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Contents

Special Issue on Selected Best Papers of the XI International SEDLL Conference

Guest Editorial

It is an increasingly acknowledged fact that we are currently living a time of immense upheaval in higher education. On both sides of the Atlantic, the same forces, similar challenges, and practically identical responses are shaping tertiary language education. In Europe, the substantial changes which language teaching is currently undergoing at the post-secondary stage are being channeled via the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). For many (e.g. Benito & Cruz 2007; Blanco 2009; Poblete Ruiz 2006), the cornerstone of the transformation being effected by the EHEA is to be found in the application of competency-based teaching. As Rylatt & Lohan (1997: 18) rightly foresaw, "It can confidently be said, as we enter a new millennium, that the business of improving learning competencies and skills will remain one of the world's fastest growing industries and priorities". In our specific European university context, the introduction of the concept of competencies has been considered "one of the major changes in university education in Europe in the last five years" (Pennock-Speck in press).

Despite a progressive and firm acceptance of this concept in academic and professional contexts (Benito & Cruz 2007), its concretion is still vague, given the complex and multifaceted nature of the term. Important questions thus continue to arise regarding the definition, methodology, and evaluation of competencies, largely due to the fact that we are still sorely lacking in empirically-validated proposals for their implementation and assessment, an area which is in urgent need of research (Pérez Cañado (coord.) 2010). It is thus the precise moment to offer such practical specifications to integrate, teach, and evaluate a competency-based model in language teaching, as the newly designed language degrees are starting to be implemented across Europe. This is precisely the aim of the present monographic volume, which comprises a selection of articles from the *XI International SEDLL Conference* on the preparation for and development of competency-based language teaching.

The first section of the volume centers on the use of digital competence as a vehicle for developing other generic and subject-specific competencies and for expediting linguistic competence acquisition. In this initial part, **Andrés Canga Alonso** reports on an interesting experience incorporating the use of e-mail tandem to promote five key competencies in a group of Spanish High School students with learning difficulties. This two-year study matched Spanish 4th- and 5th-graders of Compulsory Secondary Education with students from a private boarding school in West Sussex. After undertaking a set of well-structured tasks in both Spanish and English, the results evince that general competence development was indeed promoted vis-à-vis communication in the mother tongue and foreign language, learning to learn, and digital competence. However, the results as regards intercultural competence were not as auspicious, an avenue of research which the author suggests pursuing in future investigations.

María Inés Casado Antoniazzi, in turn, presents ORALEX, a computer-assisted system for formal aural-oral assessment of English language competence. It represents a major breakthrough in communicative language testing, as it constitutes an innovative, cost-effective, and user-friendly tool which allows quantitative and qualitative evaluation of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discursive competence via a vast gamut of communicative activities, whilst concomitantly favoring student ownership in the testing process. The author showcases sample exercises, expounds on the most conspicuous traits of ORALEX, and points forward to future fine-tuning of the program and research on its effects.

Jesús García Laborda also presents an assessment project entitled PAULEX, which deals with the design and validation of a computer-based university entrance examination for Spanish universities including measurement of both oral and written competence through tasks on the four communicative skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). After an initial overview of computer-based language testing, in which the author underlines the lack of research in this area in Spain, he fleshes out the design and implementation of the project as regards technological advances, attitudinal observations and results. The article concludes by endorsing the academic feasibility of the project, although the author also pinpoints limitations, such as the need of a greater governmental support and professional training, and the limited number of projects of this type in Spain.

Another project with the title of I-AGENT (Intelligent Adaptive Generic English Tutor) is the object of study of the article by **Pilar Rodriguez Arancón**, **Elena Bárcena** and **Jorge Arús**. This is an on-going endeavor which blends individual and collaborative work using innovative ICALL software combined with face-to-face instruction, with a view to addressing the limitations of computer-based assessment in relation to open-ended tasks and thus fostering mutual reinforcement of linguistic aspects in a blended learning scenario. A detailed sample unit is offered, which presents a communicative and intercultural focus on language.

The subsequent three articles focus on competence development in a tertiary setting. **Aintzane Etxebarría**, **Urtza Garay**, and **Asier Romero** foreground the significance of developing social strategies in the student-centered higher education classroom. After framing this type of strategy against the backdrop of some of the most acknowledged classifications, the authors focus on its development via the course management system Moodle. They report on a qualitative instance of classroom research on the use of Moodle tools to work on *asking*, *cooperating*, *empathizing*, and

practicing. The outcomes point to the scarce use of this web-based environment to develop such social strategies in language learning. This leads the researchers to suggest an original proposal of how to employ Moodle instruments to enhance social strategies within L2 learning at university level and to underscore the desirability of conducting further research into their efficiency at this tertiary stage.

Dolores Fernández Martínez then sets forth an original and well-grounded framework to develop a central generic competence in Higher Education students –critical thinking– via discourse analysis. She takes critical discourse analysis (CDA) from theory to practice by laying out a three-pronged proposal which walks the reader from the basic parameters of study involved in discourse analysis to the tools it employs and the hands-on analysis of texts. The practical examples provided of CDA via slogans, ads, songs, interviews, or e-mails constitute invaluable instances of how to encourage critical analysis of social situations and cultural aspects which acquire a particularly sharp relief in the competency-based language teaching scenario propounded by Bologna.

Finally, *Roberto Martínez Mateo* describes an experience which integrates some of the latest student-centered methodologies –CLT, TBLT, CALL– to develop oral-aural skills at tertiary level. Framed against the backdrop of the European Higher Education Area and its promotion of a meaning-based, action-oriented, and dialogic pedagogy, the experiment is unraveled from its rationale and preliminary stages, to its results and effects. A BBC-controlled site is employed to hone the oral kills of university freshmen and sophomores with largely positive outcomes in terms of aural-oral performance, self-directed and lifelong learning, and connection to real-world contexts, something which, the author concludes, makes a compelling case for the replication of similar projects on a larger scale.

A third section includes a miscellany of aspects from a competency-based perspective. *José Cuadrado-Moreno* and *María Reyes-Fernández* present a teacher training program whose aim was to train a secondary education teacher of English to identify common reference levels in written production activities. The study comprises an initial phase of familiarization with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR); a second phase in which the participant assessed the written production competence of a sample of year-9 pupils of English; and a final third phase in which several reliability coefficients were obtained. The quantitative analysis evinced that the proposed training program can be adopted as a model to familiarize secondary education teachers with the CEFR, to teach them how to identify pupils' common reference level in written production activities, and to obtain reliable scores when rating, notwithstanding the limitation of the study to a single trainee.

Ana S. Jovanovic and *Gorana G. Zecevic Krneta* look into abductive reasoning and second language learning and present the results of a quantitative study on the processes that motivate initial hypothesis-making and their possible repercussions for the L2 instruction in a group of Serbian university freshmen. The study reports on the use of word inference strategies used by students –based on their L1 knowledge and that of other foreign languages– and the necessity to develop them from the early stages of language learning.

The last two articles show a predominantly linguistic focus. *Päivi Pietilä* examines the relationship between lexical and syntactic competences of advanced Finnish learners of English in a translation activity from L1 Finnish into L2 English. The results indicate that lexical and syntactic competence do not seem to develop in parallel, for even the best candidates with almost faultless syntax produced a considerable number of lexical errors. According to the author, this ultimately proves the necessity of introducing teaching techniques which could help to strengthen the lexical competence of students during their studies, and, in turn, the desirability of striking a more appropriate balance between the fluency triggered by communicative language teaching and linguistic accuracy, of which lexical precision is just an example.

Finally, the article by *Roberto Mayoral Hernández* deals with Spanish as a foreign language, and more precisely with the teaching of subject position, which may either precede of follow the verb. Given the dissimilarity with regard to other foreign languages in which the subject has a fixed position in the sentence (as is the case of English), the author contends that the issue is not appropriately addressed in many textbooks and dictionaries, and hence proposes a detailed study of three structures that are frequently associated with postverbal subjects: verbs of psychological affection, the impersonal passive, and unaccusative verbs. Several communicative task-based activities are also presented, in order to ensure that L2 learners of Spanish are able to recognize postverbal subjects as a common phenomenon.

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Promoting Basic Competences in EFL Instruction by Means of E-mail Tandem

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Abstract—This paper intends to show how e-mail tandem (Brammerts & Little, 1996; Gläsmann & Calvert, 2001; Stickler & Lewis, 2003) has been integrated in the English curriculum of a *Diversificación Curricular* Programme (3rd and 4th grade of Secondary Education) to promote linguistic, intercultural, learning to learn and digital competences (LOE, 2006). The first part will be devoted to explaining the main characteristics of e-mail tandem and its close relationship with the aforementioned four competences, as well as with the Common European Framework of Reference (2001) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) (Little & Perclová, 2001; Cassany, 2006). The second part will deal with the main characteristics of the students involved and the instruments used to practise the linguistic, intercultural, learning to learn, and digital competences, i.e. e-mails written by the students, learning diaries (Nunan, 1992; Otto, 2003; Oxford, 1996) and reflections on the ELP (Palacios, 2006). Finally, examples of student performance will be presented, together with the main conclusions derived from their work, including some suggestions for further research.

Index Terms—key competences, e-mail tandem, ELP, learning diaries

I. INTRODUCTION

From the last decades of the 20th century, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament have been concerned with the promotion of lifelong language learning. Thus, Recommendation 2005(0021) was passed as a framework to promote eight key competences to favour this kind of learning, i.e. communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence, learning to learn, intercultural and social competences, entrepreneurship and cultural expression. Competences are defined as "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context" (*Commission of the European Communities*, 2005: 13), being key competences those which all individuals need "for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment" (2005: 13). Concurrently, the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (2001) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) were developed in order to make teachers, learners and teacher trainers aware of the importance not only of learning a language, but also of the cultural aspects implied in this learning (Byram, 1997), so that students can develop their inter/multicultural competence by establishing relationships between previously acquired grammatical structures and vocabulary. Similarly, the ELP is aimed at encouraging students to reflect on their own learning (Cassany, 2006; Little & Perclová, 2001), and, therefore, become more autonomous learners who progressively "take charge of their own learning" (Holec, 1981: 3).

This paper will focus on the way communication in the mother tongue, communication in a foreign language, intercultural, learning to learn and digital competences were integrated in the English curriculum within a *Diversificación Curricular* Programme (3rd and 4th Grade of Secondary Education) in a project based on e-mail-tandem (Brammerts & Little, 1996; Gläsmann & Calvert, 2001; Stickler & Lewis, 2003), following the guidelines provided by the Spanish Law of Education (2/2006, May 3)[1] and adapted to the context of *Principado de Asturias*, a region located in the north of Spain (*Decreto* 74/2007, June 14).[2]

Key Competences and E-mail Tandem

The introduction of basic competences in the curriculum, as stated in *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria: Decreto de ordenación y currículo* (2007: 45), aims, on the one hand, at integrating different kinds of learning to establish a relationship between the contents which are learnt in the different subjects students are taught in their formal instruction, and, on the other hand, to effectively use them in different contexts and situations.

E-mail tandem aims at making students with different mother tongues work together using different tasks, so that they can improve their linguistic competence in the foreign language, get to know their partner better, and benefit from their partner's knowledge and experience (Brammerts, 2003: 28-29). Key competence *communication in a foreign language* is closely related to this approach to language learning since it is based on the ability to understand, express

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[1] More information about this regulation is available at http://www.boe.es/aeboe/consultas/bases_datos/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2006-7899 (accessed 1/10/2011).
[2] More information about this regulation can be found at http://www.educastur.es/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=997&Itemid=152 (accessed 1/10/2011).

and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in written form in the contexts of education and leisure (*Commission of the European Communities*, 2005: 14).

E-mail tandem is based on two main principles: reciprocity and autonomy. Reciprocity means that "each partner brings certain skills and abilities which the other partner seeks to acquire and in which both partners support each other in their learning in such a way that both benefit as much as possible from their working together" (Brammerts, 2003: 29). Thus, it helps equality between both tandem partners because they must help each other in order to achieve the learning goals they have previously set. To achieve these goals, tandem partners should use both their native language and the target language in each message and the ideal situation is when they write half of the message in each language. Therefore, students should be able to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in their mother tongue in order to interact with their tandem partners, so they are putting in practice their skills and abilities referring to another key competence, i.e. *communication in the mother tongue* (*Commission of the European Communities*, 2005: 13).

Using both languages also implies that this method has a lot to do with *learning from the partner's model*, which has five further implications. Firstly, *learning from a partner's clarifications, explanations and information* (Brammerts & Calvert, 2003: 52). Learning is also achieved by *dialogue*. The dialogue will benefit from the fact that both learners are interested in the language and culture of their partners, have previous knowledge of it and can learn from comparisons.

Secondly, *learning forms of utterance and behaviour from a partner*, which "involves […] productive [language] use by learners" (Brammerts & Calvert, 2003: 52). This process has a lot in common with intercultural learning because there is not only the need to be grammatically and phonologically competent in the L2, but also to know the context and the cultural connotations that may be implied in the words that are uttered or written. Thanks to this approach, students belonging to different societies and countries establish intercultural communication with their partners (Müller-Hartmann, 2006; O'Dowd, 2003, 2006; Stickler & Lewis, 2003). This idea of intercultural communication is quite remarkable and it was promoted within the *Common European Framework of Reference,* which understands foreign language learning as an active process in which learners should not only acquire the grammatical and phonological features of an L2, but should also be aware of the way people live and behave in the target language community. Therefore, e-mail tandem is supposed to raise an awareness of the intercultural and social competences, as it will be shown with students' work in the third section of this paper.

The third implication when learning from the partner is *learning from the partner's corrections*, as partners "must state clearly what should be corrected in what way and at what time, and if necessary, give hints to their partner" (Brammerts & Calvert, 2003: 53).

Learning from the partner's model also entails self-reflection and mutual collaboration between tandem partners. On the one hand, self-reflection implies reflection upon their own native language, mainly when learners have to answer their partners' questions or doubts, and upon the target language, whenever they have to use it as a means of communication. These two aspects are closely linked to the second principle of e-mail tandem: autonomy, which implies that both partners are responsible for their own learning, so they decide "*what* they want to learn, *how* and *when*, and what sort of help they need from their partner" (Brammerts & Calvert, 2003: 29). Thus, key competence *learning to learn* resembles this second principle, since

Individuals should be able to organise their own learning […] [This] competence includes awareness of one's own learning process and needs […] Learning to learn engages learners to build upon prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts. (*Commission of the European Communities*, 2005: 16).

Learning to learn is also related to the views some scholars have on autonomy in foreign language learning (Benson 1996, 2001; Little, 1991, 1999; Nunan, 1992), as they understand it as mutual collaboration among students with a view to improving their linguistic competence in the target language. These authors claim that learning is achieved when there is a strong relationship between the structures learned by the students and their use in connected speech.

On the other hand, tandem language learning has a lot to do with *collaborative language learning*. This type of learning takes place when two people share the idea of improving their communicative competence in the target language, and establish a *negotiation* to reach an agreement on how they will deal with the tasks they have to face together. Accordingly, learners need to reflect on their learning process as a previous step to becoming autonomous language learners (Little, 1991: 45). Otto suggested the introduction of learning diaries to promote this reflection on the learning process, since "a specific tandem diary could contain the ideas and comments of both learners concerning the reciprocity principle and the way they work together" (2003: 89). Furthermore, learning diaries are important introspective tools which help learners "gain confidence, make sense of difficult material, and generate original insights" (Nunan, 1992: 120), and they are also excellent sources for self-assessment since they are "excellent sources for the exploration of affective, social and cognitive variables" (Oxford *et al.*, 1996: 21).

E-mail becomes the means by which partners get in touch and exchange views and information. Through their partners' e-mails, students come closer to the language and culture of the target language community and this fact could make them aware of the similarities and differences between the native and the target language, so they could become reflective learners and, thus, more autonomous students. It is based on asynchronous communication as "the writing and the receipt of messages are separated in time" (Brammerts & Calvert, 2003: 49). This asynchronous communication helps students analyse the content of the message they receive and they can make any comments they consider relevant

to the tandem partner. This e-mail exchange promotes students' digital competence since computers are used to "retrieve, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet" (*Commission of the European Communities*, 2005: 16).

To conclude the first section of this article, it could be maintained that e-mail tandem is closely linked to Vygotsky's (1978) constructivism and that it is also related to Freire's critical theory (1974), which emphasizes the importance of a critical view of language learning against its social and cultural background in order to help students achieve productive learning through deep reflection. This reflective view of language learning is closely related to the philosophy of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), since students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning in their Linguistic Biography using the descriptors available for each of the skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening, spoken production and spoken interaction (Cassany, 2006).

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The research reported on here was carried out during two academic years with thirteen students (eleven boys and two girls) at a Secondary school in Oviedo, North of Spain, which belonged to what in the Spanish educational system is called *Diversificación Curricular*. *Diversificación Curricular* groups are formed by students who have significant learning difficulties and/or a lack of motivation towards formal learning. Some of them might also have behavioural or psychological problems. For these reasons, the curriculum should be adapted to their needs, so that they can achieve the necessary goals and competences to achieve their GSCE. This programme is recommended to be developed over the last two years of Secondary Education, i.e. 3rd and 4th grade, though it is possible to include students during its second year of implementation.

In order to promote students' motivation, the methodology used implies two main aspects. On the one hand, they work in small groups which cannot be bigger than fifteen pupils in three main areas: Sociolinguistics (i.e. Spanish and History), Sciences and Technology (i.e. Maths, Biology and Chemistry) and foreign language (English). As far as the foreign language is concerned, it should be taught according to a communicative approach to help the students involved acquire the basic competences to use the L2 according to the oral, spoken and written skills suggested in CEFR and the ELP. Students are exposed to the target language for three hours during the first year of the programme and for two hours during the second year. The remaining subjects (i.e. Physical Education, Religion, Arts and Crafts and IT) are learnt with the rest of their classmates in groups which should not be bigger than thirty students.

To preserve the students' identities, we will refer to them with a number from 1-13 and a letter *s* preceding it. All the informants have a lack of motivation towards formal learning and particularly to foreign language learning, as, at the beginning of the programme, they all said that English was useless for them in their near future. Five of them (s1, s2, s3, s4 and s12) show significant learning difficulties regarding understanding and writing. There are also four pupils (s5, s6, s9 and s11) who had been out of school due to bad behaviour and, finally, three of them (s5, s9 and s11) have psychological problems which affect their interaction with schoolmates and teachers. S7, s8, s10 and s13 are unmotivated learners but they do not suffer any other behavioural or psychological problems.

B. Instruments

Taking into account the Recommendations given by the Commission of the European Communities (2005), the Spanish Law of Education (LOE, 2006) and the *Decreto de Organización y Curriculum* (2007), which were analysed in the first section of this paper, the current study aimed at promoting five key competences in the teaching of EFL at *Diversificación Curricular* (i.e. digital, communication in the mother tongue, and in a foreign language, learning to learn, and intercultural competences), using e-mail tandem as the basic methodology.

During the first year of the programme, we aimed at improving students' self-esteem (Pérez Gómez *et al.*, 2009: 11) by making them aware of the importance of learning a foreign language emphasizing the reflection on one's own learning to be conscious of their learning progress. At the same time, traditional classroom interaction was combined with a textbook appropriate to their language proficiency, which was no higher than A1/A1+, and with individual and group work in the IT room to promote their digital competence (Pérez Gómez *et al.*, 2009: 12).

In line with the established curriculum, they had three teaching hours a week, divided in three one-hour sessions, one of which was devoted to the textbook to work on the four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. There was a session in the IT room in which the students performed activities where they had to revise learnt vocabulary or grammar from different websites provided by the teacher (e.g.: http://www.isabelperez.com; http://englisch-hilfen.de/en; http://ckicnlearn.net). From the second term onwards, they also looked for information, individually or in groups, about topics of interest to them (fashion, sports, music...) to complete projects and present them to the rest of the students. The aim of this exercise was to promote communication in a foreign language using ICT, which is, probably, the most important competence students should acquire, and to find information about the topic on the Internet and summarize it to present it to their classmates. Essays were revised before being presented to check grammatical and lexical mistakes. Besides, students had to prepare some questions to be answered by their classmates, which were later marked by the teacher and given back to them to see their progress throughout the course.

These tasks were intended for the students to practise all the skills, as they read and chose the information they needed (reading comprehension), wrote an essay about their topic (writing) and finally made a speech to their classmates (spoken production and interaction) as well as listening, as they had to answer questions provided by the classmates who had done the project. The third session was devoted to the ELP, as will be shown when referring to learning to learn.

In the second year, the students were exposed to the target language for two hours a week. One of them was devoted to the textbook and the second session to activities based on e-mail tandem. They were encouraged to reflect on their learning process either in their learning diaries or by means of the ELP. Thus, an e-mail tandem exchange was established with students from a private boarding school located in West Sussex (UK). As was mentioned in the introduction to this paper, tandem partners should use their native and target language in each of the messages to follow the reciprocity principle (Brammerts, 2003:29). E-mail tandem, as will be shown in the next section, helps students be aware of two key competences: communication in the mother tongue and in the foreign language, being the ideal situation when half of the message is written in each of the languages (Brammerts, 2003; Gläsmann & Calvert, 2001). At the same time, intercultural communication is established (Byram, 1997; O'Dowd, 2003, 2006; Stickler & Lewis, 2003: 97-98) since students who belong to different countries interact with each other by means of the e-mails they write. However, as O'Dowd (2003) points out, not all the communication established between members of two different cultures by means of e-mail leads necessarily to intercultural learning. For this reason, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence will be taken into account when analysing if the communication carried out by the Spanish students can be considered intercultural. Bearing in mind the characteristics of the students involved, we will focus on two aspects of his model:

• Attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

• Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction. (Byram, 1997: 50, 61)

According to this model, students were given five topics (personal information, free time, school, Christmas, and my town) to be developed both in the mother tongue and the target language, as was mentioned above, and they also had to pay attention to their partners' mistakes in order to correct them. They were paired up with English students who had an equivalent level of Spanish, but there were also some pairs made up of two Spanish students and an English tandem partner due to the difficulties some of the Spanish students had to write in English. The goal of the latter pairings was that the one with the best command could help the less skilled and both could benefit from the English student's writing.

As far as learning to learn is concerned, students were encouraged to reflect on their own learning. Thus, from the introductory sections to the course objectives in the first year of the programme, the main components of the ELP (i.e. *language passport*, *language biography* and *dossier*) were presented in the classroom. As will be shown in the next section, participants were asked to fill in different parts of their language biography. Thus, learners filled in the section *Mis Lenguas* to help them reflect on the languages they could speak at home, at school or elsewhere. Afterwards, they produced their *abanicos lingüísticos*, in which they pointed out the languages they knew and when they used them. Finally, they were asked to reflect on their learning process by reading the descriptors provided in their language biographies and ticking the boxes which showed their competence in the foreign language according to the six levels of reference (A1-C2). At the end of each term, they had to choose their best activities to be included in their dossiers.

Learning to learn was also promoted by means of learning diaries. Participants had to write a diary (Otto, 2003; Oxford *et al.*, 1996) about their learning experience, in which they were asked to reflect critically on the importance of the tasks done in class and in the IT room for their learning progress. Learning strategies were also discussed in the classroom by working with the tasks suggested by Palacios (2006: 129-170), as well as the ones at the end of the language biography in the ELP. Besides, all the students had to fill in a questionnaire at the end of every term where, on the one hand, they were asked to reflect on their previous performance and, on the other, to set goals for the following term.

III. RESULTS

Regarding digital competence, all the students, despite their learning difficulties, were able, from the first year of the programme, to surf the Internet to find information on topics of interest to them, summarize it, and present it to their classmates. Communication in the target language was also promoted by means of these activities, since students had to prepare some questions which could be answered by the rest of their peers.

The e-mail tandem exchange also promoted the development of the digital competence, since participants could exchange information on the topics mentioned in the previous section to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via e-mail using the native language and the target language. As is shown in the example below, taken from s3's and s4's introductory e-mail, they make mistakes when using the target language but the message they write can be perfectly understood by their partner as she only corrected a couple of mistakes, which are highlighted in bold just below their e-mail:

Dear Mary[3]

Hi!

How are you? We very good

I am s3. I am sixteen years old. My birthday is twentieth September. I am tall and my eyes are brown. I am Spanish and I live in Oviedo. I live with my mother and my sister. She is twenty-three years old.

Yo no tengo mascotas, pero me gustaría tener un bulldog inglés. Tampoco toco ningún instrumento, pero me gusta mucho la música y bailar. En mi tiempo libre estoy con mi familia y mis amigos. Me gusta mucho el baloncesto.

Hi I am s4 I am seventeen years old. My birthday is ninth March. I am tall and black long hair. I live in Oviedo with my parents.

Yo no tengo perros pero si toco un instrumento, la guitarra. Los fines de semana me gusta salir con mis amigos. Kisses

CORRECTIONS:

We ARE very good.

Your English is very good- well done! My Spanish is very bad- I'm sorry!

The e-mail tandem exchange is also a positive experience for the participants regarding reflection on one's own learning to become aware of the importance of learning to learn by means of learning diaries. Diaries were introduced during the first year of the programme to reflect on the activities done in the classroom, mainly in the IT room. Spanish was the language in which they wrote their reflections. Thus, twelve of the participants wrote everything in their mother tongue because they felt more comfortable and the teacher decided not to force them to do it in English due to their particular characteristics, since the main goal of the task was not to improve target language command, but to make them aware of the importance of reflection as a lifelong learning process. Diaries proved to be useful tools for reflection since, as the project developed, ten students (76.92%) were able to support their arguments as opposed to the beginning of the first year, when they simply described the websites they visited. This argument is illustrated in the following examples taken from s8's and s4's diaries at the beginning and at the end of the programme:

s8

Estuve en la página de clicknlearn de 3 ºde la ESO de nivel fácil (de los colores, los números y de ropa).

Hoy es el último día de clase de ingles. Durante dos años hemos trabajado ingles tanto en los ordenadores como en la clase.

También compartimos con otros alumnos de otro colegio de Inglaterra nos mandábamos cartas de cómo era nuestro colegio y más cosas cotidianas que vivimos.

Yo creo que me ha servido bastante todo lo que hemos hecho estos dos años he aprendido muchas cosas. Y lo mejor que hemos hecho es que lo hemos comparado y hemos visto las mejoras desde que empezamos hace dos años.

s4

Hoy he estado haciendo ejercicios de verbos, tanto en afirmativo como en negativo, también he estado haciendo ejercicios de pronombres, y sobre todo de partes del cuerpo porque es lo que más me cuesta.

En estos dos años, en inglés he afianzado conocimientos, de todo lo elemental que habíamos dado cursos anteriores: Present Simple, Past continuous, Superlativos y comparativos. En este último curso me he notado con más seguridad a la hora de escribir, y leer. También me ha resultado mucho mas fácil estos dos años que el resto de cursos, gracias a que el ritmo de avance, se ha amoldado a mi ritmo.

Entre estos dos últimos curso, hemos hecho dos trabajos, de Michael Jordan y Dani Pedrosa, se ha notado la mejora de todo este tiempo, en cuestión de vocabulario y gramática.

En el porfolio nos hemos autoevaluado, y nos damos cuenta de lo que hemos avanzado y mejorado a lo largo de estos últimos dos años.

Las cartas nos han servido para aprender algo de vocabulario, porque se practica de dos maneras; una, a la hora de escribir, ya que hay que buscar palabras en el diccionario, y por otra, al leer las cartas. Y creo que no solo se aprende vocabulario, también se aprenden costumbres y formas de expresión.

Eight students (61.54%) also included a copy of the e-mails they had sent and received during the e-mail tandem exchange, to analyse what had been learnt from their partners' e-mails, as is shown in the following examples taken from s3 and s12:

s3

La verdad es que creo que ha sido una experiencia muy positiva en la que creo que he aprendido un montón de cosas más y sobre todo a expresarme un poco mejor. Hemos tenido algún que otro fallo que nos ha corregido, pero la verdad es que pensé que tendríamos muchos más**.**

s12

En esta carta aprendí también mucho vocabulario pero también me he fijado de que él tiene más faltas que en la otra carta, no obstante la carta está bien y se entiende bien.

The reflection students made in the Language Biography of their ELPs confirms that twelve of them acquired the learning to learn competence, since they were able to tick the boxes which showed their competence in the foreign

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[3] The names of the English students used in this paper have been changed.

language according to the six levels of reference for each of the skills dealt with in the classroom and only one of them ticked boxes above A2, which did not correspond to his linguistic competence in English. Finally, the questionnaires the pupils filled in during the programme, together with the activities provided at the end of the Language Biography, can be considered as useful instruments to promote learning to learn since they enabled students to evaluate the work done during the term and set goals for the following, and, at the end of the second year, they were able to come to a general conclusion about their learning progress, as can be seen in the examples taken from s4 and s8..

As far as intercultural competence is concerned, the e-mail tandem exchange is intended to promote intercultural communication, since students from different language communities get in touch to deal with topics concerning their native countries (e.g. School or Christmas). However, as was mentioned in the previous section of this paper, not all the communication established between members of two different cultures by means of e-mail leads necessarily to intercultural learning if participants do not show attitudes of curiosity and openness towards other cultures and belief about one's own ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction. With regard to our study, students showed attitudes of curiosity and openness towards their tandem partners, since they were really excited when they got a new e-mail, but twelve of them were unable to establish any relationships between cultural aspects concerning any of the topics dealt with. Regarding schools in England and in Spain, none of them asked their partner how subjects and classrooms were organised and they simply concentrated on the facilities both schools had and the subjects they studied. Talking about Christmas, they focused on shopping, gifts and New Year's Eve more than on the way Christmas is celebrated in both countries by pointing out similarities and differences between them. However, eight of them emphasized the importance of learning new vocabulary about these topics (61.54%), and only s4 referred to culture when she reflected on the e-mails in her diary:

Los emails nos han servido para aprender algo de vocabulario, porque se practica de dos maneras; una, a la hora de escribir, ya que hay que buscar palabras en el diccionario, y por otra, al leer las cartas. Y creo que no solo se aprende vocabulario, también se aprenden costumbres y formas de expresión.

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that most of the students involved, despite their learning difficulties, were able to develop and acquire four of the five key competences included in the curriculum (i.e. communication in the mother and in the foreign language, learning to learn and digital competence) using e-mail tandem as the basic approach.

The e-mails they sent and received, together with the individual and group work activities students carried out during the first year of the programme, enabled them to use their native and target language to communicate with their tandem partners, as well as to become acquainted ICT (digital competence), since they not only retrieved, stored, produced, presented and exchanged information, but also communicated and participated in collaborative networks via e-mail.

Learning to learn was also acquired since most of the participants were able to reflect on their learning, either through e-mail tandem or classroom activities, in their learning diaries, showing a greater degree of reflection at the end of the study as compared to their first diary entries. The ELP was also a useful instrument to deepen on this self-reflection process, since students evaluated their learning progress by means of the descriptors provided in the Language Biography, being their evaluation no higher than $A1^{+}/A2$, which corresponded to their competence in English.

According to Byram's (1997) model, intercultural competence was partially acquired, since participants showed attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to learn more things about their tandem partners, but only s4 was able to associate her tandem experience with some kind of intercultural communication which enabled her to learn more about customs in the UK. Thus, most of the students did not show readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own in order to be capable of acquiring new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices. This finding coincides with O'Dowd's (2003) views on intercultural learning, since not all virtual communication between students belonging to two different countries leads to intercultural communication, and, thus, to the acquisition of intercultural competence.

As a conclusion, e-mail tandem proves to be a useful method to promote communication in the mother and foreign language, learning to learn and digital competences in the EFL classroom with a group of students with learning difficulties. However, the implementation of this approach to language learning with this group of students does not seem to imply that intercultural competence can be acquired. Therefore, further research should be carried out with a larger group of students with and without learning difficulties with a double-fold objective: to test if the development of intercultural competence has to do with learning abilities, and to determine if their performance is similar on the rest of the key competences analysed in this paper or whether students without learning difficulties outperform those belonging to *Diversificación Curricular*.

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ICTs Applied to Formal Foreign Language Aural-oral Assessment: ORALEX[*] and Communicative Language Competences in English

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Abstract—This article analyses a computer-assisted system of formal aural-oral assessment of English, appropriate both for the contents taught in the classroom and the communicative language competences acquired when learning a foreign language. ORALEX was designed *ad hoc* for easing the teacher's/evaluator's role. It responds to the need for evaluating learners' skills in English, following the Common European Framework in a more efficient and effective way: efficient, because ORALEX can boast of disruptive innovation (easy means, excellent results); effective, because ORALEX facilitates group test-taking as opposed to individual face-to-face encounters. Thus, there is a twofold purpose to this article. Firstly, to show how a communicative approach to learning a foreign language is indirectly facilitated by ORALEX. And secondly, to highlight how communicative language competences might be assessed using this same tool effectively, while emphasising the students' learning autonomy and their performance as active agents of their own linguistic experiences. The article will include a discussion about aural-oral exercises currently being used in ORALEX within the framework of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. ORALEX can be used in multiple scenarios: EFL, ESL, bilingual or any other situation where aural-oral skills require testing. Furthermore, its flexibility makes it appropriate for schools, academies, training centres, universities, etc. regardless of the level of the foreign language tested or the number of students or subjects to be examined simultaneously, as long as there is one computer available per student.

Index Terms—ICT, oral assessment, competences, software, computer, autonomous learning, EFL/ESL

I. INTRODUCTION

The Foreign Language Department at Centro Universitario Villanueva Teachers' College, an accredited Higher Education Institution affiliated with the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, has been training student teachers since its foundation in 1978. These student teachers are granted a degree in teaching education to teach English at the kindergarten, infant and primary school levels. Exams have always been part of this University's programme. However, only written exams were administered initially. As time went by, the need for oral testing became apparent. Oral assessment started in 1998[1] and can be considered as achievement and progress testing on account of its aim (Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 450).

Since then, our Foreign Language Department has made oral exams compulsory to formally test students' oral proficiency in a foreign language –in our case, English– because our institution places increasing emphasis on aural-oral communication. Teachers of English at Centro Villanueva have formally been assessing their student teachers' written and oral command of the language in subjects such as English Language I, II and III, Phonetics, etc. There are certain weighty reasons why formal aural-oral assessment is fostered. Firstly, our student teachers have to be ready to perform in any English-speaking environment. Secondly, they have to teach English, mainly orally; therefore, their oral skills must be up to par. Thirdly, oral exams put students through tense situations; this experience trains student teachers to perform under pressure, which will help them perform in their future job interviews or in classroom activities where parents (native speakers, perhaps), school and Ministry authorities, etc. might be present. Fourthly, oral exams test student teachers' fluency as well as accuracy in a foreign language. English phonetics, grammar, etc. are thus put into practice and oral exams become a true assessment of the theory learnt in other subjects. Fifthly, students consider them very important.[2]

As might be inferred, the formal aural-oral assessment process has undergone a series of adaptations to suit the students' and teachers' needs. In the early stages, students who attended either regular or monthly classes were assessed

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[*] ORALEX is an in-house developed software package, designed by the Department of Foreign Languages at Centro Universitario Villanueva. The technical advice and support was mainly provided by Juan Luis García Martín, the ICT Department head of Centro Universitario Villanueva.
[1] Distance education assessment (López, Alba-Juez, Aragonés & Molina, 2006; AudioAssessment.com, 2008) is totally unrelated to our model.
[2] In a survey done in May-June 2010, 73 questionnaires were passed. 92% of the respondents thought oral exams were very important to test foreign language proficiency.

in teacher-student face-to-face encounters. However, since time spent on formal aural-oral assessment became totally unrealistic, there was an urgent need for an improved testing procedure, time-saving in this whole process being tantamount to success (Larson, 2000: 54). We thus went from individual face-to-face assessment to group test-taking through the local area network, for post assessment, through ORALEX.

ORALEX is an easy-to-use software programme used in testing aural-oral foreign language skills. When designing ORALEX, it was imperative to maintain all the benefits of the face-to-face encounters while adding others. The communicative approach to teaching/learning followed in class could not get *lost in translation*. Thus, a brief practical description of how this approach is used in class will be outlined as a springboard for the formal aural-oral assessment.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The communicative approach views language as an interactive tool: to express oneself, to express one's views to others, to listen to the views of others, and to interact. Under this approach, language is used for communication (Bachman, 1990; Brumfit, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Johnson, 1982; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Littlewood, 1981; Munby, 1978; Richards & Rogers, 1986; Widdowson, 1978; Wilkins, 1972). To achieve communication, the communicative approach makes use of authentic language, speech acts and different speech registers, dialects and language varieties.

Authenticity can surface at two levels, situational and interactional, and both can be present in assessment. Testing shows situational authenticity when the task is an accurate representation of some language activity which takes place in everyday life. Interactional authenticity appears when we try to use situations and tasks which are likely to be familiar and relevant to the students (Bachman, 1990; Widdowson, 1978). Speech acts are categories of communicative functions (Wilkins, 1976, in Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 318). Any expression which conveys the speaker's intention can be considered a speech act, that is, with its corresponding illocutionary value (Austin, 1962, in Madrid & Hughes, in Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 53).

Furthermore, genuinely communicative activities exhibit three features: information gap, choice and feedback. An information gap occurs when one person in the conversation misses some piece of information. Then, the participants can choose what to say and how to say something: "To fill the information gap, participants in the conversation need feedback to know whether their communication is being successful" (Johnson & Morrow, 1981, in Megás & Santamará, in Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 320). In such activities, exercises cannot be tightly controlled.

Recapitulating, I have chosen to call the three *natural* features of communicative activities an interactive loop, which can be assessed by ORALEX with some limitations.

III. COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING/LEARNING (CLT)

A communicative approach to teaching/learning at our University has been eased by the contents taught as well as the methodology used in class, upon which the Internet has had a great bearing. Our student teachers need to engage in meaningful and authentic language use to master communication at all levels, including school children's linguistic level. They should become familiar with everyday English as well as classroom English, in order to interact with society and with their prospective students.[3]

Since a class scenario is not 100% real, the actual communicative experiences need readjusting in the classroom. To achieve such a goal, "problem solving activities can, for example, focus on language study: proverbs, idioms, traditions, games, rhymes and songs, etc. and through apparently quite controlled elements on the part of the teacher, they may still retain the three principles (of interaction) mentioned above" (Megías & Santamaría, in Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 323).

English Language I will be analysed, to see how these objectives at our University are fulfilled. The contents of this subject encompass broad-ranging areas, covering a number of everyday home life and school situations that student teachers can find themselves in when travelling abroad, doing their teacher training, and/or after graduating. The following description exemplifies how the class activities in this subject have been adapted to the communicative approach.

The corresponding units cover Food,[4] The Family,[5] People and Clothes,[6] The Weather[7] and Travelling.[8] Home reading materials provide further reinforcement of the units. By way of example, the first unit –Food– will be tackled.

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[3] "In the late 1980s Bachman (1990) presented his first comprehensive view of communicative language ability (CLA), which clearly grew out of the work of Canale and Swain. He suggested that CLA consists of language knowledge or competence combined with the ability to execute that competence in appropriate language use" (EALTA Guidelines, 2006: 3).

[4] Materials drawn from e.g. http://www.nourishinteractive.com/kids/kidsarea.html; http://www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu/ (accessed 9/9/2010); *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* DVD.

[5] E.g. Website *The Ugly Duckling*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMKxnYRhk6I (accessed 9/9/2010); *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* DVD, etc.

[6] E.g. http://www.esl-lab.com/ (accessed 9/9/2010), etc.

