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ÍNDICE / TABLE OF CONTENTS

SEYED JALAL ABDOLMANAFI ROKNI & NASROLLAH BAYAT AFSHAR Vocabulary Knowledge Learning and Reading Comprehension Performance: Which One Is Superior - Breadth or Depth?	5
ERI OSADA A Teacher's Decision-Making Process in an Elementary School EFL Education	15
CHIARA VETTORI EBNER The Long Way to Bilingualism: The Peculiar Case of Multilingual South Tyrol	25
LETIZIA CINGANOTTO & DANIELA CUCCURULLO PLE & PLN for Language Learning and Teaching: A Case Study	35
ROBERT CRAIG Promoting Student Engagement through Outcomes Based Education in an EAL Environment	49
MOHAMED KIES Fostering LMD English Language Learners' Skills and Competencies as a Way to Face New Challenges in Education.....	61
JIN XU The Relationship between the Use of Speaking Strategies and Performance on IELTS Speaking Test: A Study on Chinese College Students	69
RECENSIONES / REVIEWS	97

VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE LEARNING AND READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE: WHICH ONE IS SUPERIOR - BREADTH OR DEPTH?

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RESUMEN

La lectura ha sido y es una tarea demandada para los aprendices de segundas lenguas. Igualmente, el aprendizaje de vocabulario juega un papel vital en el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera y numerosos investigadores han establecido la correlación entre conocimiento del vocabulario y la comprensión lectora. Sin embargo, la investigación sobre la amplitud y la profundidad en el conocimiento del vocabulario de aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL – English as a Foreign Language) y sus interacciones mutuas es inadecuada. De manera similar, este artículo intenta revisar las relaciones entre el conocimiento del vocabulario de alumnado EFL y su comprensión lectora, así como analizar si la amplitud y la profundidad de dicho conocimiento de vocabulario están correlacionadas. Habiendo revisado numerosos estudios al respecto, encontramos que al tiempo que la profundidad y la amplitud en el conocimiento del vocabulario tienen papeles esenciales en la comprensión lectora de los aprendices EFL, la profundidad juega un papel más esencial, si cabe. También encontramos que la profundidad y la amplitud en el conocimiento del vocabulario están correlacionadas de manera positiva, es decir, aquel alumnado que mostraba un amplio conocimiento en el número de palabras, también mostraba un conocimiento más profundo de esas palabras.

Palabras clave: Actuación lectora, profundidad léxica, amplitud léxica.

ABSTRACT

Reading has been and is a demanding task for foreign language learners. Correspondingly, vocabulary knowledge plays an extremely vital role in foreign language learning and numerous researchers have investigated the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. However, research on breadth and depth of EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge and their mutual interactions is inadequate. Accordingly, the present paper intends to review the relationships between EFL students' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension and analyze whether breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge are correlated to each other. Having reviewed numerous studies in this regard, it was found that whereas both breadth and depth vocabulary knowledge have vital roles in EFL learners' reading comprehension performance, depth of vocabulary knowledge plays a more significant role. It was also found that depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge are positively correlated, that is, those learners who had large vocabulary size will have a deeper knowledge of the words, too.

Key words: Reading performance, depth of vocabulary knowledge, breadth of vocabulary knowledge.

1. Introduction

Reading can be regarded as one of the most central skills in any language because it is a source of information and pleasure as well as a means of strengthening knowledge of the language (Rashidi and Khosravi, 2010).

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As Schellings, Aarnoutse, and Leeuwe (2006) assert, 'Reading is the construction of the meaning of text. It is an active and strategic process, in which the reader's skill and knowledge interact with the characteristics of the text such as genre, the wording and structure of the text' (p.550).

Laufer (1997) emphasizes that background knowledge, the knowledge of vocabulary in a text, and the application of general reading strategies have dramatic effects on reading comprehension. Nonetheless, vocabulary knowledge has been considered as the most influential component of reading. As such, it is necessary to spend several lines to illuminate the nature of vocabulary knowledge a bit clearer.

1.1. Defining vocabulary knowledge through frameworks

In recent decades, second language (L2) vocabulary researchers have offered different but complementary frameworks in order to provide a comprehensive definition about vocabulary knowledge (Richards, 1976; Chappelle, 1998; Henriksen, 1999).

Richards (1976) documented seven aspects of vocabulary knowledge (e.g. associations, syntactic, semantic value, underlying form, behavior and derivations and different meanings). Nation (1990) made a distinction between eight types of vocabulary knowledge (e.g., function, meaning, form, grammatical pattern and relation with other words).

Chappelle (1998) asserted that any feature definition of vocabulary must enclose the four dimensions: (a) knowledge of word characteristics, (b) size of vocabulary, (c) processes of lexical access and (d) organization of lexicon.

Nation (1990) proposed eight facets of vocabulary knowledge: (1) the written form of the word, (2) the spoken form of a word, (3) the associations the word has with other related words, (4) the stylistic register constraints of the word, (5) the frequency of the word, (6) the collocation behavior of the word, (7) the conceptual meaning of the word, and (8) the grammatical behavior of the word. Other researchers have suggested different aspects of vocabulary knowledge (Henriksen, 1999; Schmitt, N. & Meara, 1997).

Qian's (2002) recent framework consists of earlier-mentioned dimensions of: (a) vocabulary size, (b) automaticity of receptive-productive knowledge, (c) lexical organization, and (d) depth of vocabulary knowledge.

1.2. Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary knowledge plays a very important function in the process of language learning. Many researchers have confirmed the very vital role of vocabulary on learners' reading comprehension (Anderson & Freebody, 1983; Mezynski, 1983; Nation, 1990; Read, 1989, 1993; Qian, 1998, 1999, 2002).

As Stahl (1983, p.33) suggests, "One of the best documented relationships in reading research" is the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. This relationship has been the main incentive for numerous researchers to consider the reader's vocabulary knowledge as the top predictor of his/her understanding of text (Anderson & Freebody, 1981).

Knowing the meanings of words and their different collocations is in direct connection with reading comprehension and thus vocabulary signifies a significant element to increasing reading achievement (Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown, 1982).

Nation (1990) declares that interest in the association between and reading comprehension and vocabulary has a very lengthy history in the research of ESL/EFL reading. Numerous researchers suppose that vocabulary learning is the very most chief feature of second-language learning (Knight, 1994; Schmitt, 2008). Richek (2005) asserts that reading attainment can be best predicted by vocabulary knowledge.

Bromley (2004) states that vocabulary knowledge sponsors reading fluency, enhances academic achievement and improves reading comprehension. "It is clear that a large and rich vocabulary is the hallmark of an individual. Indeed, a large vocabulary repertoire facilitates becoming an educated person to

Vocabulary knowledge learning and reading comprehension performance: which one is superior - breadth or depth?

the extent that vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading proficiency in particular and school achievement in general" (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002, p.1).

Several authors have stressed on the crucial role of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension in their studies (Hu and Nation, 2000; Hirsh and Nation, 1992). Nassaji (2004) accepts it as true that one kind of knowledge resource that is rigorously associated to the ones' ability to read texts easily is vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, vocabulary is indispensable for reading comprehension. "In fact, without the recognition of the meaning of the words, it would be impossible to either produce or perceive the language" (Mehrpour, Razmjoo and Kian, 2011).

The remarkable role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension has been well documented in first language (L1) studies and this has become visible to be the case in second language (L2) settings as well. Researchers have presented quite a lot of models to depict the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

1.3. *Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension's Models*

As was pointed out earlier, the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension is multifaceted and active.

Anderson and Freebody (1981) offered a model for understanding and appreciating the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension through three hypotheses: a) the instrumentalist hypothesis, b) the aptitude hypothesis, and c) the knowledge hypothesis. The commonsense model of these three is the very instrumentalist hypothesis. According to this model what turns an ordinary reader into a better reader is learning more words; consequently, in order to enhance comprehension, vocabulary words should be taught and learned. Mezynski (1983) proposed a fourth "access" hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, vocabulary has a causal relationship with comprehension on condition that the vocabulary can be easily accessed.

Haynes (1993) also confirmed that nearly all major problems and handicaps for L2 readers is not lack of reading strategies but inadequate vocabulary in English.

Many studies have confirmed that vocabulary knowledge is one of the paramount predictors of reading capability and the means to obtain new information from texts (Nation, 2001; Qian, 2002; Read, 2000).

Hu and Nation (2000) argue that the following elements are involved in these models: a) background knowledge (sometimes called knowledge of the world), language knowledge (of which vocabulary knowledge is a part), skill in language use (of which reading comprehension is one result).

More recently, Grabe and Stoller (2001) have underlined the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. In the same way, Stahl (2003) identify this relationship as a "robust" one and that vocabulary knowledge has constantly and consistently been the "foremost predictor of a text's difficulty" (p.241).

2. Research on the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension

Progressively, researchers have found that sufficient vocabulary knowledge is one of the vital elements of reading comprehension.

Early factor analytic studies believed that vocabulary knowledge is one of the key parts in reading comprehension (Davis, 1944; Spearritt, 1972). For instance, Davis (1944) analyzed tests of nine skills underlying reading comprehension and came to this result that the two most important skills in these tests were: a) vocabulary knowledge and b) reasoning. Spearritt (1972) reanalyzed Davis's (1944) records and finally asserted that the four major factors were: vocabulary knowledge, pursuing the organization of the

passage, deducing the main points from the content and identifying the writer's purpose and intention. The most excellent distinguished element of these four skills was vocabulary knowledge.

Concerning the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, Koda's (1989) conducted a study on 24 college students who were learning Japanese as a foreign language and found that a very strong link between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Taking into account the effects of content knowledge and vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension, Huang (1999) carefully calculated university students' vocabulary size and their reading comprehension ability. The subjects took Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test, a recall practice, an English passage and the Inventory of Content Knowledge and Interest Questionnaire. He found that university students' comprehension of any English passage depends on vocabulary knowledge and content knowledge, but their comprehension is completely bound for vocabulary knowledge.

Snow (2002) confirmed that the levels of power of relationship between a kindergarten vocabulary measure and reading comprehension amplified considerably at the same time as the children advanced in grade level. The correlations for first graders, fourth graders, and seventh graders were .45, .62, and .69, respectively. Gelderen et al. (2004) administered tests of English vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension to 397 Dutch students from Grade 8 to Grade 10 in secondary education and found a correlation of .63.

Guo (2006) scrutinized the relationship among vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension and syntactic awareness of 155 English speaking undergraduate and graduate students. Factor analysis shows that there is a very high correlation between syntactic awareness and reading comprehension. The results show that syntactic awareness directly influence reading comprehension, and indirectly influences reading comprehension via vocabulary knowledge.

2.1. Vocabulary knowledge; Breadth and depth

Researchers have discriminated between two aspects of vocabulary knowledge, that is depth and breadth (e.g. Bogaards and Laufer, 2004; Read, 2000). Nation (2001) declared that size or breadth of vocabulary knowledge is the number of words that language learners know.

Vocabulary breadth defines as the number of words a learner is familiar with at least on a surface. Vocabulary knowledge depth refers to the deepness of learner's repertoire of words (Qian and Schedl, 2004).

"Breadth of vocabulary knowledge is defined as the number of words that a person knows. With native speakers, the objective of studies in this area has been to measure the number of words that they know in some absolute sense, whereas with second language learners the aim is often more narrowly defined in terms of their knowledge of items in a specified list of relatively high frequency words, such as the General Service List". (Shen, 2008, p.136). Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) which consists of various word-frequency levels varying from high frequency (2000-word level) to low-frequency words (10,000-word level) (Farvardin and Koosha, 2011). This well-known test has received great attentions and supports from several researchers and is now accepted by many researchers as a suitable measure of vocabulary breadth or size (e.g., Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Qian, 1999, 2002).

Alternatively, as Akbarian (2010) argues "depth of vocabulary knowledge refers to how well the language learner knows a word" (p. 392). Several researchers have attributed knowledge of spelling, collocational meanings, pronunciation, hyponymy, stylistic features, synonymy, and antonymy and etc to this kind of vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 1990; Read, 2000; Richards, 1976). Read (1993, 2000) developed Word Associates Test (WAT) to assess some of these aspects and it is nowadays accepted as the most well-known test for measuring depth of vocabulary knowledge of learners.

Ordenez et al (2002, p.719) regard breadth and depth as two vital aspects of vocabulary knowledge. They assert that "although lexical knowledge is most commonly thought of and assessed as a number of

Vocabulary knowledge learning and reading comprehension performance: which one is superior - breadth or depth?

words known, or breadth of vocabulary, it is now increasingly clear that richness of the representation of the words known is also a key dimension of variability. We refer to this dimension as depth of vocabulary”.

2.2 The relationship between depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge

Schmitt and Meara (1997) investigated the relationship between depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge and found that the correlations between word association and vocabulary size were strongly high. Therefore, it was rational to conclude that breadth and depth are two interrelated and vital dimensions of vocabulary knowledge.

After administering Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) and the Word Associates Format, Qian (1999) came to a conclusion that the scores of the two tests were closely and significantly correlated.

Vermeer (2001) came to the conclusion that both breadth and depth of vocabulary are highly correlated. She concluded that “a deeper knowledge of words is the consequence of knowing more words, or that, conversely, the more words someone knows, the finer the networks and the deeper the word knowledge” (p.230). Vermeer (2001) concluded that there is no necessarily any conceptual distinction between the two dimensions (depth and breadth) of vocabulary.

Qian's (2002) investigation showed that depth of vocabulary knowledge is as important as that of vocabulary size in predicting academic reading performance.

2.3 Research on the relationship between breadth and depth of vocabulary

The relationship between both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge has been a focus of investigation among L1 reading researchers (Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown, 1982; Mezynski, 1983).

Laufer (1992) reported that the scores on reading comprehension correlated with both scores on the VLT ($r = .50$) and those on the EVST (Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test) ($r = .75$).

Read (1993), Nurweni and Read (in press) found a relatively high correlation between breadth and depth of vocabulary. Qian (1999) asserted that ESL learner's dimensions of breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge are strongly associated.

Schmitt and Meara (1997) found that correlations between vocabulary breadth and WAT (as a depth test) were relatively high (.61 for receptive knowledge and .62 for productive knowledge). In another study, Nurweni and Read (1999) reported that the correlation between the scores on the tests of breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge was .62 and the relationship became even stronger ($r = .81$) with high-proficiency students.

Later, Qian (2002) conducted a similar study with 217 participants from 19 different L1 backgrounds and reached the same conclusion.

2.3.1 Relationship between reading comprehension and breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge

Regarding the importance of depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge, few studies (Qian, 1999, 2002; Ouellette, 2006; Farahani, 2006) have investigated the relationship between depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Qian (1999, 2002) asserts that both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge play essential roles and that the polysemy, synonymy and collocation, which are vital elements in depth of vocabulary, are significant variables.

De Bot et al. (1997) confirmed that diverse aspects of vocabulary knowledge (breadth and depth) are strongly associated with reading comprehension processes. Qian (1999) assert that that breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are greatly interrelated. Qian (1998; 1999;

2000; 2002) has found that in reading comprehension, both depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge play significant roles.

Typically, breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension has been highlighted by several researchers (Liu and Nation, 1985). Laufer (1996, 1992), found high interrelations between vocabulary size and reading comprehension. Laufer (1996) and Qian's (1999, 2002, 2004) research has produced results representing reasonably high correlation between breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Ouellette (2006) differentiated between breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge in order to highlight the role of vocabulary in a variety of reading skills.

Tannenbaum (2006) investigated the relationships between three dimensions of word knowledge (breadth, depth and fluency) and reading comprehension. The results indicated that breadth and depth /fluency present the best model to fit to the data. It was found that two aspects of word knowledge (depth and breadth) contribute a lot to the prediction of reading comprehension performance.

Likewise, Huang (2006) found that breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are positively correlated.

3. Studies conducted in Iran

As far as the studies related to the topic of investigation conducted in Iran are concerned, one can refer to a few researches.

Rashidi and Khosravi (2010). tried to assess the role of depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. They administered "all instruments (Word-Associate Test (WAT) (Read, 1993) measuring depth of vocabulary knowledge (DVK), Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) (Nation, 1983) measuring Vocabulary Size (VS), and Reading Comprehension Test (RC)" together to 38 Iranian senior university students (Rashidi and Khosravi, 2010, p.81). Finally, they obtained the following results: a) the correlation among DVK, VS, and RC were very strong and positive; b) depth of vocabulary knowledge contributes a lot to the prediction and understanding of reading comprehension; and c) the stronger depth and breadth of vocabulary, the better performance on reading comprehension.

Farahani (2006) examined the relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and Iranian learners' lexical inferencing strategy. She concludes that that relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and lexical inferencing strategy type was highly significant.

Golkar and Yamini's study (2007) tried to empirically determine the reliability and validity of the passive and active versions of the Vocabulary Levels Tests. The participants were 76 Iranian undergraduate students majoring in engineering and English Language and Literature. Three tests of the Vocabulary Levels Test, the Productive Version of the Vocabulary Levels Test, and a TOEFL test were administered to students to find out the relationship between the two vocabulary tests and their relationship to their proficiency level and reading comprehension. The results proved the reliability and validity of Vocabulary Levels Tests as the tests of vocabulary size.

The learners' passive and active vocabularies were also highly correlated as a whole and at each separate word-frequency level. Passive vocabulary was always larger than active vocabulary at all levels. In addition, there was a high correlation between the learners' vocabulary knowledge on the one hand and proficiency and reading comprehension ability on the other hand.

In line with Nurweni and Read (1999), Akbarian (2010) found that VLT (breadth test) and WAT (depth test) had a great deal of common shared variance for Iranian ESP graduate students ($R^2 = .746$).

Kaivanpanah and Zandi (2009) attempted to investigate the role of depth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. A TOEFL test and a measure of depth of vocabulary knowledge were administered to 57 EFL learners (17 males and 40 females). The analysis of the results showed that although depth of vocabulary knowledge is significantly related to reading, grammatical knowledge explains the greatest amount of variance in tests takers' performance on reading comprehension tests.

4. Conclusion

Many researchers consider vocabulary learning as the most chief aspect of second-language (L2) learning (Knight, 1994; Schmitt, 2008,). Vocabulary knowledge is essential for reading comprehension. As Stahl (1983, p.33) asserted, the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge is “one of the best documented relationships in reading research”. Thus, many researchers suppose that a reader’s vocabulary knowledge can be the best predictor of his understanding of text (Anderson & Freebody, 1981).

There is a general agreement that vocabulary knowledge should be regarded as a multi-dimensional construct, therefore researchers no longer consider vocabulary knowledge having a single dimension.

The present study emphasizes that depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge have a quite positive and significant correlations with each other and also with reading comprehension in English as a foreign language (EFL).

It also was found that while measures of size of vocabulary knowledge are strongly related to the reader's comprehension of text, measures examining aspects of depth of vocabulary knowledge make a stronger contribution to reading performance than those that simply measure a single definition of a word.

Therefore, both the vocabulary depth and size measures are valid in a predictive sense. As a result it is noteworthy to state that learners need to have a good knowledge of high frequency words along with adequate additional vocabulary to read.

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- Vocabulary knowledge learning and reading comprehension performance: which one is superior - breadth or depth?
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Seyed Mohammad Mohammadi y Nasrollah Bayat Afshar

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A TEACHER'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EFL EDUCATION

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RESUMEN

Este estudio de casos investiga el proceso de toma de decisiones de un docente de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en una escuela de educación primaria en Japón. El participante era un profesor masculino que rondaba los cuarenta años (y solía trabajar en el extranjero, por lo que tenía experiencia internacional) con poca experiencia en la enseñanza del inglés. En 2011 tuvo la oportunidad de enseñar en la universidad durante un año, al tiempo que impartía clases experimentales de inglés en una escuela de primaria. El investigador observó las cuatro clases que impartió con un profesor nativo de inglés, tomó notas y se establecieron debates con el docente antes y después de dichas clases. Las clases, así como estos debates, se grabaron digitalmente. Los datos de la observación fueron transcritos y analizados con referencia a las planificaciones de aula originales, los datos del debate y las notas de campo. Los resultados mostraron que algunos factores, como por ejemplo el nivel de perfeccionamiento inadecuado en inglés, tenían cierto impacto en sus decisiones de planificación para subsiguientes clases, y que su decisión sobre la cantidad deseada de uso de la lengua meta estaba influenciada por sus creencias sobre la educación en lengua japonesa, que es su especialidad.

Palabras clave: Escuela primaria, inglés para fines específicos (EFL), toma de decisiones, cognición del docente.

ABSTRACT

This is a case study that investigated a teacher's decision-making process regarding EFL education in a Japanese elementary school. The participant was a male homeroom teacher in his forties. Although he was experienced as a homeroom teacher (and he used to work overseas, so he had international experience), he was rather inexperienced in teaching English. In 2011, he had a chance to study at a university for a year, and also conducted experimental English lessons in an elementary school. The researcher observed the four lessons he conducted with a native speaker of English, took field notes, and had pre-class and post-class discussions with him. The lessons as well as the discussions were digitally recorded. The observation data were later transcribed and analyzed with reference to the original lesson plans, discussion data, and field notes. The results showed that several factors, such as his inadequate English proficiency, his classroom practice experience as a homeroom teacher, and the students' post-class reflections, had an impact on his decisions when planning the next lessons, and that his decision about the desired amount of target language use was influenced by his beliefs about the Japanese language education, which is his specialty.

Key words: Elementary school, EFL, decision-making, teacher-cognition.

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Introduction

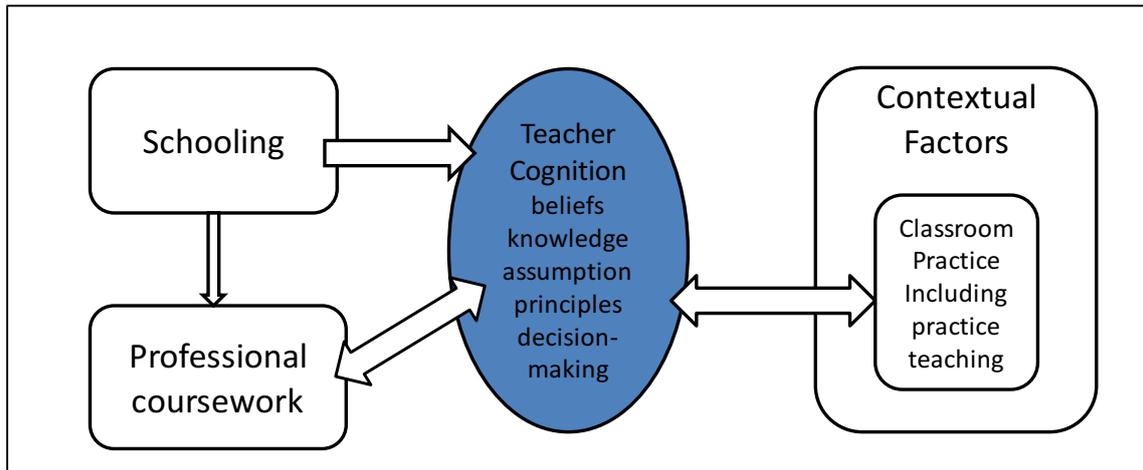
The English program was officially implemented in Japanese elementary schools in 2011. This program, which is named “Foreign Language Activities,” is now a compulsory subject in Grades 5 and 6, but is not a core subject in the way that Japanese, math, or science are. After several years of English being taught at elementary schools, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) is currently planning to implement English in Grades 3 and 4, and to upgrade Foreign Language Activities to a core subject for Grade 5 and 6 students. The biggest issue in terms of making English a core subject is who will teach it. Currently, the curriculum guidelines indicate that homeroom teachers, who teach all the subjects, should play the primary role in conducting English lessons. They manage to teach English with the aid of an assistant language teacher (ALT), even though they were not trained to teach it when they were pre-service teachers. However, if English becomes a core subject, homeroom teachers should have certain knowledge and skills about teaching it. Therefore, the current study tries to examine a homeroom teacher’s decision-making process through observation, field notes, and discussions with him.

1. Elementary school English education in Japan

According to the curriculum guidelines for “Foreign Language Activities,” the overall objective is to form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities through foreign languages. The guidelines say that foundation should be pursued via the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarity with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages. The guidelines also state that too much of a focus on gaining language skills is not appropriate, especially in reading and writing. In fact, only the comprehension of the letters of the alphabet letters is included in the textbooks.

In junior and senior high schools, a Japanese teacher of English (JTE) who has a teacher’s license in English usually teaches alone, and sometimes co-teaches with an ALT, who is a native or near-native speaker of English. On the other hand, elementary schools have various types of teaching styles. If a local government is rich enough to afford to hire an ALT, a homeroom teacher (HRT) can teach with him/her in every lesson, while a JTE might be hired and work with an HRT in some areas. The majority of the schools can enjoy an ALT’s visit, but the frequency of their visits varies depending on the local government budget. In other schools, an HRT teaches without anyone else’s help. If English education becomes a compulsory core subject and there is to be a new focus on pupils gaining language skills, teachers would need more teaching skills than ever.

