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Editors’ Notes

With this volume, my ten years as editor of BJTLLL ends. It is a bittersweet feeling as I type these words. Much like a mother who proudly watches as her son walks away on his own into the adult world, I pass the torch on to two new editors knowing that the journal will be in excellent hands while oddly sad at my newfound freedom from editorial obligations. BJTLLL began almost as an afterthought. Following a department meeting, my friend and colleague, Dr. Virginia Unamuno blithely commented, ‘you should start a journal to help promote our research students’ work’ and without second thought and a total ignorance of the intricate workings of setting up and editing a journal, I accepted the challenge. The learning curve has been steep and there have been an untold number of hours, including entire weekends, spent at the computer and countless cases of eye fatigue and back aches in order to assure that the journal has flourished. However, the rewards that come from having had a hand in the stewardship of so many young researchers’ work, receiving countless heartfelt expressions of gratitude from authors who needed a bit of nudging to get their articles into shape and the growing international recognition of the quality of the research published in our journal far outweigh any hardships along the way.

First and foremost, I feel the need to thank all of our readers for your continued support. Without all of the academic colleagues around the world who have submitted articles or encouraged their research students to do so and the teachers and researchers who have read and cited the work published in our journal, BJTLLL would have long since languished. I must also thank all of the reviewers who took the time away from their busy schedules to provide constructive criticism and input so that the articles could be fairly and promptly vetted. To all the invited authors who so munificently bestowed brilliant and innovative insight into the many different fields of study related to our journal, I am completely indebted. It was my secret pleasure to know that I would be the first to read new texts by so many outstanding and distinguished authors and many a time I have been awestruck, not only by the invited authors’ articles but also by the keen perspectives displayed so often in the interviews. The fact that our invited guests and interviewees take the time to write articles or to be interviewed speaks volumes about their academic generosity. Of course, this list of acknowledgements would not be complete without a a very special note of gratitude to Sonia Pulido and her students at EINA. Their amazing artwork has been an wonderful addition to our journal for years. And finally, I would like to thank Dr. Emilee Moore and Dr. Xavier Fontich for agreeing to take on the role of editors. I step down with the assurance that the journal I started a decade ago will prosper, probably in ways that I cannot even imagine. I look forward to being your most loyal reader and fan!

I turn now to a preview of this issue. It holds three accounts of research in language and literature education, all three richly diverse in topic and analytical approach. The guest author Jessica Bradley, from the University of Leeds, leads these off. Bradley’s intriguing ‘thought piece’ is definitely that – thought provoking. Drawing from recent work in translanguaging and multimodal studies, the author proposes that operationalizing this framework can help researchers and practitioners identify connections between language(s) use and language modalities, multiple communicative repertoires and competences, and how individuals see and understand the world. Bradley advocates the need for collaborative research between all sectors and disciplines from both traditionally academic and non-academic fields. Perhaps most importantly, Bradley highlights the need for commitment to transform – transformation of knowledge for the betterment of the world we live in.
In the research section of the volume, Lamas’ study outlines two cases of primary education teachers’ perspectives on poetry education. Lamas interrogates the causes behind a detected scarcity of rigorous and systematic use of poetry as a focus and instrument for literacy education in upper primary education, in particular looking at the beliefs teachers hold concerning poetry. She points out that too often poetry takes a ‘second’ position to other literary forms and in her study of two teachers as case studies, she unravels their own profile as poetry readers, their prior educational experience with poetry as students themselves and their current approach to poetry in their own teaching practices. Along somewhat similar lines, Hibbs’ study underscores the relevance of providing students with the time and space to develop their own comprehension of texts (in different languages), through the teacher’s careful scaffolding. Both Lamas and Hibbs provide arguments for the need for stronger support and an expansion of opportunities to explore empirically new approaches that will foreground these resources (reading in various languages, poetry) in initial and continued teacher education.

Lissón’s article focuses on students’ writing abilities in English as a foreign language. Drawing on data from Spanish university students in their first years of an English philology major, the author applies a readability metrics analysis to determine differences in students’ output from year 1 and year 2. The author bases her study principally on linguistic parameters such as sentence length, use of polysyllabic words (longer words; although the author highlights that this may be problematic due to possible use of Latin-based words in English by Spanish speakers), number of words per sentence (complexity), and number of sentences (extension of text).

The research section is completed by our usual book review and interview of a well-established academic working in a field related to the language and literature education. Sánchez Jiménez’s review of Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal’s book entitled *Dialogicity in Written Specialised Genres* is a timely contribution and ties in very nicely with the three research articles presented in this volume, especially given the significant emphasis the book places on the complexity of both writer and reader (and their interchangeable roles).

Hossain interviews Dr. Suresh Canagarajah regarding his views on language, communication and society as mobile (versus perspectives of these as static and structured). Much like the invited author’s work, the reader of this interview is asked to see languages and texts as unpredictable ‘mobile resources’ that cross boundaries and purposes, lending themselves to the ‘creolization’ or hybridization of educational practices and intellectual traditions. This seems very much in synch with the transformation that Bradley urges researchers and educators to seek.

With this, I bid a fond farewell to BJTLLL readers.

Dr. Melinda Dooly

**Credits:**

**Illustrations** for the covers of each issue are designed by students of EINA (Escola de Disseny i Art, Barcelona) studying in the postgraduate course ‘Il·lustració Creativa’, under the direction of Sonia Pulido, teacher of Illustration for Publishing Media.

**Reviewers for Volume 10.4**

The editors would like to thank the following reviewers for their contribution to the preparation of Volume 10.4:

Cristina Aliagas, Universitat Pompeu Fabra; Josep Maria Cots, Universitat de Lleida; Teresa Colomer; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Xavier Fontich, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Ana Maria Margallo, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Felipe Munitas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona & Neus Real, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
Lettre des éditeurs

Ce volume termine mes 10 ans en tant qu'éditeur BJTLLL. L'écriture de ces mots me donne une sensation douce-amère. En tant que mère qui regarde avec fierté que son fils est entré dans le monde adulte, je laisse mes responsabilités à deux nouveaux éditeurs, sachant que le magazine sera dans de bonnes mains et en même temps avec un étrange sentiment de tristesse enfin me voir libre d'obligations éditoriales. BJTLLL a commencé presque comme un événement intempestif. Après une réunion départementale, mon amie et collègue Dra. Virginia Unamuno a dit joyeusement « nous devrions commencer un magazine pour aider à promouvoir le travail de nos étudiants de recherche » et sans y penser plus souvent et avec une ignorance totale du fonctionnement complexe de la configuration et de l'édition d'un magazine, j'ai accepté le défi. La courbe d'apprentissage a été abrupte et il y a eu un nombre incalculable d'heures avant l'ordinateur, y compris des week-ends entiers, et d'innombrables moments de mal aux yeux et à l'épaule pour m'assurer que le magazine puisse fleurir. Cependant, la récompense pour avoir participé à l'administration du travail de tant de jeunes chercheurs (dont j'ai reçu d'innombrables expressions de gratitude, étant donné qu'ils ont besoin de mettre leurs articles en circulation) et la reconnaissance internationale croissante de la qualité de la recherche publiée dans notre magazine, dépasse largement toutes les difficultés que j'ai rencontrées.

Tout d'abord, je ressens le besoin de remercier tous nos lecteurs pour leur soutien continu. Sans tous les collègues universitaires du monde entier qui ont envoyé des articles ou encouragé leurs étudiants à le faire, et les enseignants et chercheurs qui ont lu et cité les travaux publiés dans notre magazine, BJTLLL aurait glissé depuis longtemps. Je dois également remercier tous les examinateurs qui ont trouvé un trou dans leurs agendaz chargés de fournir des critiques constructives et de contribuer au fait que les articles pourraient être examinés de manière approfondie et dans le temps prévu. Je suis complètement endetté avec tous les auteurs invités qui ont si généreusement contribué avec une vision brillante et innovatrice de leurs domaines respectifs et variés d'étude et de pensée liés à notre domaine d'expertise. Pour moi, cela a été un plaisir secret d'avoir lu la première de nouveaux textes de tant d'auteurs connus et reconnus. Plusieurs fois, j'ai été impressionné non seulement par les articles des auteurs invités, mais aussi par les perspectives perspicaces qui sont souvent montrées dans les interviews. Le fait que des professeurs d'une grande reconnaissance offrent leur temps pour écrire des articles ou être interviewés témoigne de leur générosité académique. Une note très spéciale de gratitude à Sonia Pulido et ses étudiants EINA. Ses œuvres d'art étonnantes ont été depuis des années un excellent ajout à notre magazine. Et enfin, je voudrais remercier Dr. Emilee Moore et Dr. Xavier Fontich pour accepter d'assumer le rôle d'éditeur. Je suis convaincue que le magazine qui a commencé il y a dix ans va prospérer, probablement d'une manière que je ne peux même pas imaginer. J'espère être le lecteur le plus fidèle et un supporter de BJTLLL!

Maintenant, quelques mots sur ce numéro. Il présente des contributions à la recherche sur l'éducation linguistique et littéraire riche et diversifiée par rapport à des questions et des approches analytiques. Le numéro commence par la contribution de l'auteur invité Jessica Bradley de l'Université de Leeds. La contribution de Bradley est certainement provocatrice. Sur la base de travaux récents sur les études « translanguaging » et multimodales, l'auteur propose de mettre en place un cadre pouvant aider les chercheurs et les professionnels à identifier les liens entre l'usage de la langue et les modalités linguistiques, les répertoires communicatifs multiples et les compétences, ainsi que les façons dont les gens voient et comprennent le monde. Bradley préconise la nécessité d'une recherche collaborative entre tous les secteurs et disciplines du domaine académique et du monde non-universitaire. Peut-être que le plus important est que Bradley souligne le besoin d'un engagement à transformer : la transformation des connaissances pour améliorer le monde dans lequel nous vivons.

Dans la section de recherche de volume, l'étude de Lamas décrit deux cas de perspectives pour des professeurs d'éducation primaire sur l'éducation poétique. Lamas soulève les questions relatives à l'usage de la poésie comme un objet et un instrument pour l'enseignement des langues dans l'enseignement primaire supérieur, en particulier dans l'observation des croyances des enseignants sur la poésie. Il souligne que trop souvent la poésie...
occupe une «deuxième position» par rapport aux autres formes littéraires et, dans son étude de deux enseignants comme études de cas, expose leur profil en tant que lecteurs de poésie, leur expérience éducative précédente avec la poésie en tant qu’étudiants et l’approche qu’ils adoptent actuellement dans leurs propres pratiques d’enseignement de la poésie.

Avec des approches similaires, l’étude de Hibbs souligne l’importance de donner aux étudiants le temps et l’espace pour développer sa propre compréhension des textes (dans différentes langues), à travers l’échafaud de l’enseignant. Les deux Lamas et Hibbs présentent arguments pour un soutien supplémentaire et de l’expansion des occasions d’explorer de nouvelles approches de manière empirique pour mettre en relief les ressources (lire en plusieurs langues, la poésie) dans la formation initiale des enseignants et continue.