[7] E.g. http://www.fema.gov/kids/twins/ (accessed 9/9/2010), etc.

[8] E.g. Song *I'm going home* by Chris de Burgh; http://video.yahoo.com/watch/1548669/5256177 (accessed 8/6/2009).

In it, students become familiar with eating healthily, the food pyramid, how to trick children into eating veggies, gardening projects, food games, teaching youngsters how to cook and especially appealing recipes for children.[9]

As regards the methodology used in class, classes are regularly held through social interaction, dialogues, role-plays, debates, presentations, round-table talks, etc. where our students learn to express themselves. They exchange "information and opinions [with their classmates], talking about their likes and dislikes and recounting their experiences. The emphasis is firmly on language as a social instrument, or a way of enabling people to interact with one another" (EALTA Guidelines, 2006: 3). The website materials included in each unit ensure this interaction.[10]

Two conclusions can be drawn from all the above: in the first place, the contents are real, adapted to the student teachers' needs. They should feel there is a synergy between the knowledge acquired and its applicability. Secondly, if the contents taught in the classroom, if the materials chosen and if the activities done do not follow the communicative language teaching approach, aural-oral assessment can do very little to promote communication. When oral assessment tries to test communication skills which have not been practised before, the result will most likely be below expectations.[11]

Therefore, for oral exams to accomplish their aim, the activities should be coherently designed, following the teaching/learning approach developed in class. Reading, model imitating, paraphrasing, answering or asking questions, narrating, arguing for and against, summarising, etc. are regularly part of the aural/oral assessment exercises.

The techniques of language testing in use at any time tend to reflect the view of language and the way it is used at that time. What is being tested and the kind of task or item type chosen as a means of testing can be expected to show the influence of current thinking on what language ability is and what exactly we are doing when we use language in everyday life. (EALTA Guidelines, 2006: 1).

IV. OBJECTIVES

There have been several challenges along the way in our aural/oral assessment throughout the history of ORALEX. Thus, a first step is to show how a communicative approach to teaching/learning a foreign language is facilitated by ORALEX. Coherence between the teaching/learning approach used in class and the way assessment is carried out is mandatory. Coherence itself, however, is not enough when assessing. The procedures call for efficiency. This explains why ORALEX makes it possible to minimise human and material resources while maximising benefits. The second step, linked to the first, is to highlight how communicative language competences can be assessed effectively through ORALEX. This software replicates the classroom approach to a large extent. Both objectives take for granted that a fundamental tenet behind any kind of formal aural-oral assessment is to ease the evaluator's role in testing language abilities. This is the reason why the initial one-to-one face-to-face encounters developed into group test-taking through LAN (Local Area Network).

V. METHODOLOGY

A. ORALEX and the Communicative Approach to Learning. The Assessment Experience

Generally speaking, all encounters with a foreign language are a learning experience for students and teachers alike. Formal aural/oral assessment with ORALEX is an enlightening experience for both parties: teachers get to know if their efforts have been productive and students discover whether their studies have proved satisfactory. These premises are especially true in a communicative approach, where students have to apply their newly acquired knowledge to real-life situations. In fact, students have often commented that Villanueva University staff teaches them how to perform orally, without neglecting the other skills. ORALEX constitutes, no doubt, a major contribution to oral assessment as a user-friendly tool.

Some examples of communicative exercises included in the formal oral exams using ORALEX are the following:

• Dialogues. Students have previously role-played dialogues in class, using real English. They may be asked to act out one of the dialogues. Another exercise might be to role-play one of the dialogues, interpreting the two characters. Another exercise supplies some expressions used in the dialogues and students have to use them in context. These can be understood as controlled activities, but there is another one that gives complete freedom to the students: they can invent a dialogue by combining some of the dialogues studied before. Although there is an information gap and a choice in these exercises, these are individually performed, that is, each student is in front of a computer. Interaction is simulated.

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[9] As an aside, it can be helpful to comment that dancing and singing relieves tension and arouses the students' enthusiasm while setting an example to imitate later on. There is a dance song in the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, performed by the Umpa Loompas dancing at work, that was sung while dancing in the English class.

[10] All the units are uploaded onto the University website.

[11] Obviously, no methodology can fully compensate for students who do not take their studies seriously.

• Paraphrasing. Here there is also an information gap and a choice. Students can use multiple expressions from the different texts and explain or give synonyms for the phrases provided. They have access through the web to all the possible expressions to paraphrase, so that they are not taken by surprise.

• Song recitation. The Ugly Duckling, the Umpa Loompas' dance song from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and others provide materials for students to sing and recite the songs. There may be questions on the songs themselves to check their knowledge of lexical items, grammar (e.g. if the questions on the song are in the Simple Past, with the use of irregular verbs), idiomatic expressions, etc.

• Retelling of stories, where students narrate one episode of their choice.

• Reading of excerpts from previously studied texts, where students have to perform as best they can, taking into account pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm, etc.

• Open-ended stories, for the students to finish.

• Questions and answers on any of the texts studied in class.

• Agreeing or disagreeing with a comment, justifying their views.

• Summary of a text.

• Listening/repetition following a model.

• Comments on videos studied in class, discussing main ideas, what impressed them most, their views, comparing them to their own experiences.

All the texts are accompanied by either audio or audio-visual materials.

B. Competences Assessed by ORALEX through a Selection of Oral Exercises

"A model of language ability is of importance to the language tester because it provides a useful basis for defining the area of competence to be tested" (EALTA Guidelines, 2006: 4).

There are certain oral exercises that the teachers of English at Centro Universitario Villanueva have considered compulsory to do in class to train student teachers properly. The sample exercises detailed later on have been practised regularly in the normal classroom as well as in the computer room before taking the formal oral exams. There is a whole range of them. This variety obeys the need to cover all aspects of communicative language competences, which can be classified as linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic (Common European Framework, 2001; Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 454). ORALEX offers the possibility of testing all of these competences.

Linguistic competence comprises lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic subcompetences (Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 454). This competence calls for fluency as well as accuracy in content and form. It can be tested through several exercises, such as paraphrasing. Besides lexical knowledge, paraphrasing puts several other aspects to the test: grammatical –the explanations have to be accurate–; semantic –the right meaning must be known in order to paraphrase correctly–; phonological –since the words to be paraphrased are spoken orally and the pronunciation, intonation, etc. should be accurate not to impede communication–; orthographic and orthoepic –students have to be aware of the relationship between the pronunciation of words and their orthography–.

Sample materials used for paraphrasing are in the unit on Food: Dinner time,[12] where there are vocabulary items with their explanations at the end of the dialogue; and in the one on The Family: The Ugly Duckling,[13] where the unknown lexical items have been worked on in class.

Linguistic competence can easily be assessed through the narration of an event, part of a story, etc.

Give a very short presentation based on the video of the recipe you chose. Give the name of your recipe when you start (15 points) (see Appendix C).

Another oral exercise to test linguistic competence is to read an excerpt.

FIRST PART: Start reading when you are ready (15 points) (page 20, The Fruitcake Special) (see Appendix D).

Another exercise consists in listening to an excerpt and giving the main ideas or answering questions on it. An additional activity to test linguistic competence is the listening/repetition type. There are fixed pauses between speech acts or sentences. Students record their voices in the spaces provided, following the model: pace, intonation, stress, pitch, pronunciation, etc. The closer they imitate the model, the higher the mark. Fluency and accuracy are promptly evidenced. Their recording also throws light on comprehension. If comprehension is lacking, this kind of exercise is a total failure. Moreover, the idea behind it is to test whether the students have developed certain memory/brain training as a result of their own individual work at home.

Listening/repetition exercise (20 points). You will hear 5 clauses with spaces in between. Remember the pauses are provided for you, so please do not touch the mouse until the end. Thanks - that will be all. Press next to start (page 62, The Book of Thoughts) (see Appendix D).

Reciting memorised texts, previously analysed in class, develops linguistic competence and proves very practical to assess orally. This type of exercise improves their reading as well as their role play activities. Our experience shows that

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[12] Audio/written http://www.esl-lab.com/cook/cookrd1.htm#vocab (accessed 7/7/2008).
[13] Audio/written http://www.jellybabys.co.uk/bedtime_stories/ Ugly_Duckling. mp3 (accessed 7/7/2008).

there is a major improvement when comparing the first and last month of University freshman year[14]. The students' self-confidence in language production is reinforced by memorisation. Students whose level of English is quite low are able to reproduce paragraphs imitating the model, which boosts their self-esteem. Memorisation is passive production, and passive activities increase their self-confidence. Excerpts from *Getting a Haircut*, *Hanging Out with Friends*, *Nice to Meet You*, i.e. dialogues on people and ordinary situations, encourage the students to perform in public. Fluency and accuracy are not the target here. Brain training is: for example, how well students can remember episodes under pressure. This aspect can be considered fundamental in a foreign language to help develop all the competences at length.

Retell Hello shoppers, here is a lost boy named Marshall (15 points) (see Appendix D).

So far ORALEX has made it possible to assess linguistic competence individually. Now, the challenge is to wrestle with real language use, in social activities, to assess sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence involves markers of social relations, politeness conventions, expressions of folk wisdom, register differences, dialect and accent (Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 454). Lack of knowledge of this competence might upset communication; for instance, when a foreigner uses an inappropriate word that goes against the rules of communication. An adequate selection of authentic language materials is of utmost importance to succeed.

Most of the dialogues from unit 3 –*People and Clothes*, *Lost in the Crowd*,[15] *Nice to Meet You*,[16] *Just a Haircut, Please*,[17] *Expressing Condolences*,[18] etc.– offer use and choice of greetings, address forms, register of discourse (formal, informal), etc., familiar quotations and everyday life expressions. Dialect and accent are exemplified, for instance, in one of the YouTube videos describing *Immigrants from Mali* (Unit 5, Travelling). The narrator is an African immigrant speaking English, with a marked French accent.[19] Moreover, the home reading materials are read by British and American people so that students get exposure to both accents.

Pragmatic competence can be divided into discourse and functional.

[They] are concerned with the user/learner's knowledge of the principles according to which messages are:

a) organised, structure and arranged ('discourse competence')

b) used to perform communicative functions ('functional competence')

c) sequenced according to interactional and transactional schemata ('design competence)". (Council of Europe, 2001: 123).

The discourse competence is the ability of a user/learner to arrange sentences in sequence so as to produce coherent stretches of language. It includes knowledge of and ability to control the ordering of sentences in terms of given/new information, coherence and cohesion. The functional competence is concerned with the use of spoken discourse and written texts in communication for particular functional purposes. It includes knowledge of speech acts and categories such as description, narration, instructions, and conversational patterns such as questions-answers, etc. (Madrid & McLaren, 2004: 322-323).

The exercises to be assessed are the same as under sociolinguistic competence. However, the focus on them varies. Here attention is drawn to the coherence of the dialogue, to the clarity and sequencing of ideas. Therefore, the forms of language are longer than sentences, such as stories, conversations, business letters, etc. (Missouri State University).[20]

SECOND PART: One question on Finders Keepers (15 points): What is the name of the game and what is the relationship between the title and the story? (see Appendix D).

The home reading materials give ample room for the assessment of discourse competence. This competence focuses on how students develop the capacity to get their messages across, to express their views and incorporate those of their interlocutors.

One question on Brains (15 points): What was the effect of Gina Capaldi's drug on Max?" (see Appendix D).

In the question-answer activities, they may have to justify, for example, why a certain character in one of the stories has behaved the way he has,[21] or describe a character's development throughout the story,[22] or explain how they would react if they were in that situation.[23]

The question-answer exchange also allows students to manipulate the situation. For instance, they have to convince their interlocutor whether the drug used on Max, a monkey, to raise his intelligence, was moral or not,[24] defending their views, agreeing or disagreeing with their interlocutor's point of view.

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[14] From now on, it will be possible with ORALEX to carry out studies systematically to statistically confirm what has been experienced all these years and what students themselves have manifested, especially after finishing their studies with us.

[15] Audio/written free online http://www.esl-lab.com/lost/lostrd1.htm (accessed 7/7/2008).

[16] http://www.esl-lab.com/childintro/childintrord1.htm (accessed 7/7/2008).

[17] http://www.esl-lab.com/cut/cutrd1.htm (accessed 7/7/2008).

[18] http://www.esl-lab.com/insurance/insurancerd1.htm (accessed 7/7/2008).

[19] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMC3jbQN5gI (accessed 7/7/2008).

[20] http://vlc.missouristate.edu/languagelearning/competence.asp (accessed 7/9/2010).

[21] In *The Fruitcake Special*, Mr. Amos's behaviour. Likewise, in *Brains*, the reason for Mr. Dimitry's attitude towards his PhD student.

[22] In *The Book of Thoughts*, if the main character changed or not and why he did or not.

[23] In *The Real Aunt Molly*, the decision her family had to make.

[24] *Brains*, in *The Fruitcake Special*.

Discourse competence can further be assessed through problem-solving. In *Finders Keepers*, a whistle got broken, but before it did, it had the power to stop time. One question to the students was: "what would you do if you had that whistle?".

Regarding functional competence, the focus is on when to say what, i.e. the ability/knowledge shown in interaction. Answering questions enables the teacher to check students' comprehension as well as production.

Please answer the following questions on the dialogue between father and daughter Dinner Time in a complete way (15 points). PRESS NEXT TO CONTINUE
   1. What does the father say about his experience cooking?
   2. What does the girl say about pumpkin?
   3. What happened at the end? (see Appendix C).
All these questions had been previously debated in class.

VI. Students as Agents of Their Own Learning

ORALEX relies heavily on autonomous assessment. Students act as agents of their own assessment procedure. To illustrate this theory further, there are two sets of instructions in ORALEX: the first screens that appear contain rubrics for testing sound, recording, etc. The second set of instructions is verbal and corresponds to the exam per se. At the beginning, students follow the instructions on the screen and act accordingly. These instructions are simple enough for the students to complete the end of the exam without further help. This peculiarity has been recently improved by preparing ORALEX instruction screens in one colour, and the exam itself in another colour. The instructions can be in any language; English was our choice. When the exam starts, students are in control of time: when to start recording, when to stop, where to stop. They take their exams at their own pace. Time control on the part of the students in all the exercises but one relieves them of much anxiety.

ORALEX can boast of transparency in the procedure. After finishing the exams and before handing the exam audio file in, students have the opportunity to listen to their answers, in spite of the fact that no changes are permitted. Through that mechanism, students can know how they have done. Thus, any unrealistic idea of their performance is easily discarded. Occasionally, students have been asked to write on a sheet of paper the mistakes they thought they had committed. Although this is not consistently carried out due to lack of time, students consider it a very positive experience. This exercise reveals language awareness and should not be discarded.[25]

Students are agents of their own learning in another important aspect. The rubrics of ORALEX instruct them very clearly on the marking scheme. They know how they are going to be assessed, i.e. which activities are worth more points.[26] Moreover, the numbers of parts and types of exercise are specified at the start of the exam for the students to know what to expect, namely, if the oral exam includes some reading, a listening/repetition exercise, a question and answer part, paraphrasing, etc.

Another aspect that emphasises students as agents of their own learning is the individual assessment of their oral exams. Although they are taken in groups, their recorded answers are assessed by their own teachers one by one. This close *bond* encourages a personal relationship, personalised assessment with recognition of effort, dialogue and provides feedback (Sangrà, 2010).

Students can listen to their exams and are encouraged to do so at revision times. Furthermore, they know that the recorded files are at their disposal. If strong disagreements between student and teacher arise, there is always the possibility of summoning a board to arbitrate on the final mark. Since exams are recorded, saved and filed through the LAN, on readily accessible simple files, this is feasible at any time.

Students are in control of whatever information there is on their performance because of the tangible proof that the saved sound file provides. Moreover, each student's assessment record becomes part of the university database, a key element in the whole process of the evaluation of competences (Escamilla, 2010). These are key assets of ORALEX.

Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation with the Help of ORALEX

The last point to touch upon is quantitative and qualitative assessment. "Are marking schemes/rating criteria described?" is one of the questions posed in EALTA Guidelines (2006: 3).

Generally, marking schemes involve the use of a rating scale, which may break down the skills being assessed in a speaking test into areas such as pronunciation, fluency and accuracy (grammatical, semantic, etc.), and mark each on a scale. The final score for such tasks is reached by giving a mark on each scale, so that a total score for the task is an aggregate of the past scores (EALTA Guidelines, 2006: 243).

Quantitative as well as qualitative assessment follows quantifiable standards. They both tackle contents and form. As regards form, linguistic competence needs assessing in terms of grammar, phonetics, etc. A scoring system is used, which students know ahead of time. Concerning contents, wrong contents can be the sign of poor linguistic competence (e.g. semantic), or poor pragmatic competence (lack of ability to justify opinions, express ideas). Qualitative assessment

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[25] Pena Díaz & Porto Requejo consider this aspect should be taken into account before final assessment, i.e. what they call "evaluación formativa" (2010: 351).
[26] The syllabus designed and uploaded on the web clarifies the possible mistakes and the points marked off for each (if they are grammar mistakes: simple present, simple past, word order, etc.).

requires clear items to rate: straightforward messages, lexical variety, coherence, etc. Students are also informed of how these aspects are assessed. A certain percentage of the final mark corresponds to global achievement. Rarely do *borderline doubts* arise in assessment. Should this happen, the decision can be taken at departmental level. Thanks to ORALEX, recording students' performance is tantamount to success.

VII. ORALEX AND DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

One last word on ORALEX and disruptive innovation: our software was the outcome of an urgent assessment need. It originated in the academic world, not in the business sector. This might account for the minimising of human and material resources while maximising benefits. The results positively outweigh the investment: it functions with inexpensive means. ORALEX does not follow the pattern of incremental innovation. This justifies why it can suit the objectives of any educational centre, even those which cannot invest in more expensive technology.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Currently ORALEX is not multimedia; it only allows for the oral exams to be carried out by means of audio listening and recording (López, Alba-Juez, Aragonés & Molina, 2006: 3). Nevertheless, foreign language testing greatly benefits from this software programme. This software can be used whenever aural/oral skills testing is necessary. In fact, those disciplines which help develop presentation skills, negotiation skills, etc. can also benefit from ORALEX.

All foreign language competences –linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic– can be readily assessed with the help of ORALEX. However, pragmatic competence is assessed through *controlled* exercises. There is no fully free interaction yet.

In other respects, students perform as agents of their own assessment procedures. Rubrics and verbal instructions allow them to complete the exams unattended. They are also in control of time. Since ORALEX provides tangible proof of the students' performance, the assessment process is transparent. The exams can even be corrected by another party.

Due to the varied environments, ORALEX can be used at all kinds of educational levels, even competitive exams or any other type of exam –Cambridge, for example– and educational sites as well: centres, schools, institutes, private or public institutions, etc. Moreover, ORALEX requires minimum investment.

Exams resulting from formal aural/oral assessment are filed, stored, and easily accessed (see Appendix E), ready to be used for other purposes if needed besides assessment. By the end of this school year, there will be sufficient data collected to carry out research on the assessment of competences based on the last three years.

"What attention is given to the appropriate analysis of assessment results? What use is made of the results?" (EALTA Guidelines, 2006: 2). The goals have been amply fulfilled.

IX. ONGOING RESEARCH

ORALEX 2.0 will be multimedia. Aural/oral assessment of picture comparison will be possible. Comparing pictures increases the ideational feature of discourse competence: "Compare these houses and decide which one you would like to live in". The incorporation of video clips will provide more pedagogical tools to assess functional competence: "Express your views on the old man's behaviour in *UP*" or "Discuss the benefits of eating healthily and education in August Gloop's family in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*". The assessment of pragmatic competence will be enhanced by real interaction between two or more students, a longed-for goal. The videos will encourage pair discussion. The principle of autonomy, of students regulating their learning, will be improved by having their answers on audio files on their desktops at their disposal. Finally, ORALEX 2.0 will allow assessment online, via the web.

APPENDIX A ORAL EXAM MONDAY, JUNE 21ST, 2010

Name: Group:
1st semester
1. You are the cook and you are teaching an 8-year old child to cook. What 3 pieces of advice can you give him? (15 points, 5 points each).
2. Narrate the episode you chose from the UGLY DUCKLING (15 points).
3. Describe Grandma Georgina, one of Charlie's grandparents (10 points).

APPENDIX B ORAL EXAM FRIDAY, JUNE 25TH, 2010

Name: Group:
Oral Unit III. PEOPLE AND CLOTHES dialogues (total 70 points: 10 points each)
Pass: 40   Good: 56   Outstanding: 65   Distinction: 70
There are 7 questions on 3 different dialogues.
Dialogue: *A Fun Day*
1. What time does the film start this afternoon?
2. Why can't Mom go with them?

Dialogue: *Just a Haircut, Please!*
3. Why does the customer go to the beauty parlour?
4. Why doesn't the customer have much time?
Video: *My Family Roots: Genealogy*
5. Where was Ana Maria Cavazos born?
6. What did they experience?
7. Where did Ana grow up?
Subtotal: 70

APPENDIX C ORAL EXAM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE I, TITULADOS MADRID

Groups A and B

Name: Date: February 19th, 2010
Units I, II and III (except home reading)

This oral exam consists of 5 different exercises. Listen carefully as no repetition of either instructions or questions is allowed. Total number of points, 70. Pass: 40 Very good: 55 Outstanding: 63 Honours: 70. *PRESS NEXT TO CONTINUE*

I. Read an excerpt provided by the teacher (any of the 11 dialogues from this unit) (15 points)

II. Please answer the following questions on the dialogue between father and daughter *Dinner Time* in a complete way. (15 points) *PRESS NEXT TO CONTINUE*

1. What does the father say about his experience cooking?

2. What does the girl say about pumpkin?

3. What happened at the end?

III. Give a very short presentation based on the video of the recipe you chose. Give the name of your recipe when you start. (15 points)

IV. In the first part of the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* describe how Veruca and Charlie reacted when they found the golden ticket. (15 points)

V. Retell "Hello shoppers, here is a lost boy named Marshall". (15 points)

APPENDIX D HOME READING EXAM, MAY 21ST, TITULADOS MADRID, GROUP A, 4:15 PM

Name:

Make sure you are in your computer session. Please pay special attention to content as well as form. There are 3 parts to this exam. FIRST PART: reading of a paragraph provided by the teacher. SECOND PART: two questions on the stories. THIRD PART: Listening/repetition (total 65 points). Pass: 35 - 55….Very Good: 56- 60….Outstanding: 61-64….Distinction: 65….*PRESS NEXT TO CONTINUE*

1. FIRST PART: Start reading when you are ready. (15 points) (page 20, *The Fruitcake Special*)

2. SECOND PART:

a. One question on *Finders Keepers* (15 points): What is the name of the game and what is the relationship between the title and the story?

b. One question on *Brains* (15 points): What was the effect of Gina Capaldi's drug on Max?

3. THIRD AND LAST PART: Listening/repetition exercise (20 points): You will hear 5 clauses with spaces in between. Remember the pauses are provided for you so please do not touch the mouse until the end. Thanks - that will be all. *PRESS NEXT TO START* (page 62, *The Book of Thoughts*)

APPENDIX E SCREENSHOTS SHOWING FILING, SAVING AND STORAGE OF ORAL EXAMS
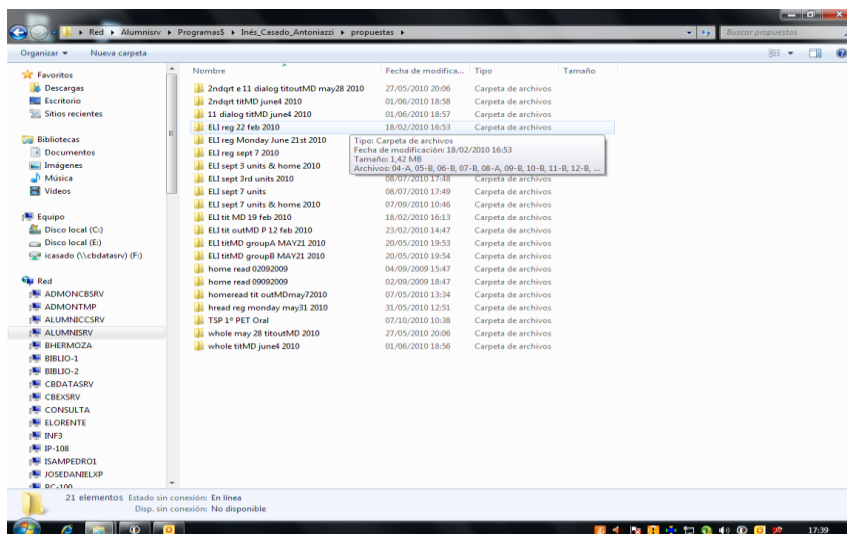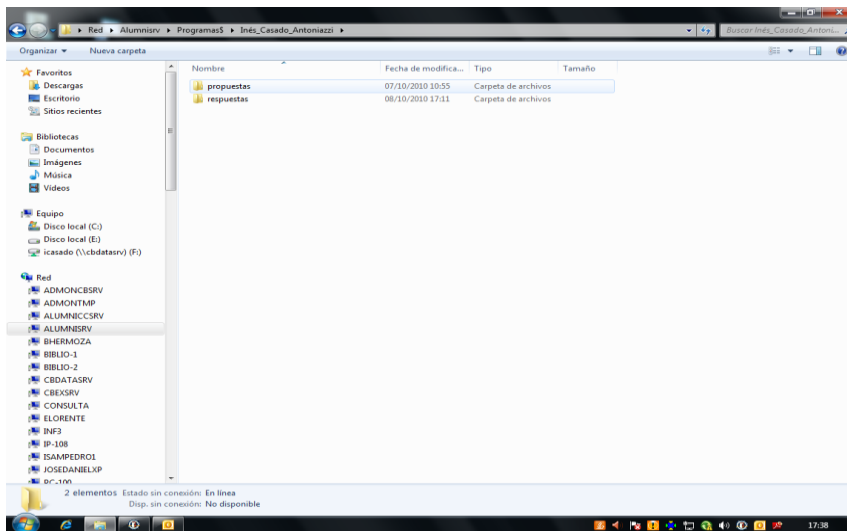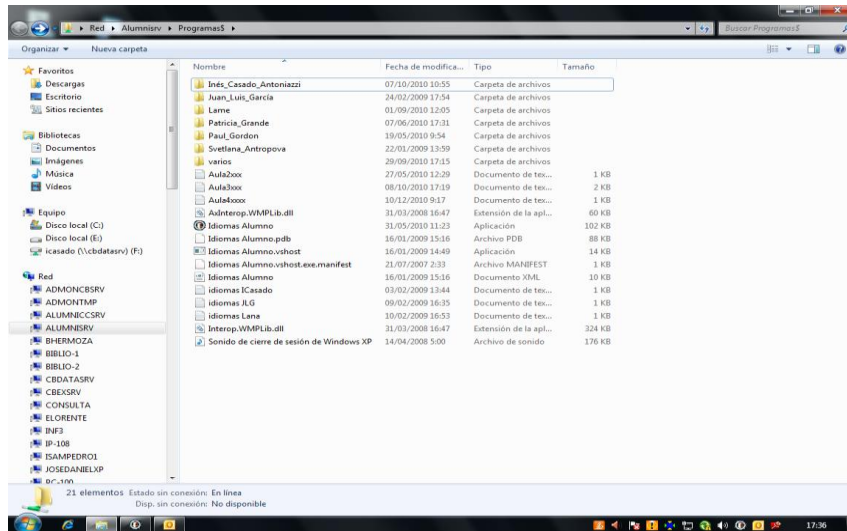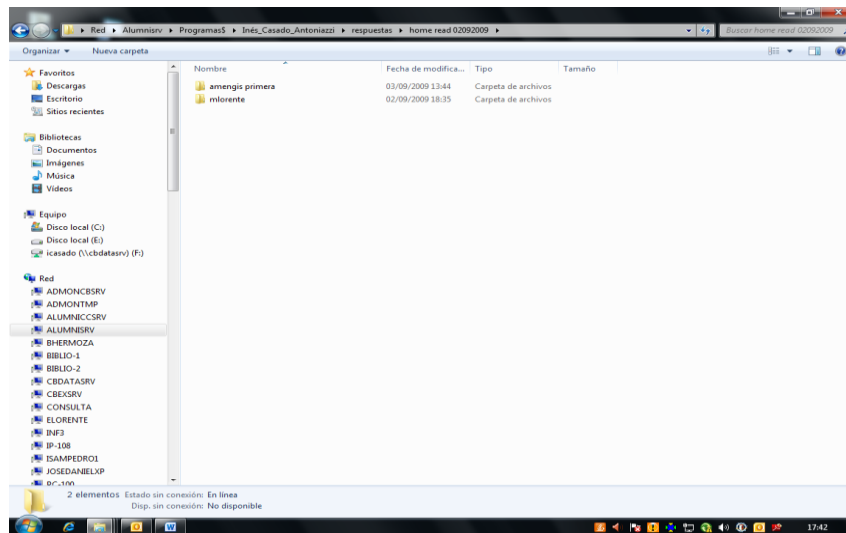
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Preliminary Findings of the PAULEX Project: A Proposal for the Internet-based Valencian University Entrance Examination

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Abstract—Although there is an increasing number of online tests in the world, little research is currently known in Spain today. Assessment has become an integral part of education and the implications of the various uses of language testing go beyond the educational settings (Douglas, 2010; Fulcher, 2010). This study describes the PAULEX project. This project deals with the design and validation of a computer-based University Entrance examination for Spanish universities. The test measures the students' oral and written competence including tasks on four different skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. This paper will address some specific features and reaction studies that are already in process. It is by no means this paper's object to give detailed information of each individual aspect but instead to give an overview of what has been done so far and provide concepts of the current research. In doing so, the paper is divided into three main sections: technological advances, attitudinal observations and results.

Index Terms—testing, English as foreign language, computers, attitudes

I. INTRODUCTION

Although there is an increasing number of online tests in the world, little research is currently known in Spain today. Assessment has become an integral part of education and the implications of the various uses of language testing go beyond the educational settings (Douglas, 2010; Fulcher, 2010). The reasons could be that computers require economic efforts from the researching institution at the beginning and that researching on new field requires specialists of more areas than those demanded for traditional testing (Bachman, 2000; Hambleton & Slater, 1997). Probably, these are also the reasons why the Spanish Ministry of Education may provide funding for research projects in the field, but the implementation of those projects may, in reality, be far for being put into practice. The PAULEX project, whose findings are hereby succinctly presented, may have contributed to the general knowledge in the area but most likely will take a long time (if ever) to be considered worth putting into practice. This article briefly reviews the findings of the PAULEX project and suggests reasons to make the web-based University Entrance Examination (IB PAU) real.

II. COMPUTER-BASED LANGUAGE TESTING

Computer-based language testing has been with us since the mid-eighties, as a way to deliver language tests via the computer. According to their construct, they can be closer to traditional or adaptive tests (Economides & Roupas, 2008; Ockey, 2009; Yen *et al.*, 2010) based on item-response theory (Colpaert, 2004) in which providing the correct response to an item leads to a more difficult one and vice-versa. When compared to traditional tests, Computer Assisted Language Testing (henceforth CALT) offers a large number of advantages, such as the inclusion of visual media, the delivery of spoken items without the need of human resources (Ockey, 2009; Siozos *et al.*, 2009; Tung & Deng, 2006), a larger type of integrated and analytical test items, or rapid feedback (immediate when dealing with objective items). Additionally, online delivery permits students to take the tests at lower costs from their schools. However, the most important effects are based on the validity of the test, especially because the test conditions (with very few exceptions)[1] are the same for all the candidates (Pardo-Ballester, 2010). Until recently, Roever (2001) asserts that preparing those tests was more difficult than traditional ones and also more expensive to produce and maintain. However, recent advancements in web-based tests have facilitated the maintenance operations and reduced the number of hours, since the same problems may be solved for the whole system instead of checking each individual computer. Besides, each computer does not need to have the whole software installed, but may work with just a number of plug-ins. At present, most of the important computer-based tests use a combination of traditional and self-corrected items. For instance, TOEFL has an integrated skills system (García Laborda, 2006; Meskill & Rangelova, 1995) that allows a chain of tasks corresponding to different skills such as speaking-listening-reading-writing (with all the combinative possibilities).

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[1] In high stakes tests, these exceptions are usually well known, such as the security breakthrough in the Turkish OSYM in 2010 (http://www.todayszaman.com/news-222239-many-security-gaps-found-in-osym-as-police-arrest-four.html) or the TOEFL Internet cut during a test in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Hangzhou (http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2006/oct/20/tefl2?INTCMP=SRCH).

Likewise, the PLEVALEX and PAUER platforms share many features with the TOEFL, although the Spanish platforms carry out skills integration in a less sophisticated and more linear fashion.

III. How Was the Spanish PAULEX Designed?

This project dates back to the original HIEO/HIELE project started in the Universitat Politecnica de Valencia (UPV), where a group of experts noticed the need to have a more efficient testing system to diagnose international students arriving at that university. The system consisted of five main modules, including grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking (García Laborda, 2006). The testing delivery system was designed by the experts at the UPV and implemented by a company in Madrid. The experimentation was rather limited, but 100 French or English students took a test through that system. The results of the positive experience were sent to the Generalitat Valenciana. A second version of the platform was implemented only for the writing module. The section, although a bit limited, was implemented and later incorporated to the PLEVALEX testing platform. PLEVALEX was the second and improved design of HIEO. After further experimentation, in 2007 the current PAULEX/PAUER platform was implemented. This platform began to be operational in 2009 and tests of English and Spanish were administered. In fact, by mid 2010, more than 300 students had taken an Internet-based version of the English or French PAU, both in the university campus (and net) system and outside it (Colegio El Pilar and Instituto Benllure of Valencia). The platform had also served to train a group of 30 teachers on the integration of computers in the PAU. By the end of 2010, it was clear that the IB PAU could be implemented and that students would not reject the testing delivery system. Furthermore, studies were conducted to observe their reactions towards the implementation of the PAU through mobile phones and devices with promising results.

IV. What Did We Study in These Experiences?

As mentioned in the previous section, overall the system combined many research aspects. The research team was mainly divided into two sections: language testing and computer/software development. Both teams have spent the last years providing an immense quantity of information.

A. Information on Language Testing

This team varied in size and a number of experts took part in the different aspects of the design and implementation stages. This team worked alongside computer engineers who designed the interfaces. Within the three areas that were the main intended research subjects, we focused on technology development and its effects in humans. However, previous stages took us to other sub-studies. These studies were necessary to focus the research adequately:

- Desire and need to change the University Entrance examination.
- Current problems of high school students in their foreign language classes.
- Advantages and disadvantages of high stakes testing.
- Attitudes towards the new oral tasks.

B. Information on Computers and Their Effect on the Stakeholders

Obviously, the design of a computer-based test requires a deep study of the interaction between the candidate (human user) and the computer. Much of the interaction in the testing situation occurs at the testee interface level (Fulcher, 2003). Thus, there are two main elements that participate in the final design of the delivery system, which are the hardware and the software. The PAULEX project technological development of interfaces was based on the results suggested by García Laborda (2006), which lead to an interface design similar to TOEFL (García Laborda, 2006) and quite different from other tests like IELTS or BULLATS (García Laborda, 2007). On the other hand, the software principles and database were based on the principles set by Gimeno Sanz in 2002 and used for the Ingenio language teaching and learning platform. As for the PAULEX project, the following are the fundamental design principles that were addressed in different projects:

- Previous interface design, especially Flucher's principles (2003).
- A comparison of different computer-based tests.
- Effect of image and computer context in the candidates.

V. Experimental Phase

A. The Test and Its Implications

The language testing experimentation began through collecting the teachers' attitudes towards the still current PAU and a new one based on the introduction of speaking and listening tasks. García Laborda & Fernández Álvarez (2010) discovered that teachers were eager to implement a dramatic change, although they also feared the effects of such a change.

We also found that many teachers were excited about the impact of technology, but many felt overwhelmed by the excess of responsibility of getting high grades in the PAU. All these fears and anxiety were, naturally, due to the

possibility to include the speaking tasks (listening did not have such impact on the teachers' attitudes), which most teachers thought to be based on short conversations in pairs and short descriptive monologues.

In relation to the construction of the test, we found evidence that supports that the change would have an impact almost uniquely on the speaking tasks. Their results supported the fact that, in the long run, due to the washback effect (Amengual Pizarro, 2009; García Laborda, 2008; Green, 2007; Hausenberg, 2006; Luxia, 2007; Watanabe, 2004), students would improve their speaking ability. They also stated that converting current PAU tasks into computer tasks would have limited differences. The last part of the studies conducted in relation to language testing was done in teacher training. In order to foresee future effects of the new test, a group of 27 teachers was trained in Valencia in a teacher development course for continuing professional development (CPD). These in-service teachers took a 30-hour course that included both the development of their capacities as testers and training in the use of technology for education. Results indicated that when appropriate training is provided and teachers know when, why and how to test, the effect of technology diminishes (García Laborda & Litzler, 2011).

B. Looking at Computers

The results were obtained through experimentation of software and, above all, interface information. In some papers, the research group found that students would be able to adapt to the new test delivery system (Figs. 1 and 2).

Figure 1. High school student takes the IB PAU (2008 version).

Figure 2. Testing conditions in the IB PAU (2008 version).

As can be seen, the development of the testing interface (Fig. 3), the buttons and the navigation elements were reduced and also followed the design principles stated by Fulcher in 2003. This interface design has been informed in a number of papers (García Laborda, 2009).
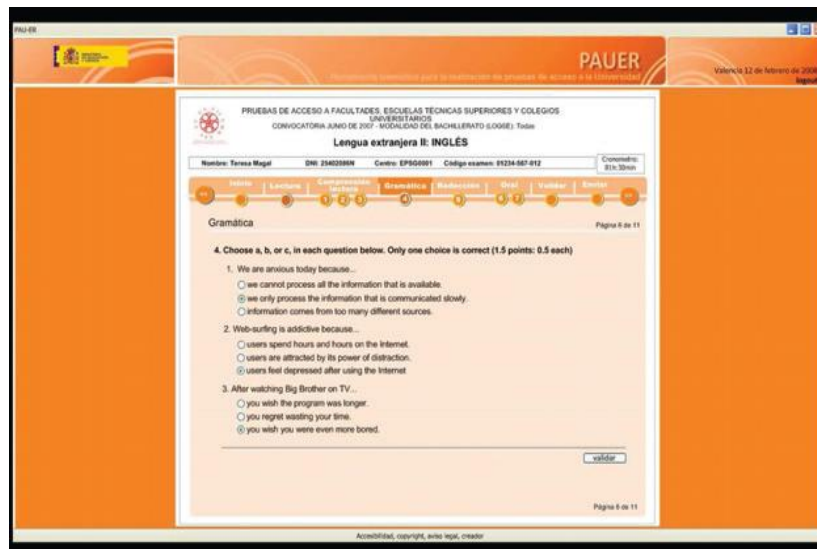
Figure 3. PAULEX interface design.

The most significant advances, however, were made in relation to the students' adaptation to the computer-delivered language testing. A number of studies evinced that, although students may face the test for the first time, they can adapt easily to most tasks. Overall, the ones to which students adapt more easily are those that can be responded with a tick or response selection (such as multiple choice tasks). Field studies also found that, despite the teachers' attitudes, most difficulties were associated to writing. Other aspects of research included the use of mobiles for testing through a testing emulator (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Mobile testing through the use of emulators.

VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

The final goal of this project was to obtain evidence of the processes and contexts in which the onlining of the University Entrance Examination (PAU) could be feasible. This research was predominantly practical. Practicality, which was not considered initially, came across as a valuable asset because the crisis in the last two years also requires the limitation of test production and delivery costs. Additionally, practicality was considered because educational boards may also consider the costs of a face to face speaking test done either in the students' high school or in the universities location.

Testing implications

Computer tests should reduce costs but also improve the construct validity in relation to formats and constructs that are used today. However, although the four different skills to be assessed would be interrelated, they also need to be analyzed through factor analysis and intersection correlation when the official trial tests begin (if ever).

VII. Conclusions

Our project and its related studies showed that it is possible and reliable to implement an Internet-based PAU. However, this study can only be considered a first approach and the final validation may depend to a large extent on the regional educational testing boards' interest in trialing, redesigning and implementing the testing platform and test construct in a near future. Thus, a genuine belief in the tremendous possibilities of this test delivery system is indispensable. That means that much work still needs to be done. The project, the most ambitious one in Spain to this date, requires both a technical and research continuation that in this period of national crisis seems too difficult to achieve. Testing advances require an expert definition of the construct with the integration of different items and skills. Since developing automatic scores in writing and, especially, speaking seems too distant for now, professional training is necessary (Amengual Pizarro, 2006). Finally, the limited number of projects of this type in Spain, however, may be a reason to continue research in this field.

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A Novel Approach for the Development of Communicative Competence in English in a Blended Learning Context

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Abstract—**This paper presents the ongoing work carried out by the research group ATLAS from the UNED in its most recent project I-AGENT (Intelligent Adaptive Generic English Tutor). The aim is to combine face-to-face classes with individual and collaborative work carried out using innovative ICALL (Intelligent Computer Assisted Language Learning) software. The limitations in the type of learning which can be achieved using a computer can be directly addressed with the presence of personal interaction in the classroom. Thus, activities do not have to follow a set structure of selecting just one answer, but can offer a limitless array of openness, given that there is a human tutor who can revise them. Peer feedback and collaborative activities are also a fundamental part of the learning process and all of these different methodologies are integrated in order to guide the student through the scaffolding structure of the course. The units follow the story of a person through different situations to which the student can easily relate, and the intercultural aspects of learning a second language are highlighted with each scenario. Each part of the computer-based work is consolidated in face-to-face sessions, and these deal directly with the communicative aspects which would be difficult to test purely electronically, such as free speaking and writing. The student is informed of the learning which will take place in each unit in the form of *can-do* statements taken from the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2001).**

Index Terms—**I-CALL, blended learning, CEFR, collaborative work**

I. Introduction

The development of ICALL (Intelligent Computer Assisted Language Learning) systems presents many challenges (Heilman & Eskenazi, 2006). There are several design and implementation issues related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies in instructional systems. ICALL programs must be able to be generic, that is, it must be possible to adapt new content into the original structure in order to expand the course or to change the information contained within it. Systems must be built for reuse and reapplication, without having to repeat the initial effort. Second, there are pedagogical and associated cognitive issues (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). ICALL must be able to model the learning situation to some degree of scaffolding, so that it is possible to gain some insight into the progress achieved in the learning process and adapt the materials developed to the needs of each individual learner. The designers are not typically the instructors who use the system, but they must anticipate the changing needs of the curriculum and the students. They must also embed sophisticated technology in a computing environment which is usable by those who do not understand technology.

ATLAS (Artificial Intelligence Techniques for Linguistic Application)[1] has attempted to focus on each of these dimensions in the development of the I-AGENT system (Intelligent Adaptive Generic English Tutor) (Bárcena & Read, 2011). ATLAS is a multidisciplinary group of researchers from Linguistics, Pedagogy and Computer Science and belongs to UNED (www.uned.es). The group has been researching ICALL for many years and has worked on the development of several systems, the latest of which is I-AGENT. The most important characteristic of the group is the focus on linguistic application. AI is used to support the development of courses which have an extensive underlying

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pedagogic and cognitive base. Many of the activities present an AI scaffolding structure: if the student does not achieve a certain percentage of correct answers, the system will take him/her to extra activities in order to reinforce some particular aspect of grammar which has been shown to be weak or problematic. I-AGENT is a blended learning or hybrid system (Read & Bárcena, 2010) which tries to bridge some of the weaker characteristics of ICALL by supplementing the limited array of activities with the presence of a human instructor in face-to-face language classes. A teacher and other students can provide the answer to the limitations which hinder language software for the analysis of unrestricted student linguistic production. I-AGENT has been designed to take students from an A2 level of English to a B1[2] in nine units following an identical AI structure; thus, it could easily be extended to more units or different levels of English below or above those mentioned. The interface for the student and the instructor is a very attractive and simple to use version of Moodle 2.0 with a definite intuitive nature.

II. I-AGENT

A. Project Goals and Design Principles

The theoretical framework in I-AGENT combines individual and collaborative constructivist principles and practices (Read & Bárcena, 2010), using Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) (Halliday, 2005) and the CEFR's (Council of Europe, 2001) domain models, and it is implemented in ICALL architecture.

The CEFR is the most widely accepted reference for language pedagogy nowadays and has an increasing influence in the learning of languages in European countries. It provides the foundations for a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and curricular strategies, and the necessary tools for proficiency assessment. Behind this document there is the widespread functional and communicative perspective of human language. It follows an action-oriented approach which takes into account environmental, cognitive, volitional and emotional resources, as well as the abilities specific to a learner as an individual and a social agent. We believe that the lack of underlying pedagogic principles for which the CEFR has been criticized (Komorowska, 2004) can be complemented with the depth of linguistic analysis present in SFL.[3] In SFL, form matches function, extended contextual evidence is incorporated, and language is seen as constantly changing contexts of situation, so meanings are not fixed, but constantly negotiated. A text is the smallest analysable unit as "for a linguist, to describe language without accounting for text is sterile; to describe text without relating it to language is vacuous" (Halliday, 1985: 10). The length of the text is not important and it can be either spoken or written; the important factor is that it is a harmonious collection of meanings appropriate to its context.

The system functionality presents the integration of prototypical communicative language competence in the classroom with ICALL software, which is used to enable a student to apply and extend it. Each software activity has its counterpart in the classroom (Bárcena, Arús & Rodríguez Arancón, 2010). The results of the computer-based work are subsequently consolidated in face-to-face sessions and vice-versa. In this process of blended learning, the student undertakes a series of learning stages either using a computer or in the classroom, as he/she progresses through the materials and shows (or not) evidence of learning. The class sessions focus on two aspects: the learning aspects that are most challenging for computational implementation; and teacher feedback depending on computer-based performance.

Our aim is to create an interactive multimedia environment that can be used to supplement normal classroom instruction. The environment will assist second language learners by providing them with opportunities for guided practice and instruction with a variety of discourse tasks while giving tutorial assistance to help them develop both general and specialised communicative competence. The environment will also help the language teacher by providing another set of supplementary learning tools and activities, a means of monitoring students' learning and performance, a resource for teaching that supports many levels and components of language skill development.

Another of the project's design principles is the control that the students have over their learning: every unit starts with some information about what they are going to learn and finishes with the aspects of interaction that they have improved. This information is presented in the form of *can-dos* taken from the CEFR. This aspect of control on the part of the student is also evident at the Lexicogrammar stage, as each individual student can decide whether he/she prefers a brief grammatical explanation about the following grammatical concepts they are going to work on, or a longer and more formal linguistic insight.

B. A Sample Unit

The course is divided into 9 units to take students from an A2 to a B1 level of English (CEFR). It is designed to take 125 hours of study or 4 European credits in a combination of ICALL units and face-to-face sessions.

The student starts working at home with Moodle. The first part of the course is a Warm-up using Internet resources or links to become familiar with the topic of the unit. The next step is a Listening activity in the form of audio or video. All of these multimedia materials follow the story of a person who goes to work abroad. He applies for a job, has an interview, gets the job, meets his colleagues at the office, goes for lunch, gets promoted, etc. The intention is that the students feel identified with the characters and find real-life situations which can be useful for them in the future. What follows is an Oral Comprehension activity with closed questions and automatic feedback from the software system. If

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[2] A2 and B1 are two of the levels referenced in the CEFR. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp (accessed 1/10/2011).
[3] http://www.isfla.org/Systemics/ (accessed 1/10/2011).

the student fails to achieve 70% of correct answers, the audio/video is made available again to the student. After playing it, a different set of Comprehension questions is presented to the student. If a 70% of correct answers is still not achieved, the student can access the script of the audio/video and proceed to complete a Listening Comprehension activity. A list of Vocabulary follows and the student can listen to the pronunciation and find the explanation of the meaning of the term in English by clicking on the word on the screen. At this point, there is a STOP in the system and the student has the first face-to-face class.

The classes are designed for a period of 90 minutes each. The teacher has a progress report of the interaction of each of the students with the I-AGENT system and also a class plan. This first class will be dedicated to Listening Comprehension, Speaking and Vocabulary, all of which are related to the specific unit they are working on.

The student can then continue the work on Moodle and go to the Lexicogrammar section based on SFL. The system will again automatically evaluate the answers and expect a 70% level of correctness. It it is not achieved, the student can try again with or without a more thorough grammatical explanation. A different set of questions will be presented and if the 70% of right answers is not attained, the scaffolding mechanism of the system starts. The student will be taken back to a different section of questions addressing a more simple aspect of grammar related to that which is presenting difficulties. Each type of error is addressed with a different type of grammatical scaffolding, as I-AGENT tries to emulate what an experienced teacher would do in a similar case. The activities are designed to encourage the students to feel that they are not just practicing the grammatical aspects but solving real-life situations. The aim is to promote higher-order thinking (Meyer, 2003). Again, the student cannot go any further before the following class.

The second face-to-face session revises the Lexicogrammar aspects, Speaking and Vocabulary. As before, the teacher already knows the level of difficulty encountered in Moodle by each of the students in the group and will attempt to solve all queries in the classroom with direct explanations and activities on the topics.

The student can then move forward to the Culture section in Moodle at home. This section is designed to make the students think about the way people work and live in other parts of the world and debunk many of the preconceived ideas they might harbor about other countries. The section is written in a *food for thought* style and has closed activities with automatic evaluation and also open-ended questions which the system will send to the teacher to be evaluated. Again, the system will not allow the student to progress without another face-to-face session.

The third class is dedicated to Speaking and a Culture review in which the students will work on the same issues presented to them in the software unit. The work on the Moodle system continues with a collaborative project done from home. The type of project varies and can take the form of a WebQuest, a wiki or a PowerPoint presentation, depending on the unit. This work carried out in small groups is created to be presented in the last face-to face session to the rest of the class.

The last class, dedicated to the presentations of the work carried out by the different groups, also offers time for self-assessment and peer assessment. You can see a complete unit in APPENDIX A.

III. SAMPLE UNIT

UNIT 1

Notion: People and their professional lives
Function: Introducing people // Causing a good impression // Activity descriptions // Eliciting and providing precise information

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UNIT LEARNING GOALS

In this unit you'll learn how to do the following in English better:
- Elicit and provide information from/into short, simple notes and texts relating to basic personal and professional matters (reading & writing-A2).
- Understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g., very basic personal and family information, employment), provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated (overall listening comprehension-A2).
- Give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list (overall oral production-A2).

WARMING UP ACTIVITY:

Let's get started! Study the following web sites to warm up your linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence regarding food (and eating) before you start the unit:

1. Links related to descriptions of people from all over the world:

http://www.talkeasy.co.uk/link/materials/esl11.html → this site provides essential vocabulary for the description of either oneself or others. All people's complete descriptions should cover physical and personality features.

http://www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/descriptions-people.htm → a site with idioms related to personality, character and description of people. These idioms are very useful to learn but they must be used with great precaution since some of them are rather colloquial and hence inappropriate for standard job seeking situations (interviews, etc.).

http://www.essortment.com/all/humancharacteri_riat.htm → a short article about cultural perspectives on human characteristics and behaviour.

2. Links about the professional world in different cultures:

http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-job-descriptions.cfm → this site deals with job descriptions so it is very useful to describe your past/current job or any other job you are familiar with or would like to have. It can also be used to structure an effective job advertisement.

http://www.eslflow.com/jobsandtimelessonplans.html → a collection of sites with vocabulary and activities related to the professional world.

http://www.articlesbase.com/leadership-articles/decoding-the-workplace-communication-differences-between-the-sexes-1896324.html → an interesting article on communication within the two sexes: professional communication with men and women.

http://www.essaydepot.com/documents/cultural-differences-between-people-in-communication/8 → a few articles on topics related to cultural differences, such as intercultural communication in the workplace.

3. Links about CVs:

http://www.businessballs.com/curriculum.htm → a site with tips on how to write an effective CV

http://www.cvtips.com/resumes-and-cvs/cv-example.html → a list of CV templates for different types of jobs for different professional areas and purposes.

4. Links about looking for a job:

http://www.wikihow.com/Get-a-Job → steps to consider when looking for a job.

http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-147-Changing-Jobs-The-Top-5-Things-to-Consider-When-Looking-for-a-New-Job/ → a site with tips and reflections for the job seeker.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epcc9X1aS7o&feature=fvw → this is just one of many videos on what to do at job interviews in order to cause a good impression and be the sucessful candidate.

http://blog.penelopetrunk.com/2009/03/06/5-things-to-do-when-youre-unemployed-hint-its-not-job-hunting/ → an alternative to job hunting – tips for the unemployed.

Section: Ac-0

Today, at home, Peter Read (a young British economist who has recently moved to Chicago) is reading the newspaper. He finds an interesting job advertisement:

Are you motivated and ambitious?
IBS is the company for you!

I. WE ARE LOOKING FOR A

Business Development Manager

Duration: 12 months

Location: Chicago, Illinois, USA

POSITION REQUIREMENTS:

Education:
- Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration.
- Master's Degree in Business (MBA) would be a plus.

Knowledge and Skills:
- 5- 10 years of experience.
- Native English speaker and high level of proficiency in Spanish.

Personal Qualities:
- A vivacious and outgoing personality.
- A diplomatic, confident, and hardworking person.
- Ability to solve problems in a quick and efficient manner.

IBS is an Equal Opportunities Employer and welcomes applications from all types of people.

For further details and an application form, please contact the Human Resources Department:

Contact Information:

Jane Thompson
jthompson@ibs.com
IBS Headquarters
10952 E 16th St.
Chicago, Illinois, 60616

Peter thinks he is the suitable candidate so he decides to go to the company. Later on that day, he enters the secretary of the Head of Human Resources' office. Watch the video of their conversation: http://atlas.uned.es/flash/JobInterview.swf

Take a look at the personal information form that Peter has filled out:

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

1. Last Name:	Read		
2. First Name:	Peter	**3. Middle Name:**	Francis
4. Birth Date:	March 16,1969	**5. Place of Birth:**	London, UK
6. Mailing Address:	4286 West Division St, Chicago IL 60651		
7. Phone No.:	(708) 556-2199	**8. Cell Phone:**	(614) 296-3621
9. Nationality:	British		
10. Social Security Number:	458-859-6965		
11. Marital Status:	Single ✓ Married ____ Separated ____ Widow(er) _____		
12. Father's Name:	Peter	**13. Father's Occupation:**	Clerk
14. Mother's Name:	Jane	**15. Mother's Occupation:**	Accountant
16. Indicate whether you have the following item that may be needed for the job:	**a. Driver's License:** Yes ✓ _____ No _____	**b. Private Vehicle:** Yes ✓ No _____	
17. Are you an American citizen?	Yes_____	No _____ ✓ _____	
18. For non American citizens:	**Work Permit:**	Yes ✓ _____	No _____
19. Education:	B.Sc. in Business Administration (University of Bath) and an MBA (London School of Economics).		
20. Work Experience:	10 years in different multinational organisations.		
21. Current Employment Status:	Unemployed		
22. Salary Expectations:	$30,000 per year		
23. Availability:	Immediate		
24. Desired Work Schedule:	Full Time __✓_ Temporary ___ Part time___ Permanent___		
25. Languages:	✓ English (Mother tongue) ✓ French (Basic) ____ German ____ Portuguese ____ Italian ✓ Spanish (Fluent) ____ Others (specify)..............................		

Following that visit, the secretary (Sally Cole) phones Peter for an appointment. Watch the video of their conversation:
http://atlas.uned.es/flash/PhoneCall12.swf

The next day, Peter goes for an interview with the Head of Human Resources, Ms. Thompson. Watch the following two videos of the conversations he has with her secretary:

http://atlas.uned.es/flash/SeatWaitingRoom.swf

Ms. Thompson arrives a few minutes later and asks her secretary for Peter: Watch the video of their brief conversation:
http://atlas.uned.es/flash/ShowHimIn.swf

Finally, Ms. Thompson interviews Peter. Watch a video of a fragment of the interview:
http://atlas.uned.es/flash/FinalInterview.swf

Activity for this section:

You are talking to a friend of Peter's who wants to know about his progress looking for job. Answer the following questions based upon what you have read and seen:

1. Where has Peter found the information about the job?
    A) In a letter from a friend.
    B) In a newspaper advertisement.
    C) On the radio.

2. While at IBS, Peter wants to…
    A) apply for a job.
    B) spell his name.
    C) tell Sally his personal history.

3. Sally asks Peter to fill in a form with information about…
    A) his career.
    B) his personal requirements.
    C) how he was brought up.

4. Who is going to interview Peter?
    A) The CEO of the company.
    B) Sally Cole.
    C) The Head of Human Resources.

5. Peter has experience in…
    A) business development.
    B) international business.
    C) hardworking business.

ANSWERS: 1-b, 2-a, 3-a, 4-c, 5-b

Section: Ac-1
Activity for this section:

You are talking to a friend of Peter's who wants to know about his progress looking for job. Answer the following questions based upon what you have read and seen:

1. Sally Cole asks Peter to…
    A) read his name.
    B) write his name.
    C) spell his name.

2. Sally Cole tells Peter that…
    A) she will send him an email as soon as possible.
    B) she will phone him.
    C) she will tell him when he has to come back.

3. Peter has an interview with the Head of Human Resources at…
    A) eleven o'clock.
    B) half past eleven.
    C) ten o'clock.

4. Ms. Thompson asks Sally if…
    A) Peter knows when he has to come.
    B) Peter is waiting to have his interview.
    C) she has called him.

5. Peter is…
    A) English and a Londoner.
    B) American but he lives in London.
    C) English and born in Bath.

ANSWERS: 1-c, 2-c, 3-a, 4-b, 5-a

Section: Ac-2
Activity for this section:

You are talking to a friend of Peter's who wants to know about his progress looking for job. Answer the following questions based upon what you have read and seen:

1. Ms Thompson asks Peter for his…
    A) job, name, nationality and hobbies.
    B) nationality, job and favourite leisure activities
    C) job, nationality and work experience.

2. Peter answers Ms Thompson saying that…
    A) he is an expert in international business expansion.
    B) he is an expert at business development.
    C) he is very interested in business.

3. Ms Thompson asks Peter what…
    A) she can do for him.
    B) he is interested in.
    C) he can do for the company.

4. Peters tells Ms Thompson that…
    A) he has been working hard for 15 years in international business.
    B) he has had a hard experience in international business.
    C) he is a person who doesn't mind working hard.

5. Peter thinks that he …
    A) is a good candidate for the job.
    B) has got few possibilities to get the job.
    C) has to prepare a good CV for future opportunities.

ANSWERS: 1-c, 2-a, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a

Section: Ac-2
Activity for this section:

Most universities follow a three-stage study system, leading to the following titles: Bachelor/Master/Doctorate. After studying three or four years at university you get a Bachelor's degree. You can continue your education for one or two more years to get a Master's degree and, if you like research, you can get a doctorate degree or Ph.D.

What do the following university degree acronyms stand for?

Ph. D.	B. Sc.	M.B.A.	B. A.
M. Sc.	B.B.A	M. Eng. M. A.	B.SC.B.A.

Master of Arts	a.
Master of Science	b.
Bachelor of Business Administration	c.
Philosophy Doctorate	d.
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	e.
Master of Engineering	f.
Bachelor of Arts	g.
Master of Business Administration	h.
Bachelor of Science	i.

ANSWERS: a. M.A.; b. M.Sc.; c. B.B.A.; d. Ph.D.; e. B.SC.B.A.; f. M.Eng.; g. B.A.; h. M.B.A.; i. B.Sc.

Section: Ac-3
Activity for this section:

Peter Read found information on how to contact IBS in the job advertisement. IBS provided the name of the contact person, her e-mail address, the company's address, telephone number and fax. Let's see if you know how to read phone numbers, e-mail addresses, web pages, etc. in English.

Read the sentences below out loud and choose the correct answer for the underlined parts. Note that phonetic transcriptions are included between diagonal lines/(slashes):

1. IBS's telephone number is 555 694 33 44
    a. Five five five six nine four double three double four
    b. Five hundred and fifty five, six hundred and ninety four, thirty-three, forty-four

2. Ms. Thompson's e-mail address is jthompson@ibs.com
    a. /dʒ eɪ / Thompson at /aɪ / /bɪ / /es/ dot /kɔ m/
    b. Thompson at / aɪ / / bɪ / /si:/ dot / si:/ /ɔ ʊ / /em/

3. Please, send all packages to P.O. Box 104
    a. /pi:/ / / ɔ ʊ / box one oh four

b. /pi:/ / ɔ ʊ / box one hundred and four

4. Chicago, Illinois, zip code is 60610
    a. Six oh six one oh
    b. Sixty thousand six hundred and ten

5. IBS's web page is www.ibs.com
    a. three /'dʌ bəl jʊ :z/ dot /aɪ / /bɪ / /es/ dot / si:/ /ɔ ʊ / /em/
    b. /'dʌ bəl jʊ :/ /'dʌ bəl jʊ :/ /'dʌ bəl jʊ :/ dot /aɪ / /bɪ / /es/ dot /kɔ m/

ANSWERS: 1. a; 2. a; 3. a; 4. a; 5. b

Section: Ac-4
Activity for this section:

[Here if Ac-3 is answered incorrectly the student must be presented with the same test after listening to the recordings of the five sentences]

Listen to an operator from IBS giving the contact information you are being questioned on:
http://atlas.uned.es/Audio/IBS_Phone_Number.mp3
http://atlas.uned.es/Audio/MsThompsonEmail.mp3
http://atlas.uned.es/Audio/POBos104.mp3
http://atlas.uned.es/Audio/IBS_Web_Address.mp3

Now answer the questions again:

1. IBS's telephone number is 555 694 33 44
    a. Five five five six nine four double three double four
    b. Five hundred and fifty five, six hundred and ninety four, thirty-three, forty-four

2. Ms. Thompson's e-mail address is jthompson@ibs.com
    a. /dʒ eɪ / Thompson at /aɪ / /bɪ / /es/ dot /kɔ m/
    b. Thompson at / aɪ / / bɪ / /si:/ dot / si:/ /ɔ ʊ / /em/
3. Please, send all packages to P.O. Box 104
    a. /pi:/ / / ɔ ʊ / box one oh four
    b. /pi:/ / / ɔ ʊ / box one hundred and four

4. Chicago, Illinois, zip code is 60610
    a. Six oh six one oh
    b. Sixty thousand six hundred and ten

5. IBS's web page is www.ibs.com
    a. three /'dʌ bəl jʊ :z/ dot /aɪ / /bɪ / /es/ dot / si:/ /ɔ ʊ / /em/
    b. /'dʌ bəl jʊ :/ /'dʌ bəl jʊ :/ /'dʌ bəl jʊ :/ dot /aɪ / /bɪ / /es/ dot /kɔ m/

ANSWERS: 1. a; 2. a; 3. a; 4. a; 5. b

Section: Ac-5
Activity for this section:

Peter Read was so nervous when he received IBS's phone call about the job interview that he forgot to write down the time. Now he is going to telephone IBS to check the time for his job interview the following day. Complete the telephone conversation filling in the gaps with the correct option. Remember to use formal language.

Sally Colle, IBS   Peter Read

Good Morning, IBS. (1) Can I _____ you?
a) help b) attend

Yes, please. (2) _____ to Ms Thompson,
Head of the Human Resources Department.
a) I'd like to speak b) I want to speak

Who (3) _____, please?
a) are you? b) is calling?

Yes, of course. (4) _____ Peter Read.
a) My name is b) I am called

Ok. Mr. Read. (5) _____ Ms. Thompsons
is busy at the moment.
a) I'm sorry b) I'm afraid

(6) _____ about an appointment I have at
ABS tomorrow. I'd just like to check the time.
a) I call b) I'm calling

Well, I've got Ms Thompson's (7) _____ for
tomorrow here. Um, let me see. Yes, your
interview is tomorrow at 11:00 am, Mr. Read.
a) plans b) schedule

Ok. Tomorrow at 11 am. Thank you very much.

You (8) _____, Mr. Read. Bye.
a) 're welcome b) 're OK

Goodbye.

ANSWERS: 1. a; 2. a; 3. b; 4. a; 5. b; 6. b; 7. b; 8. a

Section: Ac-6
Activity for this section:

Peter Read is getting to know the people he is going to work with. Will he feel comfortable with his colleagues in the office? This is not always easy, as we are all very different. Look at the list of different personalities and think if these characteristics are generally good or bad. Then write a + (positive) or a – (negative) before the adjectives to describe the character of a person in a working environment.

A natural communicator	Indecisive
Ability to make well thought out decisions	Persuasive
Able to multitask	Hard-working
Selfish	Efficient
Adaptable	Loyal
Cool under pressure	Responsible
Creative	Motivated
Envious	Narrow-minded
Dedicated	Leader
Lazy	Negotiator
Diplomatic	Open minded
Energetic	Well-organized
Unpunctual	Team player
Flexible	Cruel

ANSWERS:

+	A natural communicator
+	Ability to make well thought out decisions
+	Able to multitask
-	Selfish
+	Adaptable
+	Cool under pressure
+	Creative
-	Envious
+	Dedicated

-	Lazy
+	Diplomatic
+	Energetic
-	Unpunctual
+	Flexible
+	Hard-working
+	Efficient
+	Loyal
+	Responsible

+	Motivated
-	Narrow-minded
+	Leader
+	Negotiator
+	Open minded
-	Indecisive
+	Persuasive
+	Team player
-	Cruel
+	Well-organized

Section: Ac-7
Activity for this section:

Most universities follow a three-stage study system, leading to the following titles: Bachelor/Master/Doctorate. After studying three or four years at university you get a Bachelor's degree. You can continue your education for one or two more years to get a Master's degree and, if you like research, you can get a doctorate degree or Ph.D. Write the following acronyms in full:

M.A.	
M.Sc.	
B.B.A	
Ph.D.	
B.SC.B.A.	
M.Eng.	
B.A.	
M.B.A.	
B.Sc.	

ANSWERS

M.A.	Master of Arts
M.Sc.	Master of Science
B.B.A	Bachelor of Business Administration
Ph.D.	Philosophy Doctorate
B.SC.B.A.	Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
M.Eng.	Master of Engineering
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
M.B.A.	Master of Business Administration
B.Sc.	Bachelor of Science

Section: Ac-8
Activity for this section:

Peter Read found information on how to contact IBS in the job advertisement. IBS provided the name of the contact person, her e-mail address, the company's address, telephone number and fax. Let's see if you know how to read phone numbers, e-mail addresses, web pages, etc. in English.

A. Telephone numbers. Write out these phone numbers and practice reading them out loud.
    a.   0075-226-6697
    b.   284-36-59710
    c.   37-9-2276313
    d.   1 (312) 555 694 3344
    e.   1 (312) 555 694 4433

ANSWERS

    a.   double oh seven five, double two six, double six nine seven OR oh oh seven five, two two six, six six nine seven OR zero zero seven five, two two six, six six nine seven
    b.   two eight four, three six, five nine seven one oh OR two eight four, three six, five nine seven one zero
    c.   three seven, nine, double two seven six three one three OR three seven, nine, two two seven six three one three
    d.   one, three one two, five five five, six nine four, double three double four OR one, three one two, five five five, six nine four, three three four four
    e.   one, three one two, five five five, six nine four, four four three three OR one, three one two, five five five, six nine four, double four double three

B. How do you read e-mail and web pages addresses?
    1.   My personal e-mail is peter.read@yahoo.com
        a.   Peter dot Read at yahoo dot com
        b.   Peter point Read at yahoo point com

    2.   The company's official web site is www.bmw.org
        a.   three /ˈdʌ bəl jʊ :z/ dot /bɪ / /em/ /ˈdʌ bəl jʊ :/ dot /ɔ : ʳg/
        b.   /ˈdʌ bəl jʊ :/ /ˈdʌ bəl jʊ :/ /ˈdʌ bəl jʊ :/ dot /bɪ / /em/ /ˈdʌ bəl jʊ :/ dot /ɔ : ʳg/

    3.   Maria's e-mail address is maria.smith@hotmail.com
        a.   Maria dot Smith at hotmail dot com
        b.   Maria dot Smith hotmail dot com

ANSWERS: 1. a; 2. b; 3. a

Section: Ac-9
Activity for this section:

Peter Read was so nervous when he received IBS's phone call about the job interview that he forgot to write down the time. Now he is going to telephones IBS to check the time for his job interview next day. Complete the telephone conversation filling the gaps with words or expressions from the box.

I'm calling	is calling?	're welcome	help	my name is	schedule	I'd like to speak	I'm afraid

Sally Colle, IBS **Peter Read**

Good Morning, IBS. (1) Can I _____ you?

Yes, please. (2) _____ to Ms Thompson, head of the Human Resources Department.

May I know who (3) _____

Ok. Mr. Read. (5) _____ Ms. Thompsons is busy at the moment.

Yes, of course. (4) _____ Peter Read.

(6) _____ about an appointment I have at ABS tomorrow. I'd just like to check the time.

Well, I've got Ms Thompsons' (7) _____ for tomorrow here. Um, let me see. Yes, your interview is tomorrow at 11:00 am, Mr Read.

Ok. Tomorrow at 11 am. Thank you very much.

You (8) _____, Mr. Read. Bye.

Good bye.

ANSWERS: 1. help; 2. I'd like to speak to; 3. is calling?; 4. my name is; 5. I'm afraid; 6. I'm calling; 7. Schedule; 9. 're welcome

---

Section: Ac-10
Activity for this section:

Peter Read is getting to know the people he is going to work with. Will he feel comfortable with his colleagues in the office? This is not always easy, as we are all very different. Look at the following adjectives used to describe personality traits and write them next to their definition in the sentences below.

Find the words from the box which correspond to the following descriptions:

confident	energetic	able to multitask	efficient	diplomatic
dynamic	selfish	envious	creative	analytical

1. A logical, rational person: _____
2. A worker characterized by his /her continuous activity and progress: _____
3. Imaginative person who has originality and expressiveness:_____
4. Someone who is very self-assured: _____
5. He/she can do several things at the same time: _____
6. A person who has a lot of energy and enthusiasm: _____
7. Someone who cares only about himself/herself rather than about other people:_____
8. A worker who can do something well without wasting time, energy or money: _____
9. Someone who wants something that someone else has: _____
10. A person who knows how to deal with people in difficult situations: _____

ANSWERS: 1. analytical; 2. dynamic; 3. creative; 4. confident; 5. able to multitask; 6. energetic; 7. selfish; 8. efficient; 9. envious; 10. diplomatic

---

Section: Ac-11

When we speak, we mostly do it for either of two basic purposes:
a) to exchange information
b) to negotiate goods and services

When dealing with information, we can either ask for or give that information. If we ask for information, we typically ask a question, e.g. *are you hungry*?; if we give the information, this is typically realized by a statement: *I'm hungry*.

When negotiating goods and services, the choice is the same as above, that is to say, we can either ask for or give them. If we ask for some goods or for a service, the most direct way to do it is by means of a command such as *pass me the salt* or *take me to the airport*. This directness, however, can sound rude in most contexts, which is why we tend to soften our request by using a question: *can you pass me the salt*? or *could you take me to the airport*? When offering to give goods and services, we can again do it quite directly: *Please take a seat* or *help yourself to more chicken*. Being direct is less rude here than in the case of requests, as we are now making an offer. Yet, because we want to make sure we convey a polite image, we often use questions, such as: w*ould you like more chicken?*, or other constructions such as *I'll drive*, etc.

Available via link (Do you want a longer grammatical explication?)

As we have seen, the combination of the notions of information and goods and services with those of giving and demanding results in four basic functions of speech: asking questions, stating, requesting and offering. In this lesson we focus on the third of these four functions, i.e. requesting.
END OF EXTRA THEORY

When requesting someone to give us something or to do something for us we can use the following forms:

a) A question, typically of the *can you…* or *could you* type, as seen above. Remember that *could you…?* is more polite than *can you…?* so use *can you…?* when making trivial requests, especially when your interlocutor is someone you know. Using the more polite form *could* on those occasions could sound pedantic. Therefore, we make requests such as: *can you pass me the salt*? or *can you unlock the door?* and *could I borrow a euro? or could you tell me how to get to…?* (to a stranger in the street).

b) There are other more polite questions to make requests, which we use when we think that our request could meet some resistance, e.g. *do you think I could borrow your car this evening? I was wondering if you wouldn't mind helping me with my homework* (this is an indirect question). Remember that the longer your request form is, the more polite it will normally sound.

c) A command, typically used when the request is very trivial and we know the other person well. The force of the command is softened by accompanying it with *please* or *will you*?: *sign here; please*, *close the door, will you?*

It is important to know not only how to make a request but also how to respond to one. When giving an affirmative response, typical realizations are: *sure, certainly* (in response to more formal requests)*, of course* (if you want to stress your will to satisfy the request) or (only for services, not for goods) *no problem*. When we feel we can't comply with the request, we need to make sure our refusal does not create an embarrassing situation. We need therefore to use a more polite expression than for affirmative answers, such as: *I'm afraid I can't* (ideally followed by a reason): *because…*

Activity for this section:

Now let's complete the following fragments of conversation that are typically heard in working environments. Please use the same structure as in the examples provided:

Note that the activities have been ordered in increasing degree of politeness.

1. Ex. Sign/here: Sign here, please.
a) ...Follow/me.
b) …Fill in/form.
c) …Meet/me/noon.
d) …Take/seat.

2. Ex. Sign/here: Sign here, will you.
a) ...Fax/letter.
b) …Fill in/form.
c) …Meet/me/noon.
d) …Pass/me/folder.

3. Ex. Sign/here: Can you sign here?
a) ...Fax/letter.
b) …Fill in/form.
c) …Meet/me/noon.
d) …Pass/me/folder.

4. Ex. Put/me/through to Human Resources: Could you put me through to Human Resources?

a) ...Fax/letter/for me.
b) …Fill in/form.
c) …Meet/me/noon.
d) …Ask/her to come to my office.

5. Ex. I/borrow/your laptop: Do you think I could borrow your laptop?
a) …I/use/your phone.
b) …you/meet my client.
c) …I/take/the day off.
d) …you/change/shifts/with me?

6. Ex. I/borrow/your laptop: I was wondering if I could borrow your laptop.
a) …I/use/your phone.
b) …you/meet my client.
c) …I/take/the day off.
d) …you/change/shifts/with me?

ANSWERS

1.
  a. Follow me, please.
  b. Fill in this/the form, please.
  c. Meet me at noon, please.
  d. Take a seat, please.

2
  a. Fax this letter, will you?
  b. Fill in this/the form, will you?
  c. Meet me at noon, will you?
  d. Pass me that folder, will you?

3
  a. Can you fax this letter?
  b. Can you fill in this form?
  c. Can you meet me at noon?
  d. Can you pass me the folder?

4

5
  a. Could you fax this letter for me?
  b. Could you fill in this form?
  c. Could you meet me at noon?
  d. Could you ask her to come to my office?

  a. Do you think I could use your phone?
  b. Do you think you could meet my client?
  c. Do you think I could take the day off?
  d. Do you think you could change shifts with me?

6
  a. I was wondering if I could use your phone.
  b. I was wondering if you could meet my client.
  c. I was wondering if I could take the day off.
  d. I was wondering if you could change shifts with me.

Section: Ac-12

When we speak, we mostly do it for either of two basic purposes:
a) to exchange information
b) to negotiate goods and services

When dealing with information, we can either ask for or give that information. If we ask for information, we typically ask a question, e.g. *are you hungry*?; if we give the information, this is typically realized by a statement: *I'm hungry*.

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Available via link (Do you want a longer grammatical explication?)

As we have seen, the combination of the notions of information and goods and services with those of giving and demanding results in four basic functions of speech: asking questions, stating, underlined requesting and offering. In this lesson we focus on the third of these four functions, i.e. requesting.
END OF EXTRA THEORY

When requesting someone to give us something or to do something for us we can use the following forms:

a)	A question, typically of the *can you…* or *could you* type, as seen above. Remember that *could you…?* is more polite than *can you…?* so use *can you…?* when making trivial requests, especially when your interlocutor is someone you know. Using the more polite form *could* on those occasions could sound pedantic. Therefore, we make requests such as: *can you pass me the salt?* or *can you unlock the door?* and *could I borrow a euro? or could you tell me how to get to…?* (to a stranger in the street).
b)	There are other more polite questions to make requests, which we use when we think that our request could meet some resistance, e.g. *do you think I could borrow your car this evening? I was wondering if you wouldn't mind helping me with my homework* (this is an indirect question). Remember that the longer your request form is, the more polite it will normally sound.
c)	A command, typically used when the request is very trivial and we know the other person well. The force of the command is softened by accompanying it with *please* or *will you*?: *sign here; please, close the door, will you?*

It is important to know not only how to make a request but also how to respond to one. When giving an affirmative response, typical realizations are: *sure, certainly* (in response to more formal requests), *of course* (if you want to stress your will to satisfy the request) or (only for services, not for goods) *no problem*. When we feel we can't comply with the request, we need to make sure our refusal does not create an embarrassing situation. We need therefore to use a more polite expression than for affirmative answers, such as: *I'm afraid I can't* (ideally followed by a reason): *because…*

Remember to follow the structure given in the examples:
1. Ex. Sign/here: Sign here, please.
a) ...File/documents.
b) …Book/meeting room.
c) …Call/in/applicant.
d) …Find/me/Mr. Brown's phone number.

2. Ex. Sign/here: Sign here, will you.
a) ...Fax/letter.
b) …File/documents.
c) …Book/meeting room.
d) …Pass/me/folder.

3. Ex. Sign/here: Can you sign here?
a) ...Fax/letter.
b) …File/documents.
c) …Book/meeting room.
d) …Pass/me/folder.

4. Ex. Put/ me/ through to Human Resources: Could you put me through to Human Resources?

a) …File/documents.
b) …Sign/here.
c) …Find/me/Mr. Brown's phone number.
d) …Ask/her to come to my office.

5. Ex. I/borrow/your laptop: Do you think I could borrow your laptop
a) …You/come to the office/on Saturday morning.
b) …I/use/your computer.
c) …I/schedule an appointment/see her.
d) …you/show/me/where the accounting department is?

6. Ex. I/borrow/your laptop: I was wondering if I could borrow your laptop
a) …You/come to the office/on Saturday morning.
b) …I/use/your computer.
c) …I/schedule an appointment/see her.
d) …you/show/me/where the accounting department is?

ANSWERS:
1.
   a. File the documents, please
   b. Book the meeting room, please
   c. Call in the applicant, please
   d. Find me Mr. Brown's number, please

2
   a. Fax this letter, will you?
   b. File these documents, will you?
   c. Book the meeting room, will you?
   d. Pass me that folder, will you?

3
   a. Can you fax this letter?
   b. Can you file these documents?
   c. Can you book the meeting room?
   d. Can you pass me the folder?

4
   a. Could you file these documents?

b. Could you sign here?
c. Could you find me Mr. Brown's phone number?
d. Could you ask her to come to my office?