The model which Borg (2006) established shows that teacher cognition is affected by a teacher’s own experience at schools, his/her professional coursework in a pre-service teacher education, and contextual factors such as previous and current classroom practices and their own teaching practicum (Graph 1). However, many of the Japanese homeroom teachers have had no experience of learning English when they were elementary school students. Nor were they trained for teaching English, and in-service training sessions are rarely provided. On the contrary, they are professional as to primary education because they have been trained and licensed as a primary school teacher and therefore their skills to teach children would have a positive impact on a foreign language teaching.



Graph 1. Borg's model of teacher cognition (2006)

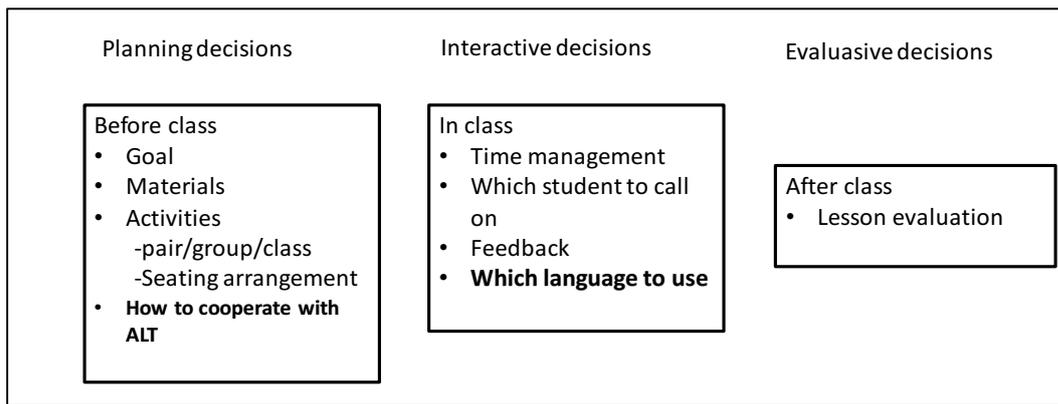
Borg states that a key role for teacher cognition research is to support teacher learning at both pre-service and in-service levels; this case study would contribute to teacher education by investigating a teacher's decision-making process.

2. Literature review

This section will address the previous literature on decision-making processes and teacher cognition.

2.1 Types of decisions

Woods (1989) proposed two types of decisions: sequential decisions and hierarchical decisions. A sequential decision is one which follows another but is independent of the previous decision, whereas a hierarchical decision is one which is intended to achieve the goals of a previous decision. Richards and Lockhart (1994: 78) put decisions into three categories: planning decisions, interactive decisions, and evaluative decisions. Planning decisions are made before classes, interactive decisions are made during classes, and evaluative decisions are made after classes. Inaba (2013), using Richards and Lockhart's types of decisions, shows some examples in each category. Before class, teachers make decisions about goals, materials, and activities. In class, teachers make decisions about time management, which student to call on, and how and when to give feedback. After class, they evaluate the lesson so as to make the next lesson better. As her research was done in junior and senior high schools, I added two examples of decisions for an elementary school setting: how to cooperate with an ALT as a planning decision, and which language to use as an interactive decision (Graph 2). As for the first one, team teaching with an ALT is quite common but nevertheless sometimes problematic in elementary school English classes. Regarding the teacher's language use in class, the senior high school curriculum guidelines stipulate that English class should be taught in English. It is probable that the next curriculum guidelines for junior high school English education will have the same requirement. Although there is no mention about a teacher's classroom use of language in the current elementary school curriculum guidelines for "Foreign Language Activities," it might be the case that how much English versus Japanese should be used will be controversial.



Graph 2. Three types of decisions, adapted from Inaba (2013)

2.2 Teacher cognition

There are a large number of studies on language teacher cognition (e.g. Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1996; Bailey, 1996; Golombek, 1998; Tsang, 2004). Bailey (1996), for example, conducted a study of ESL teachers' decision-making. She obtained copies of lesson plans, videotaped their lessons, took field notes, and then interviewed the teachers. During lessons, the teachers in this study changed their plans

- if an opportunity arose to serve the common good
- when an unexpected opportunity arose to teach something timely and significant
- if an alternative arose that would apparently accomplish the same goals better than the teacher's planning decisions would have done
- when deviating from their lesson plans would better accommodate the students' learning styles.

They also changed their lesson plans in order to promote students' involvement, or to keep the more verbal learners from dominating activities and to encourage the less verbally active students to participate more.

On the other hand, there are few studies on decision-making in English education in Japan. The result of Inaba (2013) shows that the examined teachers' decisions were made based on

- the goals set either by school or individually
- teachers' beliefs from their learning experiences, knowledge or values
- students' current learning conditions
- relationship with class or an individual student
- educational policy of school

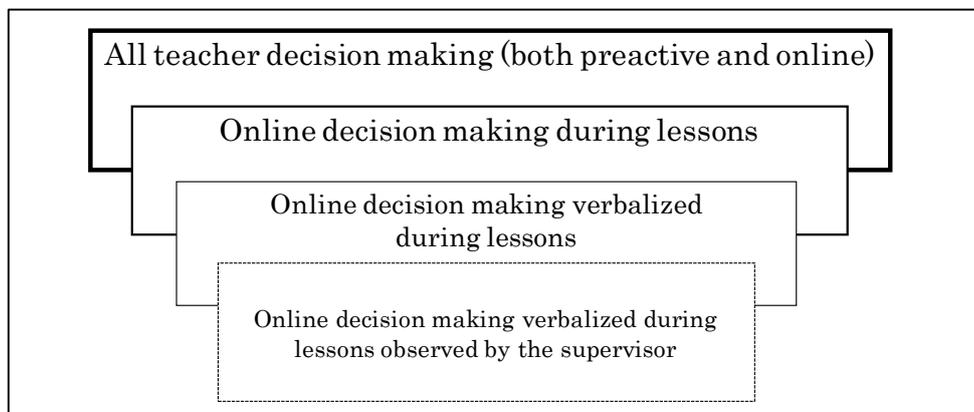
It seems that teachers make decisions not only based on their experiences and their beliefs from their previous practices, but also by the ongoing class atmosphere, including students' learning behaviors. Using the Borg (2006) teacher cognition model and the Inaba (2013) three types of decisions as theoretical frameworks, this research will seek answers to the following questions.

1. What kind of decisions does a homeroom teacher make?
2. What does a homeroom teacher base decisions on when he plans lessons, while he is teaching, and after he finishes the lessons?

3. Study

3.1 Types of decisions

The participant is a male teacher, Teacher A, who had been an elementary school teacher for seventeen years. He had had an experience teaching at a Japanese school in an Asian country for three years, while living with his family. When I conducted this study, he had been allowed to leave his school for one year and study “Foreign Language Activities” at a university. He was a pseudo-homeroom teacher, which means he was not the students’ real homeroom teacher because he was away from his school work. However, he acted like a homeroom teacher, including co-teaching with an ALT while this study was conducted. He came to study at the university where I worked so as to examine the possibility of introducing phonological awareness (PA) activities to elementary school English education. In order to add some PA activities, he had to modify the lesson plans which were established by the government. This necessitated that he make some planning decisions, and I examined these by comparing the original lesson plans with his own lesson plans.



Graph 3. Decision-making hierarchy (Bailey, 2006)

Bailey (2006) indicates that it is difficult to observe “online”, which some other researchers call “interactive” or “in-class” decision-making, and therefore I not only videotaped the classes and took field notes, but also had discussions about lessons with the teacher before and after the lessons (Graph 3). The discussions before class involved the teacher showing me his lesson plans and explaining them to me, and then I asked questions if I had any. Those after class were so-called stimulated recall. The stimulated recall method is a type of retrospective report. The participants are interviewed by a researcher who prompts recalls about certain events which occurred in the classroom. Even though stimulated recall is usually done with video-watching, I couldn’t use a video during discussions because of the time constraint. Consequently, I asked questions based on my field notes and Teacher A answered.



Graph 4. Teaching materials on the blackboard



Graph 5. Eigo note 1 (MEXT, 2009)

3.2 Results and discussions

3.2.1 Planning decisions

Changing contents in lesson plans

Table 1 shows the original unit plan provided by MEXT. The goal is that students will express what they want and then introduce their design to their classmates. He not only set these goals but also an additional goal for students' PA. There are four lessons in this unit. Based on this unit plan, Teacher A carefully made his own unit syllabus as well as each lesson plan. Since he needed to make room to add PA activities, he decided to delete some other activities. The original first lesson plan had three activities, but Teacher A modified the contents of the second activity and eliminated the third activity. In the second lesson, he modified "Let's listen" and decided not to cover Activity 1. In the third and fourth lessons, he planned to skip "Let's listen," while in the fourth lesson he changed the style of "Let's chant." The reason that he decided to skip the listening comprehension quizzes listed in the teachers' manual was probably that he co-taught with a native speaker of English. The textbook provided by MEXT offered some listening activities in order to give students, who had little opportunity to experience contact with a foreign teacher, a chance to hear native speakers' speech. In Teacher A's case, he did not in fact need such materials. In addition to omitting some activities, he tried to attract his students more effectively by using an iPad instead of the pictures in the textbook. He considered an intercultural activity in the first lesson of every unit to be indispensable, but he thought the pictures in the textbook were not varied enough to attract his students. So instead of working on the activity shown in the textbook, he showed 15 different clothes in 15 different countries on the iPad. He mentioned that "I would expect my students to get interested in foreign countries through knowing various kinds of clothes in the world." As referenced earlier, he added some PA activities to the provided plans. One of those activities is "swattering," in which students swat the cards which their teachers say. His students used to use their hands when they played such games, but after learning a new way of playing it at the university, he changed the rule and he had his students use their pencils instead of their hands.

Table 1. Activities on the original lesson plans (Modified version of MEXT, 2009)

LESSON 1	LESSON 2	LESSON 3	LESSON 4
Let's Listen (Which pair is talking?)	Let's chant!	Let's chant!	Let's chant!
Activity (What kind of clothes do you want to try on?)	Activity (Boy/girl dressed in your favorite clothes)	Let's listen! (What items are there?)	Let's listen! (Draw lines from items to colors)

Let's chant!	Let's listen! (What items are there?)	Activity 1 (Let's play a shopping game.)	Activity 2 (Show and tell)
	Activity (preparation for a shopping game)		

Time constraints

In the fourth lesson, he changed the format of the activity in order to save time and to prevent the students from getting bored. He made four groups for presentations, instead of dividing the students into two groups. If he had divided the students into only two groups, there would have been about twenty students in each group, which would have taken more time. He also had the ALT observe two groups while he was in charge of the rest. It would have seemed easier for the teachers to control just one group, but he and the ALT carefully stood between the two groups and watched them.

“If you had ten students give a one-minute presentation, it would not take only ten minutes, but more than ten minutes because you would have to think of the time for explanation as well as the time the students would take to go to the front before the presentation, and go back to his/her seat after the presentation. Such time for classroom management can only be estimated by your experience of teaching.”

And in the last discussion session, he also confessed, “If I had been their homeroom teacher, I could have done better time management under better classroom control.”

3.2.2 Interactive decisions

Richards and Lockhart (1994) state that teaching is essentially a thinking process. Teachers make a decision every single minute. Some salient examples will be shown in this section.

Time Allocation

Although he attempted to allocate adequate time to each activity every time he created a lesson plan, the lessons sometimes did not go as planned. In the second lesson, the previous activity happened to take more time than planned, and therefore “Let's listen” was eliminated. On the other hand, he gained an extra five minutes for oral practice because he skipped the listening practice. On another occasion, the bell rang for the end of the class; that time, “Reflection time” was eliminated in the first lesson, and PA review practice was eliminated in the third lesson.

Language choice

Teacher A's original specialty is teaching the Japanese language, even though homeroom teachers teach almost all the subjects in Japanese elementary schools. In discussions with him, he seemed to be aware of the language use issue.

“I intentionally used more English in the second lesson than in the first one. Students react immediately to their homeroom teacher because they are familiar with their homeroom teacher's voice. On the contrary, the students in that class were not familiar with my voice. Moreover, their homeroom teacher is female. I thought it might be hard for them in the first lesson to react to my instruction, and much harder in English. In the second lesson, however, I thought they got familiar with my voice and could understand me.”

“As a teacher who majored in Japanese, I believe language teachers are responsible for providing as much comprehensible input for their students in English lessons as possible. I'd like to conduct 80% of each English lesson in English, but I can't because of my lack of English ability.”

In the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) classes that he attended at the university, he learned that input should be meaningful to the students, and that classroom English in particular should be maximized, as it is a comprehensible and meaningful input. That may be why he relied on classroom English. On the other hand, in order to facilitate students' understanding, he especially used Japanese, when he explained how to play games. In the excerpt below, he used both Japanese and English.

HRT: Repeat after me. *likana?* [Are you ready?] Group 1, 3, 5. Hello.

G1, 3, 5: (Silence)

HRT: *Are?*[Oh?] Repeat after me. Group 1, 3, 5.
OK? Hello. ("let me hear you" gesture)

Class: Hello.

HRT: Only Group 1, 3, 5. *Daijobu?* [Are you all right?] Hello.

G1, 3, 5: Hello.

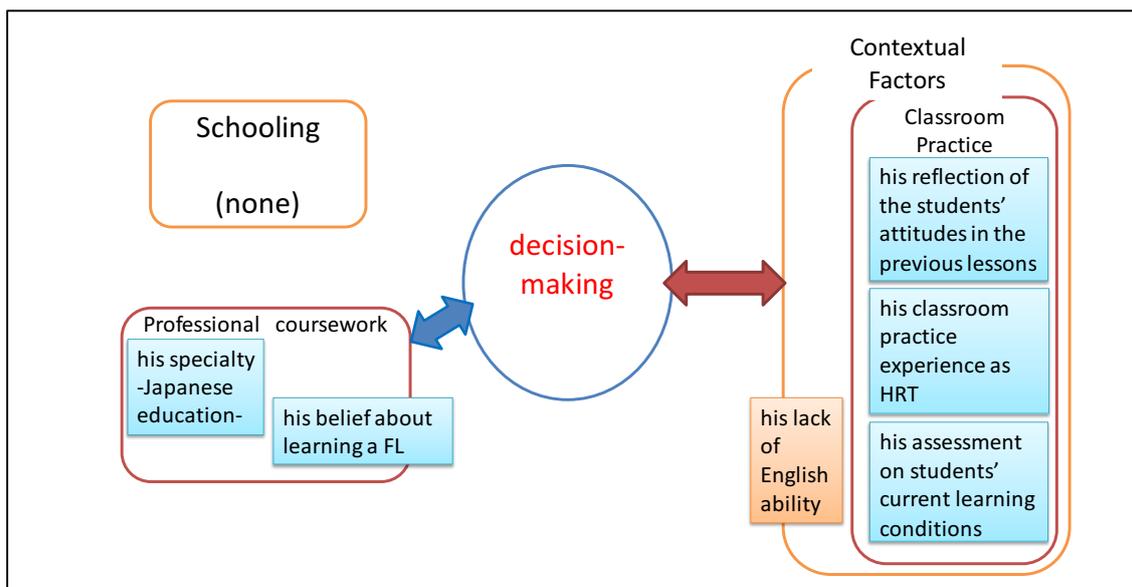
During the instruction, he kept speaking in English while using gestures, whereas he used Japanese when he wanted to express his emotions.

3.2.3 Evaluative decisions

Two decisions were found to be evaluative. One was that Teacher A did a different PA activity from the one planned earlier (Lesson 3) to make the lesson more attractive to his students, taking into account the students' reflections from the previous lessons. He planned to play "Rider's joy game," which was done in the second lesson, in the third lesson as well. However, as the students didn't seem to enjoy it in the second lesson, he changed the activity into a "Snail talk, get a tail" game when he revised the plan of the third lesson. Unfortunately, he almost ran out of time before the "Snail talk, get a tail" game was introduced, and he decided to skip it and save time for the students' reflections, and therefore it could not be verified whether this change would have been effective or not. The other evaluative decision was the formation of the activity. Originally, he planned to have his students practice in chorus all together and then split into two groups. However, the students' performance in the previous lesson led him to change his mind, and he skipped the whole class practice. He said, "In the previous lesson, the students did a better job than I had expected. So, I decided to skip the choral practice and divide them into two groups in this lesson."

3.3 Further discussions

The previous section discussed the results in terms of decision-making process, while in this section the results will be analyzed in the light of teacher cognition. Graph 6 shows Teacher A's decision-making process. As mentioned earlier, people around his age did not have any experience of learning English in their elementary school, and when he was in pre-service teacher education course, he never learned how to teach a foreign language. However, as he specialized in Japanese language pedagogy, he had knowledge about teaching a language. In addition, he had a chance to learn SLA or early childhood foreign language methodologies in a university for a year. Those experiences apparently had an impact on his decisions. As an experienced homeroom teacher, he carefully watched children's performance and behavior, which affected the next lesson. However, he could not accomplish his ideal use of languages because of his lack of English ability. In his case, he worked with an ALT who was a native speaker of English. Teacher A made use of the ALT as a provider of authentic input, and yet he did not think that the amount of his own input in the target language was enough.



Graph 6. Teacher A's cognition

In reference to the factors which exerted influence on his decision-making, his personal experience overseas is also relevant. He lived in a foreign country for three years and he learned to speak the local language. His family members, his wife and two young children, also learned it, and so he must have seen how people learn a foreign language from the beginning. His perceptions of the importance of sound and intercultural understanding for learning a foreign language might stem from his personal experience. He was unusual in this sense, compared with most of the other homeroom teachers.

4. Conclusions

There were several decisions found and analyzed in this study which could be classified into two groups, specifically positive and negative decisions. Teacher A's knowledge and experience as a homeroom teacher seemed to have a positive impact on his teaching even in English, whereas his lack of proficiency in English had a negative impact on his ability to teach in that language. Teacher A added some PA activities that he considered useful for his students. Then he changed some part of each lesson plan to facilitate his students' understanding, to help his students enjoy English classes, or to save time. As for language use, he did not use as much English as he expected because of his lack of English proficiency.

He was lucky enough to take some courses related to SLA and early childhood foreign language education at a university, but most of the current in-service teachers lack both professional coursework and the chance to improve their English skills. These deficiencies might cause them trouble when they make decisions in English classes. Therefore, it is important that the in-service and pre-service teacher training should provide chances to obtain knowledge of theory and practice about teaching a foreign language, and to improve English skills. Lastly, teachers who are involved in teaching a foreign language might need some experiences of intercultural contact, which is my next research topic.

There is a limitation in this study, which is that it examined only one homeroom teacher and it cannot be generalized. In order to make the results transferrable, it is necessary to conduct more research on other cases.

5. Acknowledgement

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THE LONG WAY TO BILINGUALISM: THE PECULIAR CASE OF MULTILINGUAL SOUTH TYROL

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ABSTRACT

In the present contribution we discuss the challenges and the results of learning a second language in South Tyrol, the multilingual border region in northern Italy where the autochthonous German- and Ladin-speaking communities have cohabited with the Italian-speaking community since the end of the First World War. The picture resulting from the data collected in the Kolipsi project (Eurac/DiScoF), an extensive linguistic and psychosocial investigation about South Tyrolean secondary school pupils now in its second edition, gives precious inputs to all entities that intervene in the process of attitude formation and change, ranging from the family environment to politics.

Keywords: L2 acquisition, CEFR L2 proficiency levels, L2 learning motivation/orientations, intergroup contact.

RESUMEN

En el presente trabajo, debatimos los retos y los resultados del proceso de aprendizaje de segundas lenguas en el Tirol del Sur, la región fronteriza multilingüe del norte de Italia donde las comunidades autóctonas hablantes de alemán y ladino han convivido con la comunidad italo hablante desde el fin de la Primera Guerra Mundial. La imagen resultante de los datos recogidos en el proyecto Kolipsi (Eurac/DiScoF), una investigación abarcadora tanto lingüística como psicosocial sobre alumnado de secundaria del Tirol del Sur, proporciona información muy valiosa a todas las entidades que intervienen en el proceso de la formación y el cambio de las actitudes, desde el entorno familiar hasta el ámbito de la política.

Palabras clave: adquisición de segundas lenguas, niveles de competencia en segundas lenguas del MCER, motivación/orientaciones en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, contacto intergrupalo.

1. Introduction

The aim of this contribution is to illustrate how challenging it is to learn a second language (L2) in a bi/multilingual context, which should theoretically represent the best possible acquisition milieu, and to what extent attitudes and well-established beliefs can influence this process, be it positively or negatively. The bi/multilingual setting we refer to is the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen - South Tyrol (South Tyrol for short), a region located in northern Italy bordering Austria and Switzerland. Until 1919 South Tyrol belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire which saw its dissolution at the end of the First World War: the signature of the Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain assigned South Tyrol to the Kingdom of Italy, separating it from northern Tyrol, which remained Austrian territory. During the fascist years (1923-1939) which followed the annexation, a strong italianization policy was introduced in South Tyrol, which aimed to foster

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the immigration of Italian speakers from other Italian regions. The consequences are still visible today: of the around 505,000 inhabitants, 69.41% are German speakers, 26.06% are Italian speakers and 4.53% are Ladin speakers (ASTAT 2012; Ladin belongs to the Rhaeto-Romanic subgroup within the Romance family and its South Tyrolean speakers mainly reside in two valleys in the Dolomites, Gröden/Gardena and Gadertal/Val Badia).

1.1 South Tyrol and its historical background

From a linguistic and cultural standpoint, South Tyrol was deeply marked by the events that followed the annexation. In its attempt to italianize the autochthonous population, fascism not only fostered Italian settlement but, above all, banned the use of the German language at school and in all public domains (cfr. Autonome Provinz Bozen Südtirol 2004, Alcock 2001). Two fundamental achievements were reached by the German-speaking South Tyroleans in the battle for the safeguard of their civil and cultural rights that took place in the following decades: the signature of the Paris Treaty between Austria and Italy (1946) and the Second Autonomy Statute (1972) that still regulates the most important provisions regarding language rights such as linguistic equality, the Ethnic Proportions Decree, the Declaration as to Linguistic Origin and the bilingualism examination. According to the Autonomy Statute, the German language is equal in every aspect to the Italian language (Article 99) and “German-speaking citizens of the Province of Bolzano/Bozen have the right to use their own language in relations with the judicial offices and with the organs and offices of the public administration” (Article 100) (cfr. Autonome Provinz Bozen-Südtirol 2006). Children are educated in their mother tongue by mother tongue teachers and attend separate schools according to linguistic group; second language learning, Italian or German, is compulsory in both primary and secondary schools. The principle of ethnic proportion reflects the fact that the positions in public offices are filled according to the numerical strength of the language groups living in South Tyrol which is determined via the census carried out every ten years, whereby each citizen must declare himself/herself as belonging to one of the three major language groups.

To guarantee that everyone can use his/her mother tongue when dealing with public offices, in 1976 the bilingualism examination was introduced as a precondition for recruitment into the public sector. The examination, consisting of a written (listening comprehension and written production) and an oral test, should ascertain the candidates' bilingual proficiency as it must be taken in both languages, i.e. German and Italian, in one of four degrees of difficulty (from D to A), each according to the school qualification needed to apply for different careers in the public sector (cfr. Autonome Provinz Bozen Südtirol 2016, Abel/Vettori/Forer 2012).

2. The current linguistic situation

In spite of the fact that South Tyrolean educational system provides separate “monolingual” schools for each one of its three language groups², it is also strongly concerned with second language instruction. As a matter of fact, from the first to the thirteenth school year (age 6 to 19) L2 learning is compulsory and comprises more than 2,000 teaching lessons for both German and Italian-speaking pupils (cfr. Egger 2001: 163). Moreover, second language instruction is also promoted by a wide range of special measures such as study trips, partnerships with German/Italian-speaking schools and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teaching. Nevertheless, despite the considerable resource costs and the many initiatives, L2 proficiency of South Tyroleans – and especially that of Italian speakers - is widely believed to be inadequate. Findings of past investigations regarding L2 competences as well as the results of the bilingualism examination all point to a relatively low L2 proficiency of the South Tyrolean population (cfr. Putzer 1997a/b; Deflorian 1997; Vettori 2005; Astat 2006a/b). The data from the bilingual examination sessions in 2014 show that only half of the candidates passed the examination A³, while just 44% of those who took the B examination passed (ASTAT 2015).

² In primary schools and in the first grade of secondary schools (age 6 to 11 and 11 to 14 years), Ladin speaking pupils are taught in three languages, Ladin, German and Italian, and then opt either for a German or an Italian-speaking second grade secondary school (age 14 to 19).

³ A: the level necessary for every job in the public administration that requires a university degree; B: the level necessary for every job in the public administration that requires a second grade secondary school qualification.

