inadequate preparation of teachers, and – as it will be highlighted again at the end of this work – more support and training should be devoted by teacher educators to these issues.

The experimentation proposed corresponds to the principles listed above: it is completely embedded into the classroom activities, it does not constitute a traditional task to be performed and completed and, basically, consists of a form of interaction between a student and the class – peers and teacher – making use of a digital tool – i.e. Twitter – and a technological support – i.e. the screen. But there are other aspects to be considered to evaluate its actual DA nature. In this perspective, two models will be taken as benchmarks: a) the Feuerstein’s Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) (Feuerstein et al., 1988) model and b) the four principles for instituting a classroom-based L2 DA program by Poehner (2008, p. 122).

### **2.3. Feuerstein’s Mediated Learning Experience**

Feuerstein et al. (1988) outlined eleven MLE attributes that distinguish it from other types of interaction: 1) intentionality and reciprocity, 2) transcendence, 3) mediation of meaning, 4) mediation of feelings of competence, 5) mediated regulation and control of behaviour, 6) mediated sharing behaviour, 7) mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation, 8) mediation of goal seeking, goal setting, goal planning, and achieving behaviour, 9) mediation of challenge: the search for novelty and complexity, 10) mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity, 11) mediation of an optimistic alternative.

According to Feuerstein, the first three are the most important in transforming a given interaction into an MLE, while “the other attributes, largely culturally and

situationally determined, are responsible for the development of differences in cognitive style, creating great diversity in human existence” (Feuerstein et al. 1988, p. 60). Let us see what happens if we relate these three traits to our experimentation.

Intentionality implies that the teacher has the intention to mediate, but it is not as obvious as it may seem. The teacher/mediator operates intentionally into the environment and manipulates the context in order to make it more favourable for development: he/she “transforms the stimulus, rendering it more salient and attractive to the child, changing its amplitude (e.g., loudness, brightness), its frequency, and the duration of its exposure” (Feuerstein et al. 1988, p. 62).

This makes room for two major types of considerations. First, the quotation shows the focus on children, that underlies DA due to its Vygotskian roots. This aspect is not problematic *per se*, since cognitive development and learning are common aims at each educational level, so that moving to a higher education level does not change the matter. Yet – and this is the second consideration – it can generate an issue when we deal with the need to consider higher education learners as autonomous and responsible agents for their own learning process, so that “normal” stimuli should be enough for them to drive their attention to the items desired without the need for extra stimulation. But, as pointed out by many scholars and also discussed in other works (Cacchione, 2013) adult (or quite adult) learner autonomy is far from being taken for granted, so that the considerations made above are still valid for an adult audience.

Reciprocity refers to cooperation and exchange of roles between participants. In other terms, it refers to the co-construction of the social object at issue. Given the characteristics of the experimentation, it is evident that both features are included: the teacher/mediator has the precise will to promote learners’ development and reciprocity lies in the conversational nature of the activity.

Transcendence concerns the need to move beyond the “here-and-now” of a given activity. According to Feuerstein, development transcends any specific task; rather, it is related to “a series of tasks that represent progressively more complex modifications of the original training task” (Feuerstein et al., 1979, p. 92). In the experimentation, the use of Twitter is just a complex modification of the original tasks such as giving feedback during explanations.

Mediation of learning – originally conceived in relation to culturally deprived children – concerns the need to make meaningful connections between the learning peculiar moment and other possible circumstances in which the learnt object can be applied. It makes the link between a single episode and all suitable future scenarios. In order to activate this connection, the mediation has to be meaningful.

The tweeting activity puts into practice and transforms, without any fixed constraint but length, what has just been learnt, stimulating and displaying creativity and fun. This simple act shows how the learning object can be treated and manipulated, while being translated into a different medium (written) and shown to the whole class on the TV screen. These features can be taken as support elements of mediation of learning in the Feuerstein’s sense.