L’article de Lissón se concentre sur l’écriture des compétences des étudiants en anglais comme langue étrangère. Basé sur les données des étudiants universitaires espagnols dans leurs premières années de la carrière de philologie anglaise, l’auteur applique une analyse des mesures de lisibilité pour déterminer les différences dans les résultats des élèves de 1ère et 2ème. L’auteur a basé son étude principalement sur les paramètres linguistiques tels que l’extension de la phrase, en utilisant des mots plus longs (de mots polysyllabes, bien que l’auteur souligne que cela peut être problématique en raison de l'utilisation possible de mots avec d’origine latin en anglais), le nombre de mots par phrase (complexité) et le nombre de phrases (extension de texte). La section de recherche est complétée par notre recension habituelle et l’interview à personnalités académiques internationales dans l'enseignement de la langue et de la littérature. La recension du livre Jiménez Sánchez Gil-Salom Soler-Monreal intitulé Dialogicity in Written Specialized Genres est très opportune et concomitante avec les trois documents de recherche présentés dans ce volume, en particulier compte tenu de l'importance la complexité rencontrée par l’écritain et le lecteur devant le texte (et leurs rôles interchangeables). Hossain interviewe le Dr Suresh Canagarajah en ce qui concerne ses vues sur la langue, la communication et la société en tant qu’éléments mobiles (par rapport à une vision qu’on en a statique et structurée). Comme l'article de l'auteur invité, on demande aux lecteurs de cette interview de voir les langues et les textes comme des « ressources mobiles » imprévisibles à travers les frontières et les buts, se prêtant à la « créolisation » ou des pratiques d'hybridation avec traditions éducatives et intellectuelles. Cela semble très en phase avec la transformation que Bradley exhorte les chercheurs et les éducateurs à rechercher.

Un à bien-tôt aux lecteurs de BJTLLL,
Dra. Melinda Dooly

Crédits:

Les illustrations des couvertures de chaque numéro sont élaborées par des étudiants d’EINA (École de Design et d’Art, Barcelone) réalisant le cours de Post-grado « Illustration créative », sous la direction de Sonia Pulido, professeur d’illustration pour médias imprimés.

Réviseurs du Volume 10.4.

Les éditeurs voudraient remercier les réviseurs suivants pour leur contribution à la préparation du Volume 10.4:

Cristina Aliagas, Universitat Pompeu Fabra; Josep Maria Cots, Universitat de Lleida; Teresa Colomer; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Xavier Fontich, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Ana Maria Margallo, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Felipe Munitas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona et Neus Real, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
Nota de les Editores

Aquest volum posa fi als meus 10 anys com a editora de BJTLLL. Escriure aquestes paraules em produeix una sensació agredolça. Com una mare que observa amb orgull com el seu fill ingressa tot sol al món dels adults, lliuro el testimoni a dos nous editors, sabent que la revista estarà en excel·lents mans i experimentant alhora una estranya sensació de tristesa en veure’m finalment lliure d'obligacions editorials. BJTLLL va començar gairebé com una ocurrència extemporània. Després d'una reunió departamental, la meva amiga i col·lega Dra. Virginia Unamuno va dir alegrement 'hauríem d'iniciar una revista per ajudar a promoure el treball dels nostres estudiants d'investigació' i sense pensar-ho més vegades i amb una total ignorància de l'intricat funcionament de la configuració i edició una revista, vaig acceptar el desafiament. La corba d'aprenentatge ha estat abrupta i hi ha hagut un nombre incalculable d'hores davant l'ordinador, inclosos caps de setmana sencers, i innombrables moments de fatiga visual i mal d'esquena per assegurar que la revista anés florint a poc a poc. No obstant això, la recompensa d'haver participat en l'administració del treball de tants joves investigadors (dels quals he rebut innombrables expressions de gratitud, necessitats de suport com estan per posar els seus articles en circulació) i el creixent reconeixement internacional de la qualitat de la recerca publicada a la nostra revista, superen amb escreix qualsevol dificultat que hagi trobat.

En primer lloc, sento la necessitat d'agrair a tots els nostres lectors el seu continu suport. Sense tots els col·legues acadèmics d'arreu del món que han enviat articles o encoratjat els seus estudiosants a fer-ho, i els docents i investigadors que han llegit i citat el treball publicat a la nostra revista, BJTLLL s'hauria esllanguit fa ja molt de temps. També he d'agrair a tots els revisors que han trobar un forat a les seves atapeïdes agendes per proporcionar crítiques constructives i contribuir al fet que els articles poguessin ser revisats de manera adequada i a temps. Estic completament en deute amb tots els autors convidats que tan generosament han contribuït amb una visió brillant i innovadora des dels seus respectius i variats camps d'estudi i pensament relacionats amb la nostra àrea de coneixement. Per a mi ha estat un plaer secret comptar amb la primícia de poder llegir nous textos de tants autors destacats i reconeguts. Moltes vegades he quedat impressionada no només dels articles dels autors convidats sinó també de les perspicacions de recerca que es mostren tan sovint en les entrevistes. El fet que professors de gran rellevància ofereixin el seu temps per escriure articles o ser entrevistats diu molt de seva generositat acadèmica. Poso una nota molt especial de gratitud a Sònia Pulido i els seus estudiants d'EINA. Les seves sorprenents obres d'art han estat durant anys una excel·lent addició a la nostra revista. I finalment, m'agradaria agrair a la Dra. Emilee Moore i al Dr. Xavier Fontich d’haver acceptat assumir el rol d'editors. Me’n vaig amb la certesa que la revista que vaig començar fa una dècada prosperarà, probablement d’una manera que ni tan sols puc imaginar. Espero ser el més lleial lector i seguidor de BJTLLL!

Passo ara a una vista prèvia d'aquest número. Presenta aportacions en recerca en educació lingüística i literària riques i diverses pel que fa a temes i enfocaments analítics. Encaçpa aquestes contribucions l'autora convidada, Jessica Bradley, de la Universitat de Leeds. L'aportació de Bradley és certament provocadora. A partir del treball recent en "translanguaging" i estudis multimodals, l'autor proposa posar en pràctica un marc que pot ajudar els investigadors i professionals a identificar connexions entre l'ús del llenguatge i les modalitats de llenguatge, repertoris comunicatius múltiples i competències, així com les maneres com les persones veuen i entenen el món. Bradley advoca per la necessitat d'una recerca col·laborativa entre tots els sectors i disciplines tant del camp tradicionalment acadèmic com no acadèmic. Potser el més important és que Bradley ressalta la necessitat del compromís de transformar: transformació del coneixement per millorar el món en què vivim.

A la secció d'investigació del volum, l'estudi de Lamas descriu dos casos de perspectives de docents d'educació primària sobre l'educació poètica. Lamas es planteja quines causes s'amaguen darrere de l'escàs rigor que detecta en l’ús de la poesia com a focus i instrument per a l'educació lingüística en l'educació primària superior, en particular en observar les creences dels mestres pel que fa a la poesia. Assenyal a que massa sovint la poesia ocupa una "segona posició" respecte d'altres formes literàries i, en el seu estudi de dos professors com a casos d'estudi, desentrenya el seu propi perfil com a lectors de
poesia, la seva experiència educativa prèvia amb la poesia com a estudiants i l'enfocament que adopten actualment en les seves pròpies pràctiques d'ensenyament de la poesia.

Amb uns plantejaments similars, l'estudi de Hibbs subratlla la importància de proporcionar als estudiants el temps i l'espai per desenvolupar la seva pròpia comprensió dels textos (en diferents idiomes), a través de la bastida curiosa del professor. Tant Lamas com Hibbs presenten arguments per a un major recolzament i una expansió d'oportunitats per a explorar enfocaments empíricament nous que posin en relleu aquests recursos (lectura en diversos idiomes, poesia) en la formació docent inicial i continuà.

L'article de Lissón se centra en les habilitats d'escriptura dels estudiants en anglès com a llengua estrangera. A partir de dades d'estudiants universitaris espanyols en els seus primers anys de la carrera de filologia anglesa, l'autor aplica una anàlisi de mètriques de llegibilitat per determinar les diferències en els resultats dels alumnes de 1r i 2n. L'autor basa el seu estudi principalment en paràmetres lingüístics com l'extensió de l'oració, l'ús de paraules polisíl·labes (paraules més llargues, encara que l'autor destaca que això pot ser problemàtic a causa del possible ús de paraules en anglès d’arrel llatina), el nombre de paraules per oració (complexitat) i el nombre d'oracions (extensió de text).

La secció d'investigació es completa amb la nostra habitual ressenya i l'entrevista a algun acadèmic de referència en algun camp relacionat amb l'ensenyament de la llengua i la literatura. La revisió de Sánchez Jiménez del llibre de Gil-Salom i Soler-Monreal titulat *Dialogicity in Written Specialized Genres* és una contribució oportuna i molt concomitant amb els tres articles de recerca presentats en aquest volum, especialment donat l'emfasi significativa que el llibre posa a la complexitat que afronten davant el text tant l'escriptor com el lector (i els seus rols intercanviables). Hossain entrevista el Dr. Suresh Canagarajah respecte als seus punts de vista sobre el llenguatge, la comunicació i la societat com a dispositius mòbils (enfront de la visió que sovint se’n té com a estàtics i estructurats). Com en l’article de l’autor convidat, demanem al lector d’aquesta entrevista que veig els llenguatges i els textos com a "recursos mòbils" impredictibles que traspassen fronteres i propòsits, prestando-se a la "criollització" o hibridació de pràctiques educatives i tradicions intel·lectuals. Això sembla molt en sintonia amb la transformació que Bradley insta els investigadors i educadors a buscar.

Una gran comiat dels lectors d'BJTLLL, Dra. Melinda Dooly

**Crèdits:**

Les il·lustracions per a les portades de cada número estan dissenyades pels estudiants d’EINA (Escola de Disseny i Art, Barcelona) que estudien en el curs de postgrau Il·lustració Creativa, sota la direcció de Sonia Pulido, professora d’Il·lustració per a Premsa.

**Revisors del Volum 10.4**

Les editores volen agrair als següents revisors la seva contribució a la preparació del Volum 10.4:

Cristina Aliagas, Universitat Pompeu Fabra; Josep Maria Cots, Universitat de Lleida; Teresa Colomer; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Xavier Fontich, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Ana María Margallo, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Felipe Munitas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona et Neus Real, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
Nota de las Editoras

Este volumen pone fin a mis 10 años como editora de BJTLLL. Escribir estas palabras me produce una sensación agridulce. Como una madre que observa con orgullo cómo su hijo ingresa solo al mundo de los adultos, entrego el testimonio a dos nuevos editores, sabiendo que la revista estará en excelentes manos y experimentando a la vez una extraña sensación de tristeza por verme al fin libre de obligaciones editoriales. BJTLLL comenzó casi como una ocurrencia extemporánea. Después de una reunión departamental, mi amiga y colega Dra. Virginia Unamuno comentó alegremente, 'deberíamos iniciar una revista para ayudar a promover el trabajo de nuestros estudiantes de investigación' y sin pensarlo más veces y con una total ignorancia del intrincado funcionamiento de la configuración y edición una revista, acepté el desafío. La curva de aprendizaje ha sido abrupta y ha habido un número incalculable de horas ante el ordenador, incluidos fines de semana enteros, e innumerables momentos de fatiga visual y dolores de espalda para asegurar que la revista floreciera poco a poco. Sin embargo, la recompensa de haber participado en la administración del trabajo de tantos jóvenes investigadores (de quienes he recibido innumerables expresiones de gratitud, necesitados de apoyo para poner sus artículos en circulación) y el creciente reconocimiento internacional de la calidad de la investigación publicada en nuestra revista, superan con creces cualquier dificultad en el camino.