Neither the schools' efforts nor the physical proximity of the two groups seem therefore sufficient to produce the multilingual society one would expect in such circumstances; on the contrary, literature and observers of local everyday life (cfr. Egger 2001; Lanthaler 2006) speak of separate linguistic sub-groups which do not share contacts with each other and where "the language of the other is learned as if the other lived in a far away, unreachable country" (Baur 2000: 300). However, South Tyrol is not an exception. In fact, this is a well known phenomenon in regions where different linguistic groups live together and where bilingualism and interculturality are not per se taken for granted and do not normally develop on large scale, as shown by the situation described in Switzerland and in the region on the border between Germany and Denmark (Baur & Mezzalana & Pichler 2008: 35). The same thing also happens in Canada where, after twelve years of learning French, English-speaking pupils are not sufficiently competent to speak in their L2 with French-speaking Canadians (Baker 2006: 224).

It is evident that becoming bilingual in South Tyrol – and also in other regions - involves a series of sociolinguistic and psycho-social issues such as attitudes, prejudices, contact and speaking habits, level of motivation etc. that cannot be ignored by the entities involved in L2 teaching nor by second language acquisition researchers. As Ushioda (2010: 16) illustrates with great clarity, "in an inherently social process such as language acquisition, the person cannot be meaningfully separated from the social environment within which he/she operates, and so the challenge is to adopt a dynamic perspective that allows us to consider simultaneously the ongoing multiple influences between environmental and individual factors, in all their componential complexity, as well as the emerging changes in both the person and the environment.

3. The Kolipsi project

The aspect of our innovative research project that we believe to be most positive is the consideration of both the linguistic and the extra-linguistic aspects of L2 learning in South Tyrol in our study. In 2007, after a first explorative study conducted on a sample of Italian pupils (Vettori 2005) which also emphasized the absence of large scale empirical studies regarding the L2 proficiency in the province of Bolzano, the European Academy of Bolzano/Bozen (EURAC) and the Department of Cognitive Science and Educational Sciences at the University of Trento (DiSCof) started an interdisciplinary project whose aim was to describe the L2 competences (Italian/German) of a representative sample of attendants of second grade secondary schools and, at the same time, to identify extra-linguistic factors that influence their L2 competence levels. The first edition of the project called "KOLIPSI. South Tyrolean pupils and the second language: a linguistic and socio-psychological investigation" (Abel/Vettori/Wisniewski, 2012) proved to be a precious instrument, above all for politics, and at the end of 2013 the same project partners finally obtained the funds to start a second edition.

Considering the status quo previously described, we adopted the concept of L2 communicative language competence envisioned in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Trim/North/Coste 2001: 9-13). The CEFR takes an action-oriented approach that views "users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action" (ibid., 9). We thought that such an approach would best suit our purpose to look at what South Tyrolean pupils really can do in their L2 in a series of written and oral tasks, which could potentially occur in their everyday life. To this end, we developed a writing and an oral test ad hoc, in collaboration with the Herder Institute in Leipzig, to assess the productive and interactive competences for different aspects of the L2 according to CEFR reference levels for the very first time in South Tyrol. At the same time, we invested great efforts in investigating the extra-linguistic aspects with qualitative⁴ and quantitative survey techniques.

⁴ In the first edition of the project, we conducted a series of interviews with "privileged observers", sixteen key figures from South Tyrolean life, and focus groups with pupils the same age as those participating in our study, in order to identify the topics for the questionnaires.

3.1 Sample and data collection tools.

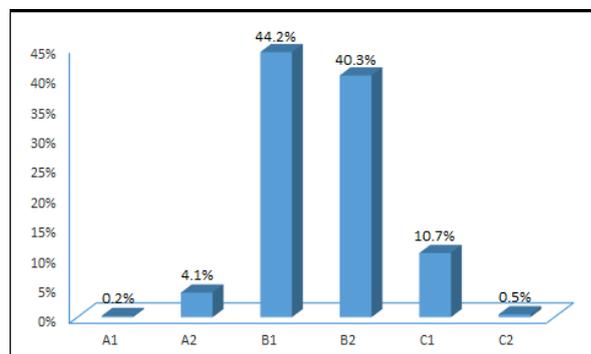
In the first edition of the project, we collected data for a representative sample consisting of around 1,300 17-18 year old fourth grade pupils from all secondary schools in the Province (school year 2007/2008). In the present edition (school year 2014/2015) we reached around 1,600 pupils; in both cases the sections involved were randomly selected. Our targets are South Tyrolean pupils with Italian and German backgrounds, therefore Ladin-speaking pupils or pupils with migrant backgrounds are not included in the analysis. Besides the pupils, we also involved their parents and L2 teachers as we also submitted an extensive questionnaire to them so as to gain the most detailed insight possible regarding the opinions, attitudes and behaviour not only of secondary school attendants but also of those with whom they live and from whom they learn.

The core of the linguistic part of the study is the KOLIPSI writing test, which in both cases was followed by another written test⁵. It consists of writing an e-mail to a friend to tell him a story based on four pictures provided in the assignment, and a letter to a friend to organise the next summer holidays by the sea or in the mountains. In this latest edition, we substituted the second task with a new one: pupils were asked to write an e-mail to a boy who had written a letter to a magazine asking for advice. The range of competences targeted for these tasks lay around B1/B2. However, since we were aware that not all performances would lie within this range, we also included the upper and lower levels in the assessment grid (i.e. A2/A1 and C1/C2).

Concerning the psychosocial part, numerous topics were addressed in a comprehensive questionnaire study, such as demographic, cultural and social characteristics of the target population, external and self-evaluation of L2 skills, L2 use habits, L2 confidence, L2 learning motivation, attitudes toward the language groups, linguistic identity, relative deprivation feeling and ethnolinguistic vitality.

4. The results

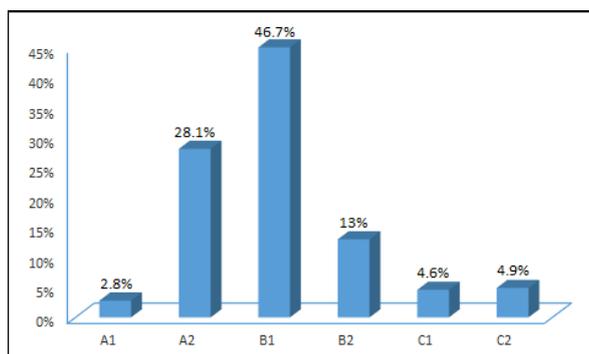
Quite a remarkable difference between the two language groups emerges from the Kolipsi test (cfr. Graph 1 and 2)⁶. Almost half of both samples reaches level B1 of the CEFR (German speakers 44%, Italian speakers 47%). However, whereas 40% of the German speaking Italian learners achieve level B2 (and 11% level C1), almost one third of the Italian speaking German learners remains at level A2 (28%), with only a small percentage performing better (13% level B2, 5% level C1). Among a number of possible influencing factors on these results, namely school type, gender and language environment (i.e. the presence of L2 group people in one's environment), the type of school pupils attend turned out to play an important role, emphasising the lower performance of pupils who attend a technical secondary school (*istituto tecnico/Fachoberschule*) as compared to those who attend an academic secondary school (*liceo/Gymnasium*).



⁵ In 2007/2008 pupils answered questions in their L2 about a text in their L1 taken from the South Tyrolean bilingualism examination, while in 2014/2015 they completed a listening comprehension and a vocabulary test (DIALANG).

⁶ The linguistic and psycho-social data collected during the school year 2014/2015 are still being analyzed, therefore we will present the results of the 2007/2008 sample.

Graph 1. KOLIPSI writing test results: German-speaking pupils with Italian L2



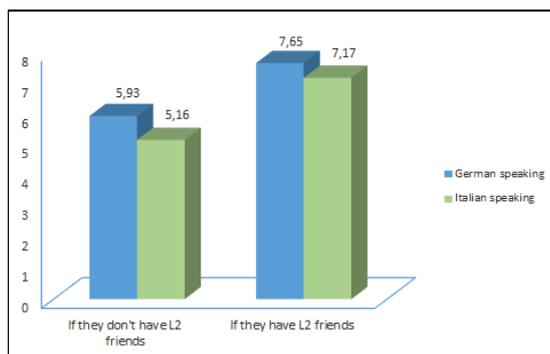
Graph 2. KOLIPSI writing test results: Italian-speaking pupils with German L2

Though it has proven to be a strong predictor of L2 proficiency, school type cannot be the only reason for such a set of results. As a matter of fact, the decisive role of extra-linguistic factors on L2 acquisition in South Tyrol is clearly shown by the results of our conjoint study. In spite of the enormous amount of L2 teaching hours per year and regardless of individual characteristics, the key to interpreting the L2 performance of South Tyrolean pupils must be searched for beyond school walls. Analysing the peculiar situation in South Tyrol, we thought that two aspects could heavily influence the L2 acquisition process more than others, namely contact with L2 group members and level of motivation. International studies have declared contact a fundamental factor in promoting positive attitudes between groups⁷, while motivation has been a major research topic since Lambert and Gardner's studies in the 70s, and it can be hardly denied that "being motivated or not can make all the difference to how willingly and successfully people learn other languages later in life" (Ushioda 2010: 5).

4.1 Contact and L2 learning motivation.

In spite of general beliefs, the survey showed that South Tyrolean pupils do have contacts with their L2 peers and with L2 people in general. A large majority of our sample have at least some friends in the other language group and those who have never or only very rarely had a relation of friendship with members of the other group live mainly in areas in which the L2 group is very small in numbers or is at least in the minority. The simple fact of having a friend from the other language group is sufficient to produce a more positive attitude toward this group (cfr. Graph. 3). This is also true for those with experience of extended intergroup contact (Wright et al. 1997), that is those whose friends and/or family members maintain friendships with people from the other language group. In addition, this latter group shows more positive attitudes toward the other language group.

⁷ Cfr. Pettigrew/Tropp 2006, Wright 2009.



Graph 3. Attitude toward L2 Language Group According to Contacts between Language Groups for German- and Italian-speaking Pupils in South Tyrol (scale from 1 to 10).

Investigating the attitude toward the L2 group is strategic especially from a motivational perspective. Gardner (2007: 10) defines L2 learning motivation as a synthesis of three elements: the effort put in to learn the language, the desire to learn it and the positive effect toward the task itself. Strictly connected to motivation are the so-called orientations that, in Gardner's theory, "help arouse motivation and direct it towards a set of goals" (Dörnyei/Ushioda 2001: 41) and that can be labelled as either integrative or instrumental. In the first case, the L2 learner has a positive disposition toward the L2 group and he desires to communicate with its members and even become similar to them; in the second, he thinks merely of the pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, for example for his working life, without implying any interest in getting closer socially to the language community (Masgoret/Gardner 2003: 129). In the case of South Tyrolean pupils, we found that L2 proficiency correlates positively with motivation and with integrative orientation but not with instrumental orientation⁸. This also means that having a positive attitude toward the other group may sustain L2 learning motivation but also that although the vast majority of the sample resolutely states that studying the L2 is important for pragmatic reasons, it is not this type of goal that can effectively help in achieving good L2 results.

The latter deduction put into discussion the entire L2 learning system in South Tyrol based on the separation of the two groups and indirectly fostering the idea that it is possible to learn a second language at school without coming into contact with and speaking to L2 people. It also contradicts the many parents who spur on their children to learn German/Italian just for the purpose of passing the bilingual examination. Underlining the pragmatic benefits of mastering the L2 does not contribute to improving the pupils' competences at all: on the one hand because of its short-term urgency (i.e. the pending bilingual examination, *conditio sine qua non* for getting a job in the public sector - traditionally seen as the most stable -), on the other hand because of its long-term target, as the majority of the pupils usually go to university before getting out onto the job market (58.7% of all secondary schools graduates in 2013, ASTAT 01/2016). Moreover, this generalized focus on the practical benefits of mastering the L2 pushes the integrative motives into the background, undermining and even neglecting the social dimension of learning a second language which, by definition, "plays an institutional and social role in the community" (Ellis 2002: 12). It is no coincidence that second language learning differs from foreign language learning which "takes place in settings where the language plays no major role in the community and is primarily learnt only in the classroom" (ibid.).

5. Conclusions

The data we presented show how the extra-linguistic factors, in particular intergroup contact and motivation, deeply influence L2 learning outcomes in South Tyrol. The school type has also proven to be

⁸ Data refer to a subsample of 734 pupils who answered all questions about their L2 learning motivation and orientations. Motivation [$r_{(592, GER)} = .278^{**}$, $p < .001$, $r_{(142, ITA)} = .328^{**}$, $p < .001$], integrative orientation [$r_{(590, GER)} = .163^{**}$, $p < .001$; $r_{(140, ITA)} = .330^{**}$, $p < .001$], instrumental orientation [$r_{(585, GER)} = .051$, $p = .216$, $r_{(140, ITA)} = .077$, $p = .367$]. For an extensive description of the analysis carried out cfr. Vettori 2012.

an influential factor, whereby pupils attending a technical secondary school show L2 competences that are clearly below those observed in academic secondary schools. However, it is not possible to determine whether the school curriculum or the personal attitudes of pupils themselves lie behind this status quo. It can be hypothesized that the pupils' preference toward technical subjects as opposed to humanities and the proportion among these two subject areas which, in technical secondary schools is decidedly unbalanced in favour of technical subjects, both contribute to the pupils' lower L2 competences. It would be interesting and, in our opinion, necessary to further investigate the attitudes, beliefs and habits of the technical secondary school attendants as well as the L2 programs applied, in order to put forward an explanation of the phenomenon and possible suggestions for improving the situation.

Nobody can deny that school plays a crucial role in L2 learning, however our analysis has clearly highlighted the role of what happens outside the school walls. The promotion of intergroup contact is crucial for both fostering a better understanding and increased mutual feeling of openness and friendliness between the groups and for experiencing the L2 in a real context. The tendency to consider school as the only occasion where the L2 can be acquired, most typical for the Italian speaking community (cfr. Giudiceandrea 2006: 23-37), needs to be changed. As a matter of fact, placing excessive emphasis on the role of the school in L2 learning without considering the influence of extra-linguistic factors put L2 teachers in a difficult position and stirs up the ever-recurrent debate about L2 teaching methods, always in search of the best ever approach. The attempt by the Italian-speaking schools to introduce the Content and Language Integrated Learning method that dates back to the 1990s and which— after decades of polemics and legal struggles - has only recently been officially ratified for both the Italian and the German-speaking schools (cfr. BU n. 29/I-II of 16/07/2013, BU n. 27/I-II of 08/07/2014 and BU n. 5/I-II of 02/02/2016), is the most evident demonstration of the generalized approach to the topic in South Tyrol.

As we do not yet have extensive empirical data demonstrating the benefits of CLIL in South Tyrol at our disposition and on the basis of our research, we think it would be fruitful to consider language learning a social process (cfr. Firth/Wagner 2007) and to promote intergroup contact. The L2 teachers could introduce the pupils to the culture of the L2 group, encouraging the reading of local authors and helping them to get familiar with the local press. Schools should further promote exchanges between the German and the Italian-speaking schools through, for example, the already existing possibility of attending the fourth year of the secondary school in the L2 school. Politics should grant teachers the opportunity to attend teacher training courses and should economically sustain public and private initiatives that bring German and Italian-speaking young people together, such as sport and music courses, parties, summer camps and others. Besides that, politics should also promote the regular monitoring of language competences and of extra-linguistic aspects in order to check if the route taken is the right one and, if not, to take corrective action.

Finally, parents should demonstrate their openness toward the L2 community and, above all, encourage their children to get in contact with their L2 peers, convincing them that good L2 proficiency is more important for their current presence in the South Tyrolean community than for their future job. This could reinforce their integrative orientation, stimulating them to search for contact with the L2 community and thereby opening them up to “a whole dimension of motivational experience that is crucial to autonomous language learning – that is, the experience of language use, and all the positive motivational repercussions, self-perceptions and intrinsic rewards that using the language can bring” (Ushioda 1996: 31).

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PLE & PLN FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING: A CASE STUDY

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RESUMEN

Los recientes desarrollos de las tecnologías de aprendizaje están facilitando un cambio significativo en la experiencia formativa. El objetivo de este trabajo es explorar el potencial de los PLE (Personal Learning Environments) y de los PLN (Personal Learning Networks) a través de la descripción de un caso de estudio sobre una iniciativa de formación online: una respuesta innovadora a la gestión integrada de la "formación permanente" para la enseñanza de idiomas. El caso de estudio se refiere a una iniciativa online desarrollada a nivel internacional en 2012 y dirigida a profesores, formadores y educadores de todo el mundo, apasionados del aprendizaje de idiomas, utilizando tecnologías. Los autores planearon y moderaron una prueba de cinco semanas durante el "EVO 2012" (Electronic Village Online), ofreciendo una oportunidad libre para discutir y compartir ideas, prácticas y experiencias gracias a encuentros sincronizados en la plataforma Moodle, a través de videoconferencias con expertos internacionales y herramientas de trabajo asíncronos. El objetivo principal fue promover la conciencia de este tema, acompañando a profesorado y formadores en la explotación de las potencialidades de los PLE y de los PLN en clases de inglés para fines específicos (EFL en sus siglas en inglés).

Palabras clave: PLE, PLN, Formación de profesorado, Aprendizaje de idiomas.

ABSTRACT

Recent developments in learning technologies are creating a significant shift in the educational experience. The paper aims at exploring the potential of PLEs (Personal Learning Environments) and PLNs (Personal Learning Networks) through the description of a case study relating to an online training initiative: an innovative answer to the "lifelong competency" management approach to language teaching. The case study refers to an online international initiative promoted in 2012 addressed to teachers, trainers and educators from all over the world, passionate about language learning with the use of technologies. The authors of this contribution planned and moderated a five-week training session within "EVO 2012" (Electronic Village Online), offering a free opportunity to discuss and share ideas, practices, experience through a Moodle platform, in synchronous meetings with international experts and asynchronous working tools. The main aim was to promote greater awareness of this topic, guiding teachers and trainers to the effective exploitation of the potential of PLE and PLN in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes.

Key words: PLE, PLN, Teacher Training, Language Learning

1. PLEs & PLNs in language learning

In the last ten years, the twin concepts of Personal Learning Environment (PLE) and Personal Learning Network (PLN) have been offered as alternatives to more traditional environments and institutionally based courses, providing the opportunity to integrate the different dimensions of the learning process.

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Formal, non-formal and informal learning have become keywords of education in the 21st centuries. In 1996, the OECD education ministers agreed to develop strategies for “lifelong learning for all” (OECD, 1996). The approach has been endorsed by ministers of labour, ministers of social affairs and the OECD Council at ministerial level. The concept of “from cradle to grave” learning refers to an approach whose importance may now be clearer than ever and non-formal and informal learning outcomes are viewed as having significant value. Policy-makers in many OECD countries are therefore trying to develop strategies to use all the skills, knowledge and competences individuals may have. Formal learning is always organized and structured, and has learning objectives; non-formal learning takes place through education organized for specific learners with specific learning objectives, outside the formal established system; informal learning is never organized, has no set objective in terms of learning outcomes and is never intentional from the learner’s standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience within the individual’s environment. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an important means for making the “lifelong learning for all” agenda a reality for all and, subsequently, for reshaping learning to match better the needs of the 21st century knowledge economies and open societies.

Another key issue in 21st century education is the massive use of technologies, which have become an integral and essential part of our students’ daily formal and informal interactions and communications (Farr & Murray, 2016). To meet the challenges of the 21st century school, educators should rethink their style, considering technology as the heart of all the teaching practices (Stanley, 2013). Technology enhanced language learning (TELL) is turning out to be a very effective approach, as it enhances the students’ motivation, with consequent better learning outcomes (Drexler, 2010; Terrel, 2011; Walker, White, 2013). The recently published European Commission report (European Commission, 2014), entitled Improving the effectiveness of language learning: CLIL and computer assisted language learning, fosters the use of technologies and mobile devices to implement language learning and the learning of content in a foreign language, mentioning the following examples:

- Authentic foreign language materials;
- Online environments, social media, or voice/video conferencing;
- Language-learning tools (apps or software);
- Online virtual learning environments;
- Game-based learning.

The report highlights the importance of social media and multimedia tools for language learning and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), as they can help build up an innovative and personalized learning environment and network with a community of practice of teachers, trainers, educators sharing the same interests and learning needs.

PLE and PLN can be placed within this framework and in line with the European recommendations, as for language teaching and learning is concerned.

The concept of PLE came out from discussions about Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and spread widely after the publication of a diagram depicting a future vision of VLEs by Scott Wilson.² The first recorded mention of PLE as a concept was by Olivier and Liber (2001). Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) refer to the aggregation of single-functionality tools, which enable learners to have greater control over their own learning experience. This includes providing support for learners to set their own learning goals; manage their learning process; interact with peers during the learning process. Important concepts in PLEs include the integration of both formal and informal learning episodes into a single experience, the use of social networks that can cross institutional boundaries, and the use of networking protocols to connect a range of resources and systems within a personally-managed space. PLEs provide contextually appropriate toolsets by enabling individuals to select options based on their needs, so that learning demands, not technology, may drive the learning process. PLEs provide multiple

²<http://www.flickr.com/photos/elifishtacos/90944650/>

narratives and perspectives as a core function of the tool, reflecting the networked nature of society and knowledge today. A collection of different PLE diagrams is available on the edtechpost wiki³.

Unlike traditional top-down teaching models, which usually favour the "one expert" voice through the layout of learning materials and resources, PLEs do not generally pre-weight any particular node of knowledge, material or activity. The voice of the teacher/instructor is still important, but not essential, as the process of learning may involve a lot of other different voices. However, some authors have pointed out the importance of teacher competences in planning and design, instruction and learning, communication and interaction and use of technology (Shaikh, Khoja, 2012). There are different research strands on PLEs, some of which are more technologically-oriented (Chatti et al., 2010; Milligan et al. 2006; Wild et al. 2008), while others can be defined as more pedagogically-oriented (Attwell, 2007; Downes, 2010; Drexler, 2010). PLEs enable individual learners to build their own learning network (PLNs), filtering information deluge, connecting with others based on shared interest and seeking personal knowledge interests.

As Buchem et al. (2011) point out, the ideas of Personal Learning Networks (PLN) and Personal Knowledge Networks (PKN) are strongly associated with PLEs, reflecting the personal online networks for learning, activating at the same time, both tacit and explicit knowledge (Couros, 2010; Chatti et al. 2010). PLEs can include basic tools (such as blogs) to more complex structures. A simple blog or podcast may work well for instructors new to technology, while more skillful instructors may end up using a wider range of tools (collaborative webtools, social networks, etc.), to achieve specific learning aims.

In language learning/teaching, the use of PLE and PLN can be particularly effective, as it can meet the students' learning needs and styles, getting closer to their communication codes and channels, interweaving formal, non-formal and informal pathways. As depicted in the diagram below, the role of the teacher/instructor in the Personal Learning Environment refers to a series of competences, which can be grouped into 5 categories, according to Shaikh and Khoja (2012).

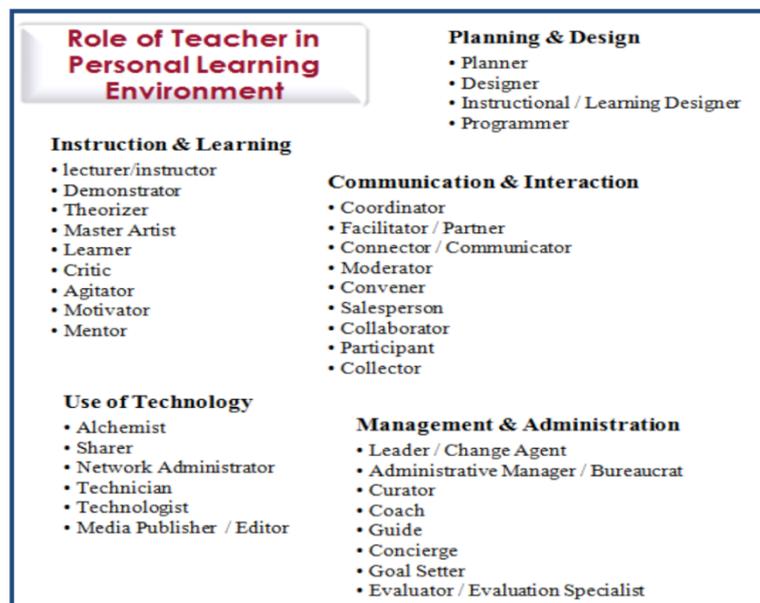


Fig. 1. The role of a teacher in Personal Learning Environment⁴

³<http://edtechpost.wikispaces.com/PLE+Diagrams>

⁴Adapted from Shaikh Z.A. & Khoja S.A., (2012), p. 27.