Concerning the other eight attributes, two are particularly worth analysing

hereby: the 9th, “mediation of challenge: the search for novelty and complexity”, and the 11th, “mediation of an optimistic alternative”. Novelty is a powerful learning driver and our experimentation leverages the novelty of Twitter use in the classroom to promote creativity and engagement. The activity proposed can be seen as a demonstration of how a more complex task can be successfully performed without any specific training, thus demonstrating also that improvement and learning success are within everyone’s means.

#### **2.4. Poehner’s four principles for instituting a classroom-based L2 DA program**

DA has not been developed to be applied to a specific educational field and, in Poehner’s words, it is relatively unknown in Applied Linguistics (2008, p. 95). In order to design a comprehensive and theoretically well-grounded framework for DA in a L2 learning context, Poehner introduced the following four main criteria, hereby reported together with their discussion in relation to the experimentation at issue:

- 1) mediators must be willing to provide any support necessary to foster learner development;
- 2) mediating moves must be sensitive to learners’ changing needs as indicated by their implicit and explicit contributions to DA;
- 3) every interaction coheres around the ZPD, and this entails an awareness of the shifting dynamics of mediator–learner dialoguing but also an intentional effort to complexify tasks in order to continually challenge learners;
- 4) L2 development from this perspective involves the internalisation of theoretical knowledge and so the approach taken to remediate underlying problems and confusions should be based on linguistic concepts.

These criteria are strictly interrelated to those already examined by Feuerstein. In particular, the first is similar to Feuerstein’s first one (intentionality). The second describes the adaptive process that mediators have to perform in order to follow learners’ needs and to promote their moves. It is based on the assumption that abilities and needs are not static and can be continuously and positively modified by a well-conducted interaction. In our experimentation, it can be affirmed that this criterion was satisfied, but, in general, we have to take it into consideration as one of the most relevant requirements for the mediator.

The 3rd and 4th criteria deal, again, with mediators’ skills. Unlike standardized assessment and testing, that can be conducted without a specific training – it can, in fact, use testing batteries prepared by someone else and just give them to the students, without providing any feedback or support during the testing phase – DA implies a set of complex abilities in order to fine-tune the interaction and turn it into a good learning development environment. These abilities only in part depend on personal attitudes and sensibility, while they can be acquired and developed via specific training and professional support.

## 2.5. Authentic assessment

In comparison with DA, Authentic Assessment has received small amounts of attention from researchers. As a consequence, literature about AA is reduced. Available resources mainly come from practitioners' websites and faculty repositories in particular. At the time of finalising this contribution, the Arizona State University is going to start a MOOC<sup>22</sup> about Assessment Methodologies, whose first module is about Authentic Assessment.

One of the main references for AA is Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner (2004), defining it as “an assessment requiring students to use the same competencies or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to apply the criterion situation in professional life.” (2004, p. 69). In other words, in AA – also referred to as Performance-based or Alternative or Direct Assessment – students conduct tasks that mirror the use of the concept or operation in the real world. In accordance with this definition, the original field of application for AA was that of internship and apprenticeship, with the student observed in action and the instructor providing directions. Subsequently it has been applied to arts and afterwards to all other areas of the curriculum, but the gap in research has not been completely filled yet.

As it has been done with DA, a major model of AA is hereby proposed in order to see how the experimentation fits the established criteria and can be consequently defined a case of actual AA. The model is that by Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner (2004).

## 2.6. The five-dimensional framework for AA by Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner (2004)

The framework proposed by Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner (2004) consists of five main criteria, defined as the dimensions of the assessment. It is important to point out that, in their model, authenticity is not a 0-1 characteristic, but, rather, it can be considered as a continuum. In their words (2004, p. 70) “the degree of authenticity is not solely a characteristic of the assessment chosen; it needs to be defined in relation to the criterion situation derived from professional practice”.

The five criteria-dimensions are:

1. The assessment task: an authentic task confronts students with activities that are also carried out in professional practice. Furthermore, the users of the assessment task should perceive the task as representative, relevant, and meaningful. It needs to have the same characteristics as a real-life problem or task.