En primer lugar, siento la necesidad de agradecer a todos nuestros lectores por su continuo apoyo. Sin todos los colegas académicos de todo el mundo que han enviado artículos o alentado a sus estudiantes a hacerlo, y los docentes e investigadores que han leído y citado el trabajo publicado en nuestra revista, BJTLLL habría languidecido hace ya mucho tiempo. También debo agradecer a todos los revisores que se tomaron el tiempo de sus apretadas agendas para proporcionar críticas constructivas y contribuir a que los artículos pudieran ser revisados de manera adecuada y a tiempo. Estoy completamente en deuda con todos los autores invitados que tan generosamente otorgaron una visión brillante e innovadora en sus respectivos y variados campos de estudio y pensamiento relacionados con nuestra área de conocimiento. Para mi ha sido un placer secreto contar con la primicia de poder leer nuevos textos de tantos autores destacados y reconocidos. Muchas veces me he quedado impresionada no solo por los artículos de los autores invitados sino también por las perspicaces perspectivas que se muestran tan a menudo en las entrevistas. El hecho de que profesores de gran relevancia ofrezcan su tiempo para escribir artículos o ser entrevistados dice mucho de su generosidad académica. Doy una nota muy especial de gratitud para Sonia Pulido y sus estudiantes en EINA. Sus increíbles obras de arte han sido durante años una maravillosa adición a nuestra revista. Y finalmente, me gustaría agradecer a la Dra. Emilee Moore y al Dr. Xavier Fontich por aceptar asumir el rol de editores. Renuncio con la seguridad de que la revista que comencé hace una década prosperará, probablemente en formas que ni siquiera puedo imaginar. ¡Espero ser el más leal lector y seguidor de BJTLLL!

Paso ahora a una vista previa de este número. Presenta aportaciones en investigación en educación lingüística y literaria ricas y diversas en cuanto a temas y enfoques analíticos. Encabeza estas contribuciones la autora invitada, Jessica Bradley, de la Universidad de Leeds. La aportación de Bradley es ciertamente provocadora. A partir del trabajo reciente en “translanguaging” y estudios multimodales, el autor propone que poner en práctica este marco puede ayudar a los investigadores y profesionales a identificar conexiones entre el uso del lenguaje y las modalidades de lenguaje, repertorios comunicativos múltiples y competencias, así como las maneras cómo las personas ven y entienden el mundo. Bradley aboga por la necesidad de una investigación colaborativa entre todos los sectores y disciplinas tanto del campo tradicionalmente académico como no académico. Tal vez lo más importante es que Bradley resalta la necesidad del compromiso de transformar: transformación del conocimiento para mejorar el mundo en el que vivimos.

En la sección de investigación del volumen, el estudio de Lamas describe dos casos de perspectivas de docentes de educación primaria sobre la educación poética. Lamas interroga qué causas se esconden detrás de una escasez detectada de uso riguroso y sistemático de la poesía como un foco e instrumento para la educación de la alfabetización en la educación primaria superior, en particular al observar las creencias de los maestros con respecto a la poesía. Señala que con demasiada frecuencia la poesía
ocupa una "segunda posición" respecto a otras formas literarias y, en su estudio de dos profesores como casos de estudio, desentraña su propio perfil como lectores de poesía, su experiencia educativa previa con la poesía como estudiantes y el enfoque que adoptan actualmente en sus propias prácticas de enseñanza de la poesía.

Con unos planteamientos similares, el estudio de Hibbs subraya la importancia de proporcionar a los estudiantes el tiempo y el espacio para desarrollar su propia comprensión de los textos (en diferentes idiomas), a través del andamiaje cuidadoso del profesor. Tanto Lamas como Hibbs presentan argumentos para la necesidad de un apoyo más fuerte y una expansión de oportunidades para explorar enfoques empíricamente nuevos que pondrán de relieve estos recursos (lectura en varios idiomas, poesía) en la formación docente inicial y continua.

El artículo de Lissón se centra en las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes en inglés como lengua extranjera. A partir de datos de estudiantes universitarios españoles en sus primeros años de una carrera de filología inglesa, el autor aplica un análisis de métricas de legibilidad para determinar las diferencias en los resultados de los alumnos de 1º y 2º. El autor basa su estudio principalmente en parámetros lingüísticos como la extensión de la oración, el uso de palabras polisílabas (palabras más largas, aunque el autor destaca que esto puede ser problemático debido al posible uso de palabras inglesas de raíz latina), el número de palabras por oración (complejidad) y el número de oraciones (extensión de texto).

La sección de investigación se completa con nuestra habitual reseña y la entrevista a algún académico de referencia en algún campo relacionado con la enseñanza de la lengua y la literatura. La revisión de Sánchez Jiménez del libro de Gil-Salom y Soler-Monreal titulado *Dialogicity in Written Specialized Genres* es una contribución oportuna y muy concomitante con los tres artículos de investigación presentados en este volumen, especialmente dado el énfasis significativo que el libro pone en la complejidad que afrontan ante el texto tanto el escritor como el lector (y sus roles intercambiables). Hossain entrevista al Dr. Suresh Canagarajah respecto a sus puntos de vista sobre el lenguaje, la comunicación y la sociedad como dispositivos móviles (frente a la visión de estos como estáticos y estructurados). Al igual que el trabajo del autor invitado, se le pide al lector de esta entrevista que vea los lenguajes y textos como "recursos móviles" impredecibles que traspasan fronteras y propósitos, prestándose a la "criollización” o hibridación de prácticas educativas y tradiciones intelectuales. Esto parece muy en sintonía con la transformación que Bradley insta a los investigadores y educadores a buscar.

Una gran despedida de los lectores de BJTLLL,
Dra. Melinda Dooly

**Créditos:**

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**Revisores para el Volumen 10.4**

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Translanguaging engagement: Dynamic multilingualism and university language engagement programmes

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Abstract: This thought piece reflects on the implications of the author’s research on translanguaging for university language engagement work with children and young people in schools and colleges. It presents the LangScape Curators project as an example of possible directions for research and practice in this area.

Key words: Translanguaging, engagement, modern languages and cultures, multilingualism, education

Introduction
This article takes the form of a thought piece (Ding, 2016). Its purpose is to consider the possibilities of my current research, which focuses on dynamic multilingualism and multimodality in community arts, when applied to the broad area of university language engagement with children and young people in schools and colleges. Writing a thought piece of this kind has a number of purposes. It aims to develop and articulate an evolving dialogue between my current research and my previous higher education practice in educational engagement for languages and arts. In so doing I start to sketch out the implications of my research within the broader arena of languages and cultures, and particularly in terms of engagement with these subjects in schools and colleges. It brings into contact translanguaging (e.g. García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015; MacSwan, 2017) as one particular lens for understanding dynamic multilingualism, empirical evidence drawn from an ethnographic research project with multilingual street artists, and university languages engagement work with schools and colleges. I consider a current example of research-led engagement work, LangScape Curators (Atkinson & Bradley, 2017; Bradley, Moore, Simpson, & Atkinson, 2018), to sketch out possible directions for research and practice in this area.

As a thought piece it is also unfinished. It is a starting point. It sets out a number of questions, ones which I will continue to ask and to find answers to over the course of the next few years. Questions that will also – I know – lead to more questions. But it is also an attempt
to draw together threads from a series of projects – research and practice-based - and articulate the commonalities between them. The anthropologist Tim Ingold has developed a taxonomy of lines, in which he writes about threads and traces. A *thread*, he explains, is “a filament of some kind, which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three-dimensional space” (2016/2007, p. 42). A *trace* is “any enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement” (p. 44). Writing – and in this case, bringing together multiple, diverse, often conflicting, threads of research and practice – is a deliberate act of meaning making. As Ingold explains, these threads can also become traces and traces can become threads. In doing so, I hope that some of these threads will become traces, or, *enduring marks*. And some of the traces will become threads, entangled together into new ideas.

The meshwork is a concept Ingold borrows from Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, pp. 117-18; Ingold, 2016/2007, p. 84) to describe the ‘entanglement of lines’ (ibid). For Ingold, these lines are ‘the trails along which life is lived’ (ibid). The meshwork provides a useful metaphor for a doctoral research project and the thesis writing process as a deliberate articulation of the meshwork. I start by describing my current research project, as one entanglement or meshwork of threads. Here I am situating this research within the broader context of my previous professional practice in languages and arts engagement, setting out the traces of my previous practice and my current research. These are put into dialogue, giving examples from my research and from my practice. I draw out research findings which illustrate the elements which link both the research and languages engagement practice. The purpose of sketching out a number of ideas for continuing this work and establishing a research agenda, in turn, aims to mark out a trace (an enduring trace [Ingold, 2016/2007, p.75], I hope).

**Research context: Translanguaging in superdiverse city wards**

For my research I am attached to the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project ‘Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities’ (TLANG, PI Angela Creese, University of Birmingham)ii. This is a four-year project which investigates communication across four UK cities (Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds and London) in four areas (Business, Heritage, Sport and Law). Broadly this project seeks to understand how people draw from multilingual repertoires in non-educational contexts. As it draws to a close, we can take stock of what we have done
and start to map out the directions (or threads) in which the research has taken us and our developing understandings of translanguaging (as traces).

At a local level, the Leeds case study, which I have been part of, has focused on the Gipton and Harehills ward of the city, and the neighbourhoods of Chapeltown and Burley. The team have worked across different contexts including advocacy and advice drop-in sessions for recently arrived people from EU accession countries, an emergent community interest company providing heritage activities for the Czech and Slovak communities, an amateur basketball team, a capoeira group, and an immigration advice service. The research across these diverse spaces and places has challenged the initial understandings of translanguaging we had at the start of the project in 2014.

The project itself is a meshwork made of multiple interwoven threads and traces. Over the course of the research, we have considered translanguaging spaces (Li Wei, 2011; García and Li Wei, 2014; Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Zhu Hua, Li Wei, & Lyons, 2017) as positive and negative in the context of a start-up community interest company and how spaces for dynamic multilingualism are opened up and closed down (Bradley & Simpson, forthcoming). This has been extended to ESOL (Simpson & Bradley, 2017), with James Simpson and Mel Cooke developing translanguaging as pedagogy for English language classrooms (Cooke & Simpson, 2017), asking what a multilingual approach to English learning for adult migrants might look like. We have conducted detailed multimodal analyses of translanguaging and embodiment in the context of sports clubs in terms of distributed cognition in basketball training (Callaghan, Moore, & Simpson, 2018). We have broadened our scope to encompass the visual, using arts-based methods and collage as a way of considering how visual arts and literacy might be used to open up translanguaging spaces for creativity and criticality in language and in transdisciplinary pedagogy (Atkinson & Bradley, 2017; Bradley, Moore, Simpson, & Atkinson, 2018). The materiality of translanguaging, and the objects and props created by artists for street arts production has been explored alongside and in connection with the transmodality of spoken word poetry and musical adaptation. Threads have been drawn, connecting these discrete projects (Bradley & Moore, forthcoming). Continuing in the arts-based arena, translanguaging was analysed visually in the silk paintings created by refugees in a co-produced project stemming from the TLANG work for the Connected Communities Utopias 2016 festival (McKay & Bradley, 2016). Building on the translation classifications used by Roman Jakobson as intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic (Baynham, Bradley, Callaghan, Hanusova, & Simpson, 2015, p. 19) we developed the
The purpose of setting out these multiple and divergent directions in the paragraph above is to demonstrate how a concept of this kind, a fairly recent concept, is taken up in different and multiple ways, even within a small, interdisciplinary research team working at a local level.