In general, “the concept of PLE marks a fundamental change in the role resources (people and media) play in teaching and learning”⁵. So PLEs and PLNs are an effective way to make students reflect on their own learning path, also considering the added value of social interactions and communications, as teaching and learning become a dynamic process involving not knowledge transmission or delivery, but co-construction, collaborative orchestration, remixing and integration of content and information. Haste (2009) identifies the co-construction of knowledge through interpersonal exchanges and interactions between a focus on knowledge-based instruction (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006) and on praxis-based instruction (Atkinson, 2011).

While most pedagogy, of course, recognizes the interaction of both in good practice, there is nevertheless an underlying epistemological gap; knowledge-based models are implicitly more ‘top down’ and praxis-based more ‘bottom up’. ‘Knowledge’ implies that the route to understanding is in the structured transmission of information. ‘Praxis’ implies a necessary interaction with materials, actions or other persons as a route to understanding” (Haste, 2009 p. 213).

The wide use of web tools and technologies in a PLE and PLN can enhance the learning process, the development of skills, abilities and competences relevant to any field, including foreign languages.

2. The case study

The following case study means to offer an example of an innovative training pathway on PLE and PLN and refers to an online international initiative promoted in 2012, which was addressed to teachers, trainers and educators all over the world, passionate about language learning with technologies.

2.1. Target and aims

The authors of this contribution planned and moderated a free online five-week training session within the international community of practice called “EVO” 2012 (Electronic Village Online⁶), which is made up of teachers, educators and trainers from all over the world, engaged in sharing ideas, practices, materials about language learning, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), technology enhanced language learning. The participants were a group of teachers and trainers from different countries, the majority of them from Italy; they made up a real community of peers and were all eager to learn more about PLE and PLN and start this new learning journey together.

The participants were mainly professors, experts in education, as well as adult educators, trainers, curriculum developers, consultants for multimedia teaching and foreign languages, interpreters and translators, “webheads” (as they like to call themselves), with previous experience of online education (as course coordinators) and a good knowledge and experience of e-learning platforms, resources and tools available on the net, without any previous experience/knowledge of PLE and PNE. The picture below provides visual information about the participants and their provenience.



Fig. 2. The participants

⁵7 things you should Know about Personal Learning Environments, Educause 2009, Creative Commons, <http://www.educause.edu/eli>.

⁶ <http://evosessions.pbworks.com/w/page/10708587/What%20is%20EVO>

The session took a look at the current situation by clarifying the concepts of Personal Learning Environments and Networks. Participants were guided to create their own PLE or PLN and select the Web 2.0 tools they wanted to use, as the five-week session evolved. The majority of the asynchronous/asynchronous activities were carried out on a Moodle platform, but a lot of other working tools were used across the five weeks. Moreover synch meetings with international experts were organized in order to offer live interaction among the participants and with the experts. The basic idea was creating a framework for the development of each participant's own personal learning environment, through the synergy of formal and informal learning in a dynamic construction and with the recognition that the majority of learning occurs outside traditional learning formats. However, the main aim was to promote greater awareness of this topic, guiding teachers and trainers to the effective exploitation of the potential of PLE and PLN in EFL classes.

The session aimed at the following objectives:

- Becoming acquainted with a variety of digital venues by interacting with the group;
- Sharing information and knowledge in a community of learners/participants;
- Enhancing their digital literacy skills by reflecting on new ways of applying them;
- Analyzing examples of self-created and professional PLEs and PLNs;
- Participating in scheduled chats discussing content and pre-defined topics with the group;
- Having hands-on experience on how to create PLEs and PLNs;
- Innovating teaching/learning processes;
- Enhancing students' motivation;
- Integrating formal and informal learning to meet the “digital style” of the students and promote the key competences.

The main idea was a “multi-tool environment” for the production of digital content and the processing of knowledge outside the formal and institutional directions designed by the school curricula. Participants were offered the opportunity to explore and experiment the following tools:

- A wiki to collect the processes and activities of the community;
- Video-makers for digital storytelling.
- Geolocalization tools (for example: Community walk), to single out the different cities and locations the participants were from;
- A digital repository conceived as a diary of all the digital experiences of the participants (past, present, ongoing);
- Social bookmarkings for images, audio and video files;
- Map generators (for example: bubbl.us) to make the learning process systemic and organic;
- Tagcloud generators (for example: wordle.net) to show the key concepts and words in a lesson;
- An online environment for oral discussions in L2 (Voxopop), to share ideas, feelings and emotions avoiding the embarrassment of live interaction;
- A video sharing provider (Youtube) to share videos in L2 made by the attendees individually or cooperatively;
- A social network (Facebook) to keep in touch in an informal setting;

- Digital poster generators (for example: Glogster) for the production of digital colorful posters on some particular issues in L2;
- Some other specific tools for the teaching/learning of L2.

2.2. *The outline of the training pathway*

The training pathway developed across five weeks between January and February 2012, as briefly described below:

Week 1

The aims of the week were to introduce themselves to the group and get acquainted with the Wiki and the Moodle; familiarize with the terminology and the concept of PLEs and PLNs; take a survey of their personal tech capabilities, experience and needs.

Participants added interesting contributions to the discussion, as in the following examples:

Let's suppose that I get on a boat, any boat. I ride for a while and then get off. Further suppose that when I get off I am in a new place, a new community, a new environment. The boat will not be back for a while; it may never come back! If I want to get along I will have to learn how to get along. There are others here so the environment is hardly personal; yet, I will organize the environment in a personal way. I will establish a home base; different than most. Devise the locations and alternate locations of things necessary and develop methods to secure them. I will watch and copy others, ask and copy others and try and fail, try and fail honing methods of my own. Once all things necessary have been worked out, I will pretty things up a bit. Add some flare and style to my daily romp through the now not so new environment. I will have changed the environment, perhaps only slightly, based on my personal influence on it. The others I have contact with I would call a PLN. The subjective but real organizational template I impose on the environment I would call a PLE. Does this work for anyone?

It is interesting to understand the visual associations and images suggested by this training pathway.

This participant, for example, associates the concept of PLE and PLN to a boat trip: the aim is to survive and to learn how to get along, organizing the environment in a personal way at first. Later on it will be necessary to interact with other peers, maybe copying and learning from them. The personal and social dimensions are perfectly joined together in this definition, showing the deep understanding of the concepts that represent the topics of this EVO session.

PLE - It's my house. I can define things, such as if I'll do the cleaning or not, when I'll do it and if I'm going to ask for help or not. PLN - It's the club. I make some decisions, but I have people I can count on and some rules that I have to follow. Also, there are people who, somehow, need me and, for that reason, I have to think about them when I make some decisions, say things, etc.

In this comment the main idea is the house, with certain actions to do, decisions to take, rules to follow. Once again, from a different perspective, the personal and social dimensions are both relevant.

PLE and PLN are both learning environments; the difference lies in the scope, individual or social. This in turn is determined by each individual based on needs, wants, preferences, styles, interests, values, professional links, hobbies, access, personality, teaching style, etc. The good thing about these new learning environments is they are eliciting changes in the ways of delivering learning for both teachers and students.

This is a more formal definition, sticking to the educational sphere. The key word here is "changes": the participant's perception is strongly affected by the idea of innovation in the learning processes both on the teacher's and the student's side.

I would favour a definition of PLE as a "physical" space where I can bring together my own "products" (such as blogs, eportfolio, etc) and different resources that I use in my learning process, like the student in

the "[Welcome to My PLE! video](#)". Many of those resources would probably have been recommended by the members of my network (PLN). In short, I see a PLE more in the fashion of a Pageflakes (or similar) than as a list of links to tools that can be used to create content.

This last comment focuses on the learning experience with no visual associations: the teacher was impressed by a video showing examples of PLE and PLN and this struck his/her memory. So the idea is to collect evidences from his/her learning experiences through a sort of digital and social portfolio.

Only some of the participants' comments were reported here: creativity, phantasy and brightness of all these posts made it hard for us to select the ones to be mentioned in this paper.

Week 2

During this week, participants were guided through the exploration of web tools and their practical use and for educational purposes; the participants were also guided to analyze and evaluate sample PLE Frameworks in order to select a format for their own PLE/PLN project. Participants were introduced to various platforms to cultivate their PLE/PLN. Then they were invited to post their ideas on the Moodle about which tech tools they might use to develop their own. We also encouraged them to comment on at least two other peers' posts in order to promote a peer-tutoring activity. Different frameworks were analyzed as Personal Learning Environment (Elgg⁸, PebblePad⁹, TamTamy¹⁰, NING; etc.) in order to identify an ideal model applicable in different contexts. Among others, participants found the models of APLaNet¹¹ and of the Personal Learning Network for Educators on a NING website¹² interesting (see picture below). The concept of Webtop, a PLE, a conceptual evolution of the system integrator was also broadened.



Fig. 3. The Educator's PLN

Participants were introduced to tools used or mentioned in the session and examined their practical use and implementation. They were guided to analyze, discuss and evaluate PLE Frameworks; they also selected a format for their own PLE/PLN project and added their personal definition of PLEs and PNEs in the glossary.

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEIs3tq5wIY>

⁸Elgg.org

⁹<http://www.pebblepad.co.uk/>

¹⁰<http://www.reply.eu/tamtamy-reply/it/>

¹¹ <http://www.aplanet-project.eu>

<https://www.facebook.com/aplanetproject/?fref=ts>

¹²<http://edupln.ning.com/>

Week 3

During this week, participants were invited to explore tools that support and supplant theories and models and to visit examples of professional PLN venues/platforms. A remarkable environment suggested to the attendees should be mentioned: Tapped In (Fig. 3). It is a special type of PLN where users enjoy their PLE. It is a space for meeting and work online for an international community of professionals of education: K-12 teachers and librarians, engaged in projects for professional development and training for teachers, students, researchers and teachers.

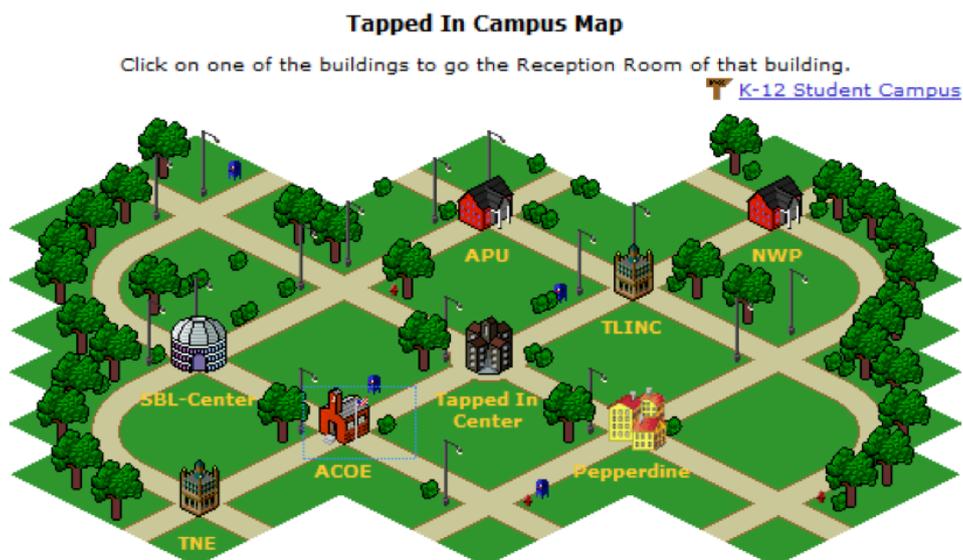


Fig. 4. Tapped In

Here follow the key features of Tapped in:

- Interactions occur mostly in chat, on a discussion board, according to a schedule previously set on topics of common interest and discussion for communities of practice is widened and open to guests. The chat transcript is automatically sent by e-mail to all participants;
- There is then a space for notes, a sort of 'wall', a tool that is spreading in different contexts, where people leave notes, ideas and memos;
- There is also a whiteboard used for brainstorming activities and/or sharing ideas when chatting;
- A welcome hall, a sort of reception where there is always a helper for orientation;
- A library with all kinds of useful resources;
- A section 'passageways' in which everyone can record the chat rooms he/she prefers;
- A widget to see online users;
- A repository of files and resources;
- A bookmarking space;
- A personal profile section;
- A 'personal office', with a private chat room.

Week 4

During this week, participants were invited to post their PLE/PLN on the participants' project chart. They were invited to visit each other's PLE/PLNs, provide feedback and to take a survey on their favourite tools and purposes.

Participants shared their own PLE/PLNs, they analyzed some open source software, visited each other's and took a survey on their favourite tools/frameworks and purposes. Emphasis was on creating, sharing, discussion and feedback.

Week 5

During this week participants were invited to present their work; share the results of the survey on favourite tools with the group; evaluate the session in a final survey; present the work and wrap-up. During this final week we presented the general outcomes of the session and shared the results of the survey on favourite tools with the group, so everyone could benefit from a reference list created by the entire class. The added value of the class community was highlighted by the enthusiasm, passion and creativity the attendees showed during the session. The sense of community made it easier to re-mediate and innovate the traditional processes of knowledge management and delivery. The picture below shows the main tools and instruments adopted and experimented during the session.

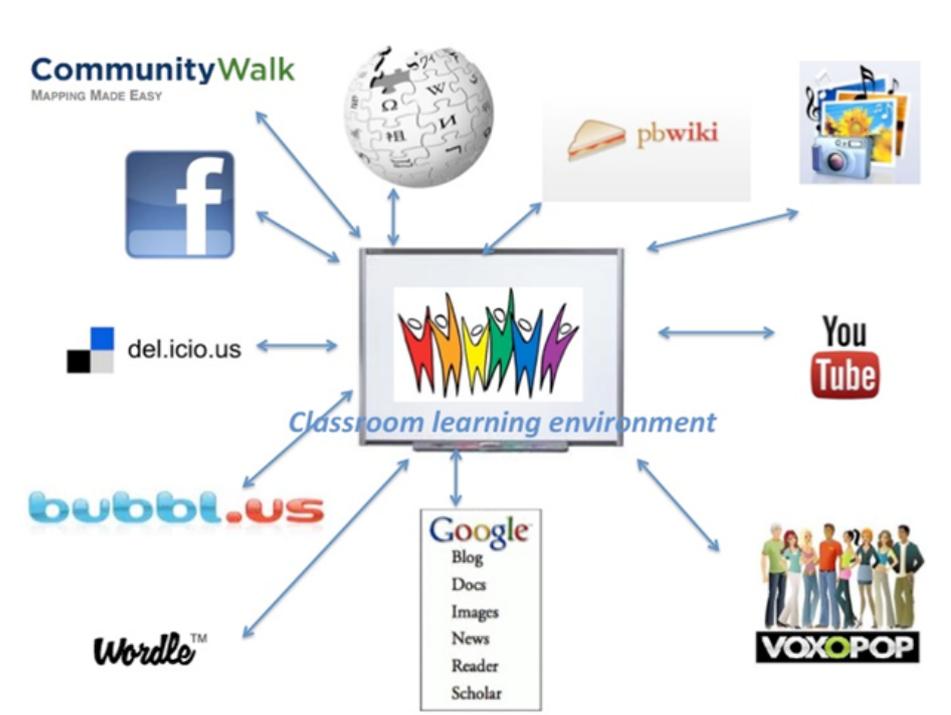


Fig. 5. The Session Learning Environment

3. Webinars

Weekly webinars turned out to be particularly effective, as they offered participants the opportunity to get hints and suggestions from expert speakers and at the same time interact with each other, asking questions, posing doubts, requests for clarifications, etc. The picture below shows an example of a webinar run by Graham Stanley¹³ from the British Council and Marisa Constantinides¹⁴ from CELT Athens,

¹³ <http://blog-efl.blogspot.it>

describing the above-mentioned “aPLaNet” project (see paragraph 2.2.). Participants were happy to listen to the presentation, watch the slides shared in the virtual class through WizIQ15 and were eager to write in the chat box to express their feelings (as shown by the emoticons in Fig. 6), their curiosity and their desire for understanding and learning.

We found that webinars are a good way to deliver content and presentation and participants can be really interactive and actively involved in the process by responding to polls, posting emoticons (smileys but also clapping hands, thumbs up/down etc.), writing in the chat box, raising hands to speak, inviting the moderators or other participants to private chats etc. So we can say we really experimented the webinar as an effective communication and learning tool.



Fig. 6. Marisa Constantinides and Graham Stanley's webinar

4. The Moodle and the wiki

The Moodle platform¹⁶ was the main environment used for the asynchronous activities. Participants could post their ideas, material, experience in the forum and comment on their peers' posts. We fostered this practice a great deal as reflecting on a colleague's work can get to a better awareness of teaching practices and to a full metacognition. One of the most interesting tasks participants were invited to carry out was posting and sharing their own choices for creating a PLE&PLN. As an example, we mention here a blog created by an attendee¹⁷, who decided to use it as a personal diary, a sort of e-portfolio to keep track and record all her activities in EVO. It is still active and the teacher has continued attending the following EVO sessions and is still using the blog as her personal learning diary.

¹⁴ http://www.celt.edu.gr/Marisa_Constantinides.htm

¹⁵ <https://www.wiziq.com/home/>

¹⁶ <http://webteachertools.com/wtt/course/view.php?id=872>

¹⁷ Maria Rita Pepe: <http://mrp4evo.blogspot.it/>

Sunday, February 12, 2012

The beginning of a PLE?

EVO 2012 - PLE & PLN for Lifelong Learning

EVO 2012 has come to an end. But I have decided that this will be only the first of my EVO sessions. This blog has worked as my e-portfolio so far and it will become (or already is?) part of my PLE.

As I could not take part in the *PLE & PLN for Lifelong Learning* course final webinar, I decided to embed here the final presentation that Letizia, one of our moderators, kindly shared with us. It will help me to wrap up this amazing learning experience and I will thus be able to share it with other colleagues who could not join the session.

Thanks to Letizia, Daniela, Susan and Sandra. You've been great moderators and mentors.

EVO PLE&PLN Webinar

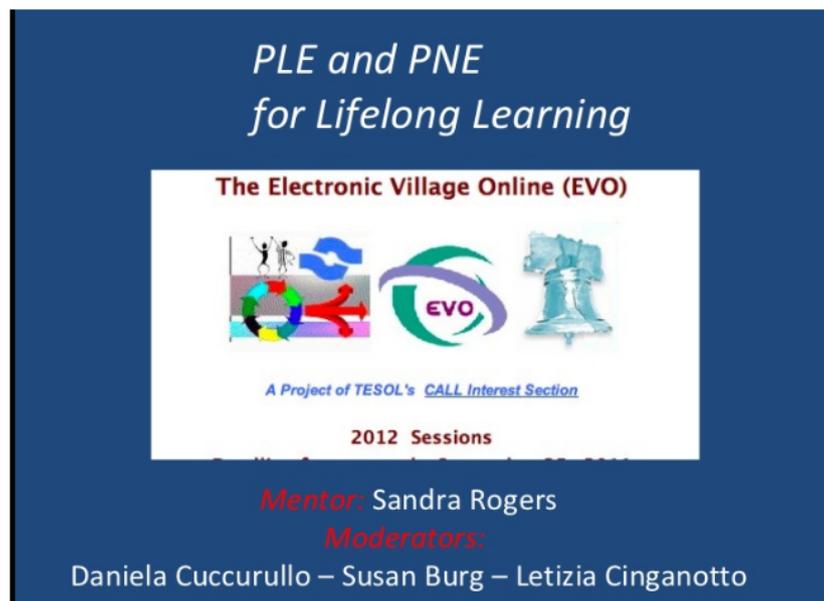


Fig. 7. An example of a participant's PLE & PLN

The wiki¹⁸ was another very useful working tool, especially for the cooperative dimension it helps to develop. Participants were invited to share their favourite tools, their ideas about PLE & PLN, the definitions of the most common technological terms, their final products. The result is a rich repository of links, tools, definitions and resources, which can offer hints for inspiration to the wider community of teachers, trainers and educators.

¹⁸<http://personallearningnetworksession.pbworks.com/w/page/33391448/FrontPage>

Online Technology Glossary

last edited by Sandra Annette Rogers 5 years, 1 month ago

Page history

Online Technology Glossary	
Top of Form	
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click on	
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asynchronous	
At different times. Not requiring participation at a specific time. For example, asynchronous communication occurs with a time delay, allowing participants to respond thoughtfully at their own convenience. Asynchronous capabilities give learners 24/7 access to course materials, embedded and streamed multimedia, external Web sites, facilitated discussions, internal email systems, and individual or group assignments.	
B	Top
bandwidth	
the information-carrying capacity of the mechanisms which connect people in cyberspace	
Blackboard	
Very popular course management software which is extremely easy to use for the novice but perhaps not as flexible for course designers. Also popular in higher education has been WebCT, which has now merged with Blackboard (Bb). In this course, we are using the Canadian platform, Desire2Learn.	
blended	
A blended (or hybrid) course is a combination course where participants meet face-to-face with their instructor but also in a virtual situation (at a CMS, Nicenet, Yahoo Groups, etc.) for digital information.	

Fig. 8. The collaborative glossary on the wiki

5. Outcomes and feedback

As a general outcome we found out that the two concepts – PLE and PLN – were mainly related more to the process than to the product. Few managed to 'fix' in a framework their learning space, which by its own nature is constantly changing, both personally and socially. There was a great interest in the subject, there were attempts of definition and implementation, but, as in most experts 'environments', the resolution is still in progress.

The feedback from the participants was rewarding as they were all grateful for helping them discover a new world and a new way to design their learning experiences and maybe their whole life, considering not only the professional dimension, but also the personal one.

The examples of blogs, wikis and other social spaces designed by the participants for learning and interacting are attempts to create their own PLE and PLN after learning more about the underlying theoretical framework. We may say these attempts represent for us the best outcomes, the most suitable way to show the participants' understanding of the concepts proposed and their will to switch from theory to practice, as meant at the beginning of the session. It is encouraging to think that we provided the participants with materials, hints and suggestions, eliciting their hunger for learning and for changing their learning and teaching habits.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this project was to analyze the characteristics and potentialities of Personal Learning Environments/Networks and to provide the participants the opportunity for a complex personalized learning experience. The basic idea of the PLE is to combine formal and informal learning through the legitimacy of using open resources on the net. In this perspective, the complex learning experience taking place in personal learning environments - if promoted in institutional environments - does not represent a rupture or an alternative to the instances of formal education: these can be incorporated within a PLE/PNE by integrating with traditional e-learning platforms. Teachers, educators and individuals seeking an innovative answer to the "lifelong competency" management approach and looking for challenges as

regards understanding, exploring and supporting new learning dimensions may get possible hints and suggestions from the implementation of a PLE and PLN as shown in the case study above. The integration of technology in language learning can represent a very powerful added value to the school curricula. The contribution was aimed at describing the outcomes of this initiative which were collected in a “multi-tool environment” for the production of digital content and the processing of knowledge outside the formal directions designed by school curricula and by institutional training pathways.

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PROMOTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION IN AN EAL ENVIRONMENT

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RESUMEN

La educación basada en resultados de aprendizaje es un enfoque que ha sido promovido y adoptado en distintos sistemas educativos de todo el mundo desde el comienzo de la década de 1990. Se han adaptado numerosos programas de manera exitosa a lo largo del tiempo, mientras que otros han quedado obsoletos por distintos motivos, entre los que se pueden señalar las interpretaciones, cuestiones relacionadas con la evaluación, el aumento de la carga de trabajo del profesorado y quizá asuntos más filosóficos relacionados con la naturaleza del aprendizaje. Sin embargo, mientras que puede haber un caso que se haya preparado para que el aprendizaje holístico se pierda mediante un enfoque rígido y atómico, hay un rango de beneficios indudable. Uno de ellos es que un programa basado en resultados bien diseñado puede mejorar el compromiso del alumnado debido a la naturaleza de las actividades y tareas requeridas para demostrar su rendimiento. Los procesos basados en resultados también son también uno de los requisitos de los órganos de acreditación para demostrar responsabilidad, así como también para establecer indicadores claros de lo que los estudiantes serán capaces de hacer tras determinadas fases de aprendizaje, al final de un curso o tras su graduación.

Un resultado de aprendizaje de especial relevancia en los contextos del inglés como medio de instrucción (EMI) y del Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE) es el requisito de demostrar la capacidad de comunicarse de manera eficaz. En la formación universitaria, el objetivo de este resultado particular tiene dos características principales: por una parte, facilitar el desarrollo cognitivo mediante la adquisición, asimilación y articulación del conocimiento; y por otra es facilitar a los graduados a entrar en el ámbito laboral y ser aceptados como miembros de una comunidad discursiva de una disciplina. Con tal, la responsabilidad de cada programa consiste en asegurar que los pasos que se dan para facilitar las oportunidades, y no solo mediante el conocimiento anticipado de competencias lingüísticas en cursos de idiomas previos.

Este artículo pone de relieve un enfoque basado en resultados aplicado a una asignatura optativa de Humanidades para estudiantes de inglés como lengua adicional en una escuela de ingeniería de Oriente Próximo. El objetivo del diseño es introducir un requisito lingüístico relevante mientras que se atrae a los estudiantes en un rango de canales de aprendizaje multimodales estimuladores, incidentales y explícitos.