With regards to this criterion, the task at issue can be defined authentic. It is not related to a professional practice, but to something that many of us do quite often – tweeting about daily life – i.e. a life practice.

2. The physical context: the physical context of AA should reflect the way knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be used in professional practice<sup>23</sup>. Authentic assessment often deals with high-fidelity contexts.

<sup>22</sup> Available at <https://www.coursera.org/learn/ell-assessment/home/welcome> (3/11/2016)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 74, quoting Brown et al., 1989; Herrington & Oliver, 2000.

Tweeting can be done wherever, as it is mobile-based. Therefore, a classroom can be considered an authentic physical context.

3. The social context: this criterion is the social counterpart of the previous one. A model for AA should consider social processes that are present in real-life contexts. What is really important in an authentic assessment is that the social processes of the assessment resemble the social processes in an equivalent situation in reality, and twitting in the classroom fits this criterion: it can be tweeted alone or in a group, and, if in a group, ideas can be tweeted before or during or after the tweet, especially if the tweet gets a feedback – re-tweets or answers.

4. The assessment result or form: an assessment involves an assessment assignment (in a certain physical and social context) that leads to an assessment result, which is then evaluated against certain assessment criteria<sup>24</sup>. This dimension, along with the following one, is particularly relevant for the experimentation to be defined as actual AA. Both dimensions concern features that are typical of traditional, standardized-oriented assessment: assignments, outcomes, standards, measurements. Moreover, and more importantly, the 5th dimension states that assessment criteria must be explicit and transparent to learners.

Let us start with the latter. In a strict sense, students in the experimentation were not aware of the assessment: when the teacher firstly introduced the activity, she explained it was meant to re-use the linguistic structures just learnt in order to get a feedback from her and the rest of the class while having fun and enjoying the unusual situation and communication tool. This, implicitly, is telling that there is an evaluation component in the activity, but it is clear that there is no explicitness of the assessment purposes nor of its formal constraints and elements – because it did not have them.

This and the following point can be considered as two major weaknesses of the experimentation and reduce or delete its AA nature. And yet, on the other hand, it could represent – and, in some sense, demonstrate and show – a major strength, being characteristic of its difference from traditional assessment models and, above all, of a development-oriented practice – similarly to what is meant for DA.

The point is that AA, while being presented as an innovative and nontraditional form of assessment, is actually designed and implemented as any other form of traditional assessment, with the “only” – of course, very relevant – difference that settings, objectives and concrete tasks are non-artificial but are real-life situations and they result meaningful to task performers. In this sense, AA is much less revolutionary than DA, as it does not change the mindset lying at the basis of assessment: it changes the practical scenario, not the theoretical one. AA can, in fact, be implemented without any form of participation of the teacher/assessor, who has no mediation role. This implies that traditional assessment roles – i. e. setting, explicitness, evaluation criteria, scores - have to be maintained.

From the experimentation perspective, this presents the problem of how to combine the two assessment models without losing any of their core characteristics.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 75, quoting Moerkerke, Doorten, & de Roode, 1999.

We, in fact, have to take into consideration that applying them both together represents one of the most important innovative features of the experimentation itself. But, since the DA model is the most relevant from the theoretical and methodological point of view and it implies a complete shift of focus from mere measurement to cognitive development and actual learning, we cannot but give priority to it. As regards to the 4th and 5th dimension of the model, we have to register them as not applicable, while the rest of the criteria confirm the authentic nature of the assessment.

5. The assessment criteria: criteria are those characteristics of the assessment result that are valued; standards are the level of performance expected from various grades and ages of students<sup>25</sup>. Setting criteria and making them explicit and transparent to learners beforehand is important in authentic assessment, because this guides learning (ibid. quoting Sluijsmans, 2002).

## 2.7. MALL

The third theoretical main aspect to analyse concerns the use of 2.0 technology and the adoption of a MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) and BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) approach (Aafren, 2014). Both these choices are intended to enhance the language learning process, by providing a favourable environment for effective and lasting learning to take place.