Ricardo Otheguy and colleagues describe translanguaging as: “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281). Translanguaging as a term was originally coined by Cen Williams in 1994 to describe language alternating practices in bilingual schools in Wales (García & Li Wei, 2014). It was taken up by linguists (e.g. Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009; García & Li Wei, 2014) seeking to develop ways of understanding flexible and fluid multilingualism and its application in education. Translanguaging is one of multiple approaches to dynamic multilingual practice – a ‘school’ Alastair Pennycook (2017) describes as the ‘trans-super-poly-metro movement’. It is beyond the scope of this article to offer a critique of translanguaging and multiple other ways of conceptualising dynamic multilingualism, suffice to say it is a contested notion (see Jaspers [2017, p. 3], for whom the “profusion of meaning gives reason for concern”). Alternative concepts include polylanguaging (Jorgenson, 2003); code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011); translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), metrolinguism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015) and plurilingualism (Lüdi & Py, 2009). Translanguaging is also a creative lens. It has been a catalyst for thinking more broadly about communication, both in terms of the individual idiolect (Otheguy et al., 2015) and what Sandrine Eschenauer (2014) describes as translangageance, or the development of a shared language, following Joëlle Aden who describes translanguaging as “l’acte dynamique de reliance à soi, aux autres et à l’environnement par lequel emergent en permanence des sens partagés entre les humains” (Aden, 2013, p. 115, in Eschenauer, 2014, p. 7). For Aden’s definition, the concept of shared space is central.
Translation and translanguaging in production and performance in community arts

For my own research I investigate how people make meaning across space and place in multilingual street arts projects (see Bradley, 2017; Bradley & Moore, forthcoming). I draw from a range of approaches, including linguistic and visual ethnography (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Copland & Creese, 2015; Pink, 2014) and from multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001; Rowsell, 2012; Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016). In this sense I am developing links between quite different paradigms. Multimodal approaches to communication developed from Hallidayan systemic function linguistics (Halliday, 1978), with linguistic ethnography having developed from the ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1972, 1974). These are not easily reconciled (Pink, 2011) with anthropological and multimodal approaches having quite different theoretical and methodological frameworks. Yet, as Sarah Pink (2011, p. 275) states, scholars are engaging with media, and combining methods to address key anthropological questions and therefore innovative approaches which draw coherently from across disciplines are necessary and possible. Put simply, communication in social life is complex. So any approach to researching and understanding communication must account for this complexity.

For my research I have, therefore, assembled a contingent (Kress, 2011, p. 240) meshwork of theories and methodologies as the ‘toolkit’ for my research (see also Adami, 2017, who sets out an innovative agenda for multimodality and superdiversity). In this way I demonstrate not what different theories can do for the same data as different lenses. Instead, I seek to articulate that ethnographic approaches to my research and attention to multimodality in my research were necessary to answer the research questions, and that obtaining complementary materials for analysis (Kress, 2011, p. 240), for example photographs and visual data, was a core methodological and epistemological consideration.

My research in the context of community arts asks how people communicate across languages and cultures in collaborative processes of production and performance. I worked with a UK-based arts organisation and a Slovenia-based arts organisation as they collaborated to devise and produce a street theatre production, ‘How Much Is Enough’ based on the traditional folk story of the Zlatorog, or golden-horned goat (Copeland, 1933). During the five-month period in which I worked with the group, I spent time observing the workshops and processes and participating in them at various points. I frame this within what Sarah Pink and Jennie Morgan (2013) describe as short-term ethnography. Five months is a short time in
which to conduct ethnographic research and this core data collection period took place within a broader commitment to working with the group for a longer time and to developing collaborative projects linking from the TLANG project and from our shared research questions.

I use the concept of translanguaging as a starting point for my research into multilingual and multimodal communication. My research builds on the current scholarship developing around translanguaging’s multimodal affordances, including by Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (2017) who focus on the “corporeal dimension of translanguaging” (p. 250) and develop the concept of semiotic repertoires (see also, Kusters, Spotti, Swanwick, & Tapio, 2017; Pennycook, 2017). In adopting a multimodal approach, I decentre ‘language’ as a central concern for my research (MacLure, 2013) and incorporate the visual and the material, including the props and the puppets that are found and made during a street arts production process, extending its scope to the objects and, in particular, the puppets. In doing so, I establish translanguaging as both the focus for the research (how do people translanguage during processes of production and performance?) but also as epistemology (Moore, Bradley, & Simpson, forthcoming) (how is translanguaging also a new way of understanding knowledge production, drawing from across research approaches and paradigms?). I also question where the limits of a particular concept might lie. What happens when the boundaries of a particular theoretical concept are extended? What is lost and what is gained?

My research findings are centred on four main stages of the production of a piece of street theatre. I have called these stages conceptualisation, making, devising and performing. The folk story on which the production is based travels across these stages and undergoes a series of multiple resemiotisations (Iedema, 2001, 2003) until it is performed in the street as part of an international street arts festival. The four stages are sketched out here. Firstly, the introduction of the story and the basis for the street arts production takes place during puppetry training workshops which I frame as conceptualisation and for which narrative is the central analytical focus. Secondly, the text becomes a synopsis, a ‘promo’, objects, puppets, costumes and props. In this making stage the analysis shifts to foreground the objects as they are created and the historical bodies (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) imbued within them. Each object, each puppet, each choice of prop, of costume, of accessory, affects the development of the production. As Catherine Kell puts it, “things make people happen” (2015, p. 423). Thirdly, in the devising stage, the actors work together to create a performance. The focus here is on interactional data and decisions made across the workshops in which the production
was worked and reworked into its final version. Fourthly, during the performance stage, the production itself forms the focus of analysis. The performance is brought into being across the streets and squares of Slovenia for an international street arts festival, pulled out of suitcases and then hidden away in side alleys. As an interactional piece, it represents and embodies the actions, objects, people, histories and conflicts that have built it. It is, in itself, a contact zone (Pratt, 1991).

My main research findings focus on the concept of the translanguaging space and the ways in which these spaces develop and recede in unexpected ways. Zhu Hua and colleagues (Zhu Hua et al., 2017, p. 412) define the translanguaging space as one in which “various semiotic resources and repertoires, from multilingual to multisensory and multimodal ones, interact and co-produce new meanings”. Drawing on this broad definition, spaces of production and performance, as sites of interaction and co-production leading to new meanings, could be framed as translanguaging spaces. The semiotic resources and repertoires of the actors are brought together and drawn upon with the aim of producing a piece of street theatre – a new meaning, to use the words of Hua and colleagues. But the data demonstrate that even in these spaces of creativity and criticality, boundaries and restrictions are imposed. Actors are invited to draw on their full communicative repertoire as ideas are gathered together and explored. However at certain moments and for certain periods of time the language spoken must be English. For example, during the sharing of stories in the conceptualisation stage, the workshop leader asks that these stories be told in English, therefore removing the possibilities for multilingual story telling. Yet, translanguaging spaces continue to emerge and the actors creatively play with words from multiple ‘named languages’ (or Languages). At the same time, the actors do not display “watchful adherence” to what Otheguy and colleagues describe as “the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281) during the workshops, instead disrupting and playing with these norms.

During the making stage, language is decentred as the props and objects that are created by the group disrupt the initial plan for the performance (Bradley, 2015). Metacommentary (Rymes, 2013; Creese, Takhi, & Blackledge, 2014) on language takes place in spaces betwixt and between the main activity. The devising stage requires negotiation across practices. Languages, or named and bounded Languages (Blommaert, 2013) become less important during the production process. Instead, the focus is on how the text – the story – can be made into a performance in the street, to be communicated to a wide audience with as little verbal communication within it as possible.
Therefore, throughout the development of the street arts production, language is both centred and decentred. Scripts are drafted and redrafted. Objects are adapted. The script is returned to continuously, and the new objects being created are considered in its redrafting, in its editing, and in its application.

The street arts performance itself is the final resemiotisation of the text, the resultant meshwork of threads. However, discussion of named Languages is part of the final devising process for the performance: which Language(s) should the performers use for the play’s dialogue? Translanguaging is evident within the performance, which is a multilingual piece, however the boundaries are clearly demarcated between named Languages: English, Slovene and Italian, leading to questions of to what extent named and bounded Languages can be bypassed. To what extent can a performance, in the street, represent the nuances and playfulness of the processes of production and of communication in social settings, in translanguaging spaces?

In summary, my research sets out an analysis of the possibilities and impossibilities of translanguaging spaces. It establishes how language, and the concept of Language, are used in community arts contexts: as a creative tool, as a marker of sameness and difference, as an object of play. But also how, even within a space which ostensibly encourages the deployment of an individual’s full communicative repertoire, and its extension, Language continues to constrain and restrict.

**Languages engagement**

The previous sections set out a short description of the translanguaging research stemming from the Leeds-based TLANG project and my own related research. There are a number of directions for its possible application across multiple contexts. Here I want to consider the broad arena of university languages engagement programmes with schools and colleges. Prior to starting my research I worked for almost a decade in the area of languages (and arts) engagement in higher education. I developed multiple projects and initiatives working with schools and colleges to address the continuing decline in language take-up at Key Stage 4, Key Stage 5 and in higher education, including for the HEFCE-funded national project ‘Routes into Languages’\(^{iii}\). At the time that I started the role (2005) the decline in numbers taking languages such as French and Spanish was continuing sharply following the implementation of curriculum reforms in 2004 that led to languages being made optional in many schools at Key Stage 4 (Lanvers, 2011). Subsequent annual Language Trends surveys
by the British Council⁵ map out the changes each year to the numbers of children and young people taking languages at each stage. Subsequent annual press coverage of GCSE and A Level results invariably includes articles decrying the UK’s lack of linguistic skills and the ‘language learning crisis’ (see Lanvers & Coleman, 2017 for a critical analysis).

Language learning in schools and universities has, in terms of numbers, been in decline for the past two decades. Ursula Lanvers and James Coleman state that the UK’s language skills are considered the lowest in Europe (2017, p. 3). Programmes of activities in languages engagement are developed to address both this drop in numbers actually taking qualifications in languages across educational stages and the social inequalities within this system. According to Lanvers and Coleman (2007, p. 3), statistics demonstrate that schools with higher percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals have a reduced take-up of languages. In this way, university language schools and departments have faced and continue to face challenges in terms of recruitment to language courses, and in terms of widening participation and social justice. As a practitioner working in this area, I found myself questioning evaluative processes for this work, which, at times mainly focused on questionnaire-based responses and quantitative data. It was challenging to track what kinds of effects the engagement programmes were having, both on a short-term basis and longitudinally. ‘Attainment-raising’ activities were arguably easier to track than those which aimed to be ‘aspiration-raising’. I wondered how research into language take-up at school and university could be brought into closer dialogue with engagement practice. In this sense, to what extent could we, as practitioners and researchers in languages, consider engagement work to be theory-generating research and develop methodologies and epistemologies that would both encompass the practice itself as engagement and develop empirical evidence for what works and why it works? Interestingly, similar arguments about developing a robust evidence base for widening participation activities are being set out by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), for example for its National Collaborative Outreach Partnership (NCOP) programme⁶.