Palabras clave: Actuación lectora, profundidad léxica, amplitud léxica.

ABSTRACT

Outcomes-based education is an approach that has been promoted, and adopted in several education systems around the world since the early 1990s. Many programs have been adapted successfully over time while others have been phased out for various reasons, including interpretations, issues with assessment, increased instructor workload and perhaps more philosophical issues concerning the nature of learning. However, while there may be a case to be made for holistic learning being lost in a rigid, atomistic approach, there is undoubtedly a range of benefits. One of these is that a well-designed outcomes-based program can help facilitate student engagement because of the nature of the activities and tasks required to demonstrate performance. An outcomes-based process is also one of the

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requirements of most accrediting bodies in order to demonstrate accountability, and for setting clear statements of what students will be able to do after particular phases of learning, by the end of a course or upon graduation.

A one particular learning outcome of relevance to EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) and (CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) environment is the requirement to demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively. In undergraduate education, the objective of this particular outcome has two main features; one is to facilitate cognitive development through the acquisition, internalization and articulation of knowledge and the second is to enable graduates to enter the workplace and be accepted as members of the disciplinary discourse community. As such, the responsibility of each program is to ensure that steps are taken to provide every opportunity for this to be achieved and not just through the frontloading of language skills in earlier language courses.

This paper outlines an outcomes-based approach applied to an undergraduate Humanities elective course for EAL (English as an Additional Language) students at an engineering institute in the Middle East. The aim of the design is to embed a significant language requirement while engaging learners in a range of stimulating, incidental and explicit, multi-modal learning channels.

Key words: Learning Outcomes; Engagement; Accountability; CLIL; EAL Higher Education; Bloom's taxonomy

1. Introduction

Engaging undergraduate students in their learning has become a focus of higher education over the last decade or so. This is understandable as governments and institutions seek ways of developing human resources in the knowledge, skills and competencies required for participation in a knowledge-based society, and, of course, improving retention rates. Research has identified different approaches to understanding student engagement in higher education, including socio-cultural (Geyer, 2001), behavioural (Kohl, 2001), and psychological (Jimerson, Campos, and Greif, 2003) aspects which are best brought together under a more holistic perspective. Christenson and Wylie's (2012) definition of engagement is that it is "multidimensional, involving aspects of a student's emotion, behaviour and cognition" (p 3). Research has also found that students who are engaged are far more likely to devote more time outside of class to their studies and perform better in course assessment (Tross, Harper, Osher, and Kneidinger, 2000), demonstrating significant cognitive and skill development in the process (Anaya, 1996). They are also more likely to complete their degree (Bean, 2005). While it may not be particularly surprising, studies have also shown that engagement additionally results in more positive images of self (Harper & Quaye, 2014).

The attention given to engagement has also resulted from findings from the learning sciences and best practice which have led to rethinking learning environments so that students are provided with opportunities to work, learn and share together, and in the process build on knowledge and comprehension (Marriam and Caffarella, 1991; Chau and Cheng, 2010). This shift from instruction to a paradigm more focused on learning through student-centred and inquiry-based pedagogies is believed to allow learners to become "active agents involved in constructing knowledge, refining their understanding, and learning socially through sharing with peers and teachers" (Kinkead, 2003). Research suggests that the benefits of engagement in inquiry-based learning address the competences required of professionals and equips students with a more developed appreciation of life-long learning, improved self-confidence and collaboration skills, as well as improved higher order thinking and problem solving abilities (Zhan, 2014; OECD, 2004). Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education" contributed enormously to approaches developed to address issues of student engagement, and when implemented can help to foster the "conditions that compel students to make the most of college, both inside and outside the classroom" (Harper and Quaye, 2009, p.1).

A range of measurable outcomes is required, however, to demonstrate students' active participation in the learning process, and what knowledge, skills and competencies have been acquired and developed. An outcomes-based approach to course design is one way of helping students to become more engaged. Nilson (2010) goes as far as to say that such an approach "guarantees a high level of student engagement because the process steers you toward student- active teaching strategies" (p18), as an outcomes-based approach is learner-centred, requiring teaching strategies which facilitate active, hands-on learning.

2. Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes have been generally categorized into five domains – Psychomotor, Affective, Social, Ethical, and Cognitive (Bloom, 1956). Fink (2003), however, believes that in order to provide opportunity for a significant learning experience, a course should incorporate the following six interactive categories of learning: Foundational knowledge, Application, Integration, Human dimension, and Learning how to learn. This paper will focus on cognitive outcomes, as they are the type of learning outcome most commonly associated with higher education. In an attempt to recognize and encompass a more holistic approach to learning, I shall categorize them broadly as 'Student Learning Outcomes,' defining them as:

Comprehensive, broad statements pertinent to the knowledge, skills and aspects of competence that a learner is expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation or completion of a program, that is, on completion of a learning process.

They are written from the student's point of view in terms of what s/he might achieve, with, of course, the proviso that appropriate academic behaviour, preparing for and attending classes, adhering to task descriptions and completing assignments, etc. is maintained. The intention is that students acquire the stated knowledge, skills and competencies as they progress through the program.

Outcomes-based education (OBE) has, however, seen considerable criticism. Berlach's 2004 paper perhaps encapsulates best the general suspicions of OBE. Among his many criticisms, he states that it is "confusing" (p.3), "jargon-impregnated" (p5), and "suffocates teachers" (p7) who "suffer from assessment overload" (p. 9), all of which paints a rather depressing picture of an approach to what Hejazi and Janzen (2011) believe is "transformational." Jenkins and Unwin (2001) list eight supportive areas; they say that OBE benefits both teachers and students in that both have a better understanding of what they will be doing during the course or class, what they might gain, and what is expected of them. As such, effective learning and teaching is more likely to take place. Teachers, they say, are able to use the stated learning outcomes as templates for developing materials, and in the selection of suitable appropriate activities for developing and assessing them.

Developing learning outcomes is a top-down process. The identification of suitable outcomes is normally driven by the mission statement of the institution, and cascades down, as shown in Fig 1 below. Program Educational Objectives, are broad statements which describe what graduates of a program are normally expected to attain within a few years after graduation, such as being effective life-long learners, demonstrating professional and ethical responsibility; embarking on a chosen career path or pursuing post-graduate study. They should align with the mission and each learning outcome should be mapped to show where student learning outcomes are developed and assessed across the curriculum. This in turn provides faculty with a clear indication of their teaching objectives and helps to identify appropriate teaching and assessment strategies. However, top-down only is unlikely to occur, as while departments are accountable for quality teaching, traditionally, most have considerable control of their particular activities; "the responsibility of teaching lies first with the faculty, any concerns about quality teaching occur at the level of the departments, where the discipline culture prevails" (Hénard, p 66).

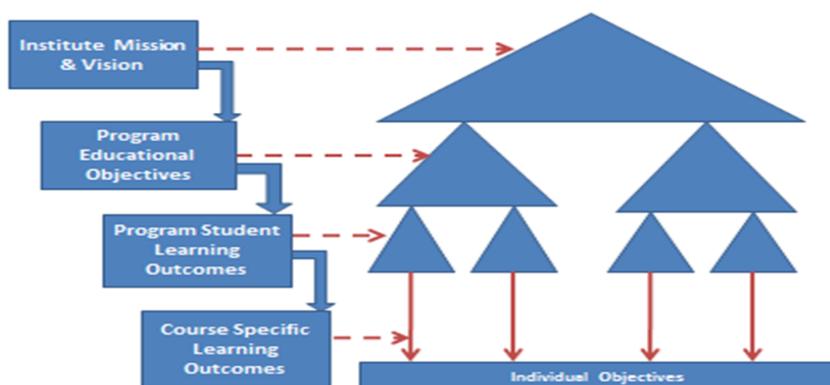


Fig. 1. Top-down development of program and course learning outcomes

Typical Program Learning Outcomes may be written, for example, in broad, non-discipline specific statements such as:

‘On successful completion of the program students will possess the knowledge, skills and competencies to:

Table 1. Core Learning Outcomes

1	Apply theory and methods to solving problems
2	Collect, organize and apply information in a given context
3	Use technology to find and/or apply information
4	Collaborate successfully with others
5	Communicate effectively
6	Become creative and critical thinkers
7	Be independent life-long learners

Upon completion of such a program, students will have had opportunity to participate in a range of courses developed to enhance knowledge, skills and competencies. Attainment of them involves Anderson and Krathwohl’s (2000) knowledge dimensions - Factual, Conceptual, Procedural and Metacognition - and the dimensions of cognitive process – Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate, and Create. One assumption is that knowledge and skills gained in courses will transfer to others. Of course, activities and tasks developed to address the above learning outcomes require that learners “assume greater responsibility and actively participate in the learning process” (Malan, 2000, p 28). This requires that learners demonstrate an understanding of that process and of how they fit into it, and involves the recognition of how knowledge is created and of how it can be accessed, evaluated and used effectively and accurately to address audience and purpose. There is also a need to understand that language development is a social activity and that it can be developed inside and outside of the classroom, independently and collaboratively. Learners, especially undergraduate students, need to plan, formulate questions, collect and organize relevant information which can be achieved through what Beichner, Deardorff and Zhang (1999) term a GOAL protocol (Gathering information, Organizing a process, Analysing a problem and Learning from their efforts). It is also evident to Malan (2000) that those

engaged in developing and facilitating learning environments also have to consider valid and reliable assessment.

3. Real World Tasks

A well-designed outcomes-based program can help facilitate student engagement because of the nature of the activities and tasks required to demonstrate performance. Conventional EFL methodologies are believed to lack the “authenticity of purpose” (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010, p. 5) to engage students sufficiently for them to persist in the ‘authentic communication’ (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p. 3) sought after in the CLIL classroom. The interrelationship of content, cognition, communication and culture (Coyle, 2007) lends itself to an outcomes-based approach, and the paradigm shift to inquiry guided learning is one that can be scaffolded to address higher order thinking, natural communication, and metacognition.

Simulating professional, adult activity is particularly significant to young adults as they are more likely to find the approximation of professional practice engaging and more conducive to learning than lecture-based delivery (Marriam and Caffarella, 1991). CLIL provides opportunity for students to develop a range of skills including critical thinking, analysis, problem solving, teamwork, and critical reading and writing. Constructivist theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) show how learners construct and define their knowledge and understanding, and ZDP (Zone of proximal development) demonstrates the importance of social interaction with peers, near peers and teachers. It also confirms the role of communication in shaping thought and learning through gathering and processing information, analysis, and synthesis. Active learning requires students to reflect on existing knowledge to develop conceptual understanding and is more likely to be facilitated through active participation and sharing problem solving with colleagues. It is particularly applicable to CLIL as it can promote language development through repeated exposure to the language of content, discussion and decision making, and the employment of higher order thinking, and as such, facilitates life-long learning. Team-based research projects, for example, with clearly defined learning outcomes, engage students in real-world communication activity, and encourage ownership of the team’s work. Motivation for and buy-in to such engagement with content, via the approximation of real world, professional practice can be strong, as are language gains from both the input and output (Bransford, Brown and Conking, 2000; Beckett and Miller, 2006).

4. Course Specific Learning Outcomes

Developing appropriate teaching and assessment strategies from the Program Outcomes provides some freedom for those responsible for course design. A Course Learning Outcome is a comprehensive statement pertinent to the knowledge, skills and aspects of competence that a learner is expected to know and is able to do by the end of a particular course. Each Course Learning Outcome should map to one or more Program Learning Outcomes. The difference between the two is the level of specificity in describing what a student will know and be able to do at the end of the course. Normally, there are four to six Course Learning Outcomes for a given course, in order to address the core life skills shown in Table 1. Course Learning Outcomes should be made clear to students and stated on the course syllabus.

If the purpose of teaching is to facilitate learning, then the pedagogy to facilitate that learning is of the utmost importance, particularly if we want students to be able to acquire, internalize, explain, justify and articulate that learning. We cannot assume that just because teaching takes place, learning automatically occurs. It is important to remember that the pedagogy for facilitating is as important, if not more so, as the content. Harper and Quaye (2014) state that we should not expect students to take responsibility for engaging themselves. Today, educators need to create appropriate learning environments which will stimulate inquisitiveness and creativity for active engagement and learning. This means that goals involving higher order thinking skills need to be set, and strategies for achieving them implemented, particularly those that meet the expectations of Gen Z who now account for almost two billion people, over a quarter of the world’s population (The McCrindle Blog). Generation Z expect to use the Internet and technology; they are perhaps the first true digital natives as their formative years have been spent on the

World Wide Web. As such, the use of ICT tools should be play an important role in the learning process, and outcomes developed to tap the skills students possess.

5. Developing Course Specific Learning Outcomes

The following example, taken from a Humanities and Social Science History elective course (for engineering students) is not sufficiently specific to show students what they will be expected to do or achieve during the course. While the course teacher may be able to provoke interest via his or her own enthusiasm and personality, the stated 'outcome' is also rather 'dry':

“By the end of the course students will have demonstrated a comprehensive and clear understanding of the origins, growth and trajectory of the oil industry in the Middle East.”

The accompanying syllabus indicated only an assessment breakdown in terms of quizzes, tests, and assignments. What is needed is further exploration of the steps students would need to take in order to achieve such a demonstration, and the activities which might stimulate interest.

Anderson and Krathwohl, in a revision of Bloom's (1956) work, provide a taxonomy of hierarchical, cognitive operations (Table 2, below). While it seems obvious that students need to acquire knowledge before they can move on to higher order thinking such as analysis, application and evaluation, the scaffolding provides teachers/course designers with a framework for developing learning outcomes, material for input and assessment at suitable stages of the course.

Ideally, each outcome should be realistic in terms of achievability, reflect appropriate levels of cognition and be assessable and measurable. The objective of stating the intended outcomes is to provide a clear picture of the course, so that students know what they will learn, and how they will demonstrate their learning. More specifically, students should know what they are expected to do, what knowledge, skills and competencies they need to demonstrate their learning. The key to using the table is to first clearly state the intended outcome, framed with an action verb and noun phrase, of what a student should know (cognitive), be able to do (skills), or value (affective).

Rewriting the above example to:

“By the end of the course students will have demonstrated an ability to write a brief essay relating the stages of oil exploration and production to the development of Emirati society”

would require students to organize their response through a number of steps identified below.

The first of the knowledge dimensions refers to the Factual Knowledge (A) that is required to complete the task. This includes facts, terminology, and supporting details which would demonstrate a sound understanding of the disciplinary requirements. Conceptual Knowledge (B) is the term given to aspects of the discipline such as basic theories, principles and models. Procedural Knowledge (C) refers to information or knowledge that helps students to do something specific to a discipline, subject, or area of study. The last dimension, Metacognitive Knowledge (D), is concerned with reflection. In particular it is concerned with the demonstration of awareness of the cognitive processes used or applied in addressing task issues.

Table 2. Krathwohl's Taxonomy Table (Adapted from Krathwohl, 2002)

Knowledge Dimension	Cognitive Process Dimension					
	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
A. Factual	Step 1					Step 6
B. Conceptual		Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	
C. Procedural						
D. Metacognition						

Organizing and clearly stating the basic process as in the above table would probably assist the students' understanding of how to approach the task but it remains geared to a traditional, academic expectation and does not address the categories of procedure and metacognition. It also assumes high motivation levels and students in tune with a traditional, academic approach.

The example could be developed beyond the traditional demonstration of factual and conceptual knowledge to include a range of additional learning outcomes, and indications of what students might be asked to do to demonstrate attainment of them, as suggested in Table 3, below.

Table 3. Course Specific Learning Outcomes, Performance Indicators and Assessment Venues

LO (Table 1)	Course Specific Student Learning Outcome (By the end of the course students will have)	Importance Level (H-M-L)	Performance Indicators (During the course students will...)	Assessment Venue
2	collected, organized and applied information related to the stages of exploration	H	i. produce a timeline/flow chart of events & effects	Oral/multimedia (Team) Presentation of Timeline
			ii. develop questions and answers related to the topic	Web-page FAQs
3	identified, accessed and critically read relevant materials from a variety of internet-based sources	H	i. maintain an individual online portfolio of annotated texts and notes	Portfolio
				Webpage links to further reading & annotated bibliography
4	collaborated successfully with others to achieve a common goal	M	i. cooperate and contribute evenly and fairly to the team goal	Peer evaluation
			ii. actively engage on individual and team tasks	Instructor observation
5	articulated an understanding of how the UAE oil story unfolded	H	i. interview (and translate)	Webpage interview report
			ii. present, orally, (in a team) an overview of the UAE oil story	Team presentation / short video
			iii. develop, research and produce a team written magazine article complete	iMagazine / webpage article
6	speculated on the consequences to Emirati society of oil exploration and production	M	i. identify political, commercial and economic factors which affected the course of this	Individual written assignment
			ii. participate in class discussion	Instructor evaluation of 'Contribution'
7	demonstrated an awareness of, and engagement in independent life-long learning	M	i. evaluate own performance in terms of engagement, skills and knowledge development	Reflective essay / journal / blog

Table 3 attempts to identify six possible learning outcomes which address knowledge dimensions and the cognitive process employed. Each of these steps can be indicated on the course syllabus and schedule showing students stages, methods and products. The activities and tasks are guided by best practice and by what we know of Gen Z, a generation of learners who perform best when engaged in multi-modal learning channels. Whereas traditionally learning was restricted to the classroom, the approach outlined above is more visually engaging and can be implemented anywhere, facilitating a 'flipped' approach, if desired. The role of the teacher remains important but now as a facilitator of

learning rather than as an imparter of knowledge. Students should be able to identify with the general topic which is localized; they understand and are able to perform the tasks which are in line with how they access and use information. Performing each chosen task would amount to a demonstration of learning, not only of content but of the language acquired to present a factual and persuasive account. Procedural and metacognitive aspects can also be added to the dimensions through class or online instruction, such as YouTube, individual and peer editing, hands-on experience of developing the web-page or other visuals, and through reflection on how well the task was performed. The incidental learning is as important as the explicit.

The importance or relevance of each course learning outcome is unlikely to be equal. This is indicated by the letters H (high), M (medium) and L (low). An 'H' indicates that the knowledge, skill and/or behaviour is one of the most important outcomes of the course. As such, this means that instructors should provide students with formal instruction, opportunities for practice, and formal assessment relevant to that knowledge, skill or behaviour, and assessment weighting is likely to be higher. An 'M' indicates that the knowledge, skill and/or behaviour is not the most important outcome of the course but is still likely to have a considerable impact on the student's performance; in this case, instructors provide more indirect instruction, opportunities for practice, and formal assessment of that knowledge, skill or behaviour. An 'L' indicates that the knowledge, skill or behaviour has only minor impact on the performance of the student. Consequently, no direct instruction or assessment of the skill is likely to be done during the course; however, the course will provide opportunities for practice.

6. Performance Indicators

The Performance Indicators of the fourth column in Table 3, above, are specific, measurable statements which serve to identify the performance required to demonstrate attainment of a learning outcome. They also serve to describe what students can be expected to do, learn and engage in during the course. Evidence of performance level also needs to be described, commonly on a four-point scale equivalent to terms such as 'Exemplary', 'Effective', 'Developing', and 'Ineffective,' and are usually presented in the form of a rubric. Normally, two or three indicators are used at different points on the course to assess performance on each learning outcome. Rubrics or performance descriptors serve not only for evaluation guidance but also help provide clear task descriptions for learners, and useful feedback about their strengths and weaknesses.

7. The Continuous Assessment Process and Closing the Loop

The top-down design enables knowledge, skills and competencies to be addressed across the curriculum, and facilitates course design which is informed by best practice. Student performance on specific outcomes can be measured by appropriate assessment venues, indicators and descriptors. The learning outcomes for the subject areas are described and mapped against the stated Program Outcomes which demonstrates that departments can share responsibility for skill and competency development across the curriculum. Successes and concerns can be identified and improvements made where necessary in time for the next courses offering.

8. Conclusion

It is not only students who can benefit; university faculty demonstrate more enthusiasm (and less stress) seeing their students engaged, as it shows clear indications of learning. Lasagabaster's (2011) study shows that CLIL causes improved and sustained motivation in formal learning situations. Given real-life, 21st century tasks, understood by Gen Z, then perhaps motivation and ensuing engagement may be even higher still. Institutions themselves will also benefit. Kuh (2001) says that engaged students are a demonstration of better quality institutions. As such, learning outcomes are important for recognition.

This paper has briefly described an approach to developing course learning outcomes related to research, critical reading, writing and thinking, and teamwork skills – the desired competencies for

participation in a knowledge based society. The focus is on designing stimulating learning environments that support knowledge and skill acquisition while engaging learners in relevant, hands-on tasks.

Perhaps the most important aspect though, is that all stakeholders see demonstrable gains in spending considerable amounts of time and money in acquiring an education. It should be an experience which is positive, challenging and engaging. Upon completion of the program of study the “principal question asked of the student or the graduate will therefore no longer be “what did you do to obtain your degree?” but rather “what can you do now that you have obtained your degree?” (Council of Europe, 2002).

9. Further Research

Further research into the impact of an outcomes-based approach in higher education is much needed. Well-described performance indicators of desirable student learning outcomes would highlight gains, and areas of concern, as part of a planned and ongoing review process.

Feedback, not only on attainment of outcomes, but also of student and faculty perceptions of the approach, its relevance and application to their studies, their motivation or resistance would also be of interest. Such research would undoubtedly be of use to the continuous effort to engage CLIL students in effective, collaborative, and rigorous, educationally purposeful activities.

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Robert Craig

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FOSTERING LMD ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES AS A WAY TO FACE NEW CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION

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RESUMEN

Asistimos hoy día a un debate creciente sobre la necesidad e importancia de incorporar lo que frecuentemente denominamos Habilidades y Competencias del Siglo Veintiuno, que son aptitudes y habilidades cuyo desarrollo se requiere en diferentes situaciones de aprendizaje. Desde luego, son requisitos necesarios para la empleabilidad y se contemplan como componentes esenciales que completan y refuerzan habilidades académicas básicas y tradicionales. Por ejemplo, la planificación y el establecimiento de objetivos la colaboración y la comunicación, la persistencia, la flexibilidad y la toma de iniciativas contribuirían al éxito académico del alumnado, en sus orientaciones profesionales e, incluso, socialmente. Fomentar las habilidades y las competencias, sin duda, contribuiría a hacer que nuestro alumnado maneje el conocimiento de una manera más efectiva, reflexiva y productiva.

Palabras clave: Competencias del siglo XXI para el aprendizaje de idiomas, sistemas argelinos LMD (License Master Doctorate)

ABSTRACT

There is a growing debate at present time on the necessity and importance of incorporating what is often referred to as Twenty First Century Skills and Competencies that are attitudes and abilities required to be developed in different learning situations. Indeed, they are necessary requirements for future employability and are seen as essential components completing and reinforcing traditional basic academic skills. For example, planning and objectives-setting, collaborating and communicating, persistence, flexibility and initiative-taking, would help to make students successful academically, in their future professional orientations, and even socially. Fostering skills and competencies would undoubtedly contribute to making our students handle and deal with knowledge in a more effective, reflective and productive manner.

Key words: Language learning–21st century skills–Competencies, Algerian LMD System (License Master Doctorate)

1. Introduction

Moreover, the attempt to develop some Key Competencies along with what is often referred to as 21st Century Skills, has become, today, a necessary pedagogical priority to be tackled in the License Master Doctorate (LMD) system. Recently, in fact, educational policy makers in some developed countries have started to focus on the concept of Key Competencies- attitudes and abilities that the learner should acquire in order to cope with new situations-. Thus, Twenty First Century Skills can be a prerequisite requirement for university students to be equipped with, to have better chances of employability in an increasingly interconnected world. It appears, then, necessary to evaluate the possibility to integrate these skills and competencies among the LMD pedagogical priorities and propose a series of actions that could

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foster our learners' independent learning: a concept which is at the heart of the LMD reform. In the present paper, we will tackle some of the LMD pedagogical priorities in the Algerian university context, as far as language learning is concerned, precise what is meant by competencies and 21st century skills, and then describe some pedagogical implications of their integration in the organization of higher studies in Algeria.

2. The LMD system in Algeria

The LMD system is inspired from the Anglo-Saxon structure of higher studies, namely Bachelor, Master, Doctorate. It is an attempt to harmonize the different university systems in the world. It was adapted in different regions such as North America, Asian countries and by the majority of European states. In Europe, this project was the direct consequence of the Bologna Process initiated in 1998.

Algeria decided to adopt the principles of the Bologna Process during the academic year 2004/2005 in order to apply this new organization of studies, within the framework of a general and an ambitious reform supposed to bring fresh air to universities. The objective of official authorities was to adapt the Algerian system to the international one, and progressively introduce new pedagogical offers supposed to supplement the traditional pedagogical practices. The LMD system assumes to guarantee a wide range of pedagogical objectives essentially centered on the students, who are meant to be the main target of such a reform. Though many problems and constraints remain unsolved, its generalization in all the Algerian universities requires, now more than ever, a re-thinking about objectives, contents, skills and competencies needed to undertake such a challenging task.