The main justification for these approaches comes from the neuroscience of learning: from a cognitive neuroscience perspective, learning involves forming and strengthening neural connections. Studies tell us that good neural networks are built by experiences containing elements such as novelty, intensity, and movement. Enriched, stimulating environments, where novelty, intensity and movement play a key role, can lead to improved learning outcomes (Naeini & Duvall, 2012).

Emotions, in this context, play a major role, as they can direct attention and directly determine learning and memory by releasing two important hormones – epinephrine and norepinephrine – involved in the creation of new neuronal circuits (van Praag et al., 2000; Phelps, 2006; Schunk, 2012). The solution for a good emotional management is linking academic content to students' experiences so that their positive emotions associated with these experiences become associated with the learning. That is just what Mobile Learning functionalities like micro-blogging and, therefore, Twitter, do. Twitter and M-learning in general is a very favorable environment for integrating novelty and intensity, because it allows Situated Learning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011), that happens when someone uses or creates and/or shares and increments knowledge exactly where knowledge is needed or generated, feeding a mechanism driven by curiosity, creativity and practical needs. As Situated Learning is generated by emotionally intense moments when something catches our attention for its beauty or another kind of attractiveness, in so doing it is very effective in creating or strengthening neural circuits.

Being intertwined with DA and AA, Twitter moments become the central point

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 75, quoting Arter & Spandel, 1992.

of an integrated, highly interactive process. For the teacher/tester, they are special occasions to observe what is being acquired and how, what kind of difficulties students encounter and what are their focuses of interest. For the students, they are special occasions for playful, fun and original re-use of the pieces of language they just learnt. Stimuli coming from the knowledge just acquired join those coming from the contextual situation, while social interactions feed the content creation process in a creative way, by mixing suggestions from friends, assonances between words and memories.

The integration of assessment and Twitter is another innovativeness factor of the experimentation. As far as it has been observed, very few cases of nontraditional assessment applied to 2.0 technologies in Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication (SCMC) with L2 learners have been implemented, and none of them is about Twitter. A very recent case is reported by Ebadi (2016) who applied DA to Skype and Google Wave and achieved interesting results in terms of interlanguage diagnosis and learning potential exploration.

### 3. The experimentation

#### 3.1. The data

In total, about eighty tweets were created by the Musicology degree class and about a hundred by the Modern Languages and Literatures degree class, showing a quantitative difference probably due to the different amount of total hours of the course. The tweets created were very diverse and showed a great variety of form, content and relationship with the context.

These are some of the most interesting tweets from the Musicology group.

The first two pictures gather some of the tweets created during the first day of the course, 29th of September 2014. More than twenty tweets were created during that very first moment, reflecting a generally positive reaction. Many of them were also re-tweeted and sometimes little conversations developed, as in the first example.

Some of the tweets take-up the main content provided during the lesson, such as greetings (*bon giorno* – good morning, misspelled) and the sentence *non ho capito niente* (*I did not understand anything*). Others, such as *que cosa volei mangiare* (*what do you want to eat*, misspelled), were perhaps stimulated by the lunch time. Even if *over-performances* like these (as mentioned above, it was the first day of the course) are quite common within a Lexical Approach (Lewis 1993), a high level of up taking of the content provided, together with a high level of personal re-working is evident.



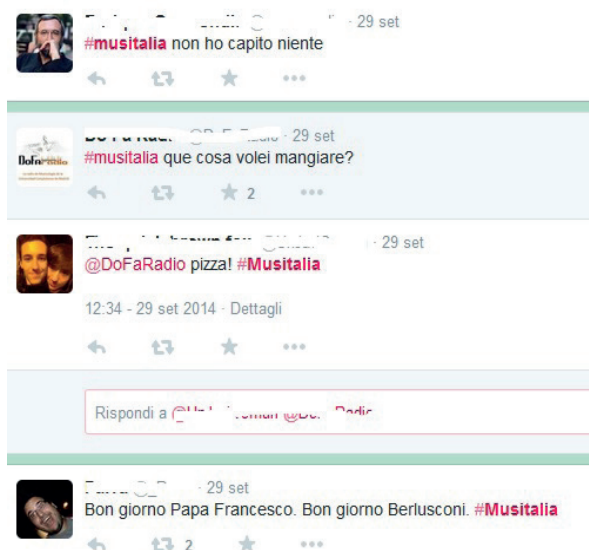


Figure 1. Some examples of tweets made during the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Musicology class, containing a short Twitter conversation.