5
a. Do you think you could come to the office on Saturday morning?
b. Do you think I could use your computer?
c. Do you think I could schedule an appointment to see her?
d. Do you think you could show me where the accounting department is?

6
a. I was wondering if you could come to the office on Saturday morning.
b. I was wondering if I could use your computer.
c. I was wondering if I could schedule an appointment to see her.
d. I was wondering if you could show me where the accounting department is.

Section: Ac-13

Respond to the following requests as in the examples. If b. contains simply "yes", reply with *sure* or *certainly*, depending on the request's degree of formality; if it says "emphatic yes", then answer with *of course*; if "only for services", then *no problem*, if it contains "No", then *I'm afraid I can't*, plus the cause specified.

Ex. 1   a. File the documents, please
         b. Yes
         Answer: Sure
Ex. 2   a. Do you think I could use your computer?
         b. Yes
         Answer: Certainly
Ex. 3   a. Book the meeting room, will you?
         b. No. Booking application not working
         Answer: I'm afraid I can't. The booking application is not working

1. a. Call in the applicant, please   6. a. Call me when you get to the office, please
    b. Yes   b. No. Not going to the office

2. a. Do you think I could take the day off? 7. a. I was wondering if I could use your phone
    b. Only for services   b. Yes

3. a. Do you think you could attend the meeting in my place?   8. a. Meet me at noon, please
    b. No. Meeting a client   b. Yes

4. a. Do you think I could schedule an appointment to see her? 9. a. Do you think you could come to the office on Saturday morning?
    b. Only for services   b. No. Taking son to school event

5. a. I was wondering if you could show me where the computer department is   10. a. I was wondering if you could stay in the office a little longer today
    b. Emphatic yes   b   Emphatic yes

ANSWERS: 1. Sure: 2. No problem; 3. I'm afraid I can't. I'm meeting a client/I have to meet a client; 4. No problem; 5. Of course; 6. I'm afraid I can't. I'm not going to the office; 7. Certainly; 8. Sure; 9. I'm afraid I can't. I'm taking my son to a school event/I have to take my son to a school event; 10. Of course.

Section: Ac-14

Look at the structure in the following sentences:
I *would* really appreciate it if you *could send* me information about the various options available for investment in IBS or in IBS related firms.
If you *preferred* to invest in mutual funds or bonds, it *would be* simpler in terms of minimum deposit amounts. Now choose the correct option from the ones given:

1. If I lost my job, I… many problems in getting another one.
    a. would have
    b. will have
    c. have
    d. has

2. If I were you…
    a. you'd resign rather than wait to be sacked.
    b. I'd resign rather than wait to be sacked.
    c. I'd have a lot of problems related to you.
    d. we could talk it over.

3. You would be more aware of people's ideas if you … less.
    a. speak
    b. would speak
    c. spoke
    d. will speak

4. If you … the job, you would regret it later.
    a. not take
    b. took not
    c. wouldn't take
    d. didn't take

ANSWERS: 1. a; 2. b; 3. c; 4. d

Section: Ac-15

To express obligation and prohibition in English we also use a series of special verbs, called MODAL VERBS. There are various modal verbs. We use modal verbs before other verbs and in tags and short answers. Modal verbs are not followed by infinitives or participles.

The modal verb used for orders or strong suggestions, advice and opinions is MUST; for example:

You must stop smoking.
You must work hard if you want to get a promotion.

However, if we are giving a less strong suggestion, advice or opinion, we use SHOULD/ SHOULDN'T; for example:

You should be careful with wet floor.
People should arrive on time.
You shouldn't disturb them.

OUGHT TO is similar to SHOULD, but it is a modal followed by TO:

This shop ought to accept credit cards.
People ought to be silent.

Another verb that expresses obligation is HAVE (GOT) TO. It is not a modal verb, but it acts as an auxiliary verb (that is, it never takes do/does/did). HAVE (GOT) TO is very similar to MUST to express obligation, but the main difference is that MUST usually expresses the feelings and wishes of the speaker/hearer, and HAVE (GOT) TO often expresses obligations that come from somewhere else.

<u>*Must*</u> *you wear that old shirt?* (Is that what you want?)
Do you <u>*have to*</u> *wear a tie at work?* (Is there a rule?)

POST-IT: We often use SHOULD in questions when we are wondering what to do:
Should I change my job or stay where I am?

We use MUST NOT/ MUSTN'T in prohibitions or negative orders:
You mustn't park in this area.
People must not enter these premises.
We use DO NOT HAVE TO/ DON'T HAVE TO, DO NOT NEED TO/ DON'T NEED TO or NEED NOT to say that something is unnecessary:
Peter doesn't have to work today.
You don't need to pay now. Tomorrow is just fine.

Activity of this section
Which do you think is <u>better</u> in the following contexts: *MUST* or *SHOULD*?
1.   Visitors are reminded that they _____ show a valid passport when boarding.
2.   I really _____ go on a diet. I'll start today!
3.   He thinks men _____ wear jackets and ties at all times.
4.   All employees _____ report to the Human Resources Manager by midday.
5.   You know, I think you _____ take a holiday.
6.   You absolutely _____ check the tyres before you take the car out today.
ANSWERS: 1. must; 2. should; 3. should; 4. must; 5. should; 6. must

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Section: Ac-16
Culture

Job hunting or *job seeking* is the act of looking for <u>employment</u>, due to <u>unemployment</u> or being unhappy with a current position. The immediate goal of job seeking is usually to be invited to a <u>job interview</u> with an <u>employer</u>, which may lead to getting <u>hired</u>. The job hunter or seeker typically first looks for job vacancies or employment opportunities. The most common methods of job hunting are:

- looking through the <u>classified advertisements</u> in <u>newspapers</u>.
- using a private or public <u>employment agency</u> or <u>recruitment agency</u>
- looking on a company's web site for job opportunities, typically via its <u>applicant tracking system</u>
- finding a job through a friend or an extended business or personal network

Contacting as many people as possible is a highly effective way to find a job. It is estimated that 60% or more of all jobs are found through networking. Job recruiters may use online social networking sites for this purpose.

One can also go and hand out <u>résumés</u> or <u>Curriculum Vitae</u> to prospective employers. Another recommended method of job hunting is <u>cold calling</u> or <u>emailing</u> companies that one desires to work for and enquire whether there are any job vacancies.

After finding a desirable job, the next step is to apply for it by replying to the advertisement. This may mean applying through a website, emailing or mailing a hard copy of your résumé to a prospective employer. Once an employer has received your résumé together with those from other candidates, they will make a list of potential employees to be interviewed based on the information provided. Some basic information about an employer should be researched before applying for the job, including their full name, location, web site, business description, etc.

Curriculum vitae is loosely translated as *[the] course of [my] life*. The purpose of a CV is to inform prospective employers of a job seeker's qualifications and experience for a position. Writing a CV is a slow process. It is important to keep in mind the companies that you are sending it too. It is very common for employers in English speaking countries to expect to find information about voluntary work carried out or hobbies and activities which interest you. It is a way to discover more about the sort of person, character and personality of the prospective employee.

Read the following texts and answer the questions:

1.   In XXXXX a CV is short (usually a maximum of 2 sides of <u>A4</u> paper), and therefore contains only a summary of the job seeker's employment history, qualifications and some personal information. It is often updated to change the emphasis of the information according to the particular position the job seeker is applying for. Many CVs contain <u>keywords</u> that potential employers might pick up on and displays the content in the most flattering manner brushing over information like poor grades.
      Which area/country does this text refer to?
      A)   The United Kingdom.   B) Germany.   C) The European Union.

2.   In XXXXX, a CV is used specifically in academic circles and medical careers and is far more comprehensive; the term <u>résumé</u> is used for most recruitment campaigns. A CV elaborates on education to a greater degree than a résumé and is expected to include a comprehensive listing of professional history including every term of employment, academic credential, publication, contribution or significant achievement. In certain professions, it may even include samples of the person's work and may run to many pages.
      Which area/country does this text refer to?
      A)   Australia.   B) The United States and Canada.   C) Portugal.

3. In XXXXX, there has been an attempt to develop a standardized CV model and promoted to ease skilled migration between countries, although this is not widely used in most contexts. It is meant to be just as helpful to employers and education providers as it is to students and job seekers. It was designed to help them understand what people changing between the countries have to offer, whilst overcoming linguistic barriers.
    Which area/country does this text refer to?
    A)   Peru.   B) South Africa.   C) The European Union.

4. Companies in XXXXX prefer not to receive a CV at all in application, but rather produce their own application form which must be completed in applying for any position. Some also allow applicants to attach a CV in support of the application. The reason some companies prefer to process applications this way is to standardize the information they receive, as there can be many variables within a CV and, therefore, the company often does not get all the information they require at application stage.
    Which area/country does this text refer to?
    A)   The United Kingdom.   B) Many places.   C) Russia.

5. In XXXXX, résumés always include a picture of the applicant, and other information, such as religion, resident registration number, family information, military information (for men), and other information often regarded as personal information in the West.
    Which area/country does this text refer to?
    A)   Korea.   B) Japan.   C) Russia.
    ANSWERS: 1 - A, 2 - B, 3 – C, 4 - B, 5 - A.

Section: Ac-17

1. Complete the following texts with the appropriate words:

    A.   In the United _____ (1) and Canada, a CV is used specifically in academic circles and medical careers and is far more comprehensive; the term _____ (2) is used for most recruitment campaigns. A _____ (3) elaborates on education to a greater degree than a résumé and is expected to include a comprehensive listing of professional history including every term of _____ (4), academic credential, publication, contribution or significant achievement. In certain _____ (5), it may even include samples of the person's work and may run to many pages.
        Answers: 1. States; 2. Résumé; 3. CV; 4. Employment; 5. Professions.

    B.   Companies in many countries prefer not to receive a CV at all in application, but rather produce their own application _____ (1) which must be completed in applying for any _____ (2). Some also allow applicants to attach a CV in support of the application. The reason some _____ (3) prefer to process applications this way is to standardize the _____ (4) they receive, as there can be many variables within a CV and, therefore, the company often does not get all the information they _____ (5) at application stage.
        Answers: 1. form; 2. position; 3. companies; 4. information; 5. require.

    C.   In Korea, résumés always include a _____ (1) of the applicant, and other information, such as religion, _____ (2) registration number, family _____ (3), military information (for men), and _____ (4) information often regarded as _____ (5) information in the West.
        Answers: 1. photograph; 2. resident; 3. information; 4. other; 5. personal.

    D.   In the United Kingdom a CV is short (usually a maximum of 2 sides of _____ (1) paper), and therefore contains only a _____ (2) of the job seeker's employment _____ (3), qualifications and some personal information. It is often _____ (4) to change the emphasis of the information according to the particular position the job seeker is applying for. Many CVs contain keywords that potential employers might pick up on and displays the content in the most flattering manner brushing over information like poor _____ (5).
        Answers: 1. A4; 2. summary; 3. history; 4. updated; 5. grades.

    E.   In the European Union, there has been an attempt to develop a standardized CV model and promoted to ease skilled _____ (1) between _____ (2), although this is not widely used in most contexts. It is meant to be just as helpful to employers and _____ (3) providers as it is to students and job _____ (4). It was designed to help them understand what people changing between the countries have to offer, whilst overcoming _____ (5) barriers.
        Answers: 1. migration; 2. countries; 3. education; 4. seekers; 5. linguistic.

2. After reading that section, could you describe how to write a CV in order to get a position in your own company/country? Please write it down and take it to class to share with other students.

3. Please write a cover letter to apply for a job vacancy in the United States or the UK. You can visit these web pages to guide you in this task:
    http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cover_letter
    http://www.exeter.ac.uk/employability/students/cvcreator/index.php

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UNIT LEARNING RESULTS

After the study of this unit you can now do the following in English better:

- Elicit and provide information from/into short, simple notes and texts relating to basic personal and professional matters (reading & writing-A2)
- Understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g., very basic personal and family information, employment), provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated (overall listening comprehension-A2)
- Give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list (overall oral production-A2)

IV. Conclusions

Approaches to second language instruction focusing on general language competence have traditionally emphasized the teaching of vocabulary, phonology, morphology, and syntax, but in recent years emphasis has shifted to the development of discourse communication skills in the second language (e.g., Krashen, 1982). Language learning is not seen merely as acquiring the knowledge of the rules of grammar, but also as acquiring the ability to use it to communicate (Barlow & Kemmer, 2000; Croft, 2001; Widdowson, 1978). However, when viewed from the perspective of ICALL, there are still many problems to be addressed as there is a need to bridge the difficulty presented in the evaluation of unrestricted linguistic student production. Free or open-ended written answers by students cannot be automatically evaluated and the same applies to oral or spoken production as voice recognition software is still in its infancy (Bain, Basso & Wald, 2002).

I-AGENT is an on-going project which blends face-to-face classes with innovative ICALL software in order to offer the possibility of evaluating all those aspects which a computer cannot. The software uses a systemic-functional approach integrated with the notional-functional syllabus model from the CEFR, and a cognitive and social constructivist pedagogic framework that enables individual and collaborative learning. After prototypical communicative language competence is acquired in the classroom, the ICALL software allows the student to apply and extend it. Each software activity has its counterpart in the classroom; thus, the computer-based work and face-to-face sessions work together to subsequently consolidate the knowledge, following the constructivist paradigm. Work in parallel is being undertaken by linguists (units that form the course and implementation in Moodle) and computer scientists (development of the Artificial Intelligence engine).

I-AGENT is about to start its final phase, being tested with a number of students at an important school of languages called International House in Madrid (www.ihes.com). Founded in 1953, International House is a network of 140 language schools around the world, all committed to the highest standards in education and business. We hope to report on the findings of this evaluation phase of the project at a later stage in the near future.

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Implementation of Social Strategies in Language Learning by Means of Moodle

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Abstract—The methodology of second language teaching has varied considerably in recent times. It has changed from mere translation and memorization of linguistic structures, which was carried out by learners of classical Latin and Greek, to constructivist learning, in which the student has to build structures with the help of the teacher, and above all, must develop and employ strategies throughout the process, leaving aside structural learning and memorization. There are many researchers who have studied learning strategies, for example, Brown (1994), Chesterfield & Chesterfield (1985), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Tarone (1981), Thompson & Rubin (1982) and Wenden & Rubin (1987). In spite of the fact that there is not a universal concept of strategy, all of them agree that there are techniques used by students to facilitate learning. The strategies have been classified according to their characteristics in the following groups: metacognitive, cognitive, social and affective. In this study, we analyze the social strategies that a second language student employs using the Moodle e-learning platform. The reason why the use of social strategies have been studied within this virtual platform is that it was built around constructivist philosophy and with the aim of promoting cooperative learning, which is closely related to the use of social strategies. For this investigation, a group of students from the University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU) was selected and a questionnaire developed bearing in mind four kinds of social strategies, namely, asking, cooperating, empathizing and practicing.

Index Terms—language learning strategies, languages, Moodle, Web 2.0

I. INTRODUCTION

Socio-affective learning strategies have been analyzed and studied by an important number of researchers, among them, Brown (1994), Chesterfield & Chesterfield (1985), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Tarone (1981), Thompson & Rubin (1982) and Wenden & Rubin (1987). Logically, this list of specialists evinces the importance accorded to the application of socio-affective strategies in the process of language learning. These strategies have been applied in both second language learning (L2) and foreign language learning (FL) processes.

Nevertheless, the appearance of Web 2.0 and especially that of e-learning platforms, such as Moodle, has caused an important technological transformation and a change of attitude towards learning and teaching, turning students into real protagonists in their teaching-learning process, guided by their teacher or tutor. In this context, the teaching-learning of a language will be carried out in a cooperative context in which the concept known as collective intelligence becomes the basis of cooperation. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that the concept of strategy applied to e-learning relates to the principles of cognitive psychology and to the constructivist perspective of knowledge and learning, which emphasizes the importance of procedural elements in the process of knowledge construction (Benito, 2009).

Therefore, we consider that socio-affective strategies are fundamental in the learning activities of a language as a way to improve the motivation of the students who are learning it. Moreover, on many occasions, the participants use such strategies unintentionally. Logically, we must not forget that they are social beings with previous experiences and knowledge which, one way or another, they share among themselves. It is at this point that the Moodle virtual platform shows all its potential, prioritizing cooperative learning and basing itself on a methodology focused on a communicative approach.

This paper intends to outline the arguments put forward by different authors on the concept of learning strategy and, specifically, to focus on social learning strategies. At the same time, it reports on the impressions collected about the use of Moodle from students at the University School of Education in Bilbao (UPV-EHU). Therefore, in the context of e-learning and taking the virtual platform Moodle as a basic tool, it seeks to investigate the practice of these social

strategies in language virtual courses at university level, and extract the characteristics which favour language learning. Based on this, the different social strategies which can be applied in such a process are recommended, transferring the information onto several tables. In this way, we can observe, on the one hand, the typology, characteristics and advantages of social strategies according to different researchers and, on the other hand, the implementation of these social strategies by means of the Moodle platform.

<div align="center">II. SOME THEORETICAL NOTIONS: LANGUAGE LEARNING, STRATEGIES, VIRTUAL PLATFORMS</div>

In this section we are going to establish the theoretical basis for its subsequent practical application.

A. Language Learning from the XIXth Century until the Present Day

From the end of the XIXth century, second language teaching methods have varied remarkably. At first, the application of the direct method was preferred, which proposed the learning of structures which were useful in real situations. From the 1940s to the 1960s, the formal method in language learning predominated and, by means of audiovisual techniques, an attempt was made to teach structures that could be used in typical conversations. Villanueva defines this type of method as follows: "Rejection of translation and use of L1, designation exercises and description of reality. Teaching living languages in a different way" (1997: 82-84).

During the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the situational and global structural audio-visual method, which focuses on the process of language learning by means of real situations, became stronger. Therefore, mechanical exercises were used which made use of recorded conversations and for this reason importance was not given to the communicative value of the language but to the grammatical structures that make up the language (Larrea, 2003). In 1990, Bogaards defined it as a system which focused on the relationship between stimulus and response.

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, Vigotsky's ideas began to spread and the concept of communicative competence began to be heard, so language practices in communicative media began to be fostered. Throughout the 1980s, a step forward was made and the student changed from being a simple apprentice to being an apprentice and a user simultaneously. Therefore, oral ability was considered to be more important than writing or reading from a communicative point of view. In this theoretical communicative production framework, corrections in oral production were left aside and priority was given to personal, communicative production, minimizing the importance of linguistic correction. In 1986, Littlewood distinguished communicative from pre-communicative activity, the latter being a series of skills or knowledge which must be practised individually to be integrated later into communicative activity.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the boom of constructivism and cognitive theories, an attempt was made to promote the autonomy of the second language apprentice, and metacognitive activities acquired significance. Burón (1993) defines metacognition as follows: a field which became important from 1980 and focuses on the strategies used by the student in his learning process.

As the Common European Framework of References for Languages (2002) points out, nowadays the autonomous character of the student for second language learning continues to be encouraged and the development of learning strategies which promote the autonomy of the individual are considered to be very important: "The skills and learning strategies which facilitate the execution of the task and which consist of: knowing how to perform correctly when linguistic resources are insufficient, being able to discover by oneself, plan and monitor the implementation of the task" (2002: 159).

B. The Concept of Learning Strategy: Definition and Classifications

The concept of learning strategy acquires such importance that The Common European Framwork mentions it as an essential and facilitating element for second language learning. In spite of the many definitions of this concept, most authors agree that it embraces the techniques and methods which assist second language learning (Cyr, 2000; Ellis, 1997; Liceras, 1992).

Throughout history, a wide range of learning strategy classifications have been put forward. The first ones date from the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Wong Fillmore mentioned two types of strategies: "The social and the cognitive" (Skehan, 1997: 73).

In the same year, Byalistok identified four types of strategies:

Formal and Functional Practice. The first strategy is a general concept of practice that refers to the attempts that the student makes to increase his exposure to the language […] Functional practice refers to the increase in the exposure to the language with a communicative objective and it can include going to the cinema, speaking to native speakers, reading books, activities in which the meaning is the most important aspect […] Monitoring and Inferencing. These are somehow complementary, given that the first is fundamentally a production strategy whereas the second can be regarded as its counterpart, comprehension. (Liceras, 1992: 187).

In 2000, Cyr published a book in which he collected some of the main learning strategy classifications; he mentions the one by Rubin (1981), in which she distinguishes two types of strategies, called direct and transversal; that of Oxford (1990), which follows the path of the previous contributor but defines the classifications in much more detail; and

finally, according to Cyr, the most complete and accepted is that of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), which distinguishes three groups of strategies: metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective.

In 1997, Villanueva set forth the following group of strategies based on the concept of dimension from a psychological, affective and social point of view:

Learning strategies related to information perception strategies and to attitudes towards learning according to certain psychological characteristics […] Communicative strategies characteristic of the pragmatic functioning of language which are used by the user-apprentice of a foreign language […] Social strategies related to the cultural representations of linguistic interaction […] Cognitive strategies. (1997: 54-55).

In the same year, and in a similar way, Ellis distinguished between cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective strategies. Finally, in 1999, Alfaya mentioned two types of strategies which can lead us to make mistakes:

So, concerning the strategies or attitudes that students adopt to learn a new language, we could say that learners take up at least two different learning processes and that these strategies which they assume unintentionally will inevitably lead to failure […] I may say that at least half of the errors are due to both of the previously commented on learning strategies namely, transfer and generalisation" (1999: 100).

C. Social Strategies: Essential Components in Language Learning

The importance of social strategies is unquestionable, given that they are part of the learning strategy typology of the afore-mentioned authors. Although many link them with affective strategies, we consider that a distinction should be made between both types, and in this paper we will focus exclusively on social strategies.

Oxford defines social strategies as follows: "Language is a form of social behaviour; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people. Learning a language thus involves other people, and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process" (1990: 145). Besides, Oxford considers that a good student uses more social strategies than a poor one. As we have observed, social strategies correspond to those social acts which the student carries out to be able to understand and study a second language in a better way. Therefore, some authors have identified the actions listed below as part of the so-called social strategies.

In 1978, Bialystok considered social strategies to be going to the cinema, talking to native speakers, reading books, that is, activities in which the meaning is the most important thing. Oxford, in 1990, came up with three groups of social strategies: on the one hand, the actions used for asking, among which she enumerates the following: asking for explanations and/or checking them and asking someone to correct mistakes; on the other hand, the actions aimed at cooperation, which lead us to carry out activities with a classmate or native; and, finally, those actions which enable us to use empathy, being open to culture and to the way of thinking and feeling of other people.

That same year, O'Malley and Chamot enumerated the same social strategies named by Oxford in a simpler way: asking and/or checking and cooperation.

In 1989, Rubin (Cyr, 2000), and subsequently in 1997, Villanueva and Ellis, introduced one more action within social strategies: the search for situations in which a second language can be practised. Taking into account types, characteristics and advantages of social strategies, we can complete the following table 1.

TABLE 1.
TYPES, CHARACTERISTICS AND ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL STRATEGIES

Types	Characteristics	Advantages
Asking (clarification, checking, asking for mistake correction) (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Cooperating (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Empathizing (Oxford, 1990). Practising (Bialystok, 1978; Ellis, 1997; Villanueva, 1997).	Promote feedback and interaction to learn a second language and control the affective part (Cyr, 2000; Skehan, 1997). They are social actions for understanding, learning and keeping information (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).	Higher self-esteem (Oxford, 1990). Confidence increases (Oxford, 1990). Aims are achieved sooner than expected (Oxford, 1990). Greater respect towards teacher, classmates and school (Oxford, 1990). The use of cognitive strategies is increased (Oxford, 1990). Concern for others increases (Oxford, 1990). Greater motivation (Oxford, 1990). There are more opportunities to practise the language (Oxford, 1990). Greater feedback on mistake (Oxford, 1990).

As observed in this table, we find mainly four types of social strategies: asking, cooperating, empathizing and practising. As their name suggests, the main characteristics of these strategies are related to actions carried out with surrounding people: teachers, friends or simply classmates who are studying the same language (target language). Social strategies have principally two characteristics: on the one hand, they encourage feedback and interaction; on the other hand, they are actions carried out with the help of others and are useful for understanding, learning or keeping information.

From the characteristics mentioned above, it is derived that they are used for controlling the affective part of the student, that is, the person who is learning a language and maintains an interaction with somebody, not necessarily a teacher, who is feeding his affectivity, given that he fosters his self-esteem and self-confidence, apart from increasing his motivation. Moreover, such interaction influences the way of dealing with and understanding others, and some think that both respect and concern for the teacher and the rest of classmates increases.

The advantages of these strategies not only focus on the affective aspect, but also on the cognitive one. Feedback, apart form helping us to practise the language often focusing on the mistake made by the student, also increases the use of cognitive strategies which lead the student to achieve his aims sooner than expected, according to Oxford.[1]

D. Web 2.0 and Social Strategies: The Practice of Social Strategies in 2.0 Language Courses

Both in the process of teaching-learning in general and in second language teaching-learning in particular, Web 2.0 defines itself as an advance. Not only is it a technological transformation; it is also a change of attitude both towards learning and teaching, since it compels the student to become a real protagonist, at the same time as the teacher's role changes from being the only source to being a guide and motivator. Thus, it is a change of perspective in which vertical hierarchies turn to horizontal ones, which promotes learning based on cooperation, which in language learning has an effect on communication. This is the ultimate aim of all languages in any context. Therefore, language teaching-learning will be carried out in a cooperative context, in which the concept known as collective intelligence becomes the basis of cooperation.

In spite of all the afore-mentioned assets, we cannot forget that what is proposed as new continues to be a mere tool and its correct functioning depends on what is done with it, that is, its use and the perpective from which it is used. And it is here where language learning strategies gain importance. The Internet becomes a virtual place, but real at the same time, where we can develop such strategies in a planned way by means of communication, which is also real and virtual at the same time. The application of social strategies coincides with what are considered to be the advantages of using Web 2.0 and its philosophy, as shown in the following diagram (Fig. 1).
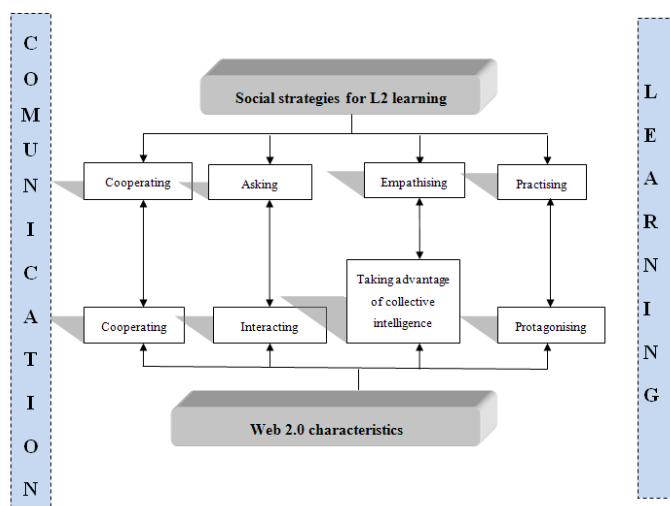

Figure 1. Social strategies and Web 2.0

Therefore, tools such as blogs and wikis applied to language teaching establish channels for expression, linguistic cooperation among students and between teacher and student(s). But in this paper, given the impossibility of studying all the tools that Web 2.0 provides, we will focus on one tool that is in vogue at present: the so-called e-learning platforms and, among them, one of the most popular: Moodle.

E. Moodle: What Does the Use of this Platform Provide in Relation to the Development of the Language Teaching-Learning Process?

The Moodle platform is a virtual platform, and as we can read in its English acronym *Course Management System,* it is a free system of course management. Moodle was created in 2002 by Martin Dougiamas, professor at Curtin University, who based its development on constructivist theories of learning and what is known as cooperative learning development. This is why the several work formats established from the first visit to the portal include cooperative work,

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[1] "Cognitive strategies are those organizations of cognitive, affective and psychomotor functions and resources which the subject carries out in the processes of fulfilment of reasoning, memory and learning. They are real configurations of functions and resources, generators of action schemes for a more efficient and economic confrontation with global or specific learning situations, for the selective incorporation of new data and its organization or for the solution of problems of diverse order or quality. They are, then, on the threshold of all learning tasks as real previous 'mechanisms', prefiguring the later processes and which, of course, all individuals select spontaneously before each performance in the form of principles, rules or guidelines" (1990: 121).

exercises, critical reflection, surveys, glossary, etc. And from a methodological point of view, it is based on a communicative approach to second languages, which according to Navarro and Torreblanca validates this educational approach and which is supported by the *Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Evaluation.*

Moreover, we can also point out that because of its contents and tools, Moodle is an ideal platform for on-line courses and classes as well as a complement for on-site classes. It is a tool which allows us to work on communication in a global manner, by means of the interaction of the four linguistic skills (oral expression and comprehension, written expression and comprehension), but also on what the *Common European Framework of References for Languages* denominates interaction. And all this, by means of cooperation.

The presentation of the course contents through this platform is becoming more common among the different second language courses at university level. In the majority of them, Moodle is used as a virtual support for on-campus teaching and presents a varied repertoire of contents, both theoretical and practical. Logically, it is around this second point that the different tools which this platform provides for the working of social strategies, mainly forums, wikis and questionnaires, and their implementation in second language learning, are going to be developed. Therefore, we find the implementation of this platform necessary as a support for our teaching.

III. FIELD STUDY: THE USE OF SOCIAL STRATEGIES BY MEANS OF MOODLE

Most universities already provide learning platforms by means of which teachers can develop their work with the students in a comfortable and efficient way. In the case of the UPV/EHU and inside the Virtual Campus (http://cvb.ehu.es/index.htm), the teacher's area is made up of five teaching modules: fully virtual subjects, support for teaching subjects, official masters, private diplomas and doctorates.

From the above-mentioned options, the most used is that of support for teaching subjects, and inside this typology, the teacher has two platforms: eKasi (http://ekasi.ehu.es) and Moodle (http://moodle.ehu.es/moodle). The first one is the institutional web site of the UPV/EHU's support for on-campus teaching. It is a software application which facilitates the management of records and students, simulating the organizational work of a university teacher in a web-based environment and facilitating the student's learning process. The second one is the internationally known e-learning technological platform, which facilities the management of free courses and helps educators to create online learning communities.

By means of Moodle, the University provides teachers with a virtual platform in order for them to take it up and make it habitable. Thus, the structure can be adapted to the teachers' needs and they will fill each of the modules with content. Moreover, we can point out that this method of working with learning technologies and communication has an eminently creative character for the teacher, as this plans the students' learning process, developing educational tools with multimedia characteristics and adding communication resources in order to encourage exchange and participation.

Thus, as can be seen in the following charts, the use of Moodle has increased both in the number of students registered in courses or subjects with Moodle (Fig. 2) and the number of subjects offered (Fig. 3).
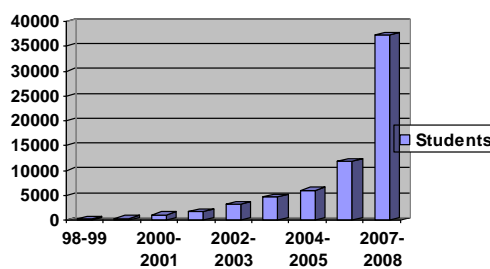

Figure 2. Evolution of the number of students in the Virtual Campus.
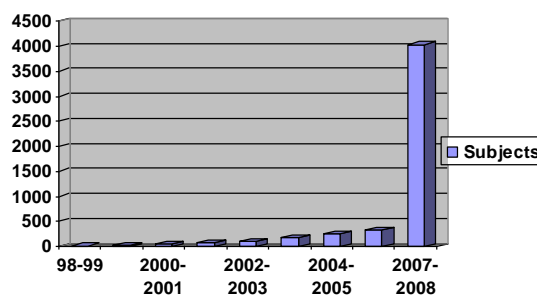

Figure 3. Evolution of the number of subjects in the Virtual Campus.

In this context, we consider that the implementation of this platform as a support for teaching must be something real and daily, but is this true? What really happens with the courses and subjects focused on second language teaching?

A. Methodology and Participants

With the objective of gathering and measuring students' assessments, a survey, anonymously administered, was carried out and it was placed on the Moodle platform in May 2010.[2] The survey was conducted by several teachers from the Language and Literature Didactics Department at UPV-EHU with a sample of 87 students (39 of them filled out the form) corresponding to the third year of the Degree in Primary Education and the subject "Children's and Young Adults' Literature".

The survey was devised taking into account the four basic social strategies for second language teaching and learning and their relation to the characteristics, which can also be regarded as advantages, which the use of Moodle tools provides:

Figure 4. Screenshot of the survey in the context of Moodle.

Thus, eight questions were drawn up, which covered the afore-mentioned four basic social strategies. The relations that we propose among questions, strategies and characteristics of the tools offered by Moodle are the following:

TABLE 2.
RELATIONS AMONG STRATEGIES, MOODLE CHARACTERISTICS AND SURVEY

Social Strategy	Moodle tools characteristics	Question	Possible answers
Asking	Interacting	"When I don't know how something is said"	-I consult the forum -I send an email to my teacher -I don't use any of the tools offered by Moodle
Cooperating	Cooperating	"I use the chat for"	- getting to know classmates -I don't use it at all
Empathizing	Taking advantage	"When I need a correction I use"	-forum -email to the teacher - I don't use any of the tools offered by Moodle
Empathizing	Taking advantage	"I fill in my profile"	-A part -I don't do it
Empathizing	Taking advantage	"I read others' profiles"	-sometimes -never
Practising	Protagonising	"I use wikis for"	-creating my linguistic learning portfolio -the cooperative creation of activities -I don't use them at all
Practising	Protagonising	"I use blog profiles for"	-expressing myself in the language I am learning -reading other people's entries -I don't use them
Practising	Protagonising	"For writing in the Moodle platform I use"	-always the language I am learning -sometimes the language I am learning and sometimes other languages -never the language I am learning

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[2] The items used in the survey are shown in Appendix A.

The possible answers, among which the student-participant can choose when answering, are of two types, as we have observed in the last table:

• With the possibility of choosing between three answers. Two of them are actions that can be carried out to solve the difficulty of linguistic learning set out in the question through the use of social strategies which Moodle tools offer. The third one offers the option of stating that none of the proposed answers is possible.

• With the possibility of choosing between two opposite answers.

Finally, we must point out that the surveys were developed and administered by means of the application called *Questionnaire Report,* which the Moodle platform itself offers, since it guaranteed anonymity and the use of a familiar tool for the student-participant.

B. Results

According to the results, we can state that the reality of the language courses which use Moodle for their development, and from the point of view of the student-participants, is as follows:

• Regarding the question related to the social strategy of *asking*, "When I don't know how something is said": half of the polled students (52%) state that they do not use any Moodle tool; 28% send e-mails to the teacher and 20% consult the forum.

• In the answers to the questions that refer to the social strategy of *cooperating*, specifically the question "I use the chat for", we find that 68% answer that they do not use the chat at all and 32% use it for getting to know their classmates.

• The results of the questions linked to the social strategy *empathizing* are as follows:

- "When I need a correction I use": 52% state that they do not use Moodle tools; 44% send an email to the teacher and 4% say they use the forum.

- "I fill in my profile": 72% say that they fill in a part of it, and 28% do not fill it in at all.

- "I read other people's profile": 68% point out that they read it sometimes, and 35% never read it.

• The answers related to the social strategy of *practising* offer the following results:

- "I use wikis for": 88% say they never use them, 8% say they use them for the cooperative creation of activities and 4% for creating their own linguistic learning portfolio.

- "For writing in the Moodle platform I use": 72% always use the language they are learning, 16% use sometimes the language they are learning and 12% never use the language they are learning.

If we evaluate these results, we can point out that, despite the fact that, in theory, the use of the Moodle platform with its tools based on the Web 2.0 philosophy for teaching and learning second languages is classified, defined and described as positive, reality seems to be quite different and makes it clear that these tools are not used, or used in a very low percentage, by the students for developing social strategies for linguistic learning.

We consider that the reason for this circumstance could be the lack of habit of using the Internet, in general, and the tools of e-learning platforms, for linguistic learning. Therefore, we think that a possible way to solve this could be by the creation of a methodological standard where teachers and students have clear ideas about which Moodle tools, in this case, foster and facilitate the development of each social strategy.

IV. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE ALTERNATIVES

One of the most significant characteristics of the world of new technologies is that it is continuously changing and is in a permanent state of improvement with regard to technical sources and applications. Therefore, innovation comes not only from the use of the tool but also from the methodology applied in its use for learning and teaching in second language courses.

From this perspective, Moodle is a help platform between the two poles which a possible scale of learning strategies could have: it goes from autonomy to working in cooperation with a group directed by a teacher, who provides the relevant information and directs its rhythm and flow. It works with and from Moodle, and responds to a type of second language learning which functions by means of the development of strategies, as we have observed in the part of this paper concerned with scientific literature related to social strategies.

In this way, if social strategies refer to those social acts that the student carries out to be able to understand and study better a second language, Moodle becomes the vehicle that can transform those social acts into a more realistic and plausible method, given that it opens simple channels from a technical point of view for the development of such strategies, which are based, above all, on promoting feedback or interaction; that is, they are actions that the apprentice carries out with the help of others and that help him to understand, learn and gather information (*asking*, *empathizing*, *cooperating* and *practising*).

Thus, the Moodle platform provides a wide variety of tools for working on the social strategies for second language learning, but the real use made of these tools is scarce, as we have observed in the results obtained in the research reported on in this article. Therefore, it is essential to open help channels for teachers and students, which explain and show clearly what each tool can be used for, and what aspect of learning strategies can be developed with each instrument.

In this way, we consider it to be important, bearing in mind the characteristics of each instrument, to create a classification which serves as a guide to teacher and e-learners when the time comes to find the most efficient way to accomplish the aims within the development of second language teaching and learning based on strategies, in this case social strategies.

Therefore, given that our initial aim in this paper is to present the characteristics, advantages and classifications of social strategies while focusing on our students' impressions, we present a conceptual map for easy comprehension which matches the more general aim that is second language learning based on communication and cooperation. That is, a learning process based on social strategies which in turn will be developed by use of the instruments that the Moodle platform provides, such as forums, questionnaires, wikis and chats, among others.
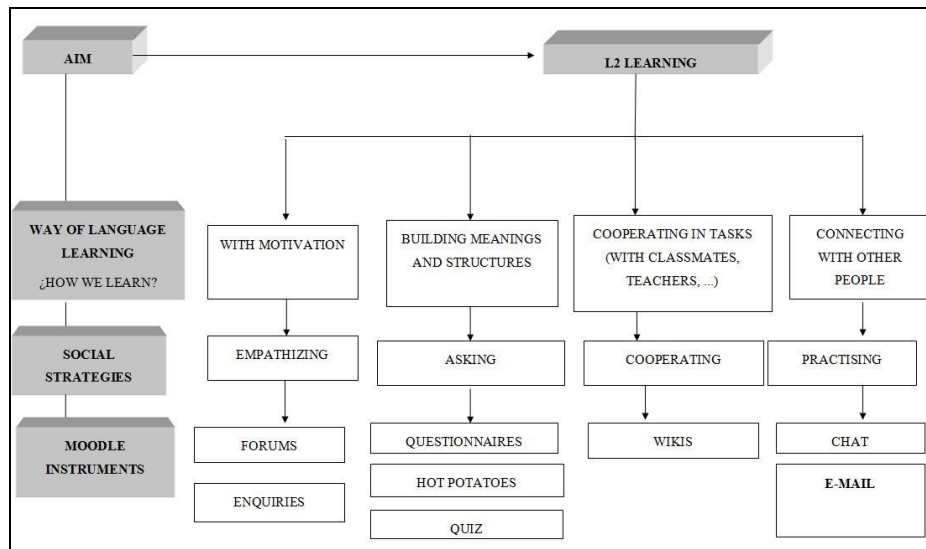
Figure 5. Social strategies for L2 learning by means of Moodle.