The following is a non exhaustive list of learning goals that should be fulfilled during the teaching/ learning process in the Algerian LMD context:

- To involve the learner in the conception of pedagogical content by taking into account his profile and his needs in order to get a better accomplishment of the teacher's mission, in addition to encouraging an instructive debate between the instructor and his learners
- To prepare and equip students for their future professional life
- To guarantee diversity in the learning choices that can reflect a more consistent pedagogical offer
- To detect the learner's difficulties in order to find efficient teaching solutions
- To adopt a different assessment approach
- To encourage continuous research and foster personal and collective initiatives
- To promote the development of transversal competencies such as the mastery of foreign languages and computing sciences
- To develop the learner's autonomy, by helping him discover and acquire a wider range of competencies that are essential in different situations and contexts

This last objective could directly lead us to the narrow relationship that could exist between the LMD students' needs and the Key Competencies that seem to be important tools for personal learning and achievement, along with the Twenty First Century Skills, which are necessary for their future employability.

3. Key Competencies and Twenty first Century Skills

The term competency refers to the ability of doing something efficiently. According to Rychen and Tiana (2004), the concept of competency is defined as the ability to successfully meet complex demands or to carry out a particular activity or task. They put forward an understanding of key competencies as "(...) internal mental structures of abilities, capacities and dispositions embedded in the individual."(p.21).

Similarly, Key Competencies are defined by the Council of Europe (2006) as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a particular context. Thus, the mastery of such skills can guarantee an improved performance, a readiness to take advantage from new opportunities and the ability

to link specific skills to particular needs and demands. In brief, they facilitate the personal development, employment and social integration, and the contribution to a better local environment.

If we want to use some of the Council of Europe framework of key competencies, for instance, we can retain the following ones: Communicating in foreign languages, Learning to learn, Interpersonal, Intercultural and Social competencies, Entrepreneurship, Basic competence in Technology, etc.

Therefore, key competencies are the necessary and appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes that learners need to develop for their own personal fulfillment but also, for their future needs. Out of these competencies, other skills and aptitudes derive and need to be developed by our learners too, such as: Critical thinking, Creativity, Initiative taking, Problem-solving, Risk assessment, Decision taking, etc.

By the same token, Crisan (2006:125) mentions the work of Bransford (2000); Singer (2002); Singer (2006) & Spelke (2002) when assuming that "(...)in line with the research in Cognitive Psychology... competencies are the best means to transfer knowledge and skills in new and dynamic situations/context." He further emphasizes the fact that the more we are able to understand the nature of competence, the more it will be easier for us to study the learning process and design the best conditions for achieving and assessing acquired competence. (Crisan, 2006:125), mentioning Glaser (1988:35).

On the other hand, it would be interesting to distinguish between what is meant by a skill and what is meant by the concept of competence. In fact, a competence is an ability encompassing cognitive skills, attitudes and other non-cognitive components, whereas a skill is often used to designate an ability to perform complex motor and/or cognitive acts with ease and precision as well as adaptability to changing conditions (Rychen & Tiana, 2004). Therefore, competencies need adequate and efficient skills and attitudes to be accomplished. According to Rychen and Tiana (2004:21): "... each competence corresponds to a combination of interrelated cognitive and practical skills, knowledge, motivation, values and ethics, attitudes, emotions and other social and behavioural components that together can be mobilized for effective action in a particular context."

Furthermore, different aspects are, by way of consequence, developed by implementing these competencies and skills. These aspects are linked to the ability of the learner to be active in a more interactive environment, his capacity to develop and criticize pedagogical offers, ask pertinent questions about the main elements of a learning structure, as well as a determination to create new ways and find solutions to complex elements discovered in new contexts.

Accordingly, a demanding and very competitive world has pushed pedagogical thinkers to take into account new skills and qualities that learners should be equipped with to deal with the new challenges that are shaping a more globalized context (Kamehameha Schools, 2010). Former abilities needed in traditional professional contexts, which consisted in mastering basic trade conditions -based on basic intellectual abilities- as well as an adaptation to the local environment, are no longer the unique aspects that a worker should have. In fact, learning new skills come to confirm the necessity of constantly adapting to new situations, by creating and strengthening social links and develop inventive attitudes supposed to boost individuals' creative abilities. This can be possible by launching important initiatives to foster his autonomy and enrich his ability to prosper in a collective framework.

Besides, we live in a constantly changing world where technology and mainly its mastery has become an inescapable vital element in an overwhelming digital era. Thus, the use of technology can also be determinant in the learner's personal development and accompany him to be a successful element in any organization, where he should also display a wide range of aptitudes such as effective communication abilities, a rapid adaptation to new and complex situations and a disposition to invent new elements supposed to cope with local hindrances.

4. Key Competencies and LMD students' needs

It is essential to note, however, that lectures at university often tend to concentrate on gaining and accumulating knowledge, neglecting the development of other aspects such as communicating in different contexts and via different means or critically thinking and problem-solving. Moreover, the development of some skills and attitudes has very rarely constituted a priority for our teachers. At the same time, there is, today, a pressing need to equip LMD learners with adequate skills. On the one hand, to be part of and

function in heterogeneous groups, and on the other hand, to act autonomously and reflectively so that they could express their needs and look for efficient ways to achieve their personal objectives. Reflectivity requires awareness, and at the same time, a control of the different elements and variables available in a given environment, as it is explained in a 2010 Kamehameha Schools report: "More than technological expertise, 21st century skills refer to content knowledge, literacy and proficiencies that prepare individuals to meet the challenges and opportunities of today's world,". Thus, this new conception of education represents a form of adaptation to the rules, languages and codes specific to one particular field. This skill would require learners to develop the ability to perceive the importance of social partners, materially and psychologically. It also represents an advantage to acquire the capacity to belong to and be a part of different and complex social entities by showing a commitment to them and by respecting their characteristics without neglecting their own particularities.

Accordingly, this new pedagogical tendency tries to propose innovative teaching methods supposed to differently conceive knowledge acquisition, something which go hand in hand with the LMD reform in Algeria. In fact, when it comes to our LMD learners, they need to be equipped with the following examples of skills.

1.1. Critical Thinking

This would require nurturing students' critical thinking skills to develop a tendency towards asking questions and thinking logically, developing imagination and a rational conception of things. It is also vital to make students able to analyze situations logically and with objectivity and reason.

1.2. Relating to others and communicating

This involves designing tasks requiring students to be open to others' own visions, thoughts and conceptions, with open-mindedness, by establishing a link between their personal view and the others', by learning how to present information or ideas and persuade an audience. There is a strong and narrow relationship between learning and the necessity to develop a kind of social competence able to guarantee success in different learning and professional environments. Everyone can feel the determinant element of contributing to the community by providing important contribution supposed to assure progress. There is another ability, which can be linked to a kind of social integration, which consists in seizing cross cultural elements, which can help to master a more practical and fruitful collaboration with people from different origins.

1.3. Using language, symbols and texts

Creating an environment that allows a maximum exploitation and use of texts, language and symbols available to the learners through different literary genres that provide content and meaning and naturally enrich the learning situations.

1.4. Managing Self

Encouraging learners' personal capacity to determine learning objectives, and be responsible at the moment of selecting their pedagogical priorities. This would involve making learners able to reflect on their learning, by evaluating their attitudes towards learning a language, and towards the world that surrounds them.

1.5. Participating, contributing and problem-solving

It is the ability to take part in a cooperative process within one or several communities and be able to provide personal contributions and experiences to enrich the learning environment and solve problems through collaboration and team work.

1.6. Creativity and Innovation

This competence involves proposing alternatives by thinking to new possibilities of doing things and from new perspectives with new ideas or with conceiving again already established ones.

1.7. Learning from doing

It is an attempt to develop learners' abilities by practising in real-life contexts to easily adapt to the professional world. It is clear today that equipping learners with only technical skills is no more sufficient. Indeed, they need to be equipped with the skills that would allow them to be employed -but not only-and to participate to the socio-economic development of the country.

4. Practical Implications

It is to be noticed that both pedagogical conceptions of learning practices, i.e. the LMD system and the use of key competencies, share common features and philosophies of how students can reach optimal advantage from a learning context.

Consequently, by involving the students in the conception of their own pedagogical content, both systems can foster autonomy of the learners to adapt their own learning styles to the chosen objectives. This can be possible, for example, by the inclusion of the feedback technique that helps them to generate their views, feelings and perceptions of the teacher's pedagogical approach. In addition, sharing their learning experiences with their teacher is so crucial at the moment of conceiving any pedagogical offer.

Encouraging the interaction among learners is also something recommended by both The LMD system and the teaching of competencies and skills. The ability to create debates, to listen to each other and to share common learning experiences can help them to positively approach learning in an progressive environment.

Since the LMD teaching and learning priorities could be achieved through the implementation of Key Competencies, it would be recommended for the teacher to explicitly make use of them and explain to his students their importance whenever the learning situation reveals its occurrence. Furthermore, key competencies encourage the establishment of learning conversations that could reveal valuable details about the learners' styles and needs. All these initiatives are possible thanks to the new learning spirit that the LMD System is supposed to bring, in order to change the prevailing old instructional behaviours and reach an optimal learners' improvement.

A written expression session could, for example, integrate and allow the implementation of the different Key Competencies explained to the learners, who would feel free, for example, to give their opinions about the teaching process and the kind of activities that can suit them best. They can also be allowed to propose essay topics that make them better express their writing styles and abilities. In addition to this, an oral expression session, could for instance, foster learners' ability to react positively in conversations through communicating in a critical and constructive manner. Teachers can encourage them to speak freely and develop their confidence in personal opinion expression, and when speaking in public, as well as develop positive attitudes towards Intercultural communication along with the respect and understanding of cultural differences.

Moreover, explaining explicitly Key Competencies and their practical implications could incite learners to reveal their weaknesses in the perspective to be analysed and efficiently treated. Working inside a collective framework, which implies cooperation with other students, could also have a positive pedagogical impact and represent a source of mutual contributions.

Furthermore, the new pedagogical spirit which encourages the inclusion of innovative instructional elements, can also recommend the adoption of a new assessment approach. Indeed, formative assessment, which hints at discovering some aspects to be developed, and which principally seeks the improvement of learners, rather than simply evaluating their work, can be of a high pedagogical importance. The valuable feedback which results from it can be a useful source of information for the teacher to redirect his teaching approach. An interesting idea of how efficiently assess learners can be, for

example, the Multiple Choice Question, accompanied with further questions supposed, thanks to answers provided by learners, to elicit important exploitable data.

Besides, capitalizing on past experiences can be very useful and can be possible thanks to the numerous possibilities provided by the electronic devices. It can be achieved by creating an electronic portfolio which would record the learners' different developmental stages. This can be a practical element that can help the teacher to further sharpen his teaching strategies.

One of my teaching and didactic priorities has become the implementation of Key Competencies and innovative skills. It did encourage me create learners'-centered initiatives, where the objective can be to incite them to make use of the maximum of this new category of skills. Indeed, it is possible to conceive activities, where learners can make use of the wide range of the competencies mentioned above. Asking them for example to make a research, written in English- which is a foreign language for them- about a significant decisive period in the history of their country, has revealed, among them, an encouraging ability to communicate with each other trying to take profit from a valuable collaboration where different students can bring their personal contributions, at different learning levels, whether linguistically, culturally, and even psychologically. These kinds of activities show that students can improve their performances when they are invited to critically think about a particular aspect, and can even make use on a frequent basis of his ability to create links between the different elements of a topic, displaying a great sense of innovation that can in many cases solve problems that can arise when practicing such pedagogical activities.

In addition, Multimedia means have become very important at the moment of trying to improve in a more interactive way the ability of the learner to develop communication abilities and to enrich his lexical competence. Using the net and modern technological devices can foster the ability of the learner to create a permanent learning channel that can help him to have access to different kinds of sources of information that contain a necessary content for setting and meeting objectives. The endless possibilities of E-learning provide, indeed, a vital source of self-development.

The LMD reform in Algeria comes to incite teachers to adopt new didactic attitudes that can differ from traditional ones where learners were not the center of interest. This new academic spirit has encouraged me when teaching Management and Business students to create other projects where they should actively exploit, in accordance with both the Official Reform and the spirit of helping to assimilate modern competencies, this new set skills. Indeed, they have been involved in a series of mini projects, more concretely: virtually creating start-ups. This initiative implied not only the use of their basic knowledge related to economy and business, but also the possibility of practicing it in a foreign language, such as English. Such experiences, supposed to recreate real life-inspired situations, encourage students to express their learning needs and take into account their particular profile. Their diversity can also be crucial in maintaining at high levels both their interest and motivation. These activities can also create situation where learners make use of a variety of qualities and aptitudes such as negotiating in a foreign language or using different electronic new media devices, lik as computers and tablets.

Moreover, and in order to better study learners' adaptation to these new pedagogical orientations, a study has been conducted where thirty (30) students were given a questionnaire. They were asked to choose, from a set of competencies, the ones that they feel can develop when practicing classroom activities. The results, as shown in table 1.1, indicate that, a majority of the respondents (from 56% to nearly 86%) declared having developed the totality of competencies, when dealing with new kinds of assignments.

Table 1. Students' Choice of Modern Skills and Competencies

MODERN SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Managing Self	19	63.33
Creativity and Innovation	17	56.66
Learning from doing	21	70
Problem-solving	18	60

Relating to others and communicating	25	83.33
Experiencing Real-Life Situations	26	86.66
Developing Autonomy	21	70

Questionnaires are useful tools for data eliciting. They can be used to better collect insightful clues that can contribute to optimally observe the teaching/learning situation. Indeed, when trying to analyze the different answers concerning learners' perception about these new kinds of activities, results reveal that their opinions can justify teachers' new pedagogical approaches which are directly linked to objectives put forward above.

Moreover, the same group of students was invited to express themselves about if the competencies mentioned above should be more developed through various motivating activities and mini-projects. Once again, and as Table 1.2 indicates, a big majority feels the need to further develop them. They seem to have seized their pedagogical importance.

Table 2. Students' Willingness to Develop Modern Skills and Competencies

	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	24	80
No	6	20

Accordingly, students seem to appreciate innovative pedagogical initiatives, which can encourage them to perceive learning in a different way. They like to be engaged in new experiences which can foster their corresponding personal qualities. Thus, teachers should maintain this fruitful environment, if proposed purposefully. In fact, it can lead to significant positive results.

Furthermore, the new teaching spirit which tries to optimize the best teaching and learning conditions for students is a proof that Teachers' mission tends to have as an objective to discover the different areas linked to their students' daily needs. They are encouraged to initiate projects where learners have to speak about their own experiences, an essential feedback meant to improve the way teaching should be carried out.

5. Conclusion

The role of higher education in coping with globalization involves developing fundamental and transferrable competencies and among them 'learning to learn' as well as making students acquire appropriate skills-that are up-dated all along their lives in the objective of making them become life-long learners in a constantly and rapidly changing world, contributing to their society's development. In this context of things, it is essential that teachers and decision-makers in the field of higher education find answers to the question: What do our learners need to learn and what skills and competencies they need to be equipped with in order to function appropriately and efficiently in their future workplace and, therefore, can respond successfully and with responsibility to the challenges of the 21st century.

The new socio-economic development challenges, affecting our country today in the context of an increasingly interconnected world have, indeed, to be taken into account for their implications for our LMD teaching. Today, more than ever, the Algerian university is confronted to many challenges and has to urgently provide concrete actions in view of operating significant changes, allowing our students to have the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies they would need for the future.

Thinking of new considerations and approaches concerning the ways learners should acquire knowledge is apparently the priority of both the LMD system and the new didactic tendency which includes some key competencies in the learning process such as the learner's autonomy, involvement in the conception of pedagogical tools and the ability to take part in a collective learning approach. In fact, these

objectives have always been a priority for the LMD system practitioners. Therefore, the LMD English curriculum specificities should adapt to change so that they fulfil the objective-among several others- of being at the service of the country's economy and society, but also of personal achievement and success in a constantly and rapidly changing global world we are inevitably and inescapably part of.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF SPEAKING STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE ON IELTS SPEAKING TEST: A STUDY ON CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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RESUMEN

Hasta la fecha, se ha alcanzado una serie de logros en los estudios sobre la relación entre las estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas y la competencia lingüística. Sin embargo, son limitados los estudios acerca de la relación entre el uso de estrategias de expresión oral y el rendimiento en exámenes de expresión oral en lengua inglesa, especialmente en un contexto chino. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo explorar dicha relación entre la aplicación de estrategias de expresión oral y el rendimiento en las pruebas de expresión oral de los exámenes IELTS, mejorando así el rendimiento en inglés oral mediante la elección y formación en la estrategia más adecuada en cada caso. 93 estudiantes chinos de postgrado que han realizado el examen IELTS durante su formación universitaria respondieron a un cuestionario sobre su uso de las estrategias de expresión oral, y los datos se analizaron con el software IBM SPSS Version 22, que aborda específicamente los análisis de correlación, regresión y ANOVA. Los principales resultados muestran lo siguiente: (1) El uso general de las estrategias de expresión oral se encuentra en un rango de frecuencia media, y la estrategia de expresión oral más usada es la compensación, mientras que la menos utilizada es la cognitiva. (2) El rendimiento en la prueba de expresión oral de los exámenes IELTS está positivamente correlacionado con el uso de los seis tipos de estrategias de expresión oral.

Palabras clave: Estrategias para la expresión oral; Rendimiento de la prueba de expresión oral de los exámenes IELTS; Correlación

ABSTRACT

By now, a host of achievements have been made on studies on the relationship between language learning strategies and language proficiency. The relationship between the use of speaking strategies and performance on oral English test, however, is hardly explored, especially within a Chinese context. The research aims to explore such a relationship between the application speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance, thereby improving oral English performance through appropriate strategy choosing and training. 93 Chinese postgraduate students who have taken IELTS at their undergraduate years answered a questionnaire regarding their use of speaking strategies, and the data are analyzed with IBM SPSS Version 22, which specifically involve a correlation analysis, regression analysis and ANOVA. The major findings are as follows: (1). The overall use of speaking strategies is at a medium frequency range; and participants are found to use compensation speaking strategy most frequently while cognitive speaking strategy is the least frequently used one. (2). IELTS speaking test performance is positively correlated with the use of all six types of speaking strategies.

Key words: Speaking strategies; IELTS speaking test performance; Correlation

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1. Introduction

Communication plays a vital part in life as it can transfer information by exchanging ideas and thoughts, making plans, tackling problems. The activity of speaking takes the account of 30% in the procedure of communication (River, 1979), thus speaking is a significant tool for communication. According to Widdowson (1990), the ultimate goal of language learning is to obtain communicative competence, emphasising the importance of speaking as well.

IELTS, known as International English Language Testing System, is an international standardized and leading test of English proficiency of the world for higher education and migration (www.ielts.org), which is regarded as the proof of English language proficiency by over 9,000 organisations all over the world (ibid). IELTS measures the test-takers' ability to communicate with the following four skills: "listening, reading, writing and speaking, which are equally weighted with scores reported on a 9 band scale of ability" and increasingly demanded by international employers, education institutions and professional organisations (www.ielts.org). The speaking module is a key component of IELTS. The assessor scores the test-taker as he or she is speaking, but the speech is also recorded for monitoring as well as re-marking in case of an appeal against the banding given.

Since IELTS is such a popular test among English language proficiency tests and it is assumed that the use of speaking strategies can enhance oral English level, the study tries to get some discoveries in the relationship between the use of speaking strategies and learners' performance in IELTS speaking test.

2. Literature Review

This chapter mainly focuses on previous studies concerning the definition and classification of speaking strategies. Additionally, this chapter presents related research and studies on this topic. Finally, IELTS, and its associated speaking test will be discussed.

2.1 Definitions of Speaking Strategies

2.1.1 Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

The following definitions given by some scholars are most widely acknowledged and adopted in the field of research surrounding language learning strategies. Stern stated that "strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner" (1983, cited in Ellis, 1994, p.531). This implies the suggestion of an unobservable and mind-based concept of language learning strategy. On the other hand, Oxford (1989, cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 531) noted that language learning strategies refer to specific actions or behaviours of the learners which could enhance their language learning, thus making it faster, easier, more effective and more self-directed. According to Weinstein and Mayer (1986, p.315), who considered language learning strategies to be both behavioural and mental, it is something that has the tendency to influence the encoding process in the language learner, no matter whether it relates to behaviour or thoughts.

Over time, the scope of language learning strategies has extended to a certain degree. The notion that conscious or unconscious activities are incorporated in language learning strategies is maintained by Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991, p.212). Similar to Weinstein and Mayer (1986), Chamot (2004, p.14) defined this term as the conscious thoughts and actions taken by the learner in order to accomplish the development goal.

The following list of features illustrate the ways in which the term 'language learning strategies' is adopted in the current study, based on the views of Chamot (1987, 2004), Oxford (1989, 1990), Ellis (1994) and the above definitions:

1. Language learning strategies could refer to both specific techniques or behaviours and general approaches taken in order to develop L2 proficiency.
2. Language learning strategies could be both mental and behavioural.

3. Language learning strategies are usually problem-orientated, meaning that learners often employ a strategy in order to tackle a specific learning problem.
4. The use of language learning strategies may vary significantly as a result of different tasks and problems as well as individual learner differences.

2.1.2 Definitions of speaking strategies

As proposed by López (2011), the term “speaking strategies” in literature could refer to communication strategies or specifically oral communication strategies (p. 3). Based on the concept that communication is the primary goal of speaking, Corder (1977) presented the techniques adopted by speakers when navigating communication difficulties as ‘communication strategies’. Dörnyei and Scott (1997, p.179) extended the definition to, “every potentially intentional attempt to cope with any language-related problem of which the speaker is aware,” during the process of communication. Whilst problem-solving is still the aim of this definition, the ‘language problem’ – unlike Corder’s (1977) definition – goes beyond the expression of meaning. In this paper, Dörnyei and Scott’s (1997, p.179) view is adopted, which could be summarized as an intentional or potentially intentional attempt to solve language problem in order to achieve L2 communication when considering the situation of Chinese students that the weakest skill is speaking as a result of imbalanced attention paid to speaking compared with other skills (Yuan, 2011, p.143).

2.2 Classification of Speaking Strategies

A number of experts in the field of second language acquisition have presented schemes for language learning strategies. However, just like the definition of the strategies themselves, there are different classifications. In what follows, the classifications of Oxford (1990) as well as Dörnyei and Scott (1995) will each be discussed in turn.

2.2.1 Classification of Language Learning Strategies

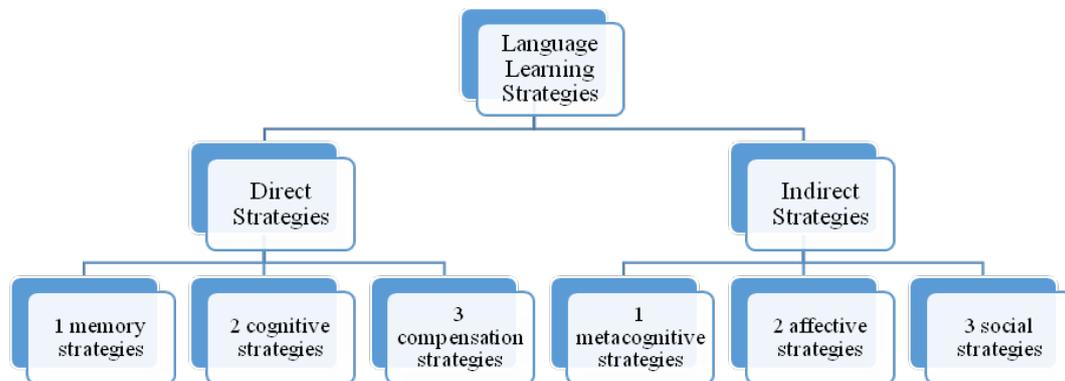


Fig. 1. Oxford's Language Learning Strategy System Diagram (Oxford, 1990, p.16)

Based on the criteria of whether language learning strategies influence learning directly or indirectly, Oxford (1990, p.16) proposed the above scheme, which has been widely accepted up to now. In comparison with the previous classification, the above diagram outlines the consideration of memory strategies, compensation strategies and affective strategies. The following table further illustrates what each subcategory contains.

Table 1. Oxford's Language Learning Strategy Scheme (1990, pp. 18-21)

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Memory strategies	"Creating links mentally, applying sounds and images, reviewing well, and employing action".
Cognitive strategies	"Practising, reviewing and sending messages, analysing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output".
Compensation strategies	"Guessing intelligently, and overcoming limitations in writing and speaking".
Metacognitive strategies	"Centring one's learning, planning and arranging one's learning, and evaluating one's learning".
Affective strategies	"Lowering one's anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking one's emotional temperature".
Social strategies	"Asking questions, cooperating with others and empathising with others".