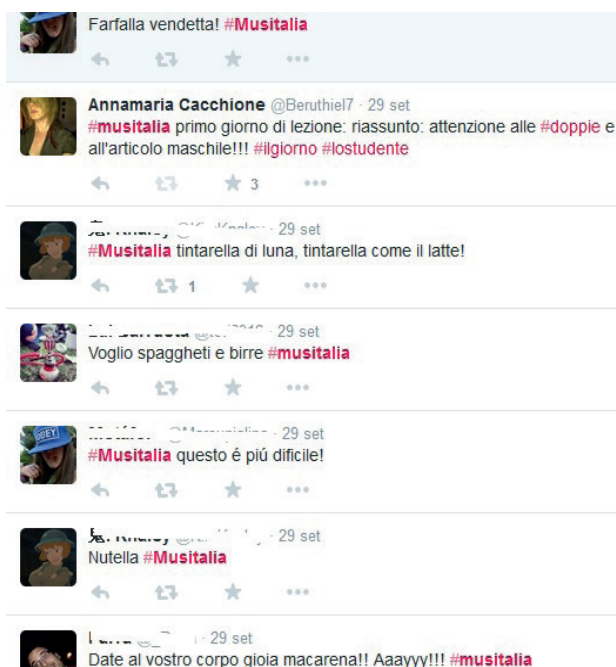


Figure 2. Other tweets made during the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Musicology class, containing quotations from an Italian song (*Tintarella di luna*) and food brand (*Nutella*).

The second tweet of figure 2 contains a clear evaluative tweet by the teacher, who makes a summary of the most common mistakes made and gives advices about them (“*First day of lesson: summary: attention to the double letters and to the masculine article!!!*”) This is an example of how the assessment was conducted, inside and outside Twitter, and also shows an example of group-assessment, because the intervention is related to common linguistic problems, thus avoiding identifying personal responsibilities for mistakes made.

As mentioned above, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October an out-of-the-classroom activity was made, and students went for a walk in the faculty in search of interesting things to tweet. The tweets reflect the up taking of the movement verb *andare* (to go) in *io vado al bagno* (I go to the bathroom), as well as that of some modal verbs such as *dovere* (have to/must) in *noi dobbiamo fare un’attività* (we have to do an activity, misspelled) and *noi dobbiamo studiare l’italiano per l’esame* (we have to study Italian for the examination).

Interactivity is shown by the conversation between a student, asking the teacher (me) how to say *going down the stairs*, code-mixing Italian and Spanish, and the answer of another student, who, maybe surprised by the first question (or, more probably, because of the place-inference related to the question, given that they were supposed to be in the same place), reacts with *escalera??* (stairs??).

*Un professore più pazzo per la facoltà... soccorso!* (A very crazy professor in the faculty! Help!), describes a person – maybe a professor they know – looking crazy while walking in the faculty.



Figure 3. Other tweets made during the walk in the faculty activity of Musicology class.

Regarding the second group, there is a number of interesting tweets related to the *like* meaning. This is highly consistent with the emphasis given during the lessons to this major verb and also with an emotional way of expression, typical of young people.



**Figure 4.** Tweets made by the Modern Languages & Literatures class, including the use of *piacere/to like*.

From the grammatical point of view, these tweets were very informative, because, although the use of the verb *piacere* (*to like*) is very similar to the Spanish *gustar*, agreement mistakes – such as lack of agreement between subject (plural) and verb (singular) – are very common. The following tweets, on the other hand, shows a perfect mastery of the *piacere* morpho-syntactics (*I don't like lessons at 3 p.m. because I am hungry*). The fourth following tweet displays another grammatically correct use of the verb, with the third singular person and the accordance with the feminine singular indirect pronoun (*le-her, in My friend Paula likes Italian very much*).