Finally, as a challenge for the future, we have found it highly interesting to follow and complete this study, based above all on the reflection and quantitative description of data, together with other research, both quantitative and qualitative, and with concrete educational interventions. It would be interesting, for instance, to conduct empirical research which implements a complete second language course in Moodle, as well as to analyze the efficiency of each instrument related to each characteristic which constitutes a social strategy in this field of university teaching.

APPENDIX A SURVEY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY CHOOSING ONE OPTION:
(ASKING)
When I don't know how to say something:
I consult a forum
I send an email to a teacher
I don't use any tool that Moodle offers
When I need to correct, I use:
A forum
An email to a teacher
I don't use any tool that Moodle offers
(COOPERATING)
I use wikis to:
Create a portfolio of language learning
Create cooperative activities
I don't use them
(PRACTISING)
I use chat to:
Practice the language that I am learning
Get to know my classmates
I don't use it
(EMPATHIZING)
I fill in my profile:
Completely
Partly
I don't fill it in
I read other people's profiles:
Always
Sometimes
Never
I use profile blogs to:
Express myself in the language that I am learning
Read other people's entries
I don't use them
To write on the Moodle platform, I use:
Always the language I am learning
Sometimes the language I am learning and at other times other languages
Never the language I am learning

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Critical Learning: Critical Discourse Analysis in EFL Teaching

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Abstract—Discourse analysis, the study of language use within its social context, has plenty of utilitarian aspects, especially for language learners. Besides being a means of communication, language is a practice that not only constructs, but is also constructed by the ways language learners understand themselves and their social environment. Critical discourse analysis promotes the application of critical thinking to social situations and the unveiling of hidden connections between language use, ideology and power. This paper aims to demonstrate how critical discourse analysis can be implemented in foreign language teaching in order to help students develop their internal values and critical thinking skills. The main principles of critical discourse analysis can be incorporated in order to turn a song, a t-shirt slogan or an email into the subject of linguistic exploitation and socio-cultural debate.

Index Terms—discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, language teaching, language learning

I. FROM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO *CRITICAL* LEARNING

Discourse analysis is a broad and fast-developing interdisciplinary field concerned with the study of language use in context. In 1952 Harris published a paper with the title "Discourse Analysis", where he claimed for solutions to the problems of both the continuation of linguistic description above the sentence and the correlation between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. In the following decades some outstanding works (Brown & Yule, 1983; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Stubbs, 1983; Van Dijk 1985a, 1985b) were published, constituting a solid background for a wide range of succeeding research appearing within the framework of discourse analysis. Those works agreed on presenting discourse analysis as a field interested in investigating the use of the language at a supra-sentential level and within its social context.

Discourse analysis includes somewhat diverse theoretical and methodological approaches from linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, psychology and sociology. Far from being a coherent paradigm of clear-cut practices, there is still an on-going proliferation of theoretical perspectives, methodological devices and research topics which in the last years have unveiled, among many others, the potential of discourse analysis as an instrument for teaching languages. In 1991, McCarthy wrote *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers* as a practical introduction to discourse analysis for language teachers. McCarthy evaluated different teaching approaches and outlined new ways of looking at grammar and vocabulary based on the insights of discourse analysis. Although in the Preface McCarthy opposed to the idea of considering discourse analysis as a method of teaching languages, three years later (McCarthy & Carter, 1994) he clarified his position by supporting the idea of providing learners with a meta-language to analyse language. Leaving aside the terminological debate about the assignment or not of the label *method* to discourse analysis, McCarthy and other works in the same vein (Norton, 2008) have contributed to acknowledging the importance of discourse analysis for some language teaching approaches.

Cots' (2006) proposal to teach "with an attitude" exemplifies in a very practical way how critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be implemented in foreign language teaching in order to activate the learners' capacity to evaluate linguistic and social reality in a critical way. CDA defends the study of discourse as a tool for the social construction of reality, but also as an instrument of power and ideological control that "implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258). Van Dijk (2001: 96) defined CDA as "discourse analysis 'with an attitude'". The term *critical* distinguishes itself from the merely descriptive purposes of other analysts, such as Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) or Stubbs (1983), "whose method suffers from an inherent weakness of explanatory power" (Teo, 2000: 12). Fairclough (2001b: 4) talked of a critical purpose which aimed to examine the hidden connections between language, power and ideology. Non-critical or descriptive approaches underestimate the way in which discursive practices are socially moulded or their social effects (Fairclough, 1995: 23).

Discourse analysis can be characterized as an instrument to approach problems, to question socio-linguistic reality and, if possible, to change it. Through discourse analysis, students learn to sharpen their critical thinking and to tackle the cultural component, which meets the recent demands for treating culture as a new language skill (Norton, 2008; Tomalin, 2008). Advocates of critical teaching perspectives (Thornbury, 2009) have focused on the relationship between language learning and social change, and have appealed for more social teaching and contextually sensitive

methods. Rather than being considered as a means of communication, language maintains a bidirectional relationship with learners and their social environment: "rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future" (Norton & Toohey, 2004: 1). The classroom is the initiating platform to make students aware of their capacity both to value the information they receive and to bring about social change out of the classroom. As an answer to the question of the methodology which best suits to the teaching of culture in the English language classroom, discourse analysis has provided valuable insights into the concepts of language analysis leading to culture awareness. The call for critical approaches or attitudes when assessing culture has produced a type of social teaching which will lead students to become critical citizens.

II. *CRITICAL* LEARNING: A PROPOSAL

This paper aims to exemplify how CDA can be implemented in foreign language teaching in order to help students develop their internal values and critical thinking abilities. The proposal presented here is divided into three main sections: the first one gives a balanced insight into basic theoretical concepts within discourse analysis; the second section offers a set of tools for analysing texts, mainly centred on cohesive devices; and the third one, which constitutes the focus of attention of this paper, illustrates how students perform critical language learning through the analysis of a wide variety of authentic texts. The following chart summarizes the topics included in each section labelled, respectively, "Theory notes", "Tools for discourse analysis" and "Analysing texts":

TABLE 1.
SUMMARY OF SECTIONS AND TOPICS

Part I: Theory notes	Part II: Tools for discourse analysis	Part III: Analysing texts
1. Discourse analysis: Introduction	1. Parts of speech	1. "Yes, we can"
2. Social dimension of discourse	2. Content and function words	2. The zodiac
3. Ideology and power in discourse	3. Cohesion and coherence	3. Song: Amy Winehouse's "Rehab"
4. Text structure	4. Cohesive devices	4. T-shirt slogans
5. Methodological approach to discourse analysis	• Lexical cohesion	5. Interview with Angelina Jolie
	• Grammatical cohesion	6. Hoax e-mail

The analytical suggestion presented in Part III assumes the necessity of a preceding theoretical and methodological framework. As stated by Schiffrin (1997: 75), "Although the study of discourse is often termed discourse *analysis*, the use of this term should not imply a field that is void of theory". The success of any analytical undertaking is subjected to the formulation of some compatible theoretical presuppositions on which the analysis will be based. Or rather seen from another perspective, the failure in the examination of theoretical presuppositions can lead to a mistaken analysis (Jones & Viechnicki, 1997). In order to perform a critical analysis of the text, students should count both on some kind of instruments to work with and some specific theoretical knowledge about the premises of CDA which will guide them in the stage of analysis.

In part I (Theory notes), students are introduced to the origins and basic parameters of study of discourse analysis, and to the concept of *discourse* as contextually activated text (Widdowson, 1995: 164). Within the relationship of bi-directionality maintained between discourse and social context, CDA incorporates ideology and power as inherent variables to the social dimension of the text (Fairclough, 1995). The theoretical part pays special attention to the tenets of CDA which students will have to apply in Part III, specifically:

• CDA proposes to study discourse within a social and ideological context marked by relations of power and inequality.

• CDA values the text not only as a tool for the social construction of reality, but also as an instrument of control.

• CDA aims to uncover implicit meanings and strategic purpose. "What is 'in' a text may be explicit or implicit [...] The implicit content of a text is a halfway house between presence and absence" (Fairclough, 1995: 5).

Sections 4 and 5 are to be taken as an introduction to the methodological counterpart of theory. They concentrate mainly on the assumption of different levels of analysis, above and below sentence level, and on the relationship of interdependence which links discourse analysis and systemic functional grammar. Some of the most outstanding discourse analysts (Fairclough, 1995, 2001a) have favoured systemic linguistics, especially Halliday's (2004) *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, as the most suitable analytic tool for their explorations. In this sense, Part II (Tools for discourse analysis) concentrates on cohesive devices as depicted primarily by Halliday's grammar.

Parts I and II have taken into account that the methods used for discourse analysis emerge from implicit theoretical presuppositions about the nature of language and the complex relationship between language, communication and socio-cultural life (Schiffrin, 1997). The intertwining of theory, method and practice in discourse analysis is a principle which cannot be overlooked. However, despite the provision of instruments for analysis, the link between the three elements rests on the assumption of the use of common sense. Students must assume that the perception of each text is essentially subjective, since their content appeals to them differently. Given that discourse analysis is basically interpretative reading, there are no rigid guidelines to follow. Students are encouraged to make use of logical thinking and to be aware of the fact that the best method of analysis is the application of common sense.

With the background provided by the previous theoretical and methodological outline, students are subsequently introduced to some authentic texts. Throughout their analysis, some guiding questions will be supplied in order to help them perform a critical analysis of the text in the terms studied in Part I and II. Students will work individually or in groups to think of a variety of interpretations. They will evaluate how the tools provided help them to analyse real texts for practical purposes. They will try to reveal the hidden motivations or meanings behind the text, identify strategic linguistic structures and discern how the text imbibes social or cultural aspects. They should be able to identify any value-laden language and perceive how the authors predispose the readers or determine their viewpoint.

The texts selected for analysis represent different domains of the students' everyday life, mainly attached to non-formal or entertaining contexts. Authentic materials are more likely to connect with their interests and prompt their motivation and satisfaction. Students should learn language through exposure to different types of texts and be aware of the fact that the study of discourse can be applied to any text, problem or situation. All texts are accessible to analysis by the existing methods of linguistics. Proving that, the main principles of CDA will be incorporated in order to turn a song, a t-shirt slogan, an interview or an email into the subject of linguistic exploitation and socio-cultural debate. The following activities, included in Part III, represent different examples of the types of texts students may analyse applying the theory and methods previously studied.

A. "Yes, We Can"

By way of introduction to this practical part, students' attention is focused on the strategic purpose of a very well-known expression and on the reactions it may produce on them. Discourse analysis involves looking at both language form and function. For that reason, they are asked to value the form of the structure "Yes, we can" and then attach a purpose or goal to it, especially considering the context in which it was created, namely, Obama's presidential election campaign. Supplementary contextual information will help them be aware of how Obama offered a new kind of politics with a skilful oratory and a high potential for reconciliation and change. With this initial activity students get into the world of politics and Obama, as a political and media celebrity, in an attractive and gentle manner, restricting to a miniature size what other scholars have done with Obama and political discourse, within CDA, on a larger scale (Horváth, 2009).

These are the types of questions used to guide students in their analysis:

• Do you know what a political slogan is?

• What is your reaction when you hear or read this expression? Can you perceive any goal or aim in it?

• What information does each word convey? Do you think the three words which make up this slogan have been strategically chosen?

• Do they have any meaning outside the context in which this slogan appeared? Try to find some contextual information on the Internet.

In the next activity, students use the information they have previously obtained in order to create their own slogan to represent them as candidates for vice-chancellor of their university. In the last part of the task they are faced with the distinction between interpretation and intention. Schiffrin (1997: 79) established a duality interpretation/intention assuming that both processes are different because the contexts of interlocutors are also different. Others, such as Harris (1952), Van Dijk (1985b) or Widdowson (1995) rejected excluding both elements since they considered that intentions give sense to the interpretation of the text. In any case, students are encouraged to tackle discourse analysis as an interpretative enterprise in which processes of production and reception should be as close as possible. When creating their slogan, they should connect as much as possible with the expectations of the receivers. When interpreting the slogans of their classmates, their interpretation should connect with the intentions of the authors as much as possible. Here are some examples of guiding questions to be used:

• In what way do you think your slogan will impact most on people? Are you going to follow any strategy?

• How many words are you going to choose? Do you think the effectiveness of your slogan depends on its length? On the word classes used (nouns, verbs, adverbs, pronouns, etc.)?

• Comment on the slogans created in class, choose the best slogan and justify your election. Is there a coincidence between the intention of the authors and the interpretation of the class?

In order to reinforce the significance of contextual connections, students will have to guess if other political slogans are real or not. The use of words with negative connotations (probably inconceivable nowadays) or the fact that some of the slogans may sound like advertisements or TV programmes today support the idea of the effectiveness of the messages within their own context. Here are some examples:

• *A chicken in every pot. A car in every garage*

• *Are you better off than you were four years ago?*

• *I like Ike*

• *I still like Ike*

• *It's the economy, stupid*

• *Ma, ma where's my pa?*

• *Morning again in America*

• *Better dead than red*

B. The Zodiac

Small *et al.* (2008) have used CDA to study advertisements in in-flight magazines as powerful instruments representing the norms and values to which travellers should supposedly adhere. Texts from activities B and E have been taken from Iberia's magazine *Ronda* (2009: 29, 38-39). Our purpose has been to emphasize the idea that the potential for analysis of this type of publication goes beyond that of advertisements and extends to all its contents. Any type of text included in the magazine, however *innocuous* it may seem, can be the subject of exploration within a CDA framework. For CDA, the text is an instrument of control which tries to predispose the addressee. In this case, the texts of the zodiac operate as injections of high self-esteem on the reader. By comparing both signs of the zodiac it can be noticed that they also contain equally value-laden language and that the similarity of structures makes us feel suspicious about the absence of any strategically fixed design.

Aries

Congratulations! The Sun, luminous king of stars (conscious power), reinforces the brilliant, energetic and enterprising side that makes you the centre of attention. Venus, goddess of love and a guardian angel of striking beauty, enfolds and protects you, bringing you hours of pleasure and inviting you to be more strategic, patient and affable. Lavished attentions, prestige, privilege and smiles.

Taurus

If born before 1 May, this is a time of enormous charisma, maximum power and tremendous guts. Appeal to your self-control! If born between 2 and 13 May, you are at the centre of things, distinguished but groaning under the heavy burden of responsibility. Born afterwards? Watch out for deceit, manipulation, blackmail, harassment and pressure. Indulge yourself, but without falling into self-neglect or depression.

- How do these texts make you feel?
- Which similarities can you notice between them?
- Can you extract any explicit or implicit connotations of power from them?

C. Song: Amy Winehouse's "Rehab"

The application of discourse analysis to the study of music is not something new, as exemplified by Carlisle's (2007) research study into competing discourses in digital music. CDA examines discourse structures within social contexts marked by inequality between social members and by the relations of power and authority enacted between them. Through the lyrics of this song, students can verify how connotations of authority and control can go beyond political, religious, educational or journalistic contexts. The singer uses the song to undermine in a rather provoking manner the authority of parents, teachers and doctors (especially manifest in the repetition of the negation "no, no, no") and to transfer it to musicians "Ray" and "Mr. Hathaway". Here is a fragment from the lyrics and some sample questions:

They tried to make me go to rehab
I said no, no, no.
Yes I've been black, but when I come back
You won't know, know, know.
I ain't got the time
And if my daddy thinks I'm fine
He's tried to make me go to rehab
I won't go, go, go.
I'd rather be at home with Ray
I ain't got 70 days
Cos there's nothing, nothing you can teach me
That I can't learn from Mr. Hathaway
Didn't get a lot in class
But I know it don't come in a shot glass

- Can you analyse the relationship the singer maintains with other people from a critical discourse analysis point of view?
- Whose authority does she confront? Who does she confer authority to?

D. T-shirt Slogans

In this activity students face a quite engaging task, namely, a CDA of the short messages they may encounter everyday on t-shirts. They will have to examine both how slogans may confer power to the people wearing the t-shirt and how they can control or manipulate the reader in some way. Superiority in the examples provided is determined by economic or family position, nationality or strength. Students will have to employ the insights obtained in order to create their own t-shirt slogan. Here are some examples of t-shirt slogans and some guiding questions:

- *I'm single if you are rich*
- *Catch me if you can 'cos I'm the England man*
- *World's bestest mum*
- *I am Spartacus*

- Can you observe any connotations of control or inequality?
- How are the people wearing the t-shirt and those who read the slogan portrayed?
- Write your own slogan for a t-shirt. Then comment on the slogans created in the class, choose the best one and evaluate if there is a coincidence between the intentions of the authors and the interpretation of the class.

E. Interview with Angelina Jolie

Journalistic discourse has been one of the fields of study which has attracted more attention from discourse analysts (Teo, 2000). Before analysing a real interview with Angelina Jolie, students are invited to play the role of a journalist who has to prepare an interview with this world-wide famous film star. Students should be conscious of the value of words in order to control the interviewee and direct the conversation in such a way that it meets the demands of a reader mainly interested in her private life.

- How would you start the conversation? Is it strategic to do it by focusing on her private life?
- How can you keep a balance between the interest of the readers in her private life and the likely reluctance of Angelina to talk about personal matters?
- By analysing cohesive devices, try to establish the strategy used by the journalist in the following interview to switch from Angelina's public career to her private life:
- *Your career has alternated between action and emotion. Is that coincidental or intentional?*
- *With six children, it must be practically impossible to be everywhere you're asked to be. How do you manage to combine your family, your work and your philanthropic activities?*
- *Are you working again soon?*
- *Do you and your partner have time to be alone?*
- *How do they [your children] react to the photographers who are always following you around?*
- *Are your elder children aware their parents are famous film stars?*
- *Are you thinking of having any more children?*
- *You've played mothers in your last four films, albeit metaphorically in the case of* Wanted. *Does your maternal instinct have an influence on your choice of parts?*
- *On the other hand, your role in the last film,* The Changeling, *seems to have helped your own family to grow…*
- *Your character becomes the object of unfounded criticism and accusations. As a public figure who appears on magazine covers around the world, do you identify with her in that respect?*
- *Would you oppose the authorities and the political system as she does?*

F. Hoax E-mail

Electronic mail has become a regular part of our Internet experience both for personal and business-related communications. It is a tool of mass global communication with the advantages of simplicity, cheapness and flexibility. However, this fact has also led to an increase of deceptive online messages in the last few years which have turned into objects of study (Chiluwa, 2009). The analysis of hoax e-mails evinces how being excessively explicit may affect the communicative effectiveness of the text. Implicit contents are placed in the limit between what has to be said and what may be assumed. When strategies are not used in a subtle and measured way, the persuasive nature of the text is blocked. Thus, strategies turn into *xtrategies* with a highly dissuasive effect on the reader.

On this occasion students should look for a hoax e-mail in their inbox and analyse it answering these types of questions:

- Analyse how the receiver and sender are portrayed in the message.
- Which strategies are used to make the information more convincing and attract the attention of the addressee?
- Which structures urge the receiver to act in some way?
- Do you consider the e-mail as strategic or *xtrategic*? Why?

III. CONCLUSION

CDA promotes the application of critical thought to social situations and the unveiling of strategies in texts. Discourse analysis, and more specifically, critical approaches offer the learner new skills to interpret society and culture. Teachers can improve their teaching practices by investigating actual language use both in and out of the classroom. Likewise, discourse analysis stimulates students to reflect on the huge amount of analysable information they receive every day through different means. The proposal offered in the paper combines theory, method and practice, and has been exemplified through its application on apparently innocuous or entertaining texts, quite different from traditionally considered socially relevant discourse. Connotations of power, control or social inequality can also be present in the zodiac or in the lyrics of a song. Discourse analysis is not restricted to significant texts and contexts. Journalists, writers of e-mails, composers of songs and creators of slogans are conscious of the potential of words to have an impact on the reader and shape his feelings and behaviour. This proposal also persuades students to employ the insights obtained from their analysis in order to produce their own brief and effective messages. Every kind of text offers the learner a new platform to apply his critical skills and reveal hidden meanings or motivations. Critical learning awakens students'

curiosity about their surrounding information and leads them to think that they can be manipulated while they think they are just being informed. All in all, the classroom presents tangible and attractive ways of interpreting contemporary culture; it is an excellent forum for teaching discourse analysis and for making students aware that there is a rich and complex world outside to be analysed and *criticalized*.

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An Experience on the Integration of ICT into a Teaching-learning Methodology of English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract—In this paper, we present the use of free ICT materials to foster the communicative approach in an actual educational setting. Specifically, we show and discuss the outcomes of the exploitation of two websites' content and resources inserted in our subject curriculum. This initiative has been put forward to work on listening skills as a means for attaining a twofold objective: i) as the first step to favour communication from the addressee's stance by further building their ability to recognize and reproduce Anglophone pronunciation and, ii) secondly, to encourage self-learning through an Internet-based resource. Although it is widely recognised that in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) a common agreement has not yet been reached on what methodology is the ideal for every possible linguistic learning situation, it seems that there is general consensus within the teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) community to bestow value on the Communicative Approach. Under the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) framework, the notion of "competence" (Hymes, 1972) has gained momentum in the teaching arena. Faced with this simultaneous responsibility and opportunity that the EHEA has brought about, we advocate the gradual integration of technology for language learning (CALL) to develop a functional communicative competence.

Index Terms—planning and expected outcomes, implementation, real effects, discussion

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, foreign language instruction in Spain has heavily relied on the methodologies that viewed language as a system or a structure. Amongst these methods we find Grammar-Translation, Audiolingualism or Situational Language Teaching, to cite but a few. In spite of the advantages and the virtues they offered at the time of their appearance now, in hindsight, we consider these teaching methodologies to have constituted a hindrance in the development of the oral auditory language skills of pupils, especially for English as a foreign language (EFL). Following Palacios (1999), we believe that the progresses made in linguistic theorising have left their trace in foreign language didactics. In fact, the enormous impact that the various linguistic theories have exerted on foreign language teaching is undeniable. As a result, at the end of the twentieth century, the eagerness to overcome the communicative restraints of previous linguistics models meant a turning point in language conception.

In the 60s and 70s, British language teaching tradition, as a critique to the previous structural and behaviourist methodologies, originated a new methodology supported by scholars like Henry Widdowson and Christopher Candlin, who followed the theories of John Firth and and Halliday's functional linguistics and of Dell Hymes' socio-linguistics. This view considered language as a vehicle for the expression of values and judgements, placing special emphasis on the communicative dimension of language over its grammatical features. These ideas translated into a language teaching methodology known as the Communicative Approach (CA) or the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Amongst the main objectives pursued by the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, two stand out:

1. Firstly, to attain communicative efficiency and,
2. Secondly, to place learner in the centre of learning process.

From then onwards, the communicative features of language have come to the foreground in foreign language studies and consequently, the functional component of language has been stressed (Mart ńez Agudo, 2006: 16). This has led to a change of point of view in foreign language teaching: the realization that language has to be studied contextualized and considering the communicative intentions of users. Thus, language is now seen as an interactional activity where communicative purposes prevail over structure, and its analysis can only take place within discourse.

Language being thus considered, the main goal sought in FLT for some decades now is the communicative competence of learners. Drawing on the initial definition of communicative competence provided by Hymes (1972), subsequently modified by Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), we share the final adjustments introduced by Celce-Murcia (1995, 2000), which specified that "the various components of communicative competence were interrelated and that it was important to properly describe the nature of these interrelationships in order to fully understand the construct of communicative competence" (Celce-Murcia, 2008: 44). In Celce-Murcia's model of communicative competence, the core feature is precisely discourse competence. This central subcompetence interfaces

with the linguistic, sociolinguistic and actional subcompetences to shape discourse and, in turn, all three subcompetences resort to a fourth, the strategic one, when they encounter any deficiency. "The goal should be for learners to interpret and produce meaningful discourse yet also to practice the phonological features, words, formulas, and grammatical structures that are salient in the discourse providing the content" (Celce-Murcia, 2008: 51).

The aforementioned goal may seem appropriate for designing a general course curriculum starting from scratch; however, we deem it is necessary to identify the specific linguistic and communicative demands of the target situations (deficiencies of the learners) as a basis for focused course development.

As is written in the Preamble to the Berlin Communiqué (Berlin Communiqué, 2003), the main objective of the Bologna process was "the development of a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area by 2010". This space, recently implemented (2010-11 academic year), has stirred a profound re-conceptualization of tertiary education in Spain that has translated into curricular rearrangement. Amongst its more prominent implications, mainly due to the novel design and conception of credits (ECTS), we are witnessing a drastic shift in the duties of the actors involved in the teaching-leaning process. As Pérez Cañado (2010: 103) puts it, "the EHEA is subverting the roles of students and teachers in tertiary language education".

Hence, within the framework of an Educational and Teaching Course for Innovation completed at my home university (UCLM), we planned and put into practice (2nd term of 2009-10) an improvement project during a one-term subject to redress a detected deficiency in oral communicative competence. In our proposal, focused on interaction and self-study as the means and on effective communication as the goal, we reckon that ICT exploitation for teaching purposes may serve a purpose in developing the Oral Auditory Communicative Competence (OACC).

II. INITIAL PICTURE

The acquisition of an adequate oral communicative competence (OCC) in at least one foreign language constitutes one of the European educational systems' main challenges for this new century. Nevertheless, a widespread worry exists that, despite the relevance given nowadays to the fact of being fluent in more than one European Community language, students don't achieve satisfactory levels of competence in foreign languages at the completion of compulsory education. (Martínez Piñeiro, 2002)

This quotation draws the portrait of the students' profile after completing their compulsory secondary education in a particular region of Spain, Galicia, and it describes quite rightly the context we were faced with. We present, in this paper, an experience undertaken with sophomore students in the degree on Humanities of the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Faculty of EE. SS. and Humanities, Cuenca). The subject under study is English II, a purely instrumental subject within the degree. This 7.5-credit core subject is taught in the second year and intends to provide students with ample language practice. It aims to help students to improve their communicative competence (oral or in writing) and to enable them to read and write fluently in the foreign language.

The spark that motivated this initiative was a deficiency detected in the very same group that was in our hands in the previous academic year. The initial objective data that confirmed and triggered this initiative were the poor performances that these freshmen showed on their first evaluation of English skills. From twenty-three students enrolled in the course, three of them did not sit for the final test, so they were not evaluated. The rest of the class regularly attended face-to-face tuition and submitted the assignments requested in the continuous assessment, so they fulfilled the ECTS requirements. Therefore, they could take the final exam and were marked accordingly. The grades, on a 1-10 scale, were distributed as follows: five scored between 7 and 8.5 points; ten between 5 and 6 points and five failed the exam with a grade between 3 and 4.9 points, giving an average grade of 5.5.

A deeper look into the performance of this (at the time of assessment) freshmen group showed that there was a marked imbalance between the grades they got on the writing and reading skills and the ones they obtained in listening and speaking ones. On the whole, they presented a much worse level of attainment in the latter. Although they were mostly able to read general and semi-specialized texts and to write acceptably, their oral auditory communicative competence obtained low scores. This is not something new. On the contrary, we find dozens of articles quoting recurrently this deficit in the specialized EFL literature. So, to begin with, we needed to "analyse the student's needs, face their problems and find fruitful solutions that help them to develop their speaking abilities" (Navarro Romero, 2009). Besides, apart from pinpointing the exact weaknesses of our pupils, we have to be cognizant that we always have to work within limited hour allocation and resource availability, bearing in mind that "language teachers and learners operate within a set of interrelated constraints. These constraints, often associated with the limited time and resources available to the teacher and the student, typically include the number of contact hours pre-determined for a course, lesson times and durations, technical support, ancillary learning materials, and so on" (Hubbard & Levy, 2006: 8).

Consequently, our aim was to provide learners with self-study strategies and resources that they might use outside the class to cater for their specific weaknesses and which could complement ordinary face-to-face EFL (Godeo, 2002-2003: 114). As a result, a new method was devised and inserted in our curriculum as an innovation project to make the most of the computer room using it as a language laboratory.

III. PROPOSAL PLANNING AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (in comparison with previous methods) and the recent implementation of the ECTS within the framework of EHEA have considerably modified the long-established roles of teacher and pupils in FLT. Whereas the teacher must slacken the reins a bit to play a different part in relation to students, these, in turn, have been pushed to assume a more active role in their learning process.

Thus, quite in agreement with present EHEA tenets, teachers are to act more as facilitators, organizers, motivators, counsellors, analysts than as the traditional directors, orchestrators or instructors (Pérez Cañado, 2010: 105) of the class. Hence, the teacher's role should be less controlling and should give way to a more flexible position from where the teacher may be ready to organize resources, act as a guide or even as a participant in the activity, or whatever the situation may require. Nonetheless, his main function will be to act as a communication activator. Conversely, students have to be active and participate in their learning process. Their involvement in the learning process has always been very important and, under this new instruction concept, it turns out to be essential.

Thus, our intention was to delve deeper into a student-oriented task-based approach rather than using the traditional text-based teacher-oriented one. This paper wants to present a humble experience on the integration, in a Higher Education context, of opportunities for learning with computers (Computer Assisted Language Learning, CALL) co-existing with opportunities for learning face-to-face (Jager, 2009: 32), since, as Jager (2009: 19) claims: "The potential of CALL is thus not utilised to the full, both in terms of the number of regular users and in terms of the kinds of applications used".

In order to deploy this initiative, we decided to explore a CALL methodology, focusing on the exploitation of a free website. As regards CALL, we will adhere to the definition provided by Hubbard (2009: 1), who characterizes it as "any process in which the learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her own language". Although it is a broad definition, as Hubbard himself admitted (2009: 1), he also argued that it is a "reasonable starting point". He goes further defining the concept of "computer" as not "simply the canonical desktop and laptop devices" (Hubbard, 2009:1) but including also all technological innovations such as PDAs, mp3/mp4 players, mobile phones, electronic whiteboards and even DVD players (Hubbard, 2009: 2).

Nonetheless, we wanted to achieve this curricular insertion seamlessly, in other words, without disrupting the real objective of the course, but facilitating the means. We tried to avoid the fact that students may be distracted with the introduction of any sort of technology just for the sake of it. Our general purpose was to employ ICT, firstly, to exercise the listening and speaking skills in class to reinforce students' abilities and consequently students' confidence to speak, and, secondly, to foster the opportunity of practising anywhere and anytime, with the help of an Internet connected terminal (notebook, laptop or other electronic device), an mp3/mp3 player or the like. From the curricular point of view, we planned and inserted this laboratory session into the weekly schedule so that we could reach "a stage where technology becomes invisible, embedded in everyday practice and hence normalised" (Bax, 2003: 23).

We fully share the following quotation: "Hay que tener presente que el aula de lengua extranjera supone un espacio de interacción y comunicación que ha de ofrecer múltiples posibilidades de expresión oral" (Martínez Agudo, 2003).[1] Besides, we wanted to extend this interactional and communication atmosphere from a functional approach to the computer room, our language laboratory. During the laboratory session programmed on Thursdays, we wanted to test our hypothesis: we postulated that, in many cases, the low performance in the speaking and listening skills in Spanish students of EFL was due to a lack of understanding of Anglo-Saxon sounds. It is reasonable to assume that to the ears of a Spanish speaker who learns English, the origin of the difficulty partly lies in the very nature of Anglo-Saxon sounds, many of which are unknown to them because they do not belong to their phonological spectrum. Precisely therein lies much of the complexity for them to recognise and imitate these sounds.

What is more, that drawback severely undermines the possibility of communication to take place, especially when the interlocutor is a native English speaker or has a native-like pronunciation. Missing some chunks of a dialogue prevents effective oral messages from getting through. It is important to emphasize this fact because such a problem is not so evident when the communicative act takes place between a Spanish speaker of English and another non-native English speaker. Nonetheless, the more similar the interlocutor's pronunciation is to that of a native speaker, the more difficult it is for communication to carry on. This hurdle cannot be attributed to a single reason, but it seems plausible to think that it might be due to the lack of equivalence between the sounds of English and Spanish. Moreover, it has to be noted that traditionally, much less time and funding have been devoted to the speaking and listening skills within the Spanish educational system if compared with the *grammatical* skills (reading and writing).

As a consequence, it is not uncommon to ascertain that Spanish speakers of English are clearly disadvantaged in this sense in comparison to students from other European countries whose educational system has accorded greater weight to the oral communicative skills.

Our primary intention with this initiative was to improve students' capability to recognize and reproduce Anglophone pronunciation as an initial step towards fostering oral communicative competence and, secondly, to encourage self-learning through an Internet-based resource. So, unquestionably, some phonetics instruction was needed. Indeed, what we were looking for was an *ad-hoc* crash course on phonetics that may be fitted into the time and resource restrictions

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[1]"We have to be aware that foreign language class is an interactional and communicative space that offers multiple opportunities for oral practice" (our translation).

of our subjects and may serve its purpose: to provide the basics to build upon. At the same time, students needed to be provided with as many oral auditory interaction opportunities as possible within and outside the class, and the CALL approach provided us with the tools to do so. A task-based (Nunan, 2004: 1) approach was followed and, simultaneously, self-study and life-long learning were promoted. The experience also sought to enable "learners to draw upon the language laboratory to develop autonomous work as a supplement to conventional group class work" (Godeo, 2002-2003: 114).

After some sifting, trying and testing a considerable amount of on line free resources, we selected the website to use in our laboratory sessions: *BBC Learning English.*[2] This is a BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) owned and controlled site, whose contents can be copied, broadcast, downloaded, stored (in any medium), transmitted, showed or played for educational purposes. And this is exactly what we got. In line with Robin (2007: 109) in Hubbard (2009: 6), "in the immediate future –the next five to ten years– the frontier in language learning and technology will not be found in what program does what better, but rather which students use off-the-shelf technology to best facilitate their own learning in their own learning style".

Theoretically, the chosen website fulfilled the criteria stated by Hubbard (2009: 2) as requisites to contribute to "improve the language", since it helps learners to "pick skills" faster and "retain" them longer. It adds "convenience" of usage by widening the range of times and places. Freshmen and sophomores seem to be easily "engaged in the learning process" by using technological devices, and this free site was "used as it is, without needing any customization" on behalf of the teacher (2009: 2).

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The execution and implementation of this experience was easily inserted into the course dynamics. It was conducted on Thursdays, in one-hour sessions in the computer lab. Students only had to bring their own headphones to work independently on the terminals. This allowed us to attain two intermediate goals. In the first place, by listening individually to the recordings, the students were able to work at their own personal pace and, secondly, they were able to work in a more focused way by eliminating background noise. Since no two students are the same, customized teaching techniques may certainly facilitate working at their own rhythm. The site offered a wealth of valuable resources, which is why we had to choose the ones that best fit our aims within the course constrains. The tabs selected to work on in this website consist basically of recordings that the user has to listen to in order to complete a series of exercises on them, with the user being in control of the activities. The student has to click on the buttons to play the excerpt, to pause it, to repeat it; everything at his own discretion. Sometimes a student needs to stop a listening to process a piece of information or to replay an extract to fully grasp its meaning - a simple procedure that proves highly convenient and intuitive for students of the era of technology.

Under close monitoring, we worked through a phonetics course that can be practiced in tab *Pronunciation Tips*[3], where one can find the complete phonetics chart of English sounds. What attracted us most and made us opt for this site was its user-friendliness and intuitiveness. Above all, I liked the way phonetics is presented to the learner in this page. Once a selection is made, a window pops up where a video is played. In this video, the user is shown how to follow the course, so that there is a visual and auditory explanation of the method. The link comprises five tabs. In the first tab (*Introduction*), we are provided with a short introduction to the course procedure. The second one (*The Sounds of English*) contains a chart with all the English sounds where the user has to click on a sound symbol to obatin a pop up window with an explanatory video. The student sees and hears how to pronounce the sounds. Besides, the users can also download these videos or a *pdf* file with examples, along with their phonetic transcription. These short videos (just over a long) provide a practical, easy to use and convenient solution to work on phonetics according to the students' needs, pace and availability. Therefore, the learners can practice naturally the linguistic features they need to acquire (Goodwin, 2001: 118): intonation, rhythm, reduced speech, linking words, consonants and vowel sounds, or word stress, almost without realising it. The fourth tab (*Quizzes*) contains several practice tests and on the last tab (*Programmes*), three radio programmes produced by the BBC in 2005 can be downloaded. These three downloads are on the weak form of schwa, consonant to vowel linking and vowel to vowel linking, respectively.

Within the same website, another tab was chosen to complement the OACC practise: the one under the title *Welcome To London.*[4] This is a content-oriented site where hand in hand with two characters, Fiona and John, we go through a series of real-life situations as they arrive and settle down in the city. It is an intermediate language level that allows the user to exercise English skills with a task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Nunan 2004: 1) approach. Most of the activities worked upon start with a listening (and some with an introductory text). Once the student plays the recording (or reads the text), he has to complete the dialogue by dragging and dropping the lines in the right order (or completing a multiple choice exercise). Two language tips accompany all these tasks: one on a Grammar Feature and another one on Vocabulary that comes up in the extract. Later, the students, working in pairs, are asked to act out orally the situation

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[2] It can be found on the link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/ (accessed 20/1/2010).
[3] It can be found on the link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/ (accessed 10/2/2010).
[4] Website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/multimedia/london/ (accessed 2/2/2010).

reproducing as much content as possible. In a second rehearsal, they are requires to introduce new data. Finally, they are asked to improvise a dialogue, departing from the structure provided. The proposed model for our tuition is thus a PPP (presentation, practice, production), TTT (testing, teaching and testing) or MMM (meeting new language, manipulating it and making it your own) one, no matter what terminology is used to refer to this pattern for language teaching (Moya Guijarro *et al.*, 2006: 12). Therefore, students are firstly presented with a guided exercise, later they are asked to perform a semi-guided role-play and finally they have to draw on this scaffolding to produce their own dialogue.

Consequently, in our daily routine primacy is given to oral work. In these interactions, errors are not systematically corrected, since they are considered part of the usual way of learning a language. By means of pre-arranged tasks, students are given the chance to perform a real-life situation in which language is the key to communicate. Authentic or semi-authentic materials are used in order to recreate as far as possible real-life situations and contexts. This way, students are encouraged to take an active part in a meaningful situation that could well take place in a real scenario (a trip to London). They feel that they are learning useful and meaningful strategies, formulae and linguistic resources to deploy outside the academic setting. Due to the familiarity with the topic at hand and the ICT usage, they are motivated to engage in the learning process. Unconsciously, they acquire grammar by using it in context, so it is easier and more entertaining. Nevertheless, communicative competence acquisition is the underlying and ultimate goal.

V. Real Effects and Discussion

To begin with, I would like to thank all the students who willingly accepted to take part and allowed their assessments to be used in this small-scale study. Personal data of students are not disclosed for confidentiality reasons. We wanted to measure and quantify the effects of our experience, if any. Our intention was to bestow as much objectivity as possible to the assessment process, in language evaluation task where the human factor cannot be discarded.