There are, of course, wider and very current reasons for ‘saving languages’. In October 2016 the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Modern Languages published a checklist for the UK Government on ‘Languages and Brexit’, which highlighted the need for languages strategy during the government’s preparations to leave the EU⁷ the fear being that the UK will have insufficient linguists for the processes and negotiations themselves and for the post-EU future of the country. ‘Brexit’, of course, is a broad and highly complex issue which I do not intend address here. Needless to say however, those active in languages
engagement are considering to what extent attitudes to languages and multilingualism and the country’s decision to leave the EU are co-implicated. The possibilities and affordances of languages, as a field, as a subject area, as a discipline, at this time, however, are wide open. As Charles Forsdick (2007, final para.) states, “Research in modern languages is increasingly proving itself to be intellectually vibrant, positioned at the forefront of the arts and humanities, and – perhaps most significant – capable of playing a crucial role in society at a time of national uncertainty”. The question is, therefore, how pathways can be developed for intellectually vibrant modern languages research to develop towards programmes of languages engagement with children and young people.

**Translanguaging approaches in languages engagement programmes**

In June 2017, Stephen Hutchings and Yaron Matras at the University of Manchester described the current situation for languages in higher education as ‘incrementally run down’. In what could be taken as a translanguaging approach to research and teaching in languages departments in the UK, they suggest:

> Any reform programme should begin with a rejection of the prevailing compartmentalised, nation-state approach to the organisations of Modern Languages units and curricula. It must recognise that established national boundaries and identities are being eroded and reconfigured by new communications technologies, migration trends, the increasingly multilingual nature of urban environments, and the transnational flows of culture, finance and ideology, generated by a globalised world. (Hutchings & Matras, 2017, para. 2, emphases added)

It is not within the scope of this article (or indeed my broader intention) to make recommendations for mass restructuring of language departments across the UK to follow the erosion and reconfiguration of national boundaries and identities that these authors describe. In both working in and researching this area over the past thirteen years, I have experienced the ways in which higher education schools and departments of modern languages can respond ably and quickly to changing landscapes (see, for example, the developing dialogue with languages teachers around the new A Level syllabi taking place at the University of Leeds) as well as the commitment of university colleagues to programmes of educational engagement. However, what is becoming increasingly interesting to me from the perspective...
of translanguaging – from the findings from my research with artists, as well as from the broader findings of the TLANG project – is how new understandings around dynamic multilingualism (Pennycook’s aforementioned ‘trans-super-poly-metro movement’ which includes translanguaging) are developing in modern languages departments and schools, across from applied linguistics and sociolinguistics (which are often housed institutionally in the UK within schools of education). And, importantly and excitingly, dialogue is taking place about how these understandings might continue to develop across contexts. The Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) has invested strongly (to the tune of £16 million) in projects which seek to demonstrate the role of languages in today’s increasingly globalised world. These include the ‘Creative Multilingualism’ project, the ‘Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies (MEITS) project, the ‘Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community’ Project and the ‘Language Acts and World Making’ project. Interestingly, all seek to develop inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary approaches to language. The MEITS project, as an example, is designed across six strands, ranging from the arts, foreign language learning and cognition. The Multilingual Manchester project, led by Matras, is another example of a project embedding transdisciplinary approaches to language. These large-scale projects demonstrate the growing dialogue between and among ‘linguists’ (applied, socio, modern, inter alia) that mirrors the kinds of questions my research has raised (for me) in terms of my previous practice. Hutchings and Matras (2017) refer to the dialectic between the intellectualisation of these challenges (similarly to the ongoing discussions of international/home student categories as ‘borders’, see also Badwan, 2015; Harvey, 2016; Collins, 2017) and the institutional structures within which these discussions take place. We can, following Sinfree Makoni and Alastair Pennycook (2007) challenge the very notion of a ‘language’ through our research. But, as Chris Perriam (2017) points out, we still conduct our research and are positioned with departments, schools and faculties whose names reflect nation-states and national boundaries. Likewise happens in schools and colleges, with these operating in an even less flexible environment than higher education institutions. Are we equipped, as Hutchings and Matras (2017) suggest, to develop ways of engaging with children and young people in languages that reflect their realities? For example, these ways might include considering and responding to the languages of migrant and diaspora communities in the UK. How can we, in university modern languages schools and departments and in schools of education, work with schools and colleges to co-produce and co-create language curricula in a way which might revitalise languages at all levels in the UK education system? How does
shifting focus from ‘bounded languages’ actually work in the context of languages engagement? How do we avoid ‘throwing the baby out with the bath water”? How might translanguaging, as a conceptual framework but also as a way of understanding how engagement might work, be a central consideration for languages engagement? To the extent that we can do this at a project level (the TLANG project is multi-disciplinary and this has been one of its strengths, see Blackledge & Creese et al., 2017), is it also possible to do this at departmental, school and faculty level? Or do we continuously create meshworks, the threads of which intersect high above our own day-to-day work in our institutions?

Translanguaging Arts and Languages Engagement: LangScape Curators

The focus for this article is languages engagement and I want to now sketch out a few ideas (traces) for a research and practice agenda around translanguaging and languages engagement. These ideas draw from a small-scale educational engagement project, LangScape Curators which uses the linguistic landscape (Blommaert, 2013; Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Pennycook, 2017), alongside developing methodologies used by researchers to investigate it, as a lens for children and young people to develop critical and analytical skills, and to understand more about language and communication. The landscape is considered following Gorter and Cenoz, as a “multilingual and multimodal repertoire” (2015, p. 17, in Pennycook, 2017, p. 270) and the approach which is adopted seeks to develop “a holistic view that goes beyond the analysis of individual signs as monolingual or multilingual” (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015, p. 63).

Earlier in 2017 I was invited to deliver two lectures for Level One undergraduate students in the School of Education at the University of Leeds as part of the ‘Education in a Multilingual World’ module. For the first of these I focused on the concept of translanguaging and theories of dynamic multilingualism. I drew on research by Brigitta Busch (2016) on biographical approaches to understanding the linguistic repertoire and students were asked to draw a portrait which showed the languages within their repertoire and position these on the portrait. It is an exercise that we have developed and used in engagement activities from the TLANG project when working with children and young people in the Harehills and Beeston areas of Leeds (Atkinson & Bradley, 2017). The aim of this exercise was to ask students to question the idea of the ‘monolingual speaker’ and to consider their own communicative repertoires (or idiolects) and the shared aspects of these. The kinds of conversations which arose from this activity included a number of students articulating their concern over not
being multilingual ‘enough’, some critique of the language experiences of some of the students in school, discussion over the role of ‘English’ and language ideologies and nation states. It was a simple exercise requiring a pen, a piece of paper, and drawing. The act of drawing, rather than listing the languages spoken, required the students to think differently, as well as to reflect on where they might position these languages on their bodies and why.

During the school half term holidays in 2016-2017, young people from Leeds-based educational centres in the east and south of the city, carried out a similar exercise but with larger, life-sized portraits which worked to demonstrate the shared elements of our communicative repertoires (for a fuller analysis, see Atkinson & Bradley, 2017 and Bradley et al., 2018). This was part of a three-day programme of language and arts engagement work for LangScape Curators supported by the university’s educational engagement social sciences cluster, based on TLANG research into the linguistic landscape. The young people talked about emoji, about the language of different subjects at school, about text speak, instagram, social media, Facebook messenger. What was particularly striking was the unproblematic way that these (complex, as we researchers thought) ideas about multimodality were considered by the young people, for example in the case of emoji (is emoji a language?, we asked – of course!, was the reply). The linguistic landscape forms the central focus for this programme of activity which has extended to work with undergraduate students and postgraduate researchers through a student education enhancement project (The Out There Challenge, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 2017) and to a linguistic landscape themed exhibition for the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (August-September 2017, University of Leeds).

**Translanguaging Approaches to Engagement?**

The overarching aim here is to see dynamic multilingualism as normal and unremarkable (Garcia, 2009). By considering the broad, multilingual, multisemiotic repertoires from an individual and from a shared perspective, we aimed to create spaces in which all participants could draw from their full communicative repertoires and talk about ‘language’ across contexts. These were spaces of creativity and of criticality in which the young people were able to share their linguistic repertoires and in which we all became co-learners. Over the course of the three days, the young people researched the linguistic landscapes of their communities and synthesised and analysed their findings using a range of arts-based methods, working with artists and researchers. At the end of the three days the participants presented
their findings at an exhibition to which their parents, carers were invited, alongside representatives from the university.

But equally, the LangScape Curators project is designed to intersect with the emergent research carried out as part of the TLANG project. It aims to situate educational and public engagement with research as central to research processes, not as a post-project activity or an add-on. The research findings and the artistic products created by the young people are data in themselves, alongside the processes, which are also considered research. How can engagement work mirror the research itself and how can we find innovative ways to ‘bring the outside in’, when it comes to our research? This concept is of particular relevance when we conduct ethnographic research, seeking to engage with people outside our institution.

The example here is one of the educational and public engagement activities developed from the TLANG project. It demonstrates how theoretical and methodological research frameworks can be developed within the context of languages engagement work. The activities developed for LangScape Curators are transdisciplinary and respond to key areas of the school curriculum: literacy, geography, history, art and, of course, languages. They encourage children and young people to become researchers themselves and to respond in an engaged and critical way to their environments. Returning to Ingold’s metaphor, the traces of the research project are present and visible within the spaces of engagement, as meshworks. Although the focus is on the linguistic landscape, language (and certainly Language) is both centred and decentred. In using arts-based methods we also disrupt traditionally bounded ways of ‘seeing’ language (Berger, 1971) and ways of doing language research (Law, 2004; MacLure, 2013) and languages engagement.

Conclusion
This thought piece sought to bring research findings around translanguaging into dialogue with language engagement in higher education. I articulate some of the findings emerging from my research into translanguaging and dynamic multilingualism in community arts and street theatre and from the research into translanguaging across space and place in superdiverse cities. In describing some of the multiple and different ways in which translanguaging is being critiqued and extended, it aimed to set out the threads and traces of this work within the context of higher education languages engagement with children and young people. It was written in response to a range of questions emerging across the broader modern languages area which, following Michael Gratzke’s (2017) statement for the
University Council for Modern Languages (UCML), is understood as “a continuum of disciplines which cover Linguistics, Language Acquisition, Translation Studies, (language-based) area studies, and (language-based) Humanities”. Gratzke raises a number of important questions for the field as a whole, based around understandings of *culture* and its centrality within languages teaching and research. Like Gratzke’s short piece, this article does not seek to answer all the questions it raises. But it does seek to make connections between the threads and traces which have not previously been articulated, namely how a dynamic multilingualism approach (from linguistics) might inform languages-focused engagement (in modern languages). It uses a brief example from a current transdisciplinary arts and language engagement project, LangScape Curators, to illustrate the possibilities and to make these connections, and as a translanguaging approach to engagement.

What might a translanguaging approach to language engagement look like? And how could translanguaging be adopted as epistemology in cross-sector, transdisciplinary languages engagement projects? Translanguaging offers a lens to consider the ways in which we draw from our communicative repertoires in daily life. A translanguaging approach to languages engagement might recognise:

1) we all draw from our communicative repertoires in different ways and across spaces and places;
2) we all bring multiple skills and experiences to interaction;
3) in working together we seek to develop and share our communicative resources, continually building on our own repertoires;
4) there are different ways of seeing (following John Berger, 1972): we make meaning in different ways and approaching from the perspective of different disciplines and fields strengthens our understandings;
5) commitment to collaboration and co-production (Facer & Enright, 2016) in engagement work, starting from within universities themselves, and therefore drawing from across a wide range of disciplinary repertoires;
6) commitment to developing a repertoire of innovative research-based approaches to evaluation of such initiatives, building on but not limited to research methodologies in linguistic and visual ethnography.