2.2.2 Classification of Speaking Strategies

The taxonomy Dörnyei and Scott (1995) proposed not only referred to strategic behaviour, but it also related the three main categories². to the four main types of communication problems². that second or foreign language learners mostly encountered. The taxonomy is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Dörnyei and Scotts' (1995) taxonomy of speaking strategies relating to communication problems

CATEGORIES STRATEGIES PROBLEMS	DIRECT STRATEGIES	INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES	INDIRECT STRATEGIES
Resource-deficit problems	Message abandonment; reduction; replacement; Circumlocution; restructuring; code switching;	Appealing for assistance	
Own-performance problems	Self-repair; Self-rephrasing	Understanding check; own-accuracy check	Verbal strategy markers
Other-performance problem	Other-repair	Requesting clarification; requesting repetition; requesting confirmation; Inference; expressing non-understanding	Feigning understanding
Processing time pressure problems			Repetition; Using fillers

To summarise, Dörnyei and Scotts' (1995) direct strategies refer to the use of an alternative method, which is more manageable and self-contained in order to convey the intended meaning. Oxford's (1990) subcategory of cognitive and compensation strategies reflects this as well, which belong to the main category of direct strategies. In contrast, indirect strategies do not directly deal with resource deficit-related problems, but rather provide support for mutual understanding (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997), such as making use of fillers or feigning understanding to prevent the conversation from breaking down (*ibid*). Similarly, Oxford (1990, p.135) saw indirect strategies as those that support learning without the direct involvement of the target language. This being said, determining whether or not it should be included in this category is challenging since indirect strategies are far less associated with meaning. Rubin (1987) believed that language learning strategies should have a direct impact, taking the aim of speaking, communication and mutual understanding into consideration. However, indirect strategies play a vital role in managing communication problems and may influence the degree to which mutual understanding occurs (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997). For this reason, the present study adopts indirect strategies. Interactional strategies, places its primary emphasis on the cooperative conduction of problem-solving exchanges (e.g. providing clarification, requesting confirmation or asking for help). This is also close to Oxford's (1990) definition of social strategies, but the difference is that social strategies belong to the main category of indirect strategies instead of parallel to indirect strategies according to Oxford (1990).

This study adopts Oxford's (1990) framework of language learning strategies as well as the specific strategic behaviours proposed by Dörnyei and Scott (1995). Oxford's classification aimed at overall language learning but this study will only focus on the skill of speaking. Thus it will also adopt Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) matrix, which is assumed to be more problem-orientated and process-based, explains the three main categories in detail and matches specific strategic behaviours with four types of communication problems.

Table 3. Speaking Strategies Scheme Used in the Study

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIC BEHAVIOURS AIMED AT SPEAKING (SOME EXAMPLES ARE LISTED)
Meta-cognitive speaking strategies	Managing learning by centring, arranging, planning, organising, evaluating, or monitoring learning.	Setting up oral English learning goals at different learning stages; paying attention when hearing English; monitoring and evaluating the oral learning process.
Cognitive speaking strategies	Enhancing learning through various ways (practising, repeating, translating, deductive reasoning).	Practising oral English through songs and films or using structured patterns; making use of L1 (Chinese) to translate when encountering difficulty expressing in English.
Memory speaking strategies	Structuring the process of reviewing; building mental links; retrieving.	Putting a new word in a meaningful context for easier memory and use; periodically revising previously learned knowledge in oral English; connecting new words with known words (in sound, meaning and function).
Compensation speaking strategies	Overcoming limitations; guessing based on clues.	Selecting or adjusting topic; inferring the meaning of a new word; approximating the meaning by using a synonym.

Affective speaking strategies	Reducing anxiety; making positive statements; viewing risks and mistakes wisely.	Taking a deep breath, using laughter or simulating reality in order to control anxiety; encouraging oneself to learn oral English; feeling free to make mistakes while speaking.
Social speaking strategies	Asking others for help; cooperating with others; enhancing mutual understanding	Asking someone to correct mistakes; asking for confirmation; practicing oral English with peers or proficient users of the target language; using body language to emphasise speech.

2.3 Relevant Research on this Field

In the field of language testing, researchers have become more interested in identifying and ascertaining individual characteristics that influence language test performance. Language learning strategy is undoubtedly one of these according to Bachman and Palmer (2010) and Purpura (1999). Many researchers, including Zhang and Zhang (2012), Song and Cheng (2006) and Gan et al. (2004) have conducted research in the Chinese context. Most of this research focused on overall language proficiency or the specific skill of reading. For example, based on the results of the interviews conducted by Gan et al. (2004), more successful learners (participants who scored over 80% in College English Test Level 4, known as CET-4 on a 100% scale) have used more types of learning strategies to facilitate learning. Zhang and Zhang's (2012) research focused on the sub-skill of reading only, which showed the use of monitoring strategies in metacognitive strategies has a highly positive relationship to the performance in the CET-4 reading test. This being said, the shortcoming of these studies is that it is difficult to determine the success of the learner, or the accuracy of using test performance as a reflection of language competence, since these researchers were unable to prove that CET-4 was valid and reliable. According to Huang (2013), the more detailed research orientation, such as the relationship between the use of speaking strategies and spoken language performance, was only studied by a few experts and scholars, who called for further exploration and investigation, especially in the Chinese context (Huang, 2013; Seong, 2014).

2.4 IELTS Speaking Test

As mentioned in the previous section, the majority of former research has shown that most language learning strategies have positive effects on oral performance. Therefore it is assumed that the use of language learning strategies can advance speaking test performance to a certain extent. This study focused on one typical model found in speaking tests; the IELTS speaking test. An IELTS speaking test generally lasts for 11-14 minutes and consists of three sections, with each one having a varied time limit, content, form and focus. This is explained in detail in the table below.

Table 4. The procedure and form of IELTS speaking test (www.ielts.org, n.d.)

PART	TIME	FORM	CONTENT	FOCUS
1	4 to 5 minutes	Interview	Test-takers are going to be asked about some general topics such as hobbies, interests, school and subject, hometown, family members and so on. To ensure the quality and consistency, questions are usually selected from the examiner's scripted frame for this part.	Here, the candidates are asked a number of questions relating to common situations or typical experiences in order to evaluate his or her basic conversational abilities.

2	3 to 4 minutes	Self-talk	Test-takers will get a topic card randomly selected by the examiner and then have one minute to prepare for the topic, after which they have to conduct a self-talk for approximately two minutes on the given topic.	This part measures the test-taker's ability to talk on a topic given with no further prompts at length from the assessor. Candidates will be scored based on the extent to which their language use is appropriate and how coherently their ideas are organised.
3	4 to 5 minutes	Discussion	A discussion, generally on deeper and further topics in part two will be conducted between the examiner and the examinee (this part is considered to be the most difficult section).	This part aims to test the candidate's ability to express ideas on the topic and to justify, analyse as well as discuss opinions and issues which are more abstract.

A qualified IELTS examiner assesses the test-taker's speaking proficiency based on the learner's pronunciation, grammatical range and accuracy, lexical resource, as well as fluency and coherence (see Appendix 3), which consist of the four main criteria for IELTS speaking test assessment. The test-taker is going to be awarded a whole or half band score ranging from 1 to 9 (see Table 2.7; and Appendix 2 for detail). These scores are based on equally-weighted criteria components. The assessment band could be seen as the table below.

Table 5. IELTS Band Scores

BAND	PROFICIENCY (OF ENGLISH)
9	Expert User
8	Very Good User
7	Good User
6	Competent User
5	Modest User
4	Limited User
3	Extremely Limited User
2	Intermittent User
1	Non-User

3. Research Design

In this chapter, the aim and rationale of this study will be presented along with a description of the research questions. Following this, a presentation of the participants and chosen sampling method is offered along with a description of the research instrument used in this study. The procedure of data analysis will then be discussed. At the end of this chapter, it deals with relevant ethical issues.

3.1 Rationale Aim and Questions

In this study, Chinese college candidates are asked to answer questions regarding their use of speaking strategies and their reported IELTS speaking test score in order to explore the relationship between speaking test performance and the application of speaking strategies. It is expected that the particular types of speaking strategy that learners with higher scores usually use most frequently will be discovered. It is hoped that this study can help to improve IELTS speaking test performance by offering a number of suggestions with regards to learners' use of speaking strategies, and by highlighting the importance of speaking strategies training in IELTS to teachers. The research questions are as follows:

- (1) When preparing for IELTS speaking test, which speaking strategies are adopted by Chinese college candidates?
- (2) What is the relationship between IELTS speaking test performance and the application of speaking strategies under each subcategory?

3.2 Participants

In this research, 93 Chinese postgraduate students from various universities in China have been selected as samples with a snowball sampling method. All of the participants study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) alongside their academic majors and have taken an IELTS speaking test at their undergraduate years. Some of the participants are currently studying for their master's degree at the University of Edinburgh so they had to take IELTS before they came to the UK for further studying, while others took IELTS at their undergraduate years in order to prove their English language proficiency for their future career development. It is believed that the students experienced a similar language learning environment prior to taking IELTS, since none of the students had the experience of studying abroad at the point of completing the examination. All of these students have finished a one-year spoken English college course according to the relevant regulations of the Chinese national college English curriculum. Snowball sampling, categorised under non-probability sampling (Robson, 2011), was applied in order to ensure that the aforementioned requirements were fulfilled. Whilst this allowed certain guarantees in terms of response rate, it should be noted that this strategy might have resulted in a sample that was not largely representative of the larger population. However, in spite of the sampling method, the participants were from different levels of universities in China.

3.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument adopted in this research is a questionnaire on investigating the use of speaking strategies using the Oxford's SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, cited in Oxford, 1990) and some communication strategies proposed by Dörnyei (1995), and is designed with the Likert-scale, which will be discussed in detail. As Dörnyei and Csizér (2012) proposed, the research method of survey questionnaires could provide us with information such as the language behaviours, attitudes and opinions, beliefs and feelings, as well as the basic background of the participants. Furthermore, the greater sample size means the research result would be more generalisable if compared to qualitative research (Bryman, 2012).

The questionnaire is designed according to Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies as well as Dörnyei's (1995) strategic behaviour on speaking strategies. The questionnaire comprises six parts that are; metacognitive speaking strategies (from Item 1-5), cognitive (from Item 6-10), memory (from Item 11-15), compensation speaking strategies (from Item 16-20), affective (from Item 21-25) and social speaking strategies (from Item 26-30), respectively.

The participants' responses to the each of the questions would be measured by using the Likert-scale, which scores from 1 to 5 according to the frequency of strategy use. Option "1" represents, "the statement is never or almost never true of me" and Option "5" is "always or almost always true of me". In addition, some background information is needed as well, such as the participants' undergraduate university, and IELTS speaking test score (See Appendix 1). The 93 selected students who have taken IELTS at their undergraduate years answered the questionnaire. To ensure the quality of the questionnaire results, they were informed of the importance and the aim of this study in advance.

3.4 Data Analysis

The whole questionnaire was analysed with every five questions within the same subcategory of speaking strategies being synthetically evaluated. Calculating the mean and standard deviation with descriptive statistics would enhance our understanding of Chinese college students' use of speaking strategies, for example, their frequency preference of strategy use. In order to investigate the relationship between participants' IELTS speaking test score and their use of speaking strategies, which is the main aim of this research, three statistical techniques are carried out. This begins with a correlation analysis: the correlation coefficient between speaking performance and use of metacognitive, cognitive, memory, compensation, affective, and social speaking strategies would be determined out one by one with the assistance of IBM SPSS Version 22, making it appropriate to figure out the Spearman's rho using SPSS (ibid).

4. Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the research results in the form of tables with relevant discussions and explanations will be presented and in light of the three research questions. The questions include what speaking strategies Chinese college students use when they prepare for the IELTS speaking test; what the relationship is between the participants' use of speaking strategies and test performance. This chapter ends with the pedagogical implications of this research.

4.1 Research Question 1: Chinese college candidates' use of speaking strategies when preparing for the IELTS speaking test In order to address the first research question, the average values, which represent the frequency of strategy application amongst students, were obtained from the questionnaire data. By comparing these averages referring to the students' use of overall and specific strategies under each subcategory, the frequency could be ranked so that what strategies Chinese college students use most and least frequently would be known.

4.1.1 The overall use of speaking strategies

This part focuses on the participants' overall use of speaking strategies, which is presented as the table below.

Table 6. The Overall Use of Speaking Strategies

STRATEGY TYPE	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Metacognitive Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	5.00	3.23	0.67
Cognitive Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	5.00	3.16	0.66
Memory Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	4.60	3.41	0.62
Compensation Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	4.80	3.59	0.64
Affective Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	5.00	3.27	0.66
Social Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	5.00	3.41	0.62

In this study, the average coefficient is set at 3.0. As indicated in Table 4.1, above, the mean average for the application of speaking strategies within each subcategory is higher than 3.0. According to Oxford and Burry-Stock's (1995) summary of strategy frequency studies using the ESL/EFL SILL, a mean within the range of 3.5-5.0 is assumed to be higher strategy use; averages of 2.5-3.4 are regarded as medium strategy use; and 1.0-2.4 seen as lower strategy use. Having a look at the table above, all the mean values are from 3.16 to 3.59, from which it could be concluded that the frequency of the overall use of speaking strategies is of a medium to high level, somewhat similar to the results of previous research (Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995). Under each subcategory is a

variance in the frequency of strategy implementation. Based on the frequency of strategy implementation, the following ranking is proposed:

Compensation Speaking Strategy > Memory Speaking Strategy >= Social Speaking Strategy > Affective Speaking Strategy > Metacognitive Speaking Strategy > Cognitive Speaking Strategy

It is surprising that social strategies have ranked in second place, the same as memory speaking strategies, which contradicted the results found by Liu (2012) suggesting that social strategies were least frequently used by Chinese students among the six strategies. This may be due to the specific skill this study focuses on; speaking, which makes it more related to social strategies than Liu's research that pays more attention to overall language learning strategies.

4.1.2 The use of speaking strategies within each subcategory

In this section of the paper, subcategory-based implementation of speaking strategies is outlined (see Table 4.2). Specifically, this section addresses students' use of metacognitive, cognitive, memory, compensation, affective and social speaking strategies one by one:

Table 7. The use of metacognitive speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Metacognitive Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	5.00	3.23	0.67
Code					
Q1	93	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.04
Q2	93	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.14
Q3	93	1.00	5.00	3.22	1.09
Q4	93	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.13
Q5	93	1.00	5.00	3.01	1.24

As illustrated in the Table, students' application of metacognitive speaking strategies achieved a mean value of 3.23. This indicates that metacognitive speaking strategies were neither greatly accepted nor rejected by participants. The highest mean average value is 3.43, which refers to the statement given in Q2 of the survey: the students' use of mental language preparation prior to speaking in English. This indicates that when preparing for the IELTS test, the students involved in this study applied this strategy more often than other strategies within the metacognitive subcategory.

Table 8. The use of cognitive speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Cognitive Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	5.00	3.16	0.66
Code					
Q6	93	1.00	5.00	2.96	1.19
Q7	93	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.27
Q8	93	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.20
Q9	93	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.06
Q10	93	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.22

The average score for cognitive speaking strategies only was 3.16, showing that the participants were neither favourable nor unfavourable towards the use of cognitive speaking strategies. Comparatively speaking, Q9, “When I don’t know how to express something in English, I will try translating from Chinese which has the similar meaning to English,” scored the highest, revealing a tendency that participants may use this strategy more frequently. While the average of Q7 is 2.62, in proximity to the low frequency of strategy use (Oxford and Burry-stock, 1995), which meant the participants have shown disapproval to the use of this strategy of repeating to some extent.

Table 9. The use of memory speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Memory Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	4.60	3.41	0.62
Code					
Q11	93	1.00	5.00	3.68	1.13
Q12	93	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.19
Q13	93	1.00	5.00	3.68	1.10
Q14	93	1.00	5.00	3.37	1.03
Q15	93	1.00	5.00	3.19	1.22

As illustrated in the above Table, it appears that the participants possessed a neutral to relatively positive view of memory speaking strategies based on the mean value score provided. Additionally, it can be seen that Q11 (memorising the pronunciation of a new word first when learning it) and Q13 (placing a new word in a meaningful context like a sentence or conversation for easier memorisation) scored 3.68, belonging to the high frequency range, which shows how the participants believed these two strategic behaviours were more relevant compared to other strategies within this subcategory.

Table 10. The use of compensation speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Compensation Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	4.80	3.59	0.64
Code					
Q16	93	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.17
Q17	93	1.00	5.00	3.72	1.11
Q18	93	1.00	5.00	4.02	0.96
Q19	93	1.00	5.00	3.59	1.06
Q20	93	1.00	5.00	3.37	1.13

It appears that the students’ application of compensatory speaking strategies falls into the higher frequency range based on the mean score (3.59). In other words, participants have shown some preference towards the use of compensation speaking strategies, among which Q18 scored 4.02, even higher than 4, suggesting that participants usually use this strategy, which is, “When practicing oral English, I try to explain a word that I cannot clearly express with easier vocabulary, or replace it with its synonym.” Q17 scored relatively highly as well, meaning that the samples showed a tendency to infer the meaning of an unknown word or phrase when they don’t understand.

Table 11. The use of affective speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Affective Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	5.00	3.27	0.66
Code					
Q21	93	1.00	5.00	3.59	1.03
Q22	93	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.11
Q23	93	1.00	5.00	2.87	1.21
Q24	93	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.11
Q25	93	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.18

The data presented in Table 4.6 indicates that participants possessed a neutral view of general affective speaking strategy implementation, with a mean average of 3.27. Q21 seemed to be the most popular affective strategy employed by the participants, which is to believe in oneself that he/she can do well in oral English. While Q23 scored only 2.87, at a low-medium frequency level, from which it could be concluded that Chinese college students may do not prefer to talk to others on their own initiative very much. This might be explained by the phenomenon that oral English skills are not often included in final university exams in the national Chinese English curriculum, which results in less attention being paid to oral English compared to other English skills like reading and writing (www.pep.com.cn, n.d).

Table 12. The use of social speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Social Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	4.80	3.41	0.62
Code					
Q26	93	1.00	5.00	2.89	1.17
Q27	93	1.00	5.00	3.28	1.09
Q28	93	1.00	5.00	3.27	1.10
Q29	93	1.00	5.00	3.95	0.93
Q30	93	1.00	5.00	3.66	0.96

Social speaking strategies scored 3.41 on average, the same as memory speaking strategies, which shows a certain degree of approval from the sample and therefore the participants may use social speaking strategies relatively frequently. Q29, which represented making use of eye contact, facial expressions and gestures to help express thought or emphasise speech, was the most frequently employed strategy. Furthermore, it appears that the students adopted the 'pause appropriately' strategy relatively often when needing time to generate further ideas whilst speaking in English. This is reflected in the high frequency score of Q30. These findings conflict with those of O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) study, which indicated that Asian learners showed a preference for learning a foreign language through written language rules rather than the application of social strategies. However, they are in accordance with Wharton's (2000) study, which showed a preference for the use of social strategies amongst language learners in Singapore.

4.2 Research Question 2: The relationship between the use of speaking strategies and performance in the IELTS speaking test

This section presents the findings of the second research question from the survey questionnaire, which aimed to explore the relationship between participants' use of speaking strategies and their performance in the IELTS speaking test using correlation and regression analysis with the help of SPSS Version 22.

4.2.1 The relationship between the overall use of speaking strategies and performance in the IELTS speaking test

A general impression on the relationship between the use of speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance could be got based on the table and the figure presented below.

Table 13. The overall use of speaking strategies of groups from different proficiency levels

IELTS SPEAKING TEST SCORE	N	OVERALL USE OF SPEAKING STRATEGIES
5	5	2.83
5.5	10	3.15
6	17	3.06
6.5	20	3.30
7	28	3.53
7.5	8	3.66
8	5	3.86

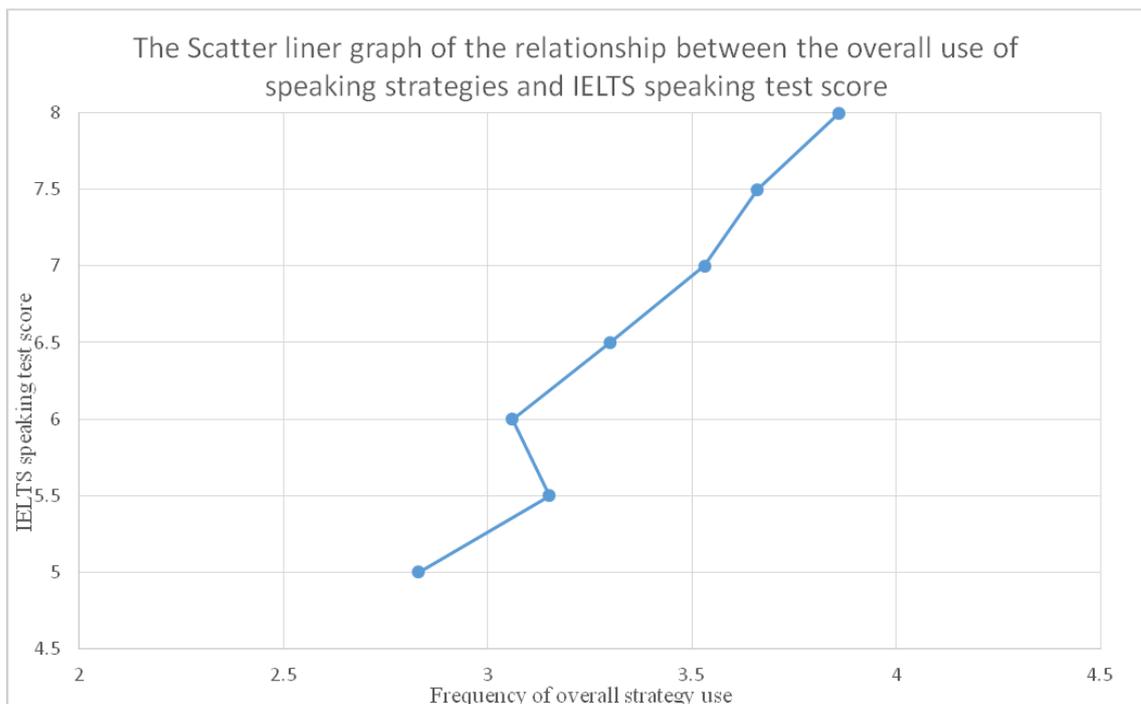


Fig. 2. The relationship between the overall use of speaking strategies and performance in the IELTS speaking test

Based on the above data presentation, it appears that in general, the more frequently use of speaking strategies, the higher IELTS speaking test score would be. Interestingly, participants who achieved an IELTS speaking test score of 5.5 generated an average frequency score of 3.06 for speaking strategy implementation; whilst those who achieved an IELTS score of 6 generated an average frequency score of 3.06 only for speaking strategy implementation. The possible reason may be that according to the rating scale (see Appendix 3), the score of 6 means effective command in general of English while 5 represents only partial command of English, which illustrates that the gap between 5 and 6 is pretty wide (see Appendix 2 and 3). Therefore participants who scored 6 may originally be better at oral English in terms of lexical resources, accuracy and fluency, regardless of their lesser strategy use, could still get a higher score than those who scored 5.5. Generally speaking, the graph suggests that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Therefore, in order to further explore the strength of the positive relationship, a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient analysis is conducted.

Table 14. The correlation between speaking strategy use and IELTS speaking test performance

		IELTS SPEAKING TEST SCORE	OVERALL USE OF SPEAKING STRATEGIES
Spearman's rho	IELTS Speaking Test Score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.650**
		N	.000
Overall use of Speaking strategies		Correlation Coefficient	.650**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.000
		N	93
		N	93

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in the above table, a positive correlation is presented by the Spearman's rho analysis. The magnitude of the positive relationship could be judged by the concrete value of the correlation coefficient of Spearman's rho. According to Qin (2004, p.238), the absolute value of the coefficient in statistics is lower than 0.20 and is called the lowest correlation, which could normally be ignored. The absolute value between 0.20 and 0.40 is defined as low correlation while anything between 0.40-0.70 is seen as cogent correlation, which means a relatively significant correlation. An absolute value ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 is high correlation, namely, very significant. In the study, the correlation between spoken English learning strategies and IELTS speaking test performance is relatively significant with an index of .650 and significance at the 0.000 level, which means that the correlation value in this study can be supposed with nearly 100% confidence. In other words, the correlation is fairly high; and the research results are assumed to be stable and reliable.

4.2.2 *The relationship between the use of speaking strategies within each subcategory and performance in the IELTS speaking test*

The following table outlines the results of a more specific and detailed analysis, which was conducted in order to further explore the relationship between the implementation of speaking strategies and subcategory-based IELTS speaking test scores.