Given that the skills primarily worked on in this initiative were the oral and listening ones, in our verification phase we wanted to keep the students' performances for the record. The chosen method to check level of attainment was a ten-minute personal interview with the teacher. Half the time was devoted to answering general questions and the other half was dedicated to a short dialogue on one of the topics that had been worked on in the website. To record the interviews we used a sound record software called *Audacity 1.3 Beta (Unicode)* that can be downloaded for free from several websites. In our case, the download was made from Softonic.[5]

The performance in the interviews was assessed based on the following four items made known to the students beforehand:

TABLE 1.
ASSESSMENT

Item	Description	Assessment scale
1	General objective assessment	1-10 scale
2	Overall improvement, if any, regarding the starting point	1-5 scale[6]
3	Improvement in listening skill	1-5 scale
4	Improvement in speaking skill	1-5 scale

The study used a non-probability incidental sampling (Aliaga, 2000). Thirteen students took the oral test in the second term final exam, so this is the number of the final sample. The results were classified according to the four items described above:

• The average grade in item 1 was 6.38, somewhat higher than the 5.5 average grade that the core of the group had scored in the previous course.

• Item 2 offered an average of 2.69, which implies that overall improvement is between *poor* and *some* improvement, tending towards the latter.

• Item 3 showed a significant leap with a mean value of 3.

• Lastly, item 4 scored a mean value of 2.15, what translates into a *poor* improvement in speaking skill.

None of the four items analyzed showed a great improvement, although three of them registered a moderate increase. Amongst these, it is worth noticing that there is an outstanding improvement in oral comprehension. Undoubtedly, this was the skill to which most time was devoted in the laboratory sessions; therefore, we were somewhat reassured because our proposal seemed to pay off. The low performance registered in item 4, as compared to item 3, can perhaps be ascribed to the longer time span it takes to attain good results in the speaking skill. Sound recognition enhancement comes first in the improvement process and will subsequently lead to a gain in speaking ability.

Besides, the results of this computer-assisted learning experience reveal an improvement in motivation, academic performance and the development of social and communication skills (Salmerón-Pérez *et. al.*, 2010), which encourages us to further apply this initiative to a larger sample and over a longer period in the future.

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[5] Softonic website: http://www.softonic.com/ (accessed 4/3/2010).
[6] On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 means *none*, 2 means *poor*, 3 means *some*, 4 means *quite* and 5 equals *great* improvement in relation to the initial picture.

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A Model for Training Teachers to Identify Common Reference Levels in Written Production Activities

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Abstract—This paper presents a teacher training programme, the purpose of which was to train a secondary education teacher of English to identify common reference levels in written production activities. The first phase of this programme was based on the familiarisation and standardisation phases in North *et al.* (2009) and allowed the participant to familiarise herself with the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001) and to reliably identify common reference levels of English in both standardised and local performances. During the second phase, the participant assessed the written production competence of a sample of Year-9 pupils of English and assigned a common reference level of English to each pupil. After analysing her scores with generalizability theory, several high reliability coefficients were obtained. Such results demonstrate that this training programme, including its assessment procedure, can be adopted as a model for training secondary education teachers of English to identify common reference levels in written production activities.

Index Terms—generalizability, reliability, Common European Framework of Reference, writing, training programme

I. INTRODUCTION

At present, European language policy makers and planners are introducing the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) into the foreign-language curricula. One of the areas which is receiving a great deal of attention is assessment, since the CEFR has established six proficiency levels (called common reference levels, CRLs), upon which objectives, contents, methodology, learning activities and assessment should be built. Training courses are consequently being organised so that teachers can learn to assess pupils' productive performances according to the CRLs. However, the reliability of the scores provided by the participants in such training activities (and, therefore, the effectiveness of the training programme) has been relatively pushed into the background.

This paper presents a teacher training programme for a secondary-education teacher of English, the purpose of which was to enable the participant to identify the CRLs of local writing performances in a reliable way.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The *Common European Framework of Reference* is a document published by the Council of Europe in 2001. For Little (2006: 167),

The CEFR is a descriptive scheme that can be used to analyse L2 learners' needs, specify L2 learning goals, guide the development of L2 learning materials and activities, and provide orientation for the assessment of L2 learning outcomes.

The CEFR introduces six levels of language proficiency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2), called *common reference levels* (CRLs), which are "appropriate to the organisation of language learning and the public recognition of achievement" (Council of Europe, 2001: 22-23). The CEFR describes explicitly the CRLs in terms of single holistic paragraphs (2001: 24, Table 1), major categories of language use (2011: 26-27, Table 2), communicative language activities (2001: chapter 4) and communicative language competences (2011: chapter 5). The CEFR has been deeply influenced by Brian North's doctoral dissertation about the development of a scale of language proficiency (North, 2000).

One of the problems of the CEFR has been the fact that many of the statements describing the common reference levels are based on the *perception* of the development of language proficiency by groups of teachers of English in Switzerland (North, 2000: 290), not on a rigorous description of actual performance or second language acquisition

theory (Fulcher, 2010: 114). North himself was aware of this problem with his rating scales in that, before the publication of the CEFR, North and Schneider (1998: 219-220) had already stated that

[T]here is no guarantee that the description of proficiency offered in a scale is accurate, valid or balanced […] Raters may actually be trained to think the same; inter-rater reliability correlations of over 0.8 are common […] But the fact that people may be able to use such instruments with surprising effectiveness doesn't necessarily mean that what the scales say is valid. Furthermore, with the vast majority of scales of language proficiency, it is far from clear on what basis it was decided to put certain statements at Level 3 and others at Level 4 anyway.

This situation has given rise to research projects looking for the criterial features which should allow examiners to distinguish among the various CRLs (Carlsen, 2010; Hendriks, 2008; Salamoura & Saville, 2010). Another problem which has been mentioned in connection to the CEFR tables has been the lack of clarity in its descriptors. The CEFR includes a series of guidelines to write descriptors describing levels in language attainment, one of which deals with the clarity of descriptors: "Descriptors should be transparent, not jargon-ridden" (Council of Europe, 2001: 206). However, in order to avoid the dangers of the overuse of jargon, the CEFR authors have often opted for vagueness. See, for example, the descriptor for B1 in the scale for grammatical accuracy (Council of Europe, 2001: 114):

| B1 | • Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts.
• Generally good control though with noticeable mother tongue influence.
• Errors occur, but it is clear what he/she is trying to express. |

The problem with descriptors such as this one is that, from our point of view, they are rather ambiguous: the assessor is given too much freedom to interpret phrases like "with reasonable accuracy" or "generally good control" and, therefore, to determine the examinee's CRL. This amount of freedom of interpretation may cause a negative index of interrater agreement (Tinsley & Weiss, 1975: 359).

The CEFR has been subsequently developed by a huge number of documents, among which two stand out for our purposes: *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment: Writing Tasks: Pilot Samples* (Council of Europe, s.d.) and North *et al.* (2009) (henceforth referred to as the *Manual*). Council of Europe (s.d.) is a collection of sample writing performances, to which CRLs have been assigned, while the *Manual* is a document to help the providers of examinations to develop, apply and report transparent, practical procedures in a cumulative process of continuing improvement in order to situate their examination(s) in relation to the Common European Framework (CEFR) (North *et al.*, 2009: 1).

In order to relate a language examination to the CEFR, the *Manual* recommends the following five-phase process:

1. *Familiarisation*, the purpose of which is "to ensure that participants in the linking process have a detailed knowledge of the CEFR, its levels and illustrative descriptors" (North *et al.*, 2009: 10).

2. *Specification*, that is, "a self-audit of the coverage of the examination (content and tasks types) profiled in relation to the categories presented in CEFR Chapter 4 […] and CEFR Chapter 5" (North *et al.*, 2009: 10).

3. *Training in standardisation/benchmarking*, the activities of which aim "(a) to help panellists to implement a common understanding of the CEFR levels; (b) to verify that such a common understanding is achieved, and (c) to maintain that standard over time" (North *et al.*, 2009: 37).

4. *Standard setting among the different CRLs.*

5. *Validation*, which is related to "the body of evidence put forward to convince the test users that the whole process and its outcomes are trustworthy" (North *et al.*, 2009: 90).

Given the relevance of the phases of familiarisation and training in standardisation/benchmarking for the participant's training process, these are presented more extensively. The *Manual* recommends carrying out the following activities during the familiarisation phase in approximately three hours (North *et al.*, 2009: 23):

• Brief presentation of the CEFR Familiarisation seminar by the coordinator (30 minutes)
• Introductory activity (d–e) and discussion (45 minutes)
• Qualitative activity (f–g) including group work (45 minutes)
• Preparation for rating (h–i) (45 minutes)
• Concluding (15 minutes)

Table 1 presents the (slightly revised) time management which North *et al.* (2009: 46) proposed for the training activities to standardise the participants' judgments concerning written performance samples.

TABLE 1.
TIME MANAGEMENT FOR ASSESSING WRITTEN PERFORMANCE SAMPLES (NORTH *ET AL.*, 2009: 46).

Stages
Stage 1: Familiarisation (60 minutes)
Stage 2: Practice with standardised samples
-    Step 1: Illustration with approximately three standardised performances (60 minutes)
-    Step 2: Controlled practice with approximately three standardised performances (60 minutes)
-    Step 3: Free stage with approximately three standardised performances (60 minutes)
Stage 3: Benchmarking local samples
-    Individual rating and group discussion of circa three performances (60 minutes)
-    Individual rating of circa five more performances (60 minutes)

The *Manual* has been the base of numerous training programmes to standardise judgments concerning written performances in terms of CRLs, such as "Rating procedures in the assessment of written learner productions of the A-levels" (Quality Agency Meißen, Sachsen, 2007), *"*Rating written learner productions of the A-levels" (Institute for Teacher Training, Saarbrücken, 2008) or "Reconocimiento de los niveles comunes de referencia en actividades de expresión e interacción escritas y orales" (Centro de Profesores, Sevilla, 2011). However, a datum which is missing in these training programmes –but present in other programmes, such as Wigglesworth (1993) or Lumley & McNamara (1995)– is, as far as we know, a statistic which estimates, with a high degree of dependability, the participants' proficiency in identifying the examinees' productive and interactive written competences in terms of CRLs.

The process of rating a written performance is related to what in educational and psychological testing is called *reliability*, which has been defined as "the degree to which test scores for a group of test takers are consistent over repeated applications of a measurement procedure and hence are inferred to be dependable, and repeatable for an individual test taker" (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999: 180) (*Standards*, 1999 henceforth). In fact, the 1999 *Standards* devoted Standard 2.1 to the reliability of scores: "For each score, subscore, or combination of scores that is to be interpreted, estimates of relevant reliabilities and standard error of measurement or test information functions should be reported" (*Standards*, 1999: 31). In a sense, this paper can be considered to be a report of the reliability and the standard error of measurement of the scores provided by the trainee during the training programme.

At present, one of the most powerful approaches to reliability estimation is *generalizability theory* (GT), which Shavelson and Webb (1991: 1) defined as "a statistical theory about the dependability of behavioural measurements". The first paper where generalizability theory was presented was Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser (1963), who defined it as "a theory regarding the adequacy with which one can generalize from one observation to a universe of observations" (1963: 137). For Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser (1963: 145), investigators had to specify a universe of conditions of observation, over which they would generalize. In GT, the term *conditions* is applied to "particular test forms or stimuli, observers, occasions or situations of observation" (Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser, 1963: 145), that is, the values of the variables which the test evaluator considers to influence the testing procedure, while a *facet* is the "characteristic of a measurement procedure such as task, occasion, observer that is defined as a potential source of measurement error" (Shavelson & Webb, 2005b: 99), i.e., the variable influencing the testing procedure. GT distinguishes between *generalizability studies* (G studies), which are used "to obtain estimates of variance components associated to the universe of admissible observations" (Brennan, 1992: 3), and *decision studies* (D studies), the purpose of which is to provide data "to design efficient measurement procedures for operational use or to provide information for making substantive decisions about objects of measurement" (Brennan, 1992: 3). GT is based on a series of assumptions:

1. Conditions are randomly selected from the universe of conditions (Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser, 1963:147).
2. Conditions are specified (Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser, 1963: 145).
3. Conditions are experimentally independent (Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser, 1963: 145).
4. The scores assigned to the conditions are numbers on an interval scale.

In GT, a person p's score in item i (X_{pi}) is broken down as follows:

$$X_{pi} = \mu \text{ (grand mean) } + \ \mu_p - \mu \text{ (person component } = v_p) + \ \mu_i - \mu \text{ (item component } = v_i) + X_{pi} - \mu_p - \mu_i + \mu \text{ (residual component } = v_{pi})$$

Where:

$$\mu = \underset{p}{E}\,\underset{i}{E}\, X_{pi} \text{ (the mean over both the population of persons and the universe of items)}$$

$$\mu_p = \underset{i}{E}\, X_{pi} \text{ (an examinee's mean score over the universe of items)}$$

$$\mu_i = \underset{p}{E}\, X_{pi} \text{ (the population mean for item } i)$$

$$X_{pi} - \mu_p - \mu_i + \mu = \text{residual component}$$

The basic assumptions underlying the model in equation 1 are:

1. The expected value of each of these components over the population of persons and the universe of items is set equal to zero ($\underset{p}{E}\nu_p = \underset{i}{E}\nu_i = \underset{pi}{E}\nu_{pi} = 0$).

2. Each of the n_p persons is administered each of the n_i items, and the responses X_{pi} are obtained (this is a description of a $p \times i$ G study, the same type as the study below).

The total test variance can also be broken down into different *variance components* (Cornfield and Tukey, 1956: 926; Cronbach, Rajaratnam & Gleser, 1963: 151; Gleser, Cronbach & Rajaratnam, 1965: 408), which can be estimated by first applying an analysis of variance to the set of data and, then, the following formulae:

$$\sigma^2(p) = E(\mu_p - \mu)^2 = \frac{MS_p - MS_{pi}}{n_i}$$

$$\sigma^2(i) = E(\mu_i - \mu)^2 = \frac{MS_i - MS_{pi}}{n_p}$$

$$\sigma^2(pi) = EE(X_{pi} - \mu_p - \mu_i + \mu)^2 = MS_{pi}$$

Among the data that may be obtained with a D-study we can mention:

1. An index Φ of dependability for domain-referenced interpretations, corrected for chance agreement (Brennan, 1980: 205; 2001: 35; Kane & Brennan, 1980: 118). Values of Φ close to or greater than .80 are considered to be dependable (Glasswell & Brown, 2003: 4).

2. Absolute error variance (Brennan, 1980: 198). The *absolute error* Δ_{pI} is the error involved in using an examinee's observed mean score as an estimate of his or her universe score (Brennan, 2001: 31).

3. Error variance for estimating μ using $\overline{X}$: The error variance involved in using the mean over the sample of both persons and items ($\overline{X}$) as an estimate of the mean over both the population of persons and the universe of items (μ)

$$\sigma^2(\overline{X}) = \sigma^2(P) + \sigma^2(I) + \sigma^2(PI) = \frac{\sigma^2(p)}{n'_p} + \frac{\sigma^2(i)}{n_i} + \frac{\sigma^2(pi)}{n'_p n_i}$$

4. Signal-to-noise ratio: Brennan & Kane (1977: 616) developed a general index to measure the precision of the criterion-referenced test, based on the concept of signal-to-noise ratio (*S/T ratio*). In telecommunication engineering, the signal-to-noise ratio indicates "the amount by which a signal exceeds the noise in a specified bandwith" (Freeman, 2004: 146). In a telecommunication system, the material to be transmitted requires a minimum S/N ratio in order to satisfy customers or to make the receiving instrument function within certain specified criteria. When Brennan & Kane (1977: 616) applied the concept of S/N ratio to criterion-referenced tests, $\sigma^2(p)$ (which is a function of the magnitude of the deviation $\mu_p - \mu$) was associated with the signal and the absolute error variance $\sigma^2(\Delta)$ with the noise. Therefore, the amount by which a signal exceeds the noise in a criterion-referenced test situation can be estimated by means of the proportion $\sigma^2(p)/\sigma^2(\Delta)$, which indicates the degree to which the test is precise (Brennan, 1980: 204; 2001: 47; Brennan & Kane, 1977: 616).

5. Index of the context-specific precision or error-tolerance ratio (*E/T*) (Kane, 1996). Brennan (2001: 48) presents the following formula for the estimation of the error-tolerance ratio:

$$E/T(\lambda) = \sqrt{\frac{\sigma^2(\Delta)}{\sigma^2(p) + (\mu - \lambda)^2}}$$

Where:

E/T(λ) = the error-tolerance ratio for cut score λ.

λ = a cut score, expressed a proportion of correct items.

From this error-tolerance ratio, a reliability-like coefficient is:

$$\Phi(\lambda) = \frac{\sigma^2(p) + (\mu - \lambda)^2}{\sigma^2(p) + (\mu - \lambda)^2 + \sigma^2(\Delta)}$$

GT has also been applied to the assessment of writing tests (Brown & Bailey, 1984; Gebril, 2010; Llabre, 1978; Sudweeks, Reeve & Bradshaw, 2004; Swartz *et al.*, 1999).

Bearing in mind the literature review and the purpose of this study, the research was guided by the following general research questions:

1. Is the trainee familiarised with the CEFR?

2. Can the trainee identify the pupils' common reference levels?

3. Are the trainee's scores reliable?

Since the trainee intended to assess the writing competence of a sample of Year-9 pupils, the specific research questions in this study were:

1. What aspects influence the variation in her scores?

2. Is the contribution of the test to the dependability of the decision procedure very high?

3. What is the recommended number of rating criteria to be used when assessing the writing competence in a population of Year-9 pupils?

4. How great is the error involved in using a pupil's observed scores as an estimate of this pupil's universe score?

5. Is the trainee's writing test a precise instrument to measure the pupils' writing competence?

6. How precise are the trainee's scores?

7. Is the writing test a precise instrument to measure the pupils' writing competence?

III. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer these research questions, a training programme was designed so that the trainee could familiarise herself with the CEFR and acquire experience in standardisation/scoring local samples of written performances in English. The programme used the model established in North *et al.* (2009) as a guideline, though several modifications were introduced:

1. Familiarisation (4 hours).

2. Practice with standardised samples

   a. Step 1: Explanation of rating criteria (2 hours).

   b. Step 2: Illustration (3 hours).

   c. Step 3: Controlled practice (1 hour and 30 minutes).

   d. Step 4: Free practice (1 hour and 30 minutes).

Since the trainee is a secondary education teacher, it was decided that she would have to recognize the common reference levels in a sample of local Year-9 pupils' performances. There was the problem that the Andalusian curriculum for secondary education (Andalucía, 2007) does not include a general instructional objective for foreign language learning in terms of the common reference levels. The authors then decided to set the common reference level A2 as the goal to attain in English at the end of secondary education (Year 10).

The familiarisation phase was composed of the following activities:

1. Presentation of the training program (30 minutes).

2. Presentation of the CEFR (30 minutes).

3. Self-assessment of the trainee's linguistic competence in terms of the CEFR common reference levels.

4. Learning activity 1: Reordering the descriptors in the CEFR table "Overall written production" (Council of Europe, 2001: 61).

5. Learning activity 2: Reordering the descriptors in the CEFR table "Overall written interaction" (Council of Europe, 2001: 83).

6. Learning activity 3: Reordering the descriptors in CEFR "Table 2. Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid" (Council of Europe, 2001: 26-27).

As *familiarisation with the CEFR* was defined as the ability to reconstruct CEFR tables, the null hypothesis h_0 to be tested in each of the familiarisation learning activities 4-6 was that there was no difference between the descriptor distribution in the corresponding CEFR table and the distribution made by the trainee. Since, as far as we know, there exist no data concerning the degree of familiarisation with the CEFR among Spanish secondary education teachers in terms of CEFR tables, the (non-parametric) sign test (traditional method) was used in order to test the above null hypotheses ($\alpha = 0.05$) (Cochran, 1937; Triola, 2006: 678-686; Wilcoxon, 1945).

During the phase of practice with standardised samples, the trainee was given some materials and asked to read the samples of written performances (ranging from A1 to A2 common reference levels) and to rate each criterion of written performance with 0, 1 or 2 (0 = A1-, 1 = A1, 2 = A2). The practice phase was composed of four steps:

1. Step 1 (*explanation*): The trainee was explained the concepts of grammatical range, lexical range, cohesion and descriptive writing, and was given the following materials:

   a. For grammatical range: the clause structures presented in Salamoura & Saville (2010: 116) using Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985)'s terminology (see Appendix A).

   b. For lexical range: the word lists from Trim (1998: 157-176) (WLA1) and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2009c) (WLA2). Lexical range was divided into lexical range for A1 level and lexical range for A2 level on the basis of these vocabulary lists, and these terms were defined as follows:

$$Lexical\ range_{A1} = WLA1$$
$$Lexical\ range_{A2} = WLA2 - WLA1$$

   c. For coherence: the descriptors of the coherence criterion for levels A1 and A2 from Table C4 in North *et al.* (2009: 187) (see Appendix B).

   d. For descriptive writing: the descriptors of the description criterion for levels A1 and A2 from Table C4 in North *et al.* (2009: 187) (see Appendix B).

2. Step 2 (*illustration*): Presentation of two CEFR illustrative standardised performances (A1 and A2) (Council of Europe, s.d.). The trainee was asked to rate each aspect of the written language use in each sample and to justify her ratings. Afterwards, feedback was provided.

3. Step 3 (*controlled practice*): Presentation of three CEFR (A1, A2 and B1) standardised samples from CEFTrain (s.d.). The trainee was asked to use Appendices A and B, WLA1 and WLA2 in order to rate four aspects of written language use (grammatical range, lexical range, cohesion and description) for three subjects by assigning a value (0 = A1−; 1 = A1; 2 = A2 or higher) to each aspect of the subject's written language use according to her estimation of the writer's aspect. Data were then collected and feedback provided.

4. Step 4 (*free activity*): Presentation of three local CEFR (A1-A2) standardised performances. The trainee was asked to rate, with the same material as during the controlled-practice phase, four aspects of written language use (grammatical range, lexical range, cohesion and description) for three subjects and to assign a value (0 =A1−; 1 = A1; 2 = A2 or higher) to each aspect of the subject's written language use. Later, data were collected and feedback was provided.

In order to assess the degree of consistency of the trainee's scores, the trainee repeated steps 3 and 4 fifteen days later (test-retest reliability) (Linn and Gronlund, 2000: 110). The collected data were then analyzed in order to test the null hypotheses h_0 that there was no difference between the first and the second rating. Since, as far as we know, there exist no data concerning the degree of familiarisation with the CEFR among Spanish secondary education teachers, the (non-parametric) sign test (traditional method) was used in order to test these hypotheses ($\alpha = 0.05$).

After the training programme was completed, the trainee rated 191 samples of written performances (of a population of 191 Year-9 pupils) from two secondary education schools in Montequinto (Dos Hermanas, Spain). These pupils took a writing test (Appendix C) and the trainee was asked to use the same rating procedure as the one used during the controlled-practice and free-activity phases.

TABLE 2.
ESTIMATED VARIANCE COMPONENTS FOR G STUDY IN THE UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS WITH A $P \times I$ DESIGN FOR THE TEST OF PRODUCTIVE AND INTERACTIVE COMPETENCE ($N_P = 191$, $N_I = 4$) (TWO-WAY ANOVA WITHOUT REPLICATION, $A = 0.05$)

Components	Pupils (p)	Criteria (i)	Interaction (pi)	Total
Df	190	3	570	763
SS	316.973	62.108	99.141	478.223
MS	1.668	20.702	0.173	
Estimated G study variance components	0.374	0.107	0.174	
Total variance (%)	57.03	19.54	31.62	
Estimated standard error	0.043	0.069	0.009	

TABLE 3.
RESULTS FOR RANDOM COMPONENTS D STUDY $P \times I$ DESIGN

$\widehat{\Phi}$	0.842
$\hat{\sigma}^2(\Delta)$	0.070
S/N ratio	5.310
$\hat{\sigma}^2(\bar{X})$	0.029

TABLE 4.
ESTIMATED E/T(Λ) AND Φ(Λ) FOR D STUDY IN THE UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS WITH A $P \times I$ DESIGN FOR THE TEST OF WRITING PRODUCTIVE AND INTERACTIVE COMPETENCES ($N_P = 191$)

λ	E/T(λ)	Φ(λ)
0.1	0.293	0.921
0.2	0.319	0.908
0.3	0.347	0.893
0.4	0.376	0.876
0.5	0.405	0.859
0.6	0.429	0.844
0.7	0.446	0.834
0.8	0.450	0.831
0.9	0.442	0.836
1	0.423	0.848

IV. ANALYSIS

A. Analysis of Trainee Data

The sign test procedure ($\alpha = 0.05$) provided the following results with the data about the familiarisation phase (Table 5), when testing the null hypotheses h_0 that there was no difference between the descriptor distribution in the corresponding CEFR table and the distribution made by the trainee during familiarisation learning activities 1-3 (Rós-Lorenzo, 2009):

TABLE 5.
DATA OBTAINED WITH THE FAMILIARISATION LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity	Test statistic	Critical value on the left	Critical value on the right
Learning activity 1	0	*	*
Learning activity 2	0	*	*
Learning activity 3	4	1	8

The asterisk indicates that, with that test statistic, it is impossible to obtain a value in the critical region and, therefore, the corresponding null hypothesis h_0 must be admitted. On the basis of the data collected in each familiarisation learning activity 1-3, it was concluded that there are not enough data to reject the null hypotheses h_0 that there was no difference between the descriptor distribution in the CEFR tables and the distributions made by the trainee. Put in a simpler way, it was inferred that the trainee was familiarised with the CEFR.

The data obtained during both the controlled practices and the free activities were also analysed with the sign test procedure. Table 6 presents the test statistics obtained and the corresponding critical values.

TABLE 6.
DATA OBTAINED DURING BOTH THE CONTROLLED PRACTICES AND THE FREE ACTIVITIES

Activity	Test statistic	Critical value on the left	Critical value on the right
Controlled practice 1	0	*	*
Controlled practice 2	0	*	*
Controlled practice 3	0	*	*
Free activity 1	0	*	*
Free activity 2	0	*	*
Free activity 3	0	*	*

In every learning activity, the trainee identified the writer's CRL and assigned the same scores to the writer's performances in both sessions. On the basis of the data collected during the controlled practice and the free activities, it was concluded that there were no difference between the scores in both sessions. In other words, it was inferred that (i) the trainee could identify the writer's CRL and (ii) her scores were highly reliable.

B. Analysis of Pupil Data

a. Analysis of the Data Obtained in the G Study

On the basis of the relative sizes of the estimated G-study variance components associated with pupils, rating criteria and the interaction between pupils and rating criteria, it can be inferred from Table 2 that:

1. The largest estimated variance component was the one associated with the individual differences among pupils' writing competence, which accounts for 57.03% of the total variance.

2. The second largest estimated variance component was the one associated with the interaction pupils-rating criteria, which accounts for 31.62% of the total variability. This variability reflects the interaction and influence of factors such as the pupils' educational histories and other residual characteristics like noise, light, pupils' health conditions, etc., which, since they have not been measured, are conflated in this variance component. For example, a particular rating criterion may have been easier for those pupils who have received additional feedback on that criterion during their instruction.

3. The smallest estimated variance component was the one associated with the rating criteria, which accounts for 19.54% of the total variance. This percentage of the total variability is associated with the difficulty of the rating criteria.

The total variability of pupils' test scores was thus influenced by (ordered from the most to the least prominent) (i) the overall writing competence, (ii) the pupils' degree of familiarity with the rating criteria and other environmental characteristics, and (iii) the difficulty of each rating criterion.

b. Analysis of the Data Obtained in the D Study

We can see in Table 3 that the Φ index is over .80. Thus, the rating procedure contributes a great deal to the dependability of the decisions or estimations based on this rating procedure. The absolute error variance $\hat{\sigma}^2(\Delta)$ is extremely low (0.07), which indicates that the error involved in using an examinee's observed mean score as an estimate of his or her universe score is also extremely low. Fig. 1 shows the influence of different numbers of rating criteria on the estimations of the Φ index and the absolute error variance. The Φ index shows a value over .80 just when the number of rating criteria is equal to or higher than 4, and, as for the absolute error variance, there exists a very small difference among its values when the number of rating criteria is equal to or higher than 4. Therefore, for the rating procedure with this trainee, it is concluded that four is an optimum number of rating criteria.
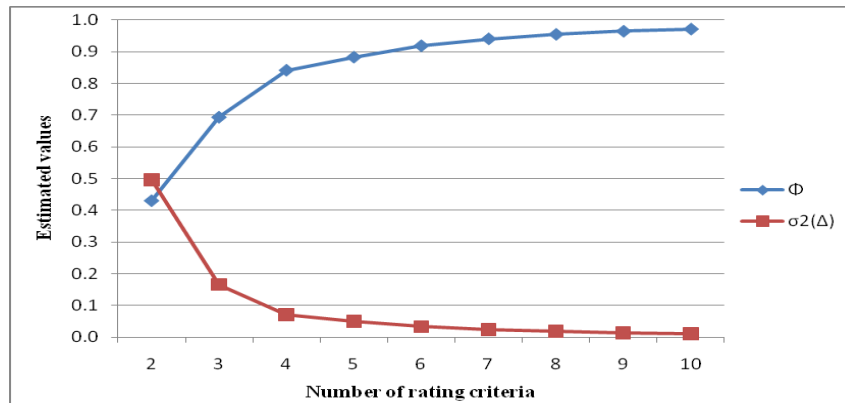
Figure 1. Influence of the number of criteria on the estimates of Φ and $\sigma^2(\Delta)$.

The signal-to-noise ratio is 5.31, which means that the magnitude of the estimated variance components for persons is more than five times the magnitude of the estimated criterion-referenced absolute error. Thus, the written test is precise to measure the pupils' writing competence.

With respect to the index of tolerance for error for this particular population and test administration, Fig. 2 shows the estimated values of $E/T(\lambda)$ and $\Phi(\lambda)$ for different cut scores (see Table 4). As predicted by Brennan (2001: 48), when λ is equal to the mean $\bar{X}$ over both the populations of pupils and the rating criteria, at $\bar{X}$ (in our study $\bar{X} = 0.787$) the estimate of $E/T(\lambda)$ achieves its maximum value and the estimate of $\Phi(\lambda)$ its minimum value. All in all, all the estimates of $E/T(\lambda)$ are small, which is an indication that the measurements have substantial precision for the intended use, while every estimate of $\Phi(\lambda)$ is over 0.8, which is a signal that the test contributes a great deal to the dependability of the decision procedure.
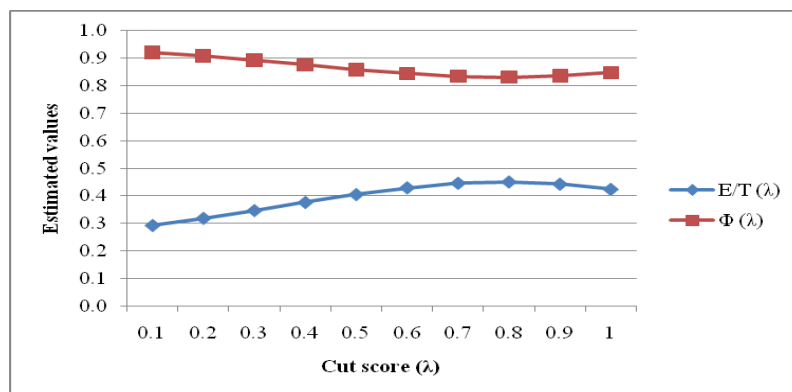

Figure 2. Estimated values of E/T (λ) and Φ (λ) with different cut scores (λ).

V. CONCLUSIONS

1. The trainee was familiarised with the CEFR.

2. The trainee could identify the pupils' common reference level and her scores were highly reliable.

3. The total variability of pupils' test scores was influenced by (ordered from the most to the least prominent) (i) the pupil's overall writing competence, (ii) factors such as differences in the pupils' educational histories and other residual characteristics, which have not been directly measured, and (iii) the degree of difficulty of each rating criterion.

4. Given the high estimated Φ coefficient obtained by the trainee, the contribution of the test to the dependability of the decision procedure is very high.

5. The recommended number of rating criteria to be used when assessing the writing competence in this population with this trainee and this population is four.

6. The error involved in using an examinee's observed mean score as an estimate of his or her universe score is extremely low.

7. The writing test is a precise instrument to measure the pupils' writing competence.

The first two conclusions constitute the answers to those general research questions which guided the present study and show that this model can be used to familiarize secondary education teachers with the CEFR, to teach them how to identify pupils' common reference level in written production activities and to obtain reliable scores when rating. Those results and these conclusions support the adoption of this training programme (including its assessment procedure) as a

model for training secondary education teachers of English to identify common reference levels in written production activities.

In contrast to studies such as Wigglesworth (1993) or Lumley & McNamara (1995), this programme has provided an index that estimates the high degree of dependability of the participant's ratings. The present study has also made use of a higher number of confirmatory GT indices ($\hat{\Phi}$, $\hat{\sigma}^2(\Delta)$, *S/N* ratio and $\hat{\sigma}^2(\bar{X})$), compared to those used in other GT studies on performance assessment (Kim, 2009). Finally, another significant point which should be highlighted is that highly satisfactory results can be attained in similar training programmes if the number of rating criteria is reduced to 4, which may contribute to shorten the length of the training programme and the effort demanded of the participants involved. The study, however, possesses the significant limitation of having been focused on a single trainee. Future research should confirm if the application of this model to training programmes with a higher number of diverse participants may also attain such fruitful results.

APPENDIX A GRAMMATICAL RANGE

List of clause structures used to assess grammatical range

	Clause structure	Example
A1		
A2	SV: S V SV: S V ; V = intr. reciprocal SVA: S V A ; V = prepositional SVO: S V O SVO: S V O ; V = phrasal V SVO: S V O $V_{particle}$; V = phrasal V SVOA: S V O_d O_i ; O_i = PP SVO: S V O ; O = *-ing* clause SVO: S V O ; O = *to*-infinitive SVO: S V O ; O = *that*-clause	He went They met They apologized to him He loved her She looked up the number She looked the number up She added the flowers to the bouquet His hair needs combing I wanted to play They thought that he was late
B1	SVOO: S V O_i O_d ; O_d = NP SV: S V ; V = intr. phrasal V SVO: S_{NP} V_{tr} O_d ; O_d = *wh*-infinitive clause SVOA: S_{NP} V_{tr} O_d A; A = *-ing* clause SVOO: S_{NP} V O_d $O_{i\,-\,PP}$; O_i = PP; Prep = *to* SVOC: S V O (*to V*) C_O SVA: S $V_{prepositional}$ A ; A = V NP ; VP = *-ing* form SVO: S V O A; V = phrasal V SVO: S V O $V_{particle}$ A; V = phrasal V SVOO: S V O_i O_d ; O_i = PP, Prep = *to*; O_d = *that*-clause SVO: S V O ; O = finite *wh*-clause SVA: S V A ; A = PP, Complement = finite *wh*-clause	She asked him his name She gave up He explained how to do it I caught him stealing He gave a big kiss to his mother I found him (to be) a good doctor He wanted the children found They failed in attempting the climb I separated out the three boys from the crowd I separated the three boys out from the crowd They admitted to the authorities that they had entered illegally He asked whether he should come He thought about whether he wanted to go

APPENDIX B DESCRIPTORS OF COHERENCE AND DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS FOR A1 AND A2 LEVELS

	Cohesion	*Descriptive texts*
A1	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like *and* and *then*.	Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do, etc.
A2	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like *and*, *but* and *because*.	Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences Can write short simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people.

APPENDIX C WRITING TEST

Read this notice from the magazine in your school.

<p style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">
Are you a good writer?
Would like to write for the school magazine?
Write about your best friend.
Please, send us your article!
</p>

Write about your best friend.

You have 20 minutes to write your answer in the answer sheet.

Write 60-80 words.

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Abductive Reasoning and Second Language Learning*

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Abstract—Although much work has been conducted on deductive and inductive approaches to second language learning, insufficient attention has been dedicated to abductive reasoning. This paper presents the results from an exploratory study on the processes that motivate initial hypothesis-making and their possible repercussions for L2 instruction. More specifically, the beginner foreign language learners' ability to infer word meaning based on their overall linguistic knowledge (e.g., knowledge of the first language, knowledge of other foreign languages) was tested in order to draw conclusions about abductive reasoning in L2 learning.

Index Terms—abductive reasoning, language acquisition, vocabulary acquisition, cross-linguistic influence

I. INTRODUCTION

Pierce (1992, 1998) described the scientific method as involving three phases: abduction that represents the process of making conjectures as to the hypotheses, deduction as the process of deriving consequences from these hypotheses, and induction through which we test these hypotheses. It is argued here that the same three modes of reasoning are present in the process of second language learning (L2).[1] When a language learner is confronted with a new linguistic unit for the first time, he or she makes hypotheses about its meanings and possible functions. By means of deductive reasoning, the learner draws conclusions from the initial hypotheses about the possible contexts in which the given unit could be used. Finally, through the exposure to different examples within the given unit, he or she reinforces, modifies, or rejects the initial hypothesis. In other words, abduction could be described as a *hunch* that facilitates and speeds up language acquisition. However, as a *non sequitur* inference, it might also be responsible for a number of language errors. Consequently, this kind of reasoning needs to be recognized and directed in L2 instruction.

Although there is much work on deductive and inductive approaches to second language learning, insufficient attention has been dedicated to abductive reasoning. This paper presents the results from an exploratory study about the processes that motivate initial hypothesis-making and their possible repercussions for L2 instruction. More specifically, beginner foreign language learners' ability to infer word meaning based on their overall linguistic knowledge of the first and other foreign languages was tested.

In the following sections, the theoretical assumptions related to abductive reasoning and hypothesis-making in second language acquisition will be briefly exposed. Furthermore, concepts in relation to vocabulary acquisition are explored and the results from the word recognition test designed to probe beginner students' ability to infer word meaning based on their previous linguistic knowledge are presented. Finally, specific suggestions for future research are proposed, together with some recommendations for L2 instruction.

II. ABDUCTION AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Prior to Peirce's work in the late 19th century, logical arguments were traditionally divided into two subclasses: the class of deductive arguments, that is, necessary inference, and the class of inductive arguments or probable inference. However, Peirce extended this dichotomy to include abduction as a form of probable argument and he elaborated on it in a number of his philosophical writings from 1865 until 1914.

[A]bductive inference shades into perceptual judgment without any sharp line of demarcation between them; or in other words our first premises, the perceptual judgments, are to be regarded as an extreme case of abductive inferences, from which they differ in being absolutely beyond criticism. The abductive suggestion comes to us like a flash. It is an

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[1] A distinction is frequently made between second vs. foreign language learning/acquisition. Second language acquisition generally refers to the acquisition of a language in the target country, while foreign language acquisition is seen as referring to a language learned outside of the target culture. Although the context of this study corresponds to the foreign language context, both terms are used interchangeably.

act of insight, although of extremely fallible insight. It is true that different elements of the hypothesis were in our minds before; but it is the idea of putting together what we had never before dreamed of putting together which flashes the new suggestion before our contemplation. (Peirce 1998:227)

Abduction furnishes all our ideas concerning real things, beyond those given in perception, but is mere conjecture, without probative force. In the absence of any special reasons to the contrary, any hypothesis may be admissible. Burch (1998) explains that abduction is not always inference to the best explanation, but it is always inference to something that clarifies or makes routine some information that has previously been unexpected.

The mind seeks to bring the facts, as modified by the new discovery, into order; that is, to form a general conception, which can be done by an act of generalization. In other cases, no new law is suggested, but only a peculiar state of facts that explains the surprising phenomenon (Peirce, 1998: 287). When an already known rule is recognized as applicable to the suggested hypothesis, the phenomenon under the assumption would be quite likely or even a necessary result. This synthesis of previous knowledge and new insights, which suggest a new conception or hypothesis, represents abduction. It is neither more nor less than guessing (Peirce, 1998: 107).