There are significant methodological, epistemological and theoretical challenges to bringing together the diversity of approaches to language within the context of languages engagement. But, by seeking to work in a way which considers everyday multilingualism as
normal and unremarkable (García & Li Wei, 2014), with languages engagement programmes seeking to develop what Suresh Canagarajah (2013, p. 188) describes as a translingual orientation we can sketch out innovative approaches to languages engagement which foreground dynamic multilingualism.

This kind of approach aligns with what feminist economists J.K Gibson-Graham describe as a performative ontological project (Gibson-Graham, 2008) and which Anna Stetsenko calls a transformative activist stance (2015). Drawing from Law and Urry (2004, p. 391), Gibson-Graham (2008, p. 615) state that “to change our understanding is to change the world”. In this way, this paper seeks to consider understandings of what languages engagement is and therefore what languages engagement might be. Now, with the uncertainty of Brexit, with the UK’s decline in language take-up in schools and our increasingly tense relationship with Europe, new approaches to languages engagement are of vital importance.

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There are also two more categories of lines according to Ingold’s taxonomy. These are ‘the cut, the crack and the crease’ which form by ‘ruptures in the surfaces themselves’ (2016:46) and ‘ghostly lines’ which he uses to describe lines which are ‘visionary or metaphysical’ (p.50).


See www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk (accessed 4 August 2017).


See https://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/20043/school_of_languages_cultures_and_societies/2838/resources_for_schoo1_languages_teachers (accessed 4 August 2017).


Poesía en la escuela: los maestros, sus lecturas y sus creencias

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Resumen: El artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio de caso en el que se exploraron las creencias de dos docentes en torno a la poesía y su didáctica en el segundo ciclo de la educación primaria. A partir de datos recogidos a través de relatos de vida y entrevistas, se analizó el perfil lector, el contenido de las creencias y los factores que inciden en su conformación. Los resultados evidencian que el impacto de las trayectorias de formación en los diferentes niveles es mayor que el del perfil lector del género.

Palabras clave: pensamiento del profesor, perfil lector, didáctica de la poesía en la educación primaria, formación docente inicial

Abstract: This article presents the results of a case study on the beliefs of two teachers about poetry and its didactics in the second cycle of primary education. The reader profile, the content of the beliefs and the factors that influence their development were analyzed from data collected through life stories and interviews. The results show that the impact of career paths at the different levels is higher than that of the genre reading profile.

Key words: teachers’ beliefs, reader profile, poetry didactics in primary education, initial teacher training

Resum: L'article presenta els resultats d'un estudi de cas en el qual es van explorar les creences de dos docents al voltant de la poesia i la seva didàctica en el segon cicle de l'educació primària. A partir de dades recollides a través de relats de vida i entrevistes, es va analitzar el perfil lector, el contingut de les creences i els factors que incideixen en la seva conformació. Els resultats evidencien que l'impacte de les trajectòries de formació en els diferents nivells és més gran que el del perfil lector del gènere.

Paraules clau: pensament del professor, perfil lector, didàctica de la poesia en l'educació primària, formació docent inicial
“Una historia particular de amor y desamor”

El título de este apartado remite a una reflexión que Teresa Colomer (2005) propone acerca de la relación entre la escuela y la lectura poética, al tiempo que afirma: “Muy pocos libros leídos en la escuela son de poesía” (p. 235). Las referencias a la posición marginal del texto poético en las aulas hispanoamericanas de los diferentes niveles de enseñanza se reiteran tanto en la bibliografía especializada como en jornadas, congresos\textsuperscript{1} y conversaciones informales con docentes.

A esto se suma el cuestionamiento al tipo de prácticas que se realizan en torno a la poesía cuando esta se hace presente. En este sentido, se habla, por ejemplo, de “abordajes didácticos empobrecidos” (Mathieu, 2012, p. 184), se señala que se “tiende a ‘usar’ la poesía con segundos propósitos, dejando de lado el aspecto estético” (Boland, 2011, p. 43), o se afirma que “la escuela ha construido una visión sesgada de la poesía” (Bombini y Lomas, 2016, p. 6). Aunque sabemos de muchas experiencias interesantes y potentes que se concretan en las aulas (Ramos, 2010; Negri y Correa, 2014; Bajour, 2016), su número sigue siendo escaso.

¿Qué factores inciden para que la poesía ocupe este lugar secundario en la escuela? Creemos que la respuesta a este interrogante exigiría examinar en profundidad múltiples variables que se traman y operan de diferente manera en los distintos contextos. Numerosas investigaciones educativas de las últimas décadas han centrado su mirada en las actuaciones de los profesores y en la diversidad de factores que inciden en ellas. En relación con la educación literaria, entre estos factores se cuentan el perfil lector del docente y sus creencias sobre la didáctica de la literatura, sobre los que hemos elegido centrarnos en este trabajo.

¿Cuáles son los contenidos de las creencias de los docentes acerca de la didáctica de la poesía y qué relación se establece entre ellas, su perfil lector y su trayectoria de formación? A esta pregunta buscamos aportar alguna línea de reflexión a través de un estudio de caso. Nos interesa explorar en aquellas creencias para que nos ayuden a construir líneas explicativas acerca de las dificultades de la presencia de la poesía en las aulas. Confiamos en que este conocimiento nos ofrezca herramientas para fortalecer la formación docente inicial.

**Las creencias de los docentes y el perfil lector**

Las investigaciones sobre el pensamiento del profesor utilizan diversidad de conceptos para categorizar y describir su objeto de estudio (Cambra, 2000; Borg, 2003). En este trabajo
adoptamos la denominación de creencias y el modelo explicativo propuesto por Cambra (2000), quien destaca que están conformadas por conjuntos de elementos articulados que forman sistemas constituidos por creencias (dimensión personal), representaciones (dimensión social) y saberes (convencionalmente aceptados). Los constituyentes de estos sistemas de creencias se orientan a diversas dimensiones: los contenidos y materias que se enseñan, las posibilidades de aprendizaje y desempeño de los estudiantes, el propio rol como enseñante, entre otros.

El carácter complejo, ecléctico, heterogéneo y dinámico de estas creencias constituye un punto de acuerdo en las investigaciones y su conformación responde a la incidencia de múltiples factores. Entre ellos, Munita (2014) releva: las experiencias de escolarización previa de los maestros, la formación docente (inicial y continua), la propia práctica profesional, las prescripciones curriculares y los factores contextuales (imaginarios vehiculados por la sociedad, por el sistema educativo y/o por la/s institución/es). Por su parte, Borg (2003) enfatiza el impacto de las experiencias que los profesores han tenido en sus trayectorias escolares, y señala que las creencias establecidas tempranamente son muy resistentes al cambio y siguen constituyendo un modelo fuerte no obstante la formación de grado.

El impacto de la formación docente en la modificación de las creencias es objeto de debate en la investigación. Mientras algunos concluyen que su incidencia es escasa, otros ponen en entredicho esas conclusiones, como apunta Munita (2014) quien —luego de ofrecer un recorrido por trabajos en torno a la educación literaria— destaca el impacto que ha tenido la incorporación de nuevos dispositivos didácticos a la formación docente en educación literaria (entre ellos, los escritos de respuesta lectora, la discusión literaria o los clubes de lectura). En esta línea, Dueñas, Tabernero, Calvo y Consejo (2014) destacan la fuerte incidencia de las trayectorias lectoras escolares en relación con el perfil lector de los futuros docentes, pero confían en el poder transformador que en ese perfil pueden tener las experiencias de lectura gratificantes durante su formación inicial.

El conjunto de factores mencionados incidiría en cómo los profesores perciben su tarea y en las decisiones que toman en sus clases (Cambra, 2000). No obstante, es preciso evitar los reduccionismos y tener presente que así como las creencias inciden en las prácticas, estas últimas y otros factores contextuales pueden modificar las primeras (Munita, 2014; Borg en Birello, 2012).
En cuanto al impacto del perfil lector del docente en sus actuaciones, en un artículo de 1990, Dubois alerta sobre el “factor olvidado” en la formación de maestros de ese entonces: la preocupación centrada en lo que el docente debía saber y lo que debía hacer omitía reflexionar sobre “la cualidad de lector y escritor que debe poseer el maestro” (p. 32). Ese planteo fue retomado en investigaciones posteriores, como las de Applegate y Applegate (2004), que se preguntan si los docentes que no sienten amor por la lectura pueden generar motivación en los niños y afirman que los que son lectores entusiastas son más proclives a utilizar estrategias de enseñanza que promueven el compromiso lector. Por su parte, Granado y Puig (2014) dan cuenta de estudios que llegan a conclusiones similares sobre la relación entre el perfil lector de un docente y las prácticas de educación lectora que ofrece, tanto en lo que se refiere a fomentar el entusiasmo por los libros como al traslado del tipo de prácticas que él mismo realiza.

**Metodología**

Como señalamos, el propósito de este trabajo fue explorar en las creencias de docentes de educación primaria en torno a la poesía y su didáctica, y en la relación que se establece entre los contenidos de esas creencias y dos factores: el perfil lector de los sujetos y su trayectoria de formación.

En función de estos objetivos, realizamos una investigación cualitativa centrada en el estudio de caso y en el enfoque biográfico-narrativo, que permite conocer el perfil lector e identificar las percepciones, orientaciones, hitos y circunstancias que han incidido en las creencias de los docentes (Bolívar y Domingo, 2006). Esta modalidad nos permite analizar con mayor profundidad algunas de las múltiples variables que operan en las teorías implícitas de los sujetos.

La decisión de acotar el objeto de estudio a la enseñanza en segundo ciclo del nivel primario en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires respondió a que, en conversaciones informales, hemos observado que en ese nivel se hacen más notorias la poca presencia del género y la manifestación de dificultades para abordarlo.

Para la recolección de datos, optamos por dos tipos de instrumentos, sobre cuya utilidad hay consenso en la investigación (Bolívar y Domingo, 2006; Borg, 2003): 1) la escritura de
relatos de vida centrados en la relación con la poesía; 2) la realización de entrevistas bajo la forma de conversaciones orientadas.

Para el estudio, convocamos como informantes a dos profesoras de nivel primario⁴, egresadas de institutos de formación docente de gestión pública: Antonella, graduada en 2004, y Paula, en 2014 (ambos seudónimos). Los criterios de selección considerados fueron que las docentes estuvieran ejerciendo en el segundo ciclo o lo hubieran hecho recientemente y que ambas tuvieran algún tipo de implicación personal con la lectura poética.

En un primer momento, les solicitamos la escritura de un texto en el que describieran su relación con la poesía desde la infancia hasta la actualidad. Nos interesaba que trajeran a la memoria la mayor cantidad de recuerdos e impresiones posibles, por lo que esta producción la realizarían en sus espacios y tiempos personales, para luego concretar las entrevistas. Para estas últimas, registradas en audio con consentimiento de las participantes y transcritas en su totalidad (Antonella: 37’ de duración; Paula: 54’), elaboramos un guión flexible orientado a recuperar experiencias y reflexiones que las informantes consideraran significativas en relación con: 1) su perfil como lectoras de poesía; 2) la lectura de poesía en sus propias trayectorias en la educación formal, desde el nivel primario hasta la formación docente inicial; 3) sus prácticas docentes en torno al género. Estas fueron las variables tomadas en cuenta en el análisis posterior de los datos obtenidos, que se centró en el contenido narrativo, buscando relevar los temas emergentes para luego hacerlos dialogar entre sí y con conclusiones surgidas de otras investigaciones en el campo.