**Figure 5.** Other tweets made by the Modern Languages & Literatures class, including the use of *piacere/to like*.

The tweets in figure 6 are from belong to a later period of the course, after about

seven weeks of lessons. The first shows the use of the past *ho imparato* (*I learnt*). The second expresses a desire in the future by using the modal verb *volere* (*I want*), and a personal opinion about the film *Interstellar*. The tweet is also part of a thread/conversation. The third is a description of the evening in Madrid. The fourth, by one of the most active students, is a quite complex sentence using the verb *preferire* (*to prefer*): *I prefer going to the bar before going to the gym because I am a very lazy boy.*



Figure 6. Other tweets made by the Modern Languages & Literatures class.

This overview closes with three tweets that are very different from the others. The first is addressed to the teacher, in front of him, to remind her to give him back the pen he had lent her. Besides the humorous use of the tweet, it shows a quite good mastery of the Italian indirect clitic pronouns (*darmi* is *dare* plus *a me*, i.e. *give to me*) used with a modal verb (*potere*, *to can*). The second is about the desire for the weekend to arrive desire quickly (it is a difficult structure in Italian, which explains the verbal mistake in the tweet). The third is about the desire for a coffee to fight sleepiness, with an interesting exchange of words of similar sounds but of different meaning: *sonno* (sleepiness) and *sogno* (dream). The second two tweets are about the use of the modal verb *volere* (*to want*).



Figure 7. Can you give me back my pen, teacher? Thank you; and two other tweets with *volere*

### 3.2. The post-intervention questionnaire

At the end of both the courses, an evaluation questionnaire has been given to the students to have data about their perception of the experimentation and about the factors that could have played a role in their engagement. The questionnaire, composed of close questions, aimed at investigating the following points:

- a. If the students liked to use Twitter in classroom or not
- b. The reasons they liked or disliked it (three possible answers)
- c. If the students had an active role in the activity, for example by creating and/or re-tweeting one or more tweets.

To provide an explanation for the possible positive answer to the question a, the students could choose among one or more of the following answers:

- Because it was useful to learn
- Because it was fun
- Because I interacted with others.

To provide an explanation for the possible negative answer to question a, the students could choose among one or more of the following answers:

- Because it was boring
- Because I don't have Twitter
- Because I did not understand the tweets.

The answers show that over 70% of the students reacted positively. The 26% negative answers, on the other hand, are not irrelevant. It is easy to think that, only for the fact that a BYOD approach has been adopted, students are automatically happy to participate.

The questionnaire gave the students the opportunity to explain their negative reaction. In the majority of the cases, the problem was that they did not have Twitter or they had it but did not use it. None of them said there was any problem in understanding, while that was supposed to be a probable negative factor, given that the tweets were in Italian and the course was addressed to absolute beginners.

The very small number of answers about the boredom of the activity seems to be related to the main answer (not having a Twitter account). In any case, it is a very marginal result (only 2 cases).

Among the liking reasons, the first is that of the playful aspect, closely followed by the usefulness for the learning process. Those who liked the experimentation as an occasion to interact with other colleagues represent a very small percentage.

The question about the number of tweets sent and re-sent or saved as favourite aimed at measuring the activity level among the students. It is interesting to see that the majority of the active users created at least three tweets (67%). The answers to the last two questions, about the re-use and the rating of others' tweets (saving them as favourite) are similar to those just presented. More than 3 and 1 are again the first two answers, but in reverse order.

The data collected with the post-intervention questionnaire tell us that the experimentation has been generally welcome and liked, mostly because it was perceived as funny and useful to learn better the new language.