It is proposed here that in the context of language learning (L1, L2, etc.), abduction represents a twofold process of perceiving specific language characteristics and making assumptions about their form and/or function. L2 learners already have considerable linguistic knowledge that can be highly productive on the condition that they know how to take advantage of this potential. Naturally, many variables are relevant in L2 learning, such as aptitude, personality, age, literacy, metalinguistic awareness, the use of strategies, knowledge of the world, and social background (Ellis, 1996: 472). They affect abduction in various ways and, at the same time, influence cross-linguistic inference.

Establishing the cross-linguistic influence (or transfer) is particularly relevant for the comprehension of a new language. Ringbom (2007: 15) proposes that "comprehension relies on three types of information: input (linguistics and other communicative), knowledge (linguistic and world knowledge), and context (linguistic and situational context)". He further distinguishes between "on-line comprehension" and "receptive learning". While on-line comprehension refers to the recognition and inference, receptive learning is consolidation and permanent storage of linguistic knowledge (Ringbom, 2007: 14). The first stage of encountering a new item in the learning process actually stands for abductive reasoning in L2 acquisition. It is operant in every aspect of language learning; however, the focus of this study is on the processes of L2 vocabulary on-line comprehension.

Laufer (1990: 574) conceives a word as a set of features (phonological, grammatical, semantic and distributional) and explains that every new word is incorporated into the total inventory of words stored in the learner's mind. Each learned word interacts with other words in the mental lexicon on the basis of semantic and phonological principles. Since words in L1 and L2/L3 are stored together in one lexicon, new words will interact with the semantically and phonologically related words both in the L1 and L2. In this study, these relationships are explored through a word recognition test that primarily takes into consideration formal similarities, as in the case of cognates. "Cognates in two languages can be defined as historically related, formally similar words, whose meanings may be identical, similar, partly different or, occasionally, even wholly different" (Ringbom, 2007: 73). Carroll (1992: 94) explains cognates in terms of a particular model of lexical activation and word recognition, defining them as lexical items from different languages that are identified by bilinguals as somehow being "the same thing". Thus, these underlying similarities of items are a concretely perceived similarity of a form and an associated, assumed similarity of function or meaning between source language and target language. In lexis, formal similarity to an existing L1 word is perceived first, in that getting the word form precedes getting the word meaning. Kirsner, Lalor and Hird (1993) make a point that learning cognates does not involve creating a new entry in memory, but rather adding new information to an existing entry. If formal correspondences can be observed, it leads a learner to a subsequent assumption of "associated translation equivalence" (see Ringbom 2007:9; Zimmermann, 1987). The extent to which these assumptions actually work determines whether the effect is positive or negative.

In the remainder of the study, results from the word recognition test are presented and interpreted in light of the exposed theoretical framework.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Test Description

In order to establish the interaction of formal cross-linguistic influence and abductive reasoning, a word recognition test was designed. The test consisted of two sections: 1) two questions that inquired about the learners' language learning history, and 2) fifty words for which the learners were supposed to offer an adequate translation in their first language, i.e., Serbian. The purpose of the first section was to determine which languages the students were already familiar with and what language was the object of their academic career.

The second section of the test consisted of a list of fifty items given without the context, since the focal interest of this research was on-line vocabulary comprehension. The word recognition quiz examined the students' ability to infer a word meaning based solely on its form. The items for this section were chosen from the list of the most frequent Spanish words compiled by the Corpus Cumbre (Eduteka, 2005). In this way, we wanted to provide a criterion that would guarantee an approximate degree of familiarity with the items in the test, independently of their respective

categories. That is to say, in order to explore the relationship between the inference strategies and the students' language learning histories, the fifty items from the test were categorized into six groups according to their forms:

1. The first group was made up of words considered to be Indo-European cognates, such as *centro* [center], *clase* [class], *masa* [mass], *par* [pair] etc.;

2. Cognates in Spanish and English, e.g., *oficina* [office], *patata* [potato], *suburbio* [suburb], etc.;

3. Spanish and French cognates, e.g., *brazo* [arm, Fr. *bras*], *caballo* [horse, Fr. *cheval*], *guerra* [war, Fr. *guerre*], etc.;

4. False cognates[2] in Spanish and English, such as *arma* [weapon], *carpeta* [folder], *nudo* [knot], *pariente* [relative], *pie* [foot], etc.;

5. False cognates in Spanish and Serbian, such as *cada* [each] (Sr. /kada/, [bathtub]), *nada* [nothing] (Sr. /nada/, [hope]), *regalo* [gift] (Sr. /regal/ [closet]), *voz* [voice] (Sr. /voz/ [train]), etc. These words represent absolute or close homophones in Serbian and Spanish, although their meaning is not related in any way. To give an example, the word *nada* [nothing] is spelled and pronounced in the same way in both Spanish and Serbian /nada/, but its meaning in Serbian is *hope*;

6. The sixth category was conceived as a control group, that is, it consisted of items with no formal similarities with any of the previously mentioned languages: *coche* [car], *iglesia* [church], *silla* [chair], etc.

B. Participants

The participants of this study are first-year students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Kragujevac enrolled in the beginner level Spanish language course. They major in one of the following departments: Serbian language and literature, English language and literature, French language and literature, or German language and literature. The Department of Serbian language and literature is designed for competent speakers of the Serbian language; they have a foreign language requirement, so during their first year of the academic program they choose one of the foreign languages offered by the Faculty (English, Spanish, French, or German). The students are not required to have previous knowledge in any of these languages. On the contrary, students who enroll in one of the foreign language departments must pass the entrance exam, which consists of tests of both Serbian and a foreign language of choice. In addition to this foreign language, they also have a foreign language requirement for which they do not need any previous knowledge. Consequently, it is assumed that the students of the beginner Spanish language course do not have any knowledge of Spanish. However, their language learning histories differ importantly, which might influence essentially the way they approach the learning of the Spanish language.

In total, 79 students completed the test. There were 21 students from the Department of Serbian language, 40 students from the English department, 11 students from the Department of French, and only 7 from the German Department. After a preliminary analysis of the data, which did not show any significant difference between the students of French and German, these students were treated as one group so that a number of statistical procedures could be completed. The consequent analyses were completed with three groups: the students from the Department of Serbian language and literature (SL, n = 21), the students from the Department of English language and literature (EL, n = 40), and the students from the Departments of French and German languages (FGL, n = 18).

C. Goals

The data were analyzed with several goals in mind. One goal was to determine the words for which the students offered correct translations, incorrect translation, or did not offer any translation. The proportion of correct, incorrect, and unanswered items among the participants as a whole was analyzed, as well as the type of error in the offered translations, with the object of explaining their origin. Finally, the existence of significant differences among the groups was determined.

IV. RESULTS

In the data analysis, the type of answer that was categorized either as a correct translation, incorrect translation, or lack of response was investigated first. The analysis of variance showed that there was indeed a significant difference among these three types of responses, $F(2, 245) = 397.2$, $p < 0.0001$ (see Fig.1). In fact, as much as 56% of all answers were correct, 16% of the translations were incorrect, and 28% of the items were left unanswered. These results show that, in spite of the low level of competence in the Spanish language, the students knew or were able to infer the correct meaning of many words in the test. This is not unexpected since most of the students did have some exposure to Spanish through television programming and/or music in the Spanish language. At the same time, it is probable that many of the correct translations were due to the appropriate use of abductive reasoning. Unfortunately, the test design did not allow the interpretation of the source of the correct answers, so the conclusions about abduction were essentially drawn from the error analysis.

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[2]False cognates are "words that involve completely different meanings and referents although they involve identical or similar surface forms" (Lalor & Kirnser, 2001:553).
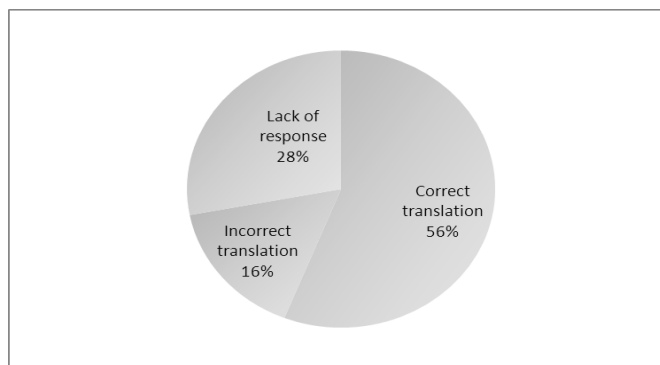
Figure 1. Type of answer.

In contrast, the lack of response may indicate the absence of abductive reasoning, which might be influenced by the type of the test. Although it was clarified that this word recognition test did not have any bearing on the course program or course evaluation, the students might have succumbed to the prevailing testing habits. In the traditional teaching context, incorrect answers are generally frowned upon, so the students are frequently apprehensive of giving responses that they are not completely sure of. If this is the case, it might have negative influence on the development of inference strategies and abductive reasoning in the L2 learning process, especially if we bear in mind that in abduction we seek not to avoid error but to generate hypotheses that have informational virtue (Levi, 1983: 41-50).[3]

As was previously mentioned, 16% of all responses were qualified as incorrect and these were the focal interest of further analyses, both quantitative and qualitative. The incorrect answers were coded for any association with the languages used by the participants, which enabled the creation of three categories of incorrect answers: 1) translations that can be connected with the English language (approximately 25% of the incorrect answers); 2) translations that are somehow inspired by the Serbian language (approximately 23%); and 3) incorrect responses that were provoked by other mechanisms beyond the scope of this study (approximately 51%). Interestingly, we were not able to determine responses that implied association with the French language. The analysis of variance did not show significant statistical difference among the three types of responses, $F(2, 147) = 2.522$, $p = 0.084$.

However, a more detailed analysis of specific word categories revealed some important findings. In the first place, it became clear that the students tend to infer word meaning from English when they identify a resemblance between this and the target language (see Table 1). This is an example of "foreign language effect", a tendency observed in language learners to rely on lexical influence from a non-native language (see Cenoz, 2001; Ringbom, 2007: 79). Apparently, learners look for whatever lexical and structural similarities they can perceive between the L2 and L3 if they consider the L2 and L3 to be related. In these instances, the foreign language effect may actually be stronger than L1 influence, which was confirmed by our data.

TABLE 1.
RESPONSES FOR THE ITEMS IN THE CATEGORIES OF SPANISH-ENGLISH COGNATES AND SPANISH-ENGLISH FALSE COGNATES

	Spanish-English cognates					Spanish-English false cognates				
	noticia [notice]	*oficina* [office]	*patata* [potato]	*plato* [plate]	*suburbia* [suburb]	*arma* [weapon]	*carpeta* [folder]	*nudo* [knot]	*pariente* [relative]	*pie* [foot]
Correct translation	35	38	11	22	9	10	0	0	5	6
No response	0	0	0	4	0	24	17	23	6	2
Incorrect translation	2	1	24	11	28	4	21	14	19	29
Association with English	35	38	11	23	9	24	14	23	6	2

This strategy, which represents a form of abductive reasoning, clearly helps learners infer the correct word meaning in the case of Spanish and English cognates. However, it is also responsible for an important percentage of transfer errors. The analysis of variance showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the type of response in the case of Spanish-English false cognates, $F(5,44) = 17.944$, $p < 0.0001$. In fact, this is the most frequent source of error, as can be observed in Fig. 2, since as many as 91.08% of all translations of the Spanish-English false cognates were incorrect. While many cognates in the L2 provide useful pegs on which the learner can hang new L3 words, these deceptive cognates, which have a purely formal but little or no semantic similarity, are, as previously discussed, very problematic items that must be properly treated in foreign vocabulary acquisition.

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[3]An argument possesses informational virtue if it suggests new phenomena or if it better explains those we already know about (for more on informational virtue, see Levi, 1983).
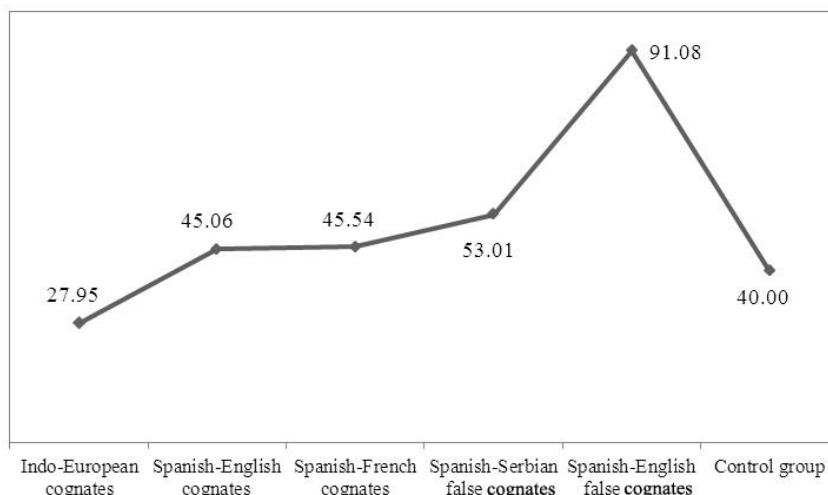
Figure 2. Incorrect responses across different word categories.

While the students relied strongly on the resemblance between the English and Spanish language at the time of word recognition, they seemed quite reluctant to associate the target language with their L1. This was obvious in the case of the Spanish-Serbian false cognates, as well as with certain Indo-European cognates. Thus, in the case of the Spanish-Serbian false cognates, only 11% of incorrect responses were due to the association with the Serbian language, while as many as 30% were left unanswered (see Fig. 3 for more detail).
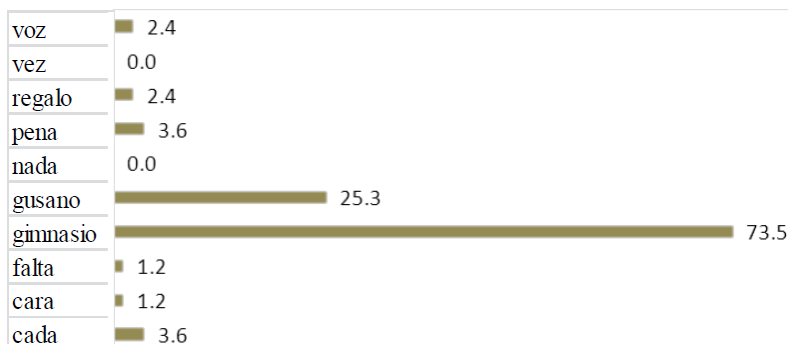

Figure 3. Incorrect translations of Spanish-Serbian false cognates.

As can be observed, the major portion of mistakes is related to the word *gimnasio* [gym], which in fact represents an Indo-European cognate. However, it is also a false cognate since in Serbian the word of the same origin stands for *high school*. If we were to exclude this specific item from the list of the Spanish-Serbian cognates, only 4.64% of the mistakes in this word category could be explained by the association with the Serbian language. Naturally, it is beneficial not to make analogies between false cognates, since incorrect hypotheses are created in this way. Unfortunately, the lack of inference strategies is also evident in the case of true cognates, which is detrimental for the students' learning process (see Table 2). While a significant portion of translations were indeed correct (just above 75% of all responses), approximately 17% were left without any answer. It could be argued that the students' abductive reasoning made them infer correct meanings from the cognates. Still, it strikes us that in the case of some words a number of participants were particularly reluctant to use this strategy. Thus, while *masa* is both homophone and homograph in Spanish and Serbian, as many as 38 students did not offer any translation for this item. The results were similar for the words *par* [pair], *sala* [hall], and *tema* [theme], for which a straightforward association with the L1 would have brought them to correct responses.

TABLE 2.
RESPONSES FOR EACH OF THE ITEMS IN THE CATEGORY OF INDO-EUROPEAN COGNATES

	centro	*clase*	*familia*	*grupo*	*masa*	*paciente*	*par*	*programa*	*sala*	*tema*
Correct translation	73	73	79	79	25	67	14	77	51	60
Incorrect translation	2	2	0	0	16	11	20	0	5	0
No response	4	4	0	0	38	1	45	2	23	19

The qualitative analysis of specific erroneous answers showed interesting evidence of creative use of inference strategies. On several occasions, the participants offered the translation *English woman* (Sr. /engleskiɲa/) for the word *iglesia,* which could be connected with the Spanish word *inglés* [English]. A similar process was operant in some translations of the word *obra* [work]. Among other responses, *honor* related to the Spanish *honra*, *poor* to *pobre*, and *shadow* to *sombra* were particularly illustrative. These represent errors caused by the perception of intralingual similarities.

Interlingual similarities, on the other hand, may also motivate negative transfer, as was observed in the following examples: the word *carpeta* [folder] was translated as *rag* due to the formal similarity with the Serbian word /krpa/; there were also several instances of translations of *bottle* for the Spanish *boca* [mouth] due to the Serbian /botsa/. These errors are provoked by the participants' perception of synforms, that is, similar lexical forms. This inference strategy tends to maintain consonant word structure while vowels seem to be of less importance, which is in line with Laufer (1997: 147).

In across-group comparison, the analysis of variance showed a significant difference in the case of the incorrect answers, while the differences were not statistically significant across any other comparison. More specifically, the students from the Department of Serbian language gave more incorrect translations when compared with the students of the foreign language departments, $F(2,147) = 3.087$, $p < 0.05$ (see Fig. 4). Further analysis showed that this difference came essentially from the greater percentage of mistakes in the case of Spanish and English cognates. The results imply that the students from the Department of Serbian language possess less knowledge of the English language than their colleagues from the foreign language departments, which is not surprising if the participants' language learning histories are considered. However, it is an additional argument for the inclusion of metacognitive training within the context of L2 instruction, particularly with the students who have scarce language learning experience.
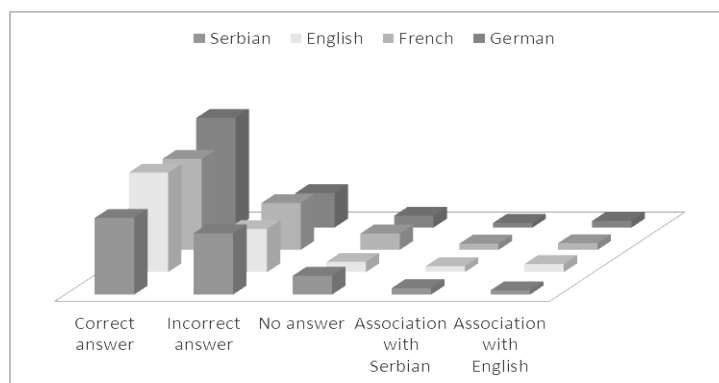

Figure 4. Differences across the groups.

V. Conclusion

The natural procedure in learning something new is to establish a connection between a new proposition and what already exists in the mind. Language learners, especially at early stages of learning, normally tend to establish a one-to-one relationship with an item in another language. The quantitative results of the word recognition test showed that, in spite of their low level of competence in the Spanish language, the participants were able to translate a significant number of vocabulary items which might indicate their use of appropriate inference strategies. L2 learners generally assume that if a word in another language is formally similar to an L1 word, it will also have an identical or at least similar meaning. This perceptive judgment, along with a subsequent hypothesis of associated translation equivalence, reflects individuals' access to abductive processes. In this manner, transfer occurs not only from the L1, but also from other languages known to the student. In fact, if the L2 and L3 are related, but the L1 and L3 are not, learners look for whatever lexical and structural similarities they can identify between the L2 and L3. The data analysis has shown that the students strongly rely on their knowledge of English vocabulary, especially when they perceive a resemblance between English and Spanish. The influence of English as an L2 seems to be more productive than the influence of the L1, probably due to the students' expectations of English and Spanish relatedness.

An important finding of the study comes from the data that exhibit the participants' reluctance to formulate hypotheses on word meaning. This group of students tended not to venture a possible translation when they did not know the correct meaning of the word, although some resemblance could have been noticed. This lack of perceptive and assumed reasoning is possibly influenced by the instructional context, which still maintains values of the traditional model of education. Traditionally, the error has been perceived as evidence of the lack of knowledge and, as such, it has been disapproved. It is suggested here that certain errors actually reveal learning processes and, more specifically, abductive reasoning, through which new connections are perceived and comprehended. Consequently, errors should not be banned but rather used as important information about learners' cognitive processes. If teachers are aware of their students' difficulties in learning specific word items, they may adjust their teaching techniques for vocabulary

presentation and practice. Additionally, more attention could be dedicated to false cognates (particularly between the L2 and L3), since they appear to be a frequent source of confusion for beginning learners. In this sense, proper explanation of differences in meaning, pragmatic and cultural use should be provided in order to enhance students' learning of cognates and their appropriate use. Finally, it is essential that at early stages of language learning, considerable effort be dedicated to the development and improvement of students' inference strategies. In learning, abduction is a moving force responsible for major leaps in judgment. It enables the establishment of new connections between the pieces of information that were previously perceived as unrelated. While this study looks at vocabulary on-line comprehension, it would be interesting to observe abductive processes in other realms of language use and their effect on specific language competences.

APPENDIX A WORD RECOGNITION TEST

Which languages do you use?
☐ English
☐ French
☐ Italian
☐ German
☐ Other: _____

Your Department:
☐ Serbian Language and Literature
☐ English Language and Literature
☐ French Language and Literature
☐ German Language and Literature

Instruction: write **one** translation, which you consider most appropriate, next to each word. It is suggested that you translate all words, even if you are not sure of their meanings. Thank you!

arma	_____	nada	_____
boca	_____	noticia	_____
brazo	_____	nudo	_____
caballo	_____	obra	_____
cada	_____	oficina	_____
camino	_____	paciente	_____
cara	_____	par	_____
carpeta	_____	pariente	_____
centro	_____	patata	_____
cielo	_____	pena	_____
clase	_____	pie	_____
coche	_____	piedra	_____
cuerpo	_____	plato	_____
deseo	_____	pleno	_____
falta	_____	programa	_____
familia	_____	recuerdo	_____
fin	_____	regalo	_____
gimnasio	_____	sala	_____
grupo	_____	silla	_____
guerra	_____	suburbio	_____
gusano	_____	tema	_____
iglesia	_____	vez	_____
luz	_____	viento	_____
masa	_____	voz	_____
mundo	_____	vuelta	_____

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Lexical vs. Syntactic Competence in L2 English

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Abstract—This article examines the relationship between lexical and syntactic competences of fairly advanced learners of English. The data consisted of written tasks where the subjects were asked to translate a text written in their L1 Finnish into their L2 English. The subjects were participants in an entrance examination, seeking admittance to study English Philology at the university. The results confirmed the findings of an earlier study (Pietilä, 2009), where the best candidates were found to manifest almost faultless syntax but produced a considerable number of lexical errors. In the present study, the performance of the 50 most successful candidates in the translation task was further compared with the performance of those 50 candidates who got the lowest grades in this task. The least proficient applicants also produced more lexical than syntactic errors, but the difference was smaller than in the case of the top candidates. In other words, the least proficient candidates had considerable problems with some syntactic features as well. The results seem to imply that lexical and syntactic competence do not develop in parallel. What is more, advanced learners tend to lack precision in their vocabulary.

Index Terms—lexical competence, syntactic competence, L2 English, translation, language learning

I. INTRODUCTION

How are grammatical and lexical competences in a second language related? If you know your second language grammar, does that mean that your vocabulary is also adequate? Conversely, if you have a large vocabulary in your L2, does that mean that you also know the grammar properly? The study reported in this paper was inspired by the observation that some fairly advanced learners seemed to write grammatically correct English, while their vocabulary was definitely rather limited, consisting mainly of highly frequent words. The purpose of the present study was to delve deeper into the relationship between grammatical and lexical competence in L2 English and to discover areas where advanced learners (university students of English) would benefit most from language practice and instruction. In this article, the terms grammatical competence and syntactic competence are used interchangeably.

II. LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC COMPETENCE

The relationship between grammar and lexis has been an interesting issue in linguistic study for quite some time. What is more, this relationship has not only been scrutinised from the point of view of second language studies. Studies of aphasic patients, or dementia, have shown that L1 grammar tends to be preserved better than vocabulary. Lexical skills of aphasic patients, then, tend to be lost more easily than grammatical skills (Kempler, Curtiss & Jackson, 1987).

This is probably due to the difference in the degree of automaticity between these two types of language competence. In psychological terms, it is maintained that automatic processes do not require attention and, therefore, operate independently of the subject's control. They (automatic processes) develop where the range of alternatives is limited, in other words, where stimulus and response are mapped frequently and constantly. Syntax would typically belong to the domain of these automatic processes. Once it is acquired, it is automatic and mandatory.

Lexis, on the other hand, is different. Lexical selection is a control process. It requires attention, and its range of alternatives is unlimited and unpredictable. Obviously, syntactic structures are more limited in number than lexical items, and each structure occurs more frequently than individual lexical words. These very characteristics of syntax (consistency and frequency, more limited choice, and therefore its automaticity) account for the fact that the syntactic function is, indeed, preserved more easily in cases like dementia than lexical skills (Kempler, Curtiss & Jackson, 1987: 348).

It would seem, then, that grammar and lexis are stored and mastered differently. They seem to be governed by different processes. If we think about native language development and second language development, we could say that the native language (or L1) is normally considered to be governed by automatic processes. The use of your L1 *on the whole* is more automatic than the use of any L2. Second languages, on the other hand, are governed by controlled processes to a large extent. However, within a second language, we could postulate a distinction between syntax and lexis, which is based on the degree of automaticity. L2 syntax, acquired to varying degrees, fossilized perhaps, but no longer presenting any major problems of conscious reflection, may have become automatized, and therefore it may seem to be used rather fluently. It may still contain errors; it may have fossilized at a certain stage before reaching anything like native speaker proficiency. This is particularly easy to notice in spoken language, as syntactic choices – often fluent and automatized– are not accompanied by hesitations (pauses, corrections, etc.) as often as lexical choices

are. That is understandable, given that lexical searches are conscious, controlled processes, which are often accompanied by pauses, repetitions, and other time-saving devices.

In L2 writing, which the present paper is concerned with, the situation is rather different. Looking at the final product of the writing process, one cannot see the hesitations or corrections that the L2 writer has made. What remains as evidence of the writer's ease or difficulty while producing the text is the relative correctness of the product. In other words, the researcher can evaluate the relationship between the writer's grammatical and lexical competences by examining the number of grammatical and lexical errors in the text and by analysing their nature.

III. THE STUDY

A. The Aims of the Study

In addition to investigating the relationship between grammar and lexis in the L2 (the primary goal of the present study), I also wanted to find out what kind of practical teaching advanced learners of English actually need. Our students in the English Department at the University of Turku, Finland, are really quite competent users of English: they could be labelled as advanced learners. They have all had about 10 years of English at school, after which they have passed a nationwide matriculation examination. After that, they have taken and passed a fairly demanding entrance examination to be able to start studying English Philology at university. The level of competence in English that they have reached in their upper secondary studies is B2.1, a level based on the B2, or Vantage, level of the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*, but adapted to the Finnish educational context (Pietilä, Taanila-Hall & Vainio, 2009: 212). In their university curriculum, they have a great deal of linguistics, literature, and social and cultural studies to do with English-speaking countries. Many of them will become teachers of English, so they also take pedagogical courses at the Faculty of Education, or they may have other minor subjects within our Faculty, the Faculty of Humanities.

The number of skills courses in our department is very limited. The students are supposed to be very skilful in English to begin with, which they are, by and large, but there are certain areas of spoken and written English where they would actually need training and even explicit teaching. All our teaching is in English, so they are exposed to English all the time and they use it constantly, but they would probably benefit from increased practice in their speaking and writing skills. One of my aims was to see how well our student applicants actually fare in English, and more precisely, how good their grammatical and lexical skills are. Is there some area of language competence to which more attention should be paid?

B. The Data and Subjects of the Study

The data for the present study consisted of translations produced as part of the entrance examination that students had to take to gain admittance to study English Philology at the University of Turku. The examination had three different tests. One was based on a book on linguistics and contained various applied tasks about linguistics, one was an essay that the applicants had to write on the basis of a novel they had been required to read, and the third one –the one that was crucial for this study– was a translation task where the applicants had to translate a text from Finnish into English.

The topic of the text to be translated was India. The title could be translated as *India Strides into the Future* or *India Takes a Long Step into the Future.* It was about the development of India, particularly about its technological advances. The text was taken from a magazine which dealt with scientific and scholarly issues, but was aimed at the general public. The length of the Finnish source text was 170 words, and that of its English translation was about 220 words. The discrepancy in the number of words was due to the fact that Finnish, a synthetic language, has case endings instead of prepositions and makes frequent use of compound words which are always spelt as single lexical items.

It is evident that translation from the mother tongue constitutes a very special kind of second language use, as the starting point is a native language word or expression and not a concept that the speaker or writer wants to express for his/her own communicative purposes. Translation is, therefore, more likely to invite transfer, or interference, from the mother tongue than other types of second language exercise, as the source language (L1) will activate the L1 representation in the mind of the language user.

The subjects of the study were young Finnish adults, candidates taking the entrance examination to be able to study English Philology at university. There were 270 applicants in all, but for this particular study, I have analysed the translations of 100 students, the 50 who got the best grades and the 50 with the lowest grades on this examination (who, obviously, did not get in). The grading was carried out by two or three examiners, so that each student's paper was examined by at least two people. The points for the translations were given in the following way:
- For general impression: 0-5 points.
- For five preselected sentences: 0-10 points.

The maximum number of points, then, was 15 for the translation task. For this particular study, I selected those 50 students who had received over 10 points (the group of the best candidates) and those who had received between 1 and 4.5 points (the bottom group; the poorest candidates). The subjects consisted, therefore, of two groups:
- Group 1 (the best candidates; 10-15 points)
- Group 2 (the poorest candidates; 1-4.5 points)

C. Background to the Study

In an earlier study (Pietilä 2009), I had analysed the translations of a larger number of students from the top end of the list (the best candidates) to see the relationship between grammatical and lexical competence in their English. The results from that study showed that a great majority of the errors were lexical. In other words, in the English of the very best candidates, lexical errors outnumbered grammatical errors. Of course, the number of errors was very small to begin with, but there was a clear difference in the students' mastery of lexis and grammar. I had divided the errors into three main categories: lexical, syntactic and spelling errors. The distribution of these error types was the following: 50% were lexical errors, the other half consisted of syntactic and spelling errors (30% and 20%, respectively).

It is clear, then, that advanced learners like these (the best applicants, those who got in to study English Philology, either as a major or a minor subject) have mastered English syntax better than lexis. One could argue that our test, the translation task, was not demanding enough –from the syntactic point of view– but it certainly did not pose any major difficulties as far as syntax is concerned. Most of the grammatical errors were typical of Finnish learners: *articles*, *prepositions*, some errors in *number* and *concord*, and some rather unorthodox *syntactic structures*. *Spelling* was slightly problematic for some students, but it was certainly *vocabulary* that posed the greatest amount of problems. Most of the *lexical errors* seemed to be the result of the student using a fairly vague expression for want of the exact word. There were also some literal translations from Finnish (Pietilä 2009).

It has been shown in earlier studies (e.g. Hasselgren, 1994) that advanced learners easily fall back on lexical items that they feel safe with, *lexical teddy bears*. These are often core words in the second language, often rather neutral in meaning, which can be used in many different contexts and are therefore overused (Hasselgren, 1994: 250). The results of my 2009 study pointed to a similar phenomenon.

One example of a sentence which produced a great number of erroneous translations was the following (the English version is provided here):

The country also manufactures effective vaccines and is developing methods of treatment for many of the *diseases which plague all humankind*.

The end of the sentence (the part given in italic type) rendered a great number of different translations, many of which were rather vague compared with the original idea, for example (Pietilä 2009: 127):

1. …plagues concerning the whole humanity
2. …diseases that trouble the whole humankind
3. …illnesses that are a nuisance for the whole mankind
4. …diseases that cause trouble to all humankind
5. …diseases that tease the whole humankind
6. …things that bother all the humankind

We have to remember that this was a translation task –and an important examination, an entrance test– so we had to be rather strict in our evaluation and assessment. We had to put the students in order, so we had to reduce points, if there were errors. In other circumstances, these expressions would have been quite acceptable. It would even be commendable that the students should use expressions like these to get their meaning across. Instead of leaving a blank, they have at least written something to make themselves understood. From the point of view of a translation task, however, these translations leave something to be desired; they are not precise. In some cases, it is possible to trace an expression back to the writer's native language, Finnish. For example, the Finnish equivalent of the verb *tease* can also have the meaning *to plague*.

Inspired by the results of this earlier study, I took a new approach to examining the translations of the student candidates. If the most successful candidates manifested such a clear difference between their lexical and grammatical competences, what would be the case of those candidates who were only allotted a few points in the translation task? In other words, how would the best candidates (Group 1) and the poorest candidates (Group 2) compare in their lexical and grammatical competences? What effect does language proficiency have on the distribution of error types, in particular on the relationship between lexical and syntactic errors? Would the poorer students manifest the same kind of predominance of lexical errors as the most successful students? Would the poorer students also master English syntax and morphology remarkably well?

D. Classification of Errors

Lexical errors in the data were identified on semantic grounds, and they were restricted to content words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs). They could simply be the result of an erroneous word choice, as in examples 7 and 8:

1. India is easy to *formulate* (target expression: *comprehend; get a sense of*)
2. One third of the population is *illicit* (target word: *illiterate*)

Both *formulate* and *illicit* are English words, of course, but as they are not equivalents of the words in the source text, they are counted as errors. In some cases, the word used in the translation carries part of the meaning of the target word, but is not a full equivalent. This can be seen in example 9.

3. For *new* energy sources (target word: *renewable*)

In example 10, the writer has not known the target words in English but has tried to express the original idea in some other way, thus resorting to a communication strategy.

4. Cities are *covered by gas* (target expression: *suffocating in exhaust fumes*)

In other circumstances, this kind of paraphrasing (albeit in this case not a very successful one) would be recommended. However, this was a test situation, and the choice of words clearly resulted in an error.

As mentioned in connection with examples 1 to 6 earlier, a certain vagueness of expression was rather common in the translations. The original meaning was often rendered partially, or the words used were somehow less specific than the target words would have been. It is, therefore, possible to see differences in the gravity of the lexical errors in the data. Some errors consist of mere nuances of meaning, while others are the result of a completely wrong word choice. In the former case, the message is conveyed to some degree, while the latter may lead to a communication breakdown. The lexical errors in the present data have been divided into the following types: *near-synonyms* (as in example 9), *existing but completely wrong words* (hereafter abbreviated as *ex-buts*; as in examples 7 and 8), *blanks* (where an applicant has not even tried to produce a word but has left a blank instead), and *vague expressions* (which may be correct English but do not convey the precise meaning of the original Finnish expression). The difference between near-synonyms and vague expressions may not always be absolutely clear, and it is possible that they in fact represent slightly different degrees of the same phenomenon: partial coverage of the intended message. Example 11 illustrates the use of a vague expression, where common, high frequency words are used instead of a more precise one:

5. In *ponds filled with dirty water* (target: *the gutter*)

It was to be expected that there would be differences in the types of lexical errors produced by the two groups of subjects. The best applicants were hardly expected to have left many blanks in their translations, for example.

Grammatical errors in the present data included errors in function words (articles, prepositions and conjunctions) and in syntax. Articles and prepositions have constantly been found to be a problematic area for Finnish learners of English, largely because Finnish does not have any articles and uses case endings instead of prepositions. What is more, there is no regular correspondence between English prepositions and Finnish grammatical cases, so it is rather challenging for Finns to learn the English system of prepositions. As far as errors in syntax are concerned, they included, for example, some problems with subject-verb concord, and an overuse of the progressive aspect. These are illustrated in examples 12 and 13, respectively.

6. Hundreds of people *dies* in religious fights

7. An average Indian *is earning* only about…

In the following subchapter, the results of the study will be presented and discussed. The main focus will be on comparing the two groups of subjects: the most successful candidates in the translation task and those whose performance gained the lowest number of points.

IV. RESULTS

As pointed out in III.*B.*, Group 1 consisted of those 50 candidates who were the most successful in the translation task, and Group 2 of those 50 who got the lowest number of points in the translation task. The two groups were compared in terms of the total number of errors contained in the translations, the distribution of error categories (lexical, grammatical, and spelling errors), and the types of errors within the lexical and grammatical categories. Correlations between the error categories were also examined.

It should be pointed out that the sheer number of errors was very different in the two groups. Group 1 produced 603 errors altogether, which means about 12 errors per person. Group 2, on the other hand, produced 2127 errors in their translations, which amounts to almost 43 errors per candidate. The raw figures can be seen in Table 1:

TABLE 1.
TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS PRODUCED BY THE BEST AND THE POOREST APPLICANTS

	Group 1 (N = 50)	Group 2 (N = 50)
Errors total	603	2127
Errors per person	12	43

It is quite clear that the difference in English proficiency was quite significant between the best and the poorest candidates. It should be kept in mind, however, that the entrance examination as a whole is not a proficiency test. It has been planned to reflect the actual contents of English studies at university, which means that linguistics and literature occupy an important role in the examination. The only subtest meant to address practical language competences is the translation task. Given the relatively high number of years (10) that practically all applicants have studied English and their desire to study English Philology at university, it is rather surprising that such a discrepancy does exist in the applicants' English skills.

Among the three main error categories, i.e. grammatical/syntactic, spelling and lexical errors, *spelling errors* were the least frequent in both groups (18% of all errors in the top group and 22% in the bottom group). As far as the number of *syntactic and lexical errors* was concerned, the groups differed from each other: as in the earlier study, the top group had made more lexical errors; in fact over one half of all their errors were lexical (54%), while 28% were syntactic. As for the poorer performers, the bottom group, they had also made more lexical errors than syntactic errors, but the difference was smaller (44% lexical, 34% syntactic errors). It seems, therefore, that the balance between syntactic and

lexical competences changes somewhat with proficiency; lower level learners still have problems with syntax, which seems to be mastered remarkably well by more proficient learners, who still may have some problems with vocabulary, however.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the error categories in both groups. The absolute numbers of the errors are also given.

TABLE 2.
DISTRIBUTION OF ERROR CATEGORIES

	Group 1		Group 2	
	No.	%	No.	%
Spelling	108	18	465	22
Syntax	167	28	720	34
Lexis	328	54	942	44
Total	603	100	2127	100

As syntactic and lexical competences were the main focus of this study, it was interesting to see to what extent the numbers of syntactic and lexical errors correlated in the translations of the two groups of subjects. The correlation results can be seen in Table 3.

TABLE 3.
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC ERRORS AND BETWEEN ERRORS AND TOTAL NUMBER OF POINTS

	Lexical errors		Total no. of points	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
Syntactic errors	0.18	0.04	-0.48	-0.32
Lexical errors			-0.58	-0.56

As Table 3 shows, the correlations between the numbers of syntactic and lexical errors are very low in both groups. This is understandable, as there was a great difference in the numbers. However, when looking at correlations between the total number of points gained in the translation task and syntactic errors on one hand, and lexical errors on the other, we can see that there is a fairly strong negative correlation. The negative nature of the correlation is, of course, natural, as a text rich in errors is very unlikely to result in a high grade. The negative relation seems to be particularly strong between lexical errors and the total number of points, which is an interesting finding. Apparently, lexical errors are more disturbing than syntactic errors in the student translations, in addition to being more numerous.

The categories of lexical and syntactic errors were examined more closely, to see what seemed to be particularly problematic for the applicants. Some examples of different errors will also be given in the following subsections, along with a discussion of the possible causes for these errors.