**Voces I: Antonella**

“Leía solo la poesía que me causara emoción (¿existe otra motivación?), textos que me ayudaban a sobrellevar, con más alivio, la realidad”, escribe Antonella, mientras da cuenta de la construcción de una relación muy personal con la lectura poética.

Su acercamiento a la poesía, marcado por lo emocional, parece sostener una concepción del género: la poesía como la posibilidad de poner en palabras la experiencia (“iluminar mejor lo que me pasaba”). Juan Gelman, Ernesto Cardenal, Oliverio Girondo, César Fernández Moreno, Raúl González Tuñón y Alejandra Pizarnik eran, entre otros, los autores elegidos. Y son estos poetas los que la llevan a asociar el género “con lo inesperado” y a reivindicar para su disfrute “la
irreverencia”, los que le hablaban “de otras cosas, más zarpadas o más ocultas…” (como el desamor, la soledad, aclara en su relato).

Antonella sitúa el origen de esa relación con el género en los años posteriores a la escuela secundaria, producto de la búsqueda personal y compartida con una amiga. La exploración del discurso poético estaba orientada hacia la canción y hacia lo proveniente de “los márgenes”:

Y no me acuerdo el texto, digamos el autor, pero sí que era de los márgenes, […] era poesía que no conocíamos, que ni sabía que existía porque en la escuela no veíamos esa faceta, y que nos llamaba mucho la atención. Porque era corta, porque tenía sorpresa, era como impredecible, eso era lo que me fascinaba.

Interesa llamar la atención sobre esta configuración de los márgenes que ofrece Antonella, ya que varios de los autores que menciona están ubicados, desde hace algunas décadas, en un lugar bastante central del campo poético argentino y latinoamericano. No obstante esto, han estado ausentes en las propuestas escolares que ella recibió en su trayectoria. Poco después, Antonella definirá aquella búsqueda compartida con la expresión “traficábamos palabras”, que enfatiza la distancia con lo “oficial” de la institución escolar. En el transcurso de la entrevista reaparecerán las ideas de sorpresa e impredecibilidad asociadas a esa poesía que la atrae. Y será el encuentro con esos textos y autores hasta entonces ocultos los que provocarán un punto de quiebre en su perfil como lectora del género (“construí otra mirada alrededor de la poesía”).

En cuanto al acceso a los textos, los mediadores que aparecen como proveedores de información no son los convencionales: las lecturas y recomendaciones de un programa de radio, o las de un puestero de libros usados. Destaca su “afán por conocer cosas nuevas”, dando cuenta de su avidez poética y de una actitud de búsqueda. Su implicación personal con la poesía sigue vigente y enfatiza el disfrute de la relectura.

Ahora bien, frente a ese contacto intenso y personal con el texto poético, el abordaje de la poesía en su trayectoria escolar se asoma desdibujado. Antonella recuerda vagamente que, en la primaria, veían “las rimas, los versos” y poemas asociados a lo romántico; además, la poesía rimada como la única existente en el horizonte escolar. Es de destacar que de esa época solo recuerda un texto, que le disgustaba (“Setenta balcones y ninguna flor”, de Baldomero Fernández Moreno). Enfatiza la ausencia del “placer de la lectura” y evoca una imagen negativa del género en esa instancia de su formación: “En la escuela primaria aprendí que la poesía puede ser tediosa, aburrida o rutinaria [...]. Con el paso del tiempo, le conocí otras caras”, escribe. En cuanto al
modo de aproximarse a la literatura en general en la escuela, lo que surge es la lectura literal y a través de cuestionarios de resolución escrita, reafirmando así las consideraciones presentadas al inicio de este trabajo.

Por otro lado, no recuerda la presencia de la poesía en la escuela secundaria, lo que nos plantea un nuevo interrogante: ¿no es recordada porque no existió o porque su presencia fue fugaz e intrascendente? Al mismo tiempo, Antonella duda en considerar poesía el acercamiento a las canciones en las clases de música, aduciendo que “no analizábamos los versos... o sea, la métrica”. Evidencia aquí una concepción de la lectura de poesía en el espacio escolar centrada en los aspectos formales. Si bien antes no dudó en incluir la canción al hablar de su relación personal con el género, al momento de pensar en la escuela pone en duda su consideración como texto poético; este cuestionamiento no está dado por los textos en sí mismos sino por el abordaje que se hizo de ellos.

La pregunta por la poesía en la formación del profesorado cae en el vacío: ningún recuerdo asoma allí.

En su rol docente, Antonella nunca incluyó el género entre las lecturas con sus estudiantes de segundo ciclo: “sigue estando como separado, ¿no? La escuela de lo que fue mi trayecto...”. En el transcurso de la conversación va tomando forma la idea de que ella solo concebiría como interesante abordar su lectura desde una experiencia semejante a la propia, pero considera que esto es demasiado subjetivo para el aula y desconfía de que a los chicos “les llegue”; no quiere enfrentarse al rechazo por parte de los niños pues la poesía es muy importante para ella y. Ante la fuerza del supuesto de que debe ser abordada desde lo formal, Antonella prefiere dejarla afuera (“...porque tengo incorporado lo de la métrica o lo aburrido, y no lo daría ni a palos”).

Ante la invitación a imaginar de qué modo abordaría la poesía con sus estudiantes, manifiesta tener poco conocimiento de propuestas poéticas publicadas en colecciones destinadas al público infantil. La pregunta sobre si compartiría con los chicos textos de los autores que ella disfruta y ha mencionado provoca de entrada una negación tajante. El primer argumento —espontáneo— contra la inclusión de textos de esos autores es que “hay muchas metáforas” y teme que no las interpreten. Este comentario hace emerger dos nuevos supuestos: por un lado, la idea de que los niños tendrían dificultades o imposibilidad para atribuir sentidos al discurso metafórico; por otro, pareciera que no se les debe ofrecer textos considerados complejos.
Voces II: Paula

“Ya la palabra poesía me provoca cierta sonrisa en el rostro. [...] De un yo que viaja en el tiempo y se encuentra con una adolescente de 13-14 años que a escondidas, escribe versos en diferentes cuadernos...”, escribe Paula, quien se define como lectora en un contexto familiar de no lectores. Se entusiasma al declarar una buena relación con la poesía, que en la adolescencia la ayudó a sobrellevar momentos conflictivos (“me ayudaba a poner en palabras”). El género se presenta para Paula asociado a la escritura (“a escondidas”) y a la experiencia amorosa; en ese recuerdo, surgen con fuerza las canciones románticas.

Entre sus textos preferidos, menciona “Táctica y estrategia” de Mario Benedetti; también da cuenta de lecturas de Alfonsina Storni, Pablo Neruda y Jorge Luis Borges. Y, luego de aclarar que no se trata de poesía estrictamente, Paula menciona las cartas de Frida Kahlo a Diego Rivera, señalando que es el uso del lenguaje que hace Frida lo que la lleva a vincular sus escritos con el género. Este comentario cobra especial sentido cuando le preguntamos con qué asocia ella a la poesía: “...como la ola en el mar [...]. Algo en movimiento, no estático. [...] Algo que tiene un sonido propio y que no importa quién lo escuche, algo te genera. [...] para hacerte un ruido, para movilizarte”. Nos interesa detenernos en esta suerte de “definición” de la poesía en la que Paula se aleja de las habituales caracterizaciones escolares del género, centradas en sus aspectos formales.

¿Quiénes medieron para acercar a Paula a la poesía? La única referencia es una pareja que le dio a conocer textos y autores, incluidos del rock nacional. No conserva recuerdos de lectura poética en la escuela primaria. De la secundaria, solo recupera un poema de Borges, del que recuerda el tono pesimista y la conversación que hubo al respecto. Nos interesa rescatar este dato, que se asocia con el comentario que ella misma hace luego: “Las lecturas generalmente eran para discutir. No era esta cosa que se solía hacer en la primaria de responder preguntas sobre lo leído...”. Además de resultar claro que Paula ya ha atravesado un proceso de reflexión sobre la lectura escolar de literatura, es de destacar que el recuerdo emerge cuando la situación de lectura le resultó significativa.

Paula reconoce en el profesorado una bisagra en su concepción de la literatura y su enseñanza, incluida la poesía. De esta etapa, valoriza con énfasis una situación de escritura de invención: la producción de un texto propio a partir de versos de poemas de autores más o menos
consagrados, de épocas y poéticas variadas. El abordaje del género se centró en la escritura (no se promovieron situaciones de discusión en torno a los textos) y en la puesta entre signos de pregunta del modo tradicional de enseñanza de la poesía:

[el docente] nos preguntaba qué considerábamos que era una poesía, si entendíamos la poesía, si se enseña [...]. Si se enseña la literatura y cómo se enseña... No respondía al final, pero... ¿alcanza con esto de las partes, de la cantidad de versos, el tema de las estrofas, si tiene rima...?

Cabe destacar que solo dedicaron una clase a la poesía, sin embargo, como veremos luego, esta única situación tuvo un alto impacto en la concepción de Paula sobre su didáctica.

En sus clases, Paula abordó la poesía a través de la propuesta de situaciones de escritura de invención. Cuando le planteamos la situación hipotética de diseñar una secuencia para su 7° grado actual, pone el énfasis en la escritura. Surge también la intención de desarmar ideas muy instaladas en el imaginario sobre el género, como la asociación de poesía y rima. En estas preocupaciones se observa el impacto de su formación, así como en el hecho de obviar las instancias de discusión literaria.

Como en el caso de Antonella, en sus comentarios se percibe una tensión en relación con la presencia de metáforas, vistas como complejas. Por un lado, en su discurso aparece la necesidad de analizarlas y que “se entiendan”, de “desglosarlas” para ver “qué pudo haber querido decir o no”. Pero, al mismo tiempo, en línea con lo que sucedía en sus clases en el profesorado, Paula cuestiona la idea de dar a los chicos explicaciones completas o respuestas que clausuren, aun cuando ellos demanden certezas.

En cuanto al corpus para sus clases, no duda en incluir poemas de autores que no han escrito para niños (“el libro no te tiene que decir a vos para qué edad lo tenés que dar”). Además, enfatiza que a ella deben gustarle los textos, para poder leerlos con intensidad en la situación didáctica.

Paula siente a la poesía como un tema pendiente para ella; se considera poco preparada para su abordaje, fundamentalmente porque dice poseer un escaso conocimiento de textos y autores, que evalúa indispensable para diseñar sus clases. No obstante esto, enfatiza su voluntad de hacer un lugar a la poesía en sus clases y, como se ha expuesto, explora algunas alternativas para darle entrada.