Those who disliked the experimentation, in the majority of cases, did not have a Twitter account. It is probable that they felt excluded from the activities. The tweeting activity was intended on a voluntary basis. Therefore, this fact raises important questions about the level of freedom that has to be left to students in cases like that, because, when leaving students totally free to participate, the risk is that they perceive the activity as less relevant. On the other hand, keeping the participation open corresponds to the will to preserve the fun and creative value of the tool – a component that surely would have been reduced by its mandatory use. From the answers collected, it seems that, at least for this purpose, the goal has been achieved.

A more general observation about engagement could be done in this respect. Mandatory activities do not ensure participation, even if they are supposed to. The difference, in these cases, is that negative reactions are interpreted as disobedience rather than non-engagement. Another consequent difference is that, while poor engagement is not automatically equivalent to zero-learning – also because there are many forms and levels of engagement (Petersen et al. 2013) – disobedience is.

Freedom of participation corresponds, on the other hand, to the didactical principle of learning personalization and, especially for university students, to personal responsibility for their own learning path.

### **3.3. SWOT analysis**

After having presented the theoretical background and the main characteristics of the experimentation, we can try and analyse the whole experimentation in order to evaluate its most relevant features and identify any point for further development and applications. For convenience, a SWOT scheme will be adopted, and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats will be identified in relation to the following points:

- a. Innovativeness of the concept
- b. Robustness of the background
- c. Quality and quantity of the results
- d. Feasibility and application fields.

#### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

##### **a. Innovativeness of the concept**

###### **Strengths**

The experimentation adopts a twofold assessment approach, integrating DA and AA. As far as it can be registered, there are no similar cases so that this can be considered a very innovative one. The use of Twitter as an evaluation tool is another innovative aspect of the experimentation. As a consequence, its whole structure can be defined as innovative and far beyond-state-of-the-art.

## **b. Robustness of the background**

### ***Strengths***

The theory behind the experimentation concerns DA, AA and MALL. As illustrated in the first section, the experiment presents all the core features of DA and, above all, meets the need for promoting learning while assessing, by exploring the ZPD actively. Within the continuum that describes all possible forms that DA can take (Poehner 2008, 13), the experimentation can be placed among the most flexible and less structured interventions. Between opposite poles of Instructionalist and Interactionist DA (ibid., 18), it clearly belongs to the latter. Moreover, it lacks the typical pre-test/intervention/post-test sandwich format.

Being based on Twitter, it is a clear case of MALL, even if the majority of the activities (but not all of them) have been done in the classroom. Furthermore, as it has been illustrated in (Cacchione 2015), it contains elements, such as novelty and intensity, that recent neurobiology of education proved to be crucial for an actual and lasting learning.

### ***Weaknesses***

Regarding DA, possible weakness aspects can be related to the lack of structure in the experimentation. This is not a theoretical issue, but it makes it impossible to use the experimentation for official, standardised-like testing.

On the other hand, the same observations do become theoretical issues in relation to AA, because the experimentation cannot match two out of five criteria. The two missing criteria are about assessment traditional setting and features, such as explicitness of objectives, presence of standardised parameters and scoring schemes. It is evident that by privileging a soft approach, conceived to promote interaction and DA mediation while minimising performance-related anxiety (Krashen 1982, MacIntyre & Gregersen 2012), it is not compatible with those criteria, even if the authenticity of the task is not put under discussion.

## **c. Quality and quantity of results**

### ***Strengths***

The overall final proficiency level – measured via traditional standardised summative assessment (shaped like official CEFR-based certification of Italian L2) – had much higher results than those of the previous years, with an average of higher marks of over 80%. If we take into consideration only the highest marks (comprised between 9 and 10 in a scale of 0-10), they were 48% in 2013-14 A.Y. and 57% for the year of experimentation. The post-intervention questionnaire served to evaluate students' perception and satisfaction, together with engagement factors and levels. Outcomes were very positive, the negative ones referring to those without a Twitter account (and not interested in activating it).