Table 15. The correlation between each category of speaking strategy and IELTS speaking test performance

CORRELATIONS		
		VALUE
Metacognitive Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	93
Cognitive Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	93
Memory Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.521**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93
Compensation Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93
Affective Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93
Social Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.415**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the table above, it can be seen that the coefficient of correlation between the use of the six strategies and IELTS speaking test score are all greater than 0.3, of which the coefficient is even greater than 0.4 in terms of the last four strategies. The results are believed to be reliable to 99% or more of the population based on the 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the table suggests that IELTS speaking test scores are positively correlated with the use of the six speaking strategies, and especially cogently correlated with the use of memory, compensation, affective and social speaking strategies. In general, this research result is in accordance with that of Li's (2005) empirical studies, which suggested a positive relationship between the use of oral English learning strategies and oral proficiency. The revelation that the more often students apply the memory strategy, the better they will perform on the IELTS speaking test represents the strongest correlation in this study. Since these two variables have a common variation trend, this finding appears to be logical. Reasons for this tendency can be assumed because the memory strategy helps students to remember relevant knowledge of spoken English with correct skills (Oxford, 1990). Taking items belonging to memory strategy in the questionnaire for example, placing a new word into context and linking to previous knowledge can enhance students' memory of the new word because when they need to use it is a real communication situation, they can build a connection and imagination to help recall the word (Krantz, 1991, p. 101). In particular, high achievers in the speaking test benefit from continuous practice and repetition of sentence patterns that normal students cannot make by themselves (ibid). These patterns are chiefly idiomatic English, which made them more easily understood by examiners. In addition, remembering these structures could enhance the candidates' fluency in speaking, which is considered an important criterion in the assessment of IELTS speaking test as well (see Appendix 3 for detailed band descriptors). As a result, it is clear that these students can achieve higher scores. Furthermore, by a phased review of what has been previously learnt about oral English, a student can create a solid foundation for his or her oral English learning and enhance their spoken English knowledge.

Additionally, a cogent positive relationship has been revealed between IELTS speaking test score and the student's application of a compensation strategy, with correlation coefficient being 0.464. This result deserves emphasis as well. According to Karbalaei and Taji (2014, p. 91), the use of compensation strategies could help people deal with their lexical and grammatical limitations, thus making it vital in maintaining a conversation especially for ESL/EFL learners. In the questionnaire, one strategic behaviour within this category is trying to explain a word that one cannot express clearly in English with easier vocabulary, or replace it with a synonym. This seemed to be quite useful because if the speaker does not choose to explain or replace the word, he would be more likely to encounter speech difficulties, which will definitely influence the candidate's speaking fluency and thus may have a negative effect on the final score he will get (see Appendix 3 on Page 75). However, it is interesting that this result seemed to be contradictory with that of Fewell's (2010) research, which indicated that participants from a lower language proficiency group used more compensation learning strategies. This may be due to the different education

contexts, which would definitely influence the choice of strategies. Another potential explanation for this finding is that whilst the present study only aimed to explore speaking proficiency, Fewell's research adopted a more generalised perspective of language skill and language learning strategy application.

Out of the six strategies, cognitive strategies showed the least favourable relationship with the IELTS speaking test score, although O'Malley and Chamot (1990) pointed out that cognitive skill is considered to be the most important in language ability development. This may be explained by the skill focus; cognitive strategies involve practising, creating input and output structures and reasoning (Oxford, 1990), which might have a more significant effect on learner's other language skills such as writing, which pays much more attention on analysing as well as logic.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

The major findings of this empirical study, the significant correlations and linear relationship between the use of speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance, may provide evidence that the use of speaking strategies is in relation to the IELTS speaking test performance, or L2 oral proficiency, which might suggest there are some pedagogical implications in oral English learning and teaching.

The findings outlined in this paper indicate that if Chinese students wish to enhance their English speaking skills, they should consciously implement appropriate speaking strategies. From the findings, it can be seen that participants who scored higher in the IELTS speaking test use memory, compensation, affective and social speaking strategies more frequently than others at a significant level, thus learners may try to employ these strategies more to improve their IELTS speaking test score. Item 12 belonging to memory strategy shows a statistical significance among the higher and lower achievers in the IELTS speaking test, from which it could be recommended that periodical reviews of previously gained knowledge is necessary (Gan et al., 2004). In terms of affective speaking strategies, students may need to challenge themselves to take responsibility for their own learning. For instance, the engagement in self-talk to simulate the real exam situation could help to lower their anxiety when they take the exam in actual. Moreover, it might be impossible for teachers to use all kinds of strategies in class due to time limitation, so they could pay more attention to apply these four in class to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

5. Conclusion

To begin with, this chapter summarizes the major findings and discussions of this study. It then discusses the limitations of this research and provides recommendations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings and Discussions This empirical study examined speaking strategies employed by some Chinese college students and explored the relationship between participants' use of speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance, which is the aim of this research. With the help of scientific statistical techniques, the following findings that could answer the research questions could be found from the collected data:

a) The means of participants' use of all the six speaking strategies have surpassed the average coefficient 3, which shows that students' use of speaking strategies belong to the range of medium frequency. However, it is reported from the data that the mean of compensation strategies is 3.59, showing the use of it falls in the higher frequency level. In general, the use of speaking strategies ordered in terms of frequency from the highest to the lowest is ranked as follows:

Compensation speaking strategies > Memory speaking strategies >= Social speaking strategies > Affective speaking strategies > Metacognitive speaking strategies > Cognitive speaking strategies

In terms of each subcategories, the means of Q9^{5.2} (cognitive speaking strategies), Q11^{5.3} (memory speaking strategies), Q13^{5.4} (memory speaking strategies), Q17^{5.5} (compensation speaking strategies),

^{5.2} Q9 When I don't know how to express something in English, I will try translating from Chinese which has the similar meaning to English.

^{5.3} Q11 I first memorise the pronunciation of a new word when learning it.

Q18^{5.6} (compensation speaking strategies), Q21^{5.7} (affective speaking strategies), Q29^{5.8} (social speaking strategies), and Q30^{5.9} (social speaking strategies) are all above 3.5, showing that Chinese college students tend to use these strategies more frequently compared with others.

b) Firstly, with an index of 0.650 and the significance at the 0.000 level, the correlation between speaking strategies and performance on IELTS speaking test is relatively high. Secondly, as for subcategories of strategies, the correlational coefficients between memory speaking strategies, compensation speaking strategies, affective speaking strategies and social speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance are all higher than 0.4 statistically significant, indicating a cogent correlation (Qin, 2004).

The pedagogical implications of this research study are that students could consciously employ memory, compensation social and affective speaking strategies while preparing for IELTS speaking test, which would be possible for them to get a more satisfactory score. On the other hand, language teachers could not involve all of the learning strategies in class as a result of time limitation and individual learner differences, thus making teachers should select more effective strategies to introduce. Therefore, the instruction of the above 4 speaking strategies seem to be important in strategy training in class for oral English teachers.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Although much effort has been to conduct this research, there still exist a number of limitations that may have a negative effect on the research results and findings. To begin with, the sample of participants is confined to a limited size, which might result in that the findings may not represent the whole undergraduate IELTS takers in China. Secondly, the items in the questionnaire might not fully reflect the participants' use of a particular type of speaking strategy, for only 5 items were involved in each subcategory. Thirdly, as the only measuring tool to judge oral proficiency level, the performance on IELTS speaking test could only approximate the participant's real level of spoken English, which may make the results not so reliable to some extent. At last, the data collected from the participants was only analysed in a quantitative way, which means that the scientific statistics could only present the result instead of giving further analysis such as explaining the reasons. Thus further research could be conducted in a qualitative or mixed-method paradigm, making it more possible to provide explanations for the results. Despite this research, there still exists a gap on the investigation on the speaking strategies employed by Chinese language learners and numerous topics could be dug out and researched on.

In conclusion, this research study found a positive relationship between participants' application of speaking strategies and their performance on IELTS speaking test. To be more specific, memory and compensation speaking strategies are the most influential on IELTS speaking test scores, and students who got scored above 7 showed a preference for using memory, compensation and affective speaking strategies, which may provide students and teachers with learning and teaching suggestions. However, there's still a lack of research in this topic regarding further explanations, which could be focus of future research.

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^{5.4} Q13 I will place a new word in a meaningful context like a sentence or conversation for easier memorisation.

^{5.5} Q17 I will infer or guess the meaning of a new word or phrase I don't understand.

^{5.6} Q18 I try to explain a word that I cannot clearly express in English with easier vocabulary, or replace it with a synonym.

^{5.7} Q21 I believe in myself that I can do well in oral English.

^{5.8} Q29 I use eye contact, facial expression and motions to help express thought or emphasise speech.

^{5.9} Q30 While talking in English, I may pause appropriately to generate further expressions or ideas.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The English Version of the Questionnaire

A Questionnaire on speaking strategies of English learning

Basic information

Which university did you study in China? _____

IELTS Speaking Test Score 4 4.5 5 5.5 6 6.5 7 7.5 8 8.5 9

This questionnaire is designed for my research on the relationship between the use of speaking strategies for English learning for IELTS speaking test preparation and the performance on IELTS speaking test only. The questions below have no standard answers and they will not influence your future studying, so please feel free to fill in the questionnaire according to your actual learning experience instead of your opinions. Please choose one option among 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 according to how the statement suits your actual condition when you **prepare for IELTS speaking test**.

- ① = this statement never or hardly suits me.
- ② = this statement does not usually suit me.
- ③ = this statement sometimes suits me.
- ④ = this statement usually suits me.
- ⑤ = this statement always suits me.

Metacognitive Speaking Strategy

1. I would pay attention when someone near me talks in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

2. I will use mental language preparation and organization prior to speaking in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

3. I will correct myself after I realize I've spoken incorrectly.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

4. I set up learning goals for oral English learning aimed at the three speaking tasks in IELTS.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

5. I periodically summarize the progress I've made, find out problems and try to solve them.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

Cognitive Speaking Strategy

6. While talking about something in Chinese, I would think about how to say it in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

7. When others speak English, I would try to repeat in a low voice.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

8. I practice oral English by listening to English songs or watching English movies.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

9. When I don't know how to express something in English, I will try translating from Chinese which has the similar meaning to English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

10. I practice oral English by using structured formulas and patterns to enhance understanding and fluency.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Memory Speaking Strategy

11. I memorise the pronunciation of a new word first when learning it.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

12. I periodically review what I've previously learnt about oral English in order to enhance memorization.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

13. While learning a new word, I will place it in a meaningful context like a sentence or conversation for easier memorization.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

14. While learning new words or phrases, I could associate them with what have been learnt before.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

15. I try to group the new words and phrases according to their functions or meanings for easier memorization.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Compensation Speaking Strategy

16. I try to adjust the topic for the conversation or discussion conducted in English when I feel it difficult to express.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

17. I will infer or guess the meaning of a new word or phrase I don't understand.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

18. When practicing oral English, I try to explain a word that I cannot clearly express in English with easier vocabulary, or replace it with a synonym.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

19. When I don't understand others, I would ask them to slow down the speed or repeat what they said.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

20. I will infer what others will say next according to what they've said earlier.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Affective Speaking Strategy

21. I believe in myself that I can do well in oral English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

22. I try to control my tension like taking a deep breath before talking to others in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

23. I try to talk with others in English on my own initiative.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

24. I feel free to speak English even if I might make mistakes.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

25. I try to engage in self-talk to simulate the exam situation.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Communicative Speaking Strategy

26. I would request others to help me correct my mistakes when talking in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

27. When I get stuck or halting while speaking English, I would repeat the last word I've said or restart the sentence.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

28. I would seek the listener's confirmation after talking about something in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

29. I use eye contact, facial expression and motions to help express thought or emphasize speech.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

30. While talking to others in English, I may pause at appropriately to generate further expressions or ideas.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Appendix 2

IELTS 9-Band Scale

(Selected from http://www.ielts.org/PDF/Guide_Edu-%20Inst_Gov_2013.pdf, retrieved on July, 24, 2015)

IELTS 9-band scale

There is no pass or fail in IELTS. Rather, all test results are reported on a clear 9-band scale (from 1, the lowest, to 9, the highest). The scale has remained consistent and acquired currency around the world over the past three decades.

The IELTS test provides an accurate picture of a candidate's language skills at a certain point in time. Language ability diminishes over time if not actively maintained.

Candidates receive an overall band score as well as individual scores for each test component (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking).

Read more about band scores, examiners, marking and assessment criteria at www.ielts.org/researchers

9	Expert user	Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
8	Very good user	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.
7	Good user	Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

6	Competent user	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
5	Modest user	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
4	Limited user	Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
3	Extremely limited user	Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
2	Intermittent user	No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
1	Non user	Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
0	Did not attempt the test	No assessable information provided.

Appendix 3

The Band Descriptors of IELTS Speaking Test (Public Version)

(Selected from http://www.ielts.org/pdf/Speaking%20Band%20descriptors_2014.pdf, retrieved on July, 24, 2015)



SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety sustains flexible use of features throughout is effortless to understand
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully, with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures flexibly produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/phon-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of pronunciation features sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of pronunciation features attempts to control features but lapses are frequent mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks with long pauses has limited ability to link simple sentences gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pauses lengthily before most words little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only produces isolated words or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no communication possible no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend 			



RECENSIONES / REVIEWS

Gómez, M.E., Huertas, C.A. & Serrano Rodríguez, R. (2016). *Educación bilingüe: programas y metodología*. Granada: Atrio, 168 pp. ISBN: 9788415275497

En el libro *Educación bilingüe: programas y metodología* encontramos dos grandes áreas temáticas con un claro denominador común: el bilingüismo y sus aplicaciones educativas. Tanto desde el punto de vista teórico que se aprecia en la primera mitad del libro como desde los programas propuestos en el segundo bloque, de carácter más práctico, bien es cierto este compendio de capítulos aporta una visión enriquecedora de lo que supone la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas en el ámbito educativo.

En primer lugar, en el prólogo realizado por Johnstone, Director de la Evaluación del Proyecto Nacional de Educación Bilingüe en España, se pone de manifiesto la necesidad de aprendizaje sobre los aspectos relativos a la educación bilingüe. Se pone de relieve que las metodologías para la enseñanza de segundas lenguas se presenten como un elemento enriquecedor, integrador de culturas y basado en la experiencia, de manera que nos guíen hacia un uso contextualizado de los elementos que se adquieren. De este modo, el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua aportará elementos a la identidad del alumno que lo está interiorizando.

En el primer capítulo, Amor y González hacen referencia a la importancia de la competencia bilingüe en la formación del profesorado, poniendo de manifiesto en sus conclusiones que la formación en segundas lenguas debe integrar teoría y práctica para una interiorización eficaz de las mismas.

Seguidamente, Díaz, Alarcón y Tagle desarrollan un estudio de caso en el que describen las creencias sobre la función del docente en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés, es decir, la percepción que tienen los futuros maestros de inglés acerca del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje que deben llevar a cabo. A través del análisis de las metáforas propuestas para la recogida de datos, estos autores concluyen que las creencias intervienen en la conducta y forma de enseñar de los docentes, así como en sus decisiones y su forma de llevar a cabo la metodología.

Larrea, en el tercer capítulo, pone de manifiesto un aspecto del bilingüismo que suele pasar más desapercibido: el conocimiento de la cultura de la lengua que estamos aprendiendo. Indica que, si bien existen descriptores graduales para cada nivel de aprendizaje de la lengua, no se han establecido del mismo modo para el conocimiento de la cultura de referencia en dicha materia.

En el cuarto capítulo encontramos un trabajo que, centrado en la lengua española, señala aspectos tan importantes como la entonación, la fluidez y el silencio en la lengua oral. Estos elementos suelen causar dificultades en la enseñanza de la lengua, por lo que Luengo propone la investigación de la variación de entonación en el discurso oral diferenciándola de la lectura oral, entre otros aspectos.

Martín expone algunas reflexiones sobre el bilingüismo en relación con la didáctica de la lengua, analizando diferentes perspectivas didácticas (por ejemplo, la metodología CLIL). A raíz de este análisis, se encuentran riesgos como la pérdida de objetivos lingüísticos que puede darse debido a la enseñanza naturalizada que se da en las aulas que siguen determinadas metodologías. Por su parte, en el capítulo 6, Mira refleja las expectativas y la realidad del estado actual del aprendizaje simultáneo de lenguas en la formación de traductores e intérpretes, ya que el alumnado de estas titulaciones debe adquirir unas competencias específicas en cuanto a las lenguas.

A continuación, Outón presenta la adaptación de un instrumento para diagnosticar la dislexia en catalán, realizando la validación del mismo a través de una muestra representativa de la población catalana que sugiere la importancia de la adaptación al lenguaje, en este caso concreto para poder diagnosticar las posibles alteraciones que puedan darse.

Mientras que Palomares y Olivares ponen de manifiesto la importancia de la universalización de la divulgación de la ciencia, que se da en lengua inglesa, y los retos que supone para el alumnado de titulaciones superiores (Máster y Doctorado), determinando la importancia del uso del inglés como segunda lengua necesaria para avanzar en los conocimientos de interés para cada ámbito; a continuación Pérez desarrolla las competencias claves para una intervención efectiva siguiendo la metodología CLIL y clasificándolas en torno a dos dimensiones: metodológicas y lingüísticas. Del mismo

modo, lleva a cabo una aproximación a las dificultades que puede tener el profesorado para llevar a cabo esta metodología. En esta línea, Pérez, Solbes, Ávila y Steele se basan en la misma metodología relacionándola con los conceptos de creatividad e inteligencias múltiples, a través del trabajo con alumnos de dos áreas impartidas en inglés en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, lo que dota a esta metodología de aprendizaje significativo. Además, Palomo analiza las iniciativas que se han tomado en cuanto al empleo de esta metodología por parte de las instituciones, en este caso, la Junta de Andalucía.

Para cerrar la primera parte de este libro, Raigón hace un repaso del estado actual de la educación bilingüe más allá de nuestras fronteras, definiendo las diferencias que se dan en distintos países con relación a lo que entendemos por bilingüismo en España.

En la segunda parte del libro se exponen diferentes programas bilingües, como los desarrollados por Arauzo-Azofra, Salas-Morera, Estévez y Luque en asignaturas de informática o los propuestos por Carrasco, Valero, Posada, Pérez y García-Gimeno en el Grado bilingüe de Ciencia y Tecnología de los Alimentos. En ambos trabajos se concluye enfatizando el éxito de la metodología empleada, si bien indican que es adecuado ajustarse a la voluntariedad de participación en los mismos por parte del alumnado. Del mismo modo, Romero-Salguero, Esquivel, López, Mora, Ruiz y Jiménez-Sanchidrián exponen la implantación del bilingüismo en asignaturas de ciencias experimentales, concluyendo la importancia de esta decisión como herramienta para el aprendizaje del alumnado.

García y Ruiz, y Hilinger y Jiménez exponen en sus trabajos experiencias relacionadas con el bilingüismo y la formación inicial del profesorado, en las universidades de Castilla La Mancha y Córdoba, respectivamente. Ambos trabajos concluyen indicando lo positivo de esta experiencia, que aporta madurez y visión de futuro al alumnado y que, como todo en los comienzos, presenta algunos elementos susceptibles de mejora.

Por otra parte, en lo referente al entrenamiento o formación docente desde el currículum oficial, se abordan los trabajos de Martínez y Martínez, que analizan el proyecto lingüístico de centro y el currículum integrado de las lenguas como elementos de fomento de plurilingüismo, así como las aportaciones del gobierno andaluz en materia de formación docente. Del mismo modo, Pascual y Díaz realizan un trabajo análogo trasladando estos aspectos a la etapa de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria en Asturias.

Otro elemento destacable en este bloque es el referido a la evaluación de los programas bilingües, al que hacen referencia los trabajos de Roldán (que evalúa estos programas a nivel de Secundaria) y Santos (que evalúa los programas de actualización lingüística dirigidos a los docentes), y que determinan la necesidad real de estos programas teniendo en cuenta los riesgos que puedan entrañar.

Cierran este bloque dos trabajos: una investigación basada en el estudio comparativo entre dos modelos de enseñanza bilingüe (inmersión y bilingüismo), desarrollada por Velasco, y las sugerencias propuestas por Witchalls para lograr un ambiente inclusivo y de cohesión en aulas multiculturales y bilingües.

En este libro se reflejan los resultados de la realidad plurilingüe en distintos ámbitos educativos, así como diversas estrategias y herramientas metodológicas que pueden ser de gran utilidad para el lector. La organización en dos partes, aunando metodología o trabajos más teóricos en una parte y aspectos prácticos en la segunda, no solo ayuda al lector a ubicarse en un determinado planteamiento, sino que permite observar la interrelación que se da entre las diferentes propuestas presentadas, que tienen como hilo conductor la importancia, mejora y calidad de la educación bilingüe.

[Rocío Luque González]

Amor, M. I., Luengo-Almena, J.L. & Martínez, M. (eds.) (2016). *Educación intercultural: metodología de aprendizaje en contextos bilingües*. Granada: Editorial Atrio, 164 pp. ISBN: 9788415275503

El volumen que aquí nos ocupa en estas páginas compila una rica variada colección de artículos agrupados en dos bloques temáticos diferenciados: el primero de ellos se presenta bajo la denominación de *Educación intercultural*, mientras que el segundo recoge aquellos capítulos más estrechamente relacionados con *Enseñanza y aprendizaje en contextos bilingües*. Amén de estos dos bloques, el libro comienza con un prólogo cuyo objetivo es dar coherencia y cohesión al conjunto de trabajos que le siguen, haciendo una apuesta firme en el propósito de que “*nuestra educación debe ser multilingüística y pluricultural*” (p. 12). Se encuentra el lector en sus manos, por tanto, con un volumen homogéneo -en sus líneas temáticas generales-, pero muy heterogéneo, casi caleidoscópico, en su aproximación a los ejes temáticos: intercultural y educación bilingüe.

En el primer bloque de artículos se abordan temáticas tan variadas como, por ejemplo, la integración lingüística del alumnado inmigrante en los centros educativos, el funcionamiento de las ATAL (Aulas Temporales de Adaptación Lingüística) y la experiencia acumulada a lo largo de los años, desde su puesta en marcha en los años noventa con el objetivo de proporcionar una educación inclusiva para el alumno migrante. También se describe el diseño de materiales bilingües (en lengua inglesa) e interculturales para el alumnado de educación infantil (0-6 años), inspirados por la metodología AICLE y con un patrón bien definido de (a) acciones previas, (b) diseño de material, propiamente dicho, y (c) evaluación. Así mismo, las competencias interculturales y bilingües en la formación inicial del profesorado se convierten en el foco de atención del contenido de esta sección del libro a través de un estudio realizado con 239 sujetos (estudiantes de Ciencias de la Educación): este trabajo concluye afirmando que aquellos estudiantes que han participado en algún tipo de movilidad a lo largo de su formación universitaria presentan mayores valores de apreciación de las competencias relacionadas con el uso de la lengua extranjera, el trabajo en un contexto internacional o el conocimiento de otras culturas. El último capítulo de este bloque se cierra con el papel que puede jugar la asignatura de Filosofía en el desarrollo de una educación intercultural, por medio de la aplicación del modelo *DUA* (diseño universal para el aprendizaje), ya desarrollado en varios sistemas educativos, que se caracteriza por su flexibilidad e inclusividad.

En la segunda parte del libro se presentan trabajos que abundan en cuestiones como las estrategias utilizadas por el profesorado de Educación Física bilingüe, valorando el alumnado de ESO participante en el estudio el uso de técnicas de coevaluación y la aplicabilidad del aprendizaje del léxico concreto de la materia en una segunda lengua en un contexto tan dinámico y práctico como es la asignatura de EF. La competencia en lengua inglesa de los futuros maestros es también motivo de análisis y preocupación, en tanto en cuanto se detecta un desfase negativo en el desarrollo de las destrezas orales con respecto a las escritas, apostándose por el uso de la *tutoría piramidal* como recurso metodológico que puede favorecer la mejora en el uso de estas destrezas. En este mismo bloque, un novedoso trabajo discute la aportación que hace al desarrollo de una sociedad e individuos bilingües el uso de *big data*, y más en particular los mensajes escritos en español e inglés por deportistas españoles de élite en la aplicación *Twitter*. Así mismo, para concluir, otro interesante estudio de diseño cuasi-experimental demuestra como la competencia lectora puede mejorar entre el alumnado de 7 y 8 años, por medio de ejercicios de lectura compartida entre iguales.

No cabe duda que la limitación espacial propia de una reseña obliga a una sucinta revisión de los contenidos de cualquier libro. Esta brevedad no menoscaba nuestra invitación a su consulta y lectura, recomendada en tanto en cuenta la variedad y riqueza de sus contenidos abren ventanas al conocimiento, proporcionando nuevas perspectivas desde las que percibir el fenómeno bilingüe e intercultural y apuntando nuevas futuras líneas de investigación que den continuidad y contraten los trabajos aquí presentados.

[Antonio R. Roldán Tapia]