En el cuadro 1, ofrecemos una síntesis de los resultados.
Cuadro 1: síntesis de resultados

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Antonella</th>
<th>Paula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perfil lector</strong></td>
<td>Implicación personal con lectura poética. Poesía asociada a lo emocional y la experiencia. Autores argentinos y latinoamericanos del siglo XX y provenientes de la música. Conocimiento y elección de autores por fuera del sistema escolar.</td>
<td>Implicación personal con lectura poética. Poesía asociada a la escritura y la experiencia amorosa. Autores argentinos y latinoamericanos del siglo XX y provenientes de la música. Conocimiento y elección de autores por fuera del sistema escolar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Escolaridad primaria y secundaria</strong></td>
<td>Escasez de recuerdos, todos asociados con los aspectos formales y el romanticismo como tema. Lectura literal y a través de cuestionarios de resolución escrita. Evoca imagen negativa de la poesía.</td>
<td>Escasez de recuerdos, excepto uno significativo: lectura y discusión en torno a un poema.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formación docente inicial</strong></td>
<td>Ausencia de recuerdos de lecturas poéticas.</td>
<td>Reconoce esta instancia como bisagra en su concepción de la didáctica de la poesía. Poesía asociada a la escritura de invención y a la inclusión de textos no publicados para niños. Cuestionamiento de los modos tradicionales de enseñanza del género.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poesía en sus prácticas docentes</strong></td>
<td>Negativa explícita a abordarla. Rechazo de posibilidad de construir corpus con textos no producidos para público infantil.</td>
<td>Abordaje de la poesía a través situaciones de escritura y de la pretensión de desarticular estereotipos sobre el género. Acepta posibilidad de construir corpus con textos no producidos para público infantil.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discusión**

Antonella y Paula, dos maestras que se reconocen a sí mismas como lectoras y, aunque con diferente intensidad, ambas interesadas en la lectura poética. En sus relatos de vida observamos un primer punto en común: la poesía se presenta como la posibilidad de “descifrar la propia experiencia”, en palabras de Petit (1999, pp. 36-37), que agrega:

[...] es el texto el que ‘lee’ al lector, en cierto modo el que lo revela [...]. Los escritores nos ayudan a ponerle un nombre a los estados de ánimo por los que pasamos, a apaciguarlos, a conocerlos mejor, a compartirlos.

Mientras que el interés se tradujo en Antonella en acciones que enriquecieran su biblioteca poética, Paula reconoce la profundización en el género como una asignatura pendiente. No obstante esta diferencia en el grado de frecuentación y conocimiento del género, se observa en ambas una implicación personal con la lectura poética. En este sentido y retomando las
conclusiones de las investigaciones sobre la incidencia del perfil lector en las actuaciones docentes (Applegate y Applegate, 2004; Granado y Puig, 2014; Munita, 2013b, entre otros), podríamos conjeturar que ambas, sobre todo Antonella, darían cuenta de la presencia del género en su propia práctica docente. En consonancia con esos estudios, entre las hipótesis que manejábamos al inicio de este trabajo atribuíamos la escasa o nula presencia del género en las aulas a una supuesta inexistencia de lectura poética por parte de los docentes. Creíamos, con Boland (2011), que “un mediador formado en poesía y lector sabrá recrear un espacio íntimo y a la vez compartido donde los chicos se acerquen a la lectura de poesía” (p. 49).

Sin embargo, el relato de Antonella pone en tela de juicio esa hipótesis, nos hace suponer que el perfil lector es condición necesaria pero no suficiente, y nos devuelve a las investigaciones sobre las creencias, en particular al impacto de las trayectorias escolares. ¿Qué ha sucedido en su formación para obtener que una experiencia personal tan intensa tenga impacto en su práctica docente? ¿Por qué cobra tanta fuerza la percepción de la escuela como un espacio donde la experiencia poética no está habilitada?

A la escasa presencia que la poesía tuvo en la educación literaria de Antonella se suma una aproximación al texto poético que “empobrece la experiencia de lectura limitándola a responder un cuestionario por escrito y a clasificar el tipo de rima” (Cañón y Hermida, 2012, p. 58) y que confirma las perspectivas empobrecedoras y sesgadas a las que aludían Mathieu (2012) y Bombini y Lomas (2016). Esta situación la lleva a afirmar de manera tajante que “no lo daría ni a palos” y a excluir la poesía de sus clases, evidenciando el peso que tiene en sus creencias la concepción de que el abordaje formal (configurado como mero reconocimiento de recursos, sin vincularlos con la producción de sentidos en el poema) es el único posible en el aula. En correlato con esto, Antonella no concibe la posibilidad de proponer a sus estudiantes una aproximación al texto poético como el que ella privilegia en su lectura personal, es decir, desde la experiencia vital; se aleja así de la conclusión de Granado y Puig (2014) acerca del traslado al aula de las propias prácticas lectoras. Habría, entonces, en relación con la poesía en el espacio escolar, ciertos modos de leer legítimos (Bombini, 1989) que excluirían el modo de leer personal de Antonella.

Otro de los contenidos que pesan en las creencias de esta docente se refiere al corpus. Como hemos visto, en su relato contrapone lo aburrido y rutinario de sus lecturas escolares con la impredecibilidad, la sorpresa y la transgresión que le aportan los textos hallados —y privilegiados
por ella—en circuitos alternativos de circulación. Sin embargo, no se plantea la posibilidad de incluir estos últimos en el diseño de sus clases debido a que la marcada presencia de metáforas la lleva a atribuirles una complejidad que excedería las posibilidades de los niños. En esta preocupación parece asomarse “el miedo a la aparente dificultad que implica una zona del arte más inasible y salvaje que otras” del que habla Bajour (2013). La complejidad sería, entonces, un criterio de peso en las creencias de Antonella sobre la conformación del corpus escolar. Por otro lado, ante la pregunta de cómo abordaría la poesía con los niños, su primera respuesta fue que desconocía la oferta del mercado destinada a ellos, lo que podría esconder el supuesto de que el corpus debería estar conformado únicamente por esos textos.

El caso de Paula se presenta diferente en algunos aspectos. Si bien carece de recuerdos sobre la poesía en la escuela primaria, señala que en el secundario las lecturas eran “para discutir”, en una práctica que parecería acercarse a las propuestas de conversación literaria como dispositivo didáctico (Chambers, 2007). Por otro lado, en su relato no da cuenta del abordaje formal que tanto impactó en Antonella.

Aunque Paula no revela mucho más acerca de cómo fue leída la poesía en su trayectoria escolar, hemos visto que ella reconoce en su formación docente inicial un quiebre en sus creencias sobre la didáctica de la literatura y de la poesía en particular, ya que habilitó el cuestionamiento de los modos tradicionales de su enseñanza y de la construcción del corpus. Con respecto a este último, la propuesta vivenciada por esta docente en su formación está alineada con la apertura del canon poético que promueve Bajour (2004) y, como hemos visto, se tradujo en que ella no duda en seleccionar para sus clases textos no escritos para niños.

Creemos que la puesta en cuestión de la enseñanza tradicional del género no se dio solo a través de las intervenciones orales del docente referidas por Paula, sino también a través del modo de leer que propuso para la poesía, que podríamos enunciar como leer para escribir, para producir un texto propio, otorgándoles sentidos personales a los versos en su nueva configuración. Esta práctica remite a muchas consignas de producción de los talleres de escritura impulsados por el grupo Grafein, sostenidas en la idea de que “leer y escribir son prácticas que se reenvían una a la otra”, pues “escribo a partir de otros textos y mi lectura es en sí misma una actividad que se asimila a la escritura” (Frugoni, 2006, p. 22). Es decir, un modo de leer bien diferenciado de las perspectivas exclusivamente formales que antes mencionamos.
La vivencia propiciada por este dispositivo didáctico en torno a la literatura impactó de tal modo en Paula que busca replicarlo en sus clases, sumado a su preocupación por desarticular los estereotipos en torno al género. En el imaginario de Paula, la didáctica de la poesía está fuertemente asociada a la producción por parte de los estudiantes y, al mismo tiempo, no logra imaginar aún situaciones de discusión literaria sobre los textos.

**Algunas conclusiones**

Los casos de Antonella y Paula confirman la complejidad de la situación de la poesía en la escuela con la que iniciamos este artículo.

En cuanto a la incidencia del perfil lector del docente en sus prácticas, el estudio realizado nos lleva a concluir que, si bien necesario, no constituye una condición suficiente para asegurar la presencia del género en las aulas ni un abordaje interesante. Los datos obtenidos reafirman el fuerte impacto de las trayectorias escolares en esas prácticas, superador incluso del impacto del perfil lector.

Decíamos más arriba que la investigación educativa asume diferentes posiciones acerca de la incidencia de la formación docente en las creencias. Los casos presentados parecen inclinarse a favor de reconocer esa incidencia. Para Antonella, la formación de grado ni siquiera creó una ocasión que le permitiera revertir sus creencias sobre la didáctica de la poesía consolidadas en sus trayectorias escolares previas. En cambio, para Paula supuso una experiencia fundante de un nuevo modo de pensarla:

[… la experiencia es lo que me pasa y lo que, al pasarme, me forma o me transforma, me constituye [...]. Por eso el sujeto de la formación no es el sujeto de la educación o del aprendizaje sino el sujeto de la experiencia: es la experiencia la que forma (Larrosa, 2003, p. 3).

Atravesar la experiencia de un modo de leer diferente en el aula habilitó a Paula para pensar sus prácticas desde una perspectiva superadora de los modos históricamente dominantes en la enseñanza de la poesía. No atravesarla pudo suponer para Antonella —conjeturamos— suspender la potencia de su relación con la poesía a la hora de entrar al aula. Si bien la experiencia “no puede ser causada, no puede ser anticipada como un efecto a partir de sus causas”, como nos recuerda Larrosa, sí es posible “cuidar que se den determinadas condiciones...
de posibilidad” (2013, p. 40). Es esta idea la que nos interesa recuperar en el deseo de que nos ayude a pensar y mejorar la formación docente inicial.

En función de este objetivo, los resultados obtenidos nos permiten esbozar algunas líneas de actuación que podrían explorarse o fortalecerse (en muchos casos ya tienen lugar, como hemos visto en Paula y como refiere Bajour [2003, 2016]): ofrecer un corpus amplio y lo más variado posible en cuanto a las líneas estéticas, que dé a conocer las nuevas propuestas poéticas que hoy vemos en colecciones de literatura para niños pero que incluya también textos no producidos especialmente para un público infantil; diversificar los modos de leer poesía en el aula, recuperando las prácticas de lectura privada de quienes tienen una implicación personal con el género, e incluyendo, entre otras, situaciones de discusión literaria que favorezcan la construcción personal y compartida de sentido de los textos; revisar el modo de incluir la perspectiva formal, de modo tal que resulte significativa y pueda reflexionarse sobre su impacto en la producción de sentidos de los poemas; diseñar situaciones de escritura poética a partir de consignas de producción que permitan acercarse (y apropiarse) al género desde perspectivas lúdicas y reflexivas. En todos estos casos (y en otros que podrían diseñarse), se trata de explorar líneas de acción orientadas a proveer a los docentes en formación de experiencias que enriquezcan su relación con la poesía y su forma de concebir la educación poética.

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**Notas**
1 Ver, entre otros: Bajour, 2013; Cañón y Hermida, 2012; Mathieu, 2012; Negri y Correa, 2014. Muchos especialistas destacan otros indicadores sobre esta marginalidad: la escasez de producción teórica y de ediciones de poesía destinadas al público infantil, aunque actualmente se observa un crecimiento (Bajour, 2013; Boland, 2011; Munita, 2013a).
2 Referencias similares pueden verse en Andricain y Rodriguez, 2003; Bajour, 2004; Cañón y Hermida, 2012.
3 En el actual sistema educativo de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, la Educación Primaria consta de siete niveles agrupados en dos ciclos: primer ciclo va de 1° a 3° grado, y segundo ciclo, de 4° a 7°.
4 En la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, el Profesorado de Educación Primaria prepara para la enseñanza en primero y segundo ciclo. En su formación Antonella y Paula se formaron con planes de estudio diferentes, en ambos casos cursaron materias que incluían entre sus contenidos la literatura y didáctica.
5 Esto responde a la escasa carga horaria del Seminario de Literatura en