A. Lexical Errors

A close look at the lexical errors produced by the subjects of the present study revealed that the distribution of the error types was very different between the two groups. The biggest group (39.5%) of lexical errors produced by the weakest candidates consisted of *ex-buts*, i.e. words which are real English words but have nothing to do with the target item, as far as their meaning is concerned, for example *illicit* for *illiterate*, or *dungeon* for *gutter*. The weakest candidates (Group 2) also left a considerable number of *blanks* (17.7%), while the strongest candidates (Group 1) left hardly any (a mere 1.8%). The majority of the lexical errors in the translations of the strongest candidates were *vague expressions*, i.e. they used words which conveyed the intended meaning partially but not precisely (as in examples 1 to 6 above). The numerical results concerning lexical errors in the data can be seen in Table 4.

TABLE 4.
DISTRIBUTION OF LEXICAL ERROR TYPES

Types of lexical errors	Group 1		Group 2	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Near-synonyms	86	26.2	269	28.6
Ex-buts	94	28.7	372	39.5
Blanks	6	1.8	167	17.7
Vague expressions	142	43.3	66	7.0
Made-up words	-	-	68	7.2
All lexical errors	328	100	942	100

The great number of *vague expressions* in the translations of the more proficient group is in line with the results of the earlier study described in section III.*C*. In this earlier study, which concentrated on those students who were admitted to study English Philology, i.e. mostly from the top of the list, it was also discovered that the majority of lexical errors belonged to this category (Pietilä, 2009: 126).

An interesting finding is the fact that the more proficient candidates did not make up any words of their own, whereas the weaker applicants produced a fair number of words which were of their own invention, such as *drawel* for *gutter*, or *illiteraric* for *illiterate*. Needless to say, these coinages were not very successful, as they had to be counted as errors in the translation test.

B. *Grammatical Errors*

The first sentence in the translation task was the following (a model translation given by a native speaker):
Getting a sense of India is easy: it is the same size as the EU, but has double the population.
Let us consider some translations provided by students from Group 1:
1. India is easy to conceive: it is the size of the EU but with twice as many people.
2. India is easily sketched out: it's the size of the EU, but twice as many people live there.
3. It's easy to picture India: it's about the size of the EU, but it has double the population.
4. It is easy to conceive of India: it is the size of the EU, but with twice as much population.

Examples 14 to 17 are all acceptable versions of the sentence, and the translations in the present data contained many more perfectly error-free solutions. Obviously, there are numerous correct possibilities. However, even a sentence as simple as this one caused several problems for some of the weaker applicants. Examples 18 to 21 illustrate this.
5. India is easy country to describe: it is size of the EU, but there is twice as much people.
6. India is easy to picture: it is the size of European Union, but there are living double so much people.
7. India is easy to figur: it's about size of EU but double number of people.
8. India is easy to figure: it is the size of EU, but there is living double that much people.

Sentences 18 to 21 contain quite a few errors, both lexical and grammatical (and even one spelling error). As far as the grammatical errors are concerned, they are rather typical of Finnish learners of English with fairly low proficiency: articles missing, errors in concord (*there is… people*), strange structures altogether (*there is living…*). Table 5 shows the distribution of different types of grammatical errors in the translations of the two groups.

TABLE 5.
DISTRIBUTION OF GRAMMATICAL ERROR TYPES

Grammatical error types	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Articles	72	43.1	301	41.8
Prepositions	39	23.4	132	18.3
Conjunctions	3	1.8	4	0.6
Number & Concord	22	13.2	96	13.3
Aspect	2	1.2	39	5.4
Mixed structures	29	17.3	148	20.6
Total	167	100	720	100

As can be seen in Table 5, article errors constitute the largest group of grammatical errors in the translations of both groups: over 40%. When article errors were scrutinised in more detail, it was discovered that, in most cases, both groups had failed to use an article when English would have required one. In other words, omissions of articles were the largest subgroup of article errors. The occurrences of various errors in the use of articles can be seen in Table 6.

TABLE 6.
DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF ARTICLE ERRORS

	Group 1		Group 2	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Omission of definite article	30	41.7	155	51.5
Omission of indefinite article	11	15.3	65	21.6
Wrong article	16	22.2	42	14.0
Superfluous article	15	20.8	39	12.9
Total	72	100	301	100

As the figures in Table 6 indicate, it was particularly the use of the English definite article that caused problems for both the most proficient and the weakest candidates. In examples 19, 20 and 21 above, there are several instances of a missing definite article, particularly in the expression *the EU*. If all omissions of articles (both definite and indefinite) are counted, they clearly constitute the majority of article errors in both groups. In Group 1, there are 41 omissions (56.9%), and in Group 2, there are 220 omissions (73.1% of all article errors).

Prepositions, another common problem area for Finnish learners, were the second biggest source of errors for the top group (23.4%), while the less successful candidates produced more errors in syntactic structures (20.6%). Examples of erroneous sentence structures can be seen in sentences 19 and 21 above: there are living... (19); there is living… (21).

All in all, the number of grammatical errors was rather low in both groups. In Group 1 there were 3.3 grammatical errors per student, whereas in Group 2 the corresponding number was 14.4. As far as lexical errors were concerned, the figures per head for the two groups were 6.6 and 18.8, respectively. In other words, there was a clear imbalance in the students' mastery of grammar and lexis.

V. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results of the study reported in this article, it can be concluded that students who received high ratings in a translation task (10-15 points out of the maximum of 15) showed a very good command of English grammar, but a considerably weaker mastery of lexis. Their lexical competence turned out to be characterised by a certain amount

of vagueness. The intended meaning was often only partially conveyed by their lexical choices. As for the group of weaker students (1-4.5 points out of 15), they showed a similar tendency, but they also had many problems with syntax. These results confirm the earlier findings that indicate that lexis and syntax do not necessarily develop in a parallel fashion. Indeed, they seem to be governed by different processes, and lexical choices seem to continue being highly demanding even for advanced learners. The vagueness of expression found in the production of so many students is undoubtedly related to the phenomenon of *lexical teddy bears* (Hasselgren, 1994). Learners find it convenient to resort to expressions that they know well, even if that may result in lexical imprecision.

As the more proficient group of students (Group 1) included mostly those who succeeded in being admitted to study English Philology, it is worth considering ways in which they could be helped to strengthen their lexical competence during their studies. They will use English on a daily basis, as practically all of our courses are taught in English, but they might benefit from explicit vocabulary teaching as well. However, perhaps a better way would be to encourage them to read as much as possible, as it is largely up to the students themselves to see to the development and maintenance of their linguistic skills.

Some studies have shown that active use of the language is a significant predictor for performance on lexically-based items, whereas education is a good predictor of rule-based items, i.e. grammar (Flege *et al.*, 1999, in DeKeyser, 2005: 13). It would seem, then, that to develop their lexical skills, students should take every opportunity to use the language.

One might also speculate that this vagueness of expression, so prevalent in the translations of otherwise highly competent candidates, might be a result of communicative language teaching, which puts a strong emphasis on fluency and communication, sometimes certainly at the expense of accuracy. Lexical precision, after all, is one form of accuracy, and it may well have suffered in the general quest for communicativeness. Striking the right balance between accuracy and fluency is not an easy task, but it seems to be of great significance in the development of lexical and syntactic competences.

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Teaching Subject Position in Spanish: *Gustar* Verbs, Unaccusatives and the Impersonal Passive

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Abstract—This paper explores a misunderstood and frequently ignored topic in the literature dealing with teaching Spanish as an L2: subject position (Vanpatten & Cadierno, 1993). Native speakers of English, and other languages whose subjects have a fixed position in the sentence, find it difficult to acquire the patterns that govern subject placement in Spanish, which may either precede or follow the verb. This difficulty is due in part to cross-linguistic differences associated to the argument structure of certain expressions, but it is also caused by the inadequate treatment of this topic in many textbooks and dictionaries. Subject inversion, i.e. the placement of the subject in postverbal position, is not a random phenomenon, and its occurrence is often limited to specific constructions. This paper examines three structures that are frequently associated with postverbal subjects: verbs of psychological affection, the impersonal passive and unaccusative verbs. Several communicative task-based activities are also presented, in order to ensure that L2 learners of Spanish are able to recognize postverbal subjects as a common phenomenon.

Index Terms—unaccusative verbs, impersonal passive, subject position, Spanish, verbs of psychological affection

I. INTRODUCTION

The variable position of the subject argument in Spanish is a largely ignored topic in textbooks and grammars for learners of Spanish as a non-native language. The cause of this absence is twofold: (i) on the one hand, the rules that govern subject position are not categorical, since they are subject to grammatical variation; (ii) on the other hand, there exists a disconnection between theoretical linguistics research and its application to language teaching. This paper explores several constructions that involve subject inversion, that is, the placement of the subject in postverbal position. Several activities are also suggested so that the more theoretical component can be included during language instruction in a communicative manner.

Postverbal subjects are frequent in certain constructions. Here we describe three structures frequently associated with subject inversion: verbs of psychological affection (*gustar/like* verbs) (1), the impersonal passive (2),[1] and unaccusative verbs (3).

(1) Verbs of psychological affection:
  Me gustan <u>las patatas</u>.
  I like potatoes.
(2) Impersonal passive:
  Finalmente se vendió <u>la casa</u>.
  The house was finally sold.
(3) Unaccusative verbs:
  Ya ha llegado <u>el tren</u>.
  The train has already arrived.

Verbs of psychological affection (VPAs) play a central role in Spanish textbooks, especially in those designed for L1 speakers of English or other languages which lack postverbal subjects, such as French. However, these verbs do not receive a uniform or clear description in the literature, and are presented in confusing and contradictory ways. Section 3 covers the topic of VPAs, since they are probably one of the constructions where the postverbal position for subjects is non-marked.

The use of the periphrastic passive voice in spoken Spanish is very marked, as it rarely occurs in the speech of native speakers. Instead, the use of an impersonal construction with the clitic *se* is preferred (2), which will be presented in section 4. The many uses of the clitic *se* cause a great deal of confusion to Spanish learners as an L2, and to the

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[1] In the Spanish literature, the term *pasiva refleja* is used for these constructions. The term *impersonal passive* has been adopted here because the construction has a passive meaning, it requires a transitive verb whose theme becomes the syntactic subject, and the verb can only appear in 3rd person. I follow the tradition that postulates that the surface, agreeing subject of these constructions is indeed an underlying object (the object of the corresponding transitive construction), which renders these constructions impersonal, since they would lack a *real* subject. The set of constructions that involve the clitic *se* in Spanish is considerable. There is abundant research dealing with the clitic *se* and its use in the middle and passive voice. See for example Peregrín Otero (1999) and Mendikoetxea (1999) for a more detailed description.

instructors trying to explain its use. A detailed explanation of the use of *se* in Spanish is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we focus on the impersonal passive constructions, as they normally require the presence of postverbal subjects.

The occurrence of postverbal subjects with unaccusative verbs is a more complicated topic, which is completely ignored in textbooks and in the specialized literature dealing with the pedagogy of Spanish. The terms unaccusative and unergative are used in the linguistic literature that deals with verb types, and it is briefly summarized in section 5. Section 5 also provides several statistical analyses that link subject position with verb types.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the constructions that involve subject inversion, section 2 introduces the main grammatical features that characterize Spanish subjects.

II. SPANISH SUBJECTS AND THE PHENOMENON OF SUBJECT INVERSION

Spanish subjects have four main properties that students need to understand in order to achieve proficiency in Spanish as an L2: (i) overt agreement, (ii) overt quantification, (iii) ability to be omitted and (iv) variable position.

Spanish subjects can be identified syntactically because they are the only argument in the sentence that overtly agrees with the verb in person and number. Thus, a sentence like (4a) changes to (4b) if the number of the subject is altered.

(4) a. *El doctor trabaja en el hospital.*
   The doctor works at the hospital.
   b. *Los doctores trabajan en el hospital.*
   The doctors work at the hospital.

Spanish is a *pro-drop* language, because it may have null subjects, as in (5). When the subject is expressed overtly, it normally occurs in preverbal position, such as in (1), but there are certain constructions that favor subject inversion. This is the case of the three constructions examined here. Examples (1) to (3) have all postverbal subjects, which appear underlined. Subject position is not a random phenomenon, and it is subject to different constraints, as is shown in the following sections. Another important feature of Spanish subjects is that they need to be overtly quantified. Subjects can be quantified in three main ways: (i) by means of a determiner, as in (6a); (ii) by being realized as a proper noun, as in (7), (iii) by being realized as a pronoun, as in (8).

(5) a. Yo estudio español.
   I study Spanish.
   b. Estudio español.
   I study Spanish.
(6) a. *Los carros tienen ruedas.*
   Cars have wheels.
   b. *Carros tienen ruedas.*
   Cars have wheels.
(7) *Juan estudia empresariales.*
   Juan studies business.
(8) *Él estudia empresariales.*
   He studies business.

These four properties are shared by all subjects, irrespective of their position in the sentence, and need to be taken into account in the following sections, as they are pervasive in all constructions.

III. VERBS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AFFECTION: GUSTAR VERBS

One of the Spanish structures that L2 learners of Spanish find particularly difficult is instantiated by the verb *gustar/like*, a typical verb of psychological affection (VPA). The structure of Spanish VPAs differs from that of languages such as English (*like*) or French (*aimer*). VPAs select two arguments which can be semantically categorized as an experiencer and a theme (9).

(9) I (EXPERIENCER) like you (THEME).

The problem arises from the fact that these two arguments surface as different syntactic entities across languages. In the case of Spanish, the experiencer surfaces as an indirect object (a dative), while the theme surfaces as the subject (nominative), as in (10).

(10) *Me*   *gust-as*   *tú*
    Me.DAT   like-2SG   you.SG.NOM
    I like you.

The two arguments of the verbs *like* and *gustar* share the same thematic roles, experiencer and theme, but they differ in their morphosyntactic structure. In Table 1, the structures of the verbs *like* and *gustar* are compared. The coinciding features, in this case the thematic structure, appear underlined. Thus, the alignment of thematic roles in English and Spanish coincide (experiencers appear in preverbal position and the theme is typically postverbal), but the alignment of morphosyntactic functions differ, as seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1.
STRUCTURE OF *GUSTAR* VERBS

I	like	apples
SUBJECT/EXPERIENCER	VERB	OBJECT/THEME
Me	gustan	las manzanas
IO/EXPERIENCER	VERB	SUBJECT/THEME

An additional problem related to VPAs is the fact that not all of them present the same structure when compared to other languages. This is the case of verbs like *molestar/bother*. In Spanish, *molestar/bother* and *gustar/like* share the same morphosyntactic and thematic structures, as they both have an experiencer argument that surfaces as a dative, and a theme that functions as the subject. However, the speakers of languages like English will find an additional problem when comparing Spanish with their native language, as seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2.
STRUCTURE OF MOLESTAR VERBS.

Noise	bothers	me
SUBJECT/THEME	VERB	OBJECT/EXPERIENCER
Me	molesta	el ruido
IO/EXPERIENCER	VERB	SUBJECT/THEME

In the case of *molestar/bother*, both the syntactic and the thematic structures of the Spanish and English counterparts coincide (they both appear underlined in Table 2), since the experiencer is realized as an object and the theme as the subject in both languages. The difference lies on the default position of the arguments, as the subject of Spanish VPAs tends to be postverbal, while English subjects must always be preverbal. Understanding the grammatical differences existing between the native language of the student and the target language is an advantage, as students tend to transfer from their L1 into their L2.

A. Inaccuracies Affecting the Teaching of VPAs

An additional problem that L2 learners of Spanish may find when trying to acquire VPAs is the lack of accuracy of Spanish textbooks and verb dictionaries. Spanish textbooks frequently treat *gustar* as defective, ie. as a verb that lacks part of its conjugation. In particular, most textbooks show VPAs conjugated only in the 3rd person. Sometimes they even include warnings explaining that *yo gusto* does not exist. This unfortunate mistake affects many verb dictionaries as well, like for example *501 Spanish Verbs*, which explicitly classify the verb *gustar* as defective. The trend in Spanish textbooks published in the USA is to show *gustar* conjugated only in the 3rd person, while emphasis is put on the declension of the dative pronouns. A typical entry in a verb dictionary published in the USA would conjugate *gustar* as in Table 3. By treating *gustar* as a defective verb, these language methods are spreading an incorrect assumption that for some reason has become the norm.

TABLE 3.
TYPICAL CONJUGATION OF THE VERB GUSTAR (PRESENT TENSE) IN US TEXTBOOKS

me	
te	
le	gusta(n)
nos	
os	
les	

A different trend is observed in verb dictionaries published in Spain, where *gustar* is just classified as a regular 1st conjugation verb, but there is no mention of the different argument structure that separates a regular 1st conjugation verb, such as *cantar/sing*, from verbs such as *gustar*, which differ in many respects. Both the American and the European trend fail when explaining the peculiarities of VPAs, by either failing to address their idiosyncrasies, as in the case of verb dictionaries from Spain, or by spreading incorrect and incomplete information, as in the case of verb dictionaries published in the USA.

All VPAs are characterized by two main features: (i) the almost obligatory presence of an experiencer pronoun in dative case (indirect object), which occurs preverbally; and (ii) a theme argument in nominative case (subject), whose unmarked position is postverbal. Additionally, a well-known property of indirect objects in Spanish is that they may appear reduplicated, i.e. there may be a full prepositional phrase functioning as indirect object plus a *redundant* obligatory dative pronoun, as in (11b).

(11) a. *Me   gust-as   tú.*
     me.DAT   like-2SG   you.NOM
     I like you.

    b. *A   mí   me   gust-as   tú.*
     to me.1SG.OBL   me.1SG.DAT   like-2SG   you.NOM
     I like you.

When textbooks ignore the topic of subject position, they lose interesting generalizations, such as the obligatory presence of a determiner in Spanish subjects, which differentiates Spanish and English, as the sentences in (12) and (13) show.

(12) a. I like ∅ apples
    b. *Me   gust-an   las manzanas.*
       me.DAT   like-3PL   the apples
      I like apples.
    c. *Me gustan manzanas.*
(13) a. Elephants are big.
    b. *Los   elefantes   son   grandes.*
      The   elephants are   big.
      Elephants are big.
    c. *Elefantes son grandes.

Summarizing, it is necessary to shed some light on the structure of VPAs and modify the existing textbooks, so that they include more accurate information. The fact that these constructions normally have postverbal subjects needs to be emphasized, as it explains different generalizations that affect all subjects in Spanish, as seen above, such as the presence of determiners, overt agreement with the verb, and the possibility to omit them. The following section describes some activities that can be used to teach VPAs.

B. How to Teach VPAs in Class

Understanding the structure of these verbs is essential when determining the activities that will be used in class. As pointed out in section 3, the only difference that many of these verbs have when comparing Spanish and English is subject position. Vebs such as *molestar/bother*, *doler/hurt* or *preocupar/worry* share basically the same structure in both languages, with two main differences: (i) Spanish VPAs tend to have postverbal subjects, (ii) Spanish VPAs need the obligatory presence of a dative clitic, even when there is a full prepositional phrase introducing an indirect object. Many students may not benefit from an overt grammatical explanation, but they will still need to understand the properties of this construction. There are several activities that can be used to teach VPAs. The wide availability of YouTube makes possible the use of almost any song. A good option to introduce and practice the structure is the song "Me gustas tú", by artist Manu Chao. This song contains a total of 54 occurrences of the verb *gustar*, used in 2nd person singular (about 27 occurrences), 3rd person singular (about 26 occurrences) and 3rd person plural (1 occurrence). The verb *gustar* can be erased from the document and substituted by blank spaces, which students will need to fill using the right form of the verb *gustar*. By doing this, students will have to pay attention to postverbal positions in order to introduce the correct form of the verb, since the subject and the verb must always agree. A possible exercise designed to practice *gustar* with an extract of this song is included in (14).

(14) Rellenar los huecos usando la forma apropiada del verbo *gustar* en presente de indicativo. ¿Cuál crees que es el título de la canción?
Me _____ los aviones, me _____ tú
Me _____ viajar, me _____ tú…

Younger students will find other types of songs interesting. For example, there is a song called "A mi burro", sung by Rosa León, which can be used to practice the verb *doler/hurt*.[2] This particular song can be also used to practice vocabulary related to body parts, and subject-verb agreement. Children will have fun if they are requested to touch the different body parts mentioned in the song as the music sounds.

Introducing vocabulary related to food together with the verb *gustar* will provide a meaningful way to present the structure of VPAs. In order to do so, the instructor must first introduce the necessary vocabulary and practice some structures with the verb *gustar*. Then students can do the following exercise (15).

(15) En grupos de dos, pregunta a tu compañero qué cosas le gustan de las siguientes categorías, y haz una lista. A continuación coméntale a tu compañero qué cosas te gustan a ti. Finalmente, cambia de grupo y explica a tu nuevo compañero cuáles eran los gustos de tu primer compañero.

a. Verduras y vegetales frescos (tomate, patata, lechuga, espinacas, judías verdes, alubias, zanahorias, col, guisantes, pepino, aguacate, maíz…).

b. Frutas frescas (naranja, manzana, piña, melocotón, albaricoque, ciruela, uva, plátano/banana, pera, sandía, melón, fresas…).

c. Comidas preparadas (hamburguesas, pizzas, pollo frito, tacos...).

Given the fact that food is an inherent part of one's culture, students can learn vocabulary, grammar and cultural aspects at the same time.

IV. THE IMPERSONAL PASSIVE

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[2] An interesting version can be found on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAwMV_phDEY&NR=1 (accessed 1/10/2011).

The use of the passive construction in Spanish is stylistically marked. Instead, it is more frequent to find impersonal constructions. The impersonal passive construction occurs when the object of a transitive verb becomes the subject of a verb with active morphology in an impersonal construction with the clitic *se*. The impersonal passive is used when the subject of a transitive verb in Spanish is omitted in order to make a generalization, as in (16c).

(16) a. *Él* (S) *corta las patatas* (O) - ACTIVE VOICE

    He cuts the potatoes.

  b. *Las patatas* (S) *son cortadas por él*. - PASSIVE VOICE

    The potatoes are cut by him.

  c. *Se cortan las patatas* (S). - IMPERSONAL PASSIVE

    The potatoes are cut.

The example in (16a) contains a transitive sentence. The second sentence (16b) is the periphrastic passive, whose structure is similar in Spanish and English. Sentence (16c) is an example of impersonal passive, which is characterized by the lack of an agent (*él*), and a subject with patient properties which corresponds with the object of the transitive counterpart (16a). In the impersonal passive, the clitic *se* becomes obligatory. The impersonal passive is limited to the third person. The subjects of the impersonal passive have the same properties seen section 2: they can be omitted, require quantification and display overt agreement with V.

Teaching the Impersonal Passive

L2 learners of Spanish do not need to know the grammatical explanation provided above, but they must be able to recognize these structures and use them properly. Recipes can be employed to practice the impersonal passive. In cooking instructions, the use of the first person plural to provide directions sounds informal in Spanish. Instead, the impersonal passive is stylistically preferred. Learning recipes becomes an ideal activity to practice vocabulary and grammar.

There exist many different resources online where there are recipes in Spanish. The following recipe has been adapted from http://www.recetasdemama.es (accessed 1/10/2011).

(17) Almejas a la marinera; http://www.recetasdemama.es/2007/07/almejas-a-la-marinera/ (accessed 1/10/2011).

Rellenar los huecos usando la forma apropiada del verbo entre paréntesis, en presente de indicativo.

Los ingredientes:

• 750 gr de almejas
• Un poco de aceite
• 4 dientes de ajo
• Pimentón
• Medio vaso de vino blanco
• Una cucharada de harina
• Perejil

Preparación:

Se _____ (poner) al fuego <u>la sartén</u> con el aceite y los ajos, cuando empiezan a dorarse se _____ (añadir) la harina y se fríe un poco. Se _____ (incorporar) <u>las almejas y el vino</u> y luego el pimentón, y se dejar cocer a fuego vivo hasta que se abren y la salsa queda ligada. Por último se le _____ (poner) <u>una rociada de perejil picado</u>, y listo. Las almejas quedan muy sabrosas, y la salsita… Hmmm.

With these activities, students can practice different skills: vocabulary related to food; grammar, such as present tense, subject position and subject-verb agreement; reading comprehension; cultural awareness. Students can also prepare dishes at home for a *Hispanic Cultural Fair*.

V. INTRANSITIVE VERBS: UNACCUSATIVES VS UNERGATIVES

This section provides a description of the main properties that differentiate the two types of intransitive verbs, namely unaccusative and unergative, because unaccusative verbs have been shown to have a higher percentage of postverbal subjects. In particular, it gives an introduction to unaccusativity through cross-linguistic comparison, and summarizes the problems that arise when trying to distinguish between unaccusative and unergative verbs in Spanish.

Perlmutter (1978) divided intransitive verbs into two subgroups: unaccusative and unergative. The two classes have different semantic and syntactic features. Perlmutter associated the subject of unergative verbs with a notion of volition or causation, while unaccusatives have affected subjects. These semantic differences have explicit syntactic consequences. For example, Burzio (1981, 1986) described the properties of unaccusative verbs in Italian, and concluded that they can be distinguished from unergatives using different syntactic diagnostics, as presented in (18).

(18)

1. Unaccusative verbs select the auxiliary *essere/be* for periphrastic forms.
2. Unergative verbs select the auxiliary *avere/have* for periphrastic forms.
3. Only unaccusative verbs accept *ne*-cliticization.
4. The participle appearing in periphrastic forms of unaccusative verbs agrees with the subject, while there is no overt agreement with the subject of unergative verbs.

The examples in (19) and (20) include sentences from Dutch and Italian to show the different behavior of unaccusative and unergative verbs with respect to auxiliary selection. Both languages use the auxiliary *be*, *zijn* and *essere* respectively, in unaccusative constructions, while unergative verbs select the auxiliary *have*, *hebben* and *avere* respectively.

(19) a. *Ik heb in totaal twee dagen gewerkt*. (have) (Dutch)
        I have worked for a total of 2 days.
    b. *Ik ben gekomen.* (be)
        I have arrived.

(20) a. *Giovanni è arrivato.* (be) (Italian)
        Giovanni has arrived.
    b. *Giovanni ha telefonato.* (have)
        Giovanni has telephoned.

The Italian partitive clitic *ne* can be used to substitute the quantified NP that functions as a direct object of a transitive verb, as in (21), or the subject of an unaccusative verb, such as in (22). However, it cannot substitute the subject of an unergative verb (23). This test seems to suggest that the subject of unaccusatives behaves in the same way as the object of a transitive verb, since the quantified object of a transitive verb can also be replaced by the pronominal form *ne*, but the subject cannot. In Italian, the past participle of periphrastic forms agrees with the subject in gender and number when the auxiliary *be* is used, i.e. with unaccusative verbs (24a). Unergative verbs, however, disallow this possibility (24b).

(21) a. *Giovanni inviterà molti esperti.*
        Giovanni will invite many experts.
    b. *Giovanni ne inviterà molti.*
        Giovani will invite many (of-them).

(22) a. *Arriverano molti esperti.*
        Many experts will arrive.
    b. *Ne arriverano molti.*
        Many of them will arrive.

(23) a. *Telefoneranno molti esperti.*
        Many experts will telephone.
    b. **Ne telefoneranno molti.*
        Many of them will telephone.

(24) a. *Maria è arrivata.* (Fem, sg)
        Maria has arrived.
    b. *Maria ha telefonato.* (Mas, sg)
        Maria has telephoned.

The literature dealing with unaccusativity is very extensive and it is beyond the scope of this paper to include a complete review here. Nevertheless, it is crucial to provide a description of Spanish intransitive verbs in order to determine the right classification of the *swarm* type verbs, which is the central topic of this research. As in Italian, there have been several tests aimed at differentiating unergative from unaccusative verbs in Spanish. However, some of the most uncontroversial tests, such as auxiliary selection, cannot be applied to Spanish, because only *haber/have* can be used as an auxiliary in periphrastic forms. Mendikoetxea (1999) and the references therein are a good source for a detailed description of Spanish intransitive verbs. Mendikoetxea (1999) proposed a classification of Spanish unaccusative verbs, which is summarized in (25):

(25) a. Verbs of change of state or location:
        abrir(se)/open, *hundir(se)/sink*, *caer/fall*, *florecer/bloom*,…
    b. Verbs of appearance or existence:
        aparecer/appear, *llegar/arrive*, *existir/exist*, *venir/come*, *suceder/happen*,…

Unaccusative verbs are relevant for this article because they have been shown to have a higher percentage of postverbal subjects in Spanish.

A. Subject Position and Verb Types in Spanish

Subjects can appear both in the preverbal and postverbal domains, irrespective of the type of verb. The following examples, which have been extracted from the online *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA), show sentences that contain unaccusative (26), unergative (27), and transitive (28) verbs with both preverbal and postverbal subjects. The verb appears marked as V, while the subject is marked with the letter S. Although overt subjects can appear both in preverbal or postverbal position, their ordering is not completely random, and ongoing research shows that it depends on various grammatical and sociolinguistic factors (Mayoral Hernández, 2005; Silva-Corvalán, 1982; Zubizarreta, 1998).

(26) a. Postverbal subject with the unaccusative verb *llegar/to arrive*:
        En febrero llega (V) *el grupo Queen a la Argentina* (S).
        In February the band Queen arrives in Argentina.

b. Preverbal subject with unaccusative verb:
En 1896, Picasso llega a Barcelona.
In 1896, Picasso arrives in Barcelona.

(27) a. Postverbal subject with the unergative verb *trabajar/to work*:
En el coro *trabaja* (V) *un maestro de tracer ías y taraceas* (S).
In the choir works a master of tracery and marquetry.

b. Preverbal position with unergative verb:
El minero trabaja durante toda la noche…
The miner works during the whole night…

(28) a. Postverbal subject with the transitive verb *empujar/to push*:
ólo empuja (V) *el libro desde el borde de la mesa, aquel que tensiona la espalda* (S).
Only the one that bends his back pushes the book from the table end.

b. Preverbal position with transitive verb:
Un niño chino empuja su carrito en la ciudad de Kunming.
A Chinese child pushes his cart in the city of Kunming.

But are all verbs equally susceptible to have postverbal subjects? Section 5.2. expands on this question.

B. A Quantitative Method to Identify Verb Types

The linguistic literature dealing with subject position and verb types in Spanish has observed that postverbal subjects seem to be associated with unaccusative verbs (Torrego, 1989). This can be expected from the fact that in a language like Spanish, where subject position is variable, the subjects of unaccusative verbs will tend to appear in postverbal position more frequently, because they have object properties, and the unmarked position for objects in Spanish is postverbal. Therefore, the subjects of unaccusative verbs seem to be a hybrid linguistic construct, with subject and object properties. Taking this observation as a point of departure, Mayoral Hernández (2005) postulated that it should be possible to determine verb types by carrying out a quantitative analysis of subject position. The general idea is that unaccusative verbs should have a higher percentage of postverbal subjects when compared to unergative, transitive and copulative verbs. The results indicated that while copulative, transitive and unergative verbs showed a similar subject distribution, unaccusative verbs showed a significantly higher percentage of postverbal subjects ($p < 0.05$), as seen in Table 4.

TABLE 4.
VERB TYPES AND SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION (MAYORAL HERNÁNDEZ, 2005)

Position of subject	Type of verb				Total
	Intransitive	Copulative	Transitive	Unaccusative	
Postverbal	6 12.2%	12 15.4%	23 11.5%	25 33.8%	66 16.5%
Preverbal	43 87.8%	66 84.6%	177 88.5%	49 66.2%	335 83.5%
Total	49 100.0%	78 100.0%	200 100.0%	74 100.0%	401 100.0%

The crosstabulation presented in Table 4 shows that intransitive (unergative), transitive and copulative verbs tend to occur in preverbal position in about 87% of the cases. Applying Pearson's chi-square test to a contingency table with only intransitive, copulative, and transitive verbs yields no statistically significant difference between them ($p = 0.678$).[3] However, if these three types of verbs are merged together and crosstabulated with the unaccusative verbs, a statistically significant difference arises ($p < .05$), since unaccusatives have a lower percentage of preverbal subjects (66.2%). The fact that unaccusative verbs have a higher percentage of postverbal subjects follows from the assumption that the subjects of unaccusative verbs are supposed to be underlying objects.

However, the analysis in Mayoral Hernández (2005) raises some questions, due to the way in which the experiment was designed. First of all, the experiment was originally intended to study the position of frequency adverbials in Spanish, and subject position was only one of the several independent variables included. Because of this, the rich Spanish verbal morphology was not controlled for, and there is no clear understanding of the consequences this might have had on the results. As an example, one might expect that subject position could vary greatly depending on grammatical person, in particular if we compare first person singular with third person. In fact, the only first person subject possible is the personal pronoun *yo/I*, which always represents given information (Prince, 1981). Considering that Spanish has a preference for placing old information in preverbal position (Silva Corvalán, 2003), and that personal pronouns tend to be old information, it becomes obvious that the lack of control of this grammatical feature might influence the results.

Another possible problem that might derive from the methodology adopted by Mayoral Hernández is that the classification of verbs as unaccusative or unergative, necessary for the coding of data, was based on Mendikoetxea's (1999) non-exhaustive list of unaccusative verbs. Therefore, decisions had to be made regarding the classification of

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[3] All the *p* values in this paper have been obtained via a Pearson's chi-square test.

some verbs as either unaccusative or unergative when they did not appear in Mendikoetxea's list. The classification adopted might have been perfectly accurate, but again, one might question this procedure after taking into account that the right classification of unaccusative and unergative verbs is still controversial, due to the lack of reliable tests. Owing to the shortcomings found in the methodology adopted, Mayoral Hernández (2006) developed an analysis that was specifically designed to test if transitive, unergative and unaccusative verbs have a unique subject distribution. This time, only those verbs whose classification is uncontroversial were selected. In particular, the verb *empuja –he/she pushes–* represented transitive verbs, while *trabaja –he/she works–* and *llega –he/she arrives–* represented unergative and unaccusative verbs respectively. These verbs show a very stable classification cross-linguistically. In those languages that have overt unaccusative morphology, such as Italian, Dutch or French, the verb *arrive* selects the auxiliary *be* in periphrastic forms, its subject can be substituted by the clitic *ne* in Italian, etc. Similarly, the verb *work* shows very clear unergative properties across languages. Verbal morphology was strictly controlled too, since only the third person singular of the present simple tense, indicative mood, active voice was included. The sentences were extracted from the online corpus CREA. The results of this new study seem to support the primitive difference between unergative and unaccusative verbs. Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < .0001$) between transitive and unergative verbs as far as subject position is concerned.

TABLE 5.
SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION IN UNERGATIVE AND TRANSITIVE VERBS ($P < .0001$) (MAYORAL HERNÁNDEZ, 2006)

			Type of Verb		
			Transitive	Unergative	Total
Subject Position	Postverbal	Count	5	32	37
		Column %	3.0%	21.5%	11.8%
	Preverbal	Count	160	117	277
		Column %	97.0%	78.5%	88.2%
Total		Count	165	149	314
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

While both types of verbs clearly display a higher percentage of preverbal subjects, this preference is much more accentuated in the case of transitive verbs. The comparison between unergative and unaccusative verbs also indicated a statistically significant difference between them ($p < .0001$), since unaccusatives show no clear tendency for either preverbal or postverbal subjects (Table 6).

TABLE 6.
SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION IN UNERGATIVE AND UNACCUSATIVE VERBS ($P < .0001$) (MAYORAL HERNÁNDEZ, 2006)

			Type of Verb		
			Unergative	Unaccusative	Total
Subject Position	Postverbal	Count	32	62	94
		Column %	21.5%	45.6%	33.0%
	Preverbal	Count	117	74	191
		Column %	78.5%	54.4%	67.0%
Total		Count	149	136	285
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is interesting to note that Mayoral Hernández (2005), as seen in Table 4, did not find a significant difference between transitive and unergative verbs. A detailed analysis of these results seems to indicate that when only prototypes are selected and other factors are controlled, which is the method adopted in Mayoral Hernandez (2006), there is a clear difference between the three types of verbs as far as their subject position is concerned ($p < 0.05$). In particular, only unaccusative verbs show a higher percentage of postverbal subjects.

In order to control other factors, we have here compared the subject distribution of unaccusative and unergative verbs in sentences with no co-occurring XP. Table 7 shows that there is a significant difference between unergative and unaccusative verbs ($p < 0.05$), as far as subject position is concerned. When there is no other XP in the sentence, unergative verbs show a clear tendency to have preverbal subjects. By contrast, unaccusative verbs show a preference for postverbal subjects.

TABLE 7.
SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION; UNERGATIVE AND UNACCUSATIVE WITH NO CO-OCCURRING XP ($P < .0001$)

			Subject Position		
			Postverbal	Preverbal	Total
Type of Verb	Unergative	Count	27	94	121
		Column %	34.2%	63.5%	53.3%
	Unaccusative	Count	52	54	106
		Column %	65.8%	36.5%	46.7%
Total		Count	79	148	227
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The data presented in this section shows that there is a group of intransitive verbs, called unaccusatives, whose subjects tend to occur postverbally in Spanish. Subject position with unaccusative verbs cannot be accounted for by using categorical rules, as this phenomenon is subject to variation.

C. Teaching Subject Position with Unaccusative Verbs

Understanding subject distribution with unaccusative verbs presents a high level of difficulty, as it does not depend on categorical rules. Therefore, the activities presented here are for advanced students. There is a special construction where the subjects of unaccusative verbs have an even higher tendency to occur postverbally. Specifically, the presence of a benefactive/malefactive dative pronoun increases the presence of postverbal subjects in sentences such as (29)

(29) a. *Se me rompió el reloj.*
        My watch broke.
    b. *Se le cayó la sal al suelo.*
        The salt fell on the floor.

The sentences in (29) contain an unaccusative verb and a dative clitic, marked in bold, whose presence is not. The function of the dative clitic is primarily to introduce a *victim*, a malefíciary. This construction is very frequent when giving excuses, and when someone feels that an uncontrolled event has caused damages or harm. Advanced students can practice this construction by giving excuses about tardiness (*se me ha ido el tren/I missed the train*), or lack of preparedness (*se me han olvidado los deberes/I forgot my homework*), since this structure accentuates the lack of control over events and the involuntary nature of the action.

The song "Se me enamora el alma", by Isabel Pantoja, can also be used to practice this structure. It includes many occurrences of dative clitics with unaccusative verbs, in order to emphasize the sense of doom and out-of-control destiny. There are several versions available on YouTube.

VI. Conclusion

This article reviews the phenomenon of subject inversion in Spanish. The topic of subject position is frequently ignored in textbooks and other instructional materials. One of the reasons that have caused this omission is the inadequate understanding of the conditions that trigger subject inversion, as they do not obey categorical rules. Here we have provided a linguistic introduction to three specific constructions: verbs of psychological affection, such as *gustar/like*; the impersonal passive; and unaccusative constructions.

It is necessary for the language instructor to be aware of the different structures associated with subject inversion, so that this apparently complicated topic can be presented in a comprehensive manner to Spanish L2 learners. Therefore, we suggest that there should be a more fluent connection between the theoretical linguistics field and its applied use for teaching languages.

We have also provided some activities and exercises suggesting different ways to introduce constructions with postverbal subjects, by using communicative activities, such as songs and food recipes.

Finally, we would like to recommend a thorough revision of the instructional materials that deal with this topic, in order to avoid the inclusion of misleading information regarding the structure of verbs such as *gustar/like*, which are incorrectly categorized as defective on many occasions.

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