### ***Weaknesses***

The remarks made about the experimentation structure have their counterparts in the results, which are more qualitative than quantitative and cannot ensure the reliability required by standardised assessment. Moreover, other weak points can be identified in the fact that, even if the experimentation is likely to have played a



strong role in getting the positive results that have been recorded, a meaningful improvement was registered even the year before, when the experimentation was not implemented (but the class was really exceptional).

With the post-intervention questionnaire, some negative outcomes were registered. About 26% of the students said they did not like using Twitter. In the majority of cases, those who gave this negative answer did not have a Twitter account and probably felt excluded from the activities. This point raises several issues about the obligatoriness of the activity, as well as the autonomy of learners.

#### **d. Feasibility and application fields**

##### **Strengths**

The experimentation has been conducted within the academic courses without any form of institutional support. The BYOD approach made it easy to implement the experimentation, so no extra resources were needed. From the organisational side, the experimentation required integrating Twitter sessions into the lesson plan, but there was no need for rigidity of timetable, so that it was very easy to implement.

#### **Threats and opportunities**

##### **a. Robustness of the background**

The issues raised about the compliance with the theoretical models proposed can be seen both as a threat and an opportunity, depending on specific aims and constraints of the context. If the main objective is that of adopting a tool to be used in formative and/or summative assessment, whose results can be officially taken as a measurement of learners proficiency, with all formal implications this can have, interventions such as the one proposed are not adequate. If, on the other hand, the aim is that of innovating learning by introducing activities that can provide insights about the ongoing learning process while enhancing effective learning and support other (i.e. teacher/mediator and peers/other students) and self-assessment, the experimentation offers a good example of how all this can be done.

##### **b. Feasibility and application fields**

While traditional assessment can be conducted properly by any teacher or assessor, regardless of their specific preparation, the type of assessment hereby proposed requires higher level abilities that cannot be taken for granted. This is, again, a threat and an opportunity. If it makes the choice of the right person to involve in similar interventions more complicated, it also gives space for wider interventions in the teacher education. Van der Veen, Dobber & van Oers (in press), describe a professional development programme for teachers, which has been running in the Netherlands for twenty-five years and is focused on designing, executing and implementing developmentally appropriate activities, including assessment. Examples like this could be of inspiration for training teachers to conduct similar interventions integrating learning and assessment in the classroom.



#### 4. Conclusive observations

This contribution wanted to describe an experimentation focused on the use of Twitter as a tool for DA and AA in language classroom. The specific aims of this work were to clarify the theoretical foundations of the experimentation – DA, AA and MALL – and to discuss its validity – this latter to be considered as the correspondence to the main principles of the models taken as reference points. Furthermore, the work aimed at evaluating the experimentation by highlighting its strong and weak aspects with a view to future application.

The theoretical basis of the discussion served to clarify a series of key aspects. The association of DA and AA is the most innovative trait of the experimentation, but it raises issues regarding some AA definition criteria that the experimentation cannot satisfy, due to its focus on spontaneous interactions between teacher and students. Nevertheless, the theoretical primacy of DA, whose main principles are all met, makes the experimentation still valid.

Along the continuum of DA dimensions, the experimentation can be positioned among the most de-structured and interactionist interventions, whose attention for learning development is the highest possible. This definition is consistent with the MALL approach, promoting extensive and stable learning through creativity, engagement, collaboration and fun.

On the opposite side, the structure of the experimentation makes it difficult to adopt it as an official assessment, as it does not allow standardised-like evaluation and scoring. Its validity and reliability regard learning support while allowing continuous assessment by the teacher, peer-assessment among students and self-assessment for the single tweeter. The complex process of real-time manipulation of content implies the need for the teacher/mediator to have specific skills in order to be able to manage such a great variety of elements at the same time.

For future application and development of the proposed experimentation, we therefore suggest ensuring a proper training of the teacher, as well as taking into proper consideration all the theoretical and methodological aspects discussed, so as to assign the right function within the general curriculum development to the activities.

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# **Culturas, Identidades e Litero-Línguas Estrangeiras**

Atas do I Colóquio Internacional  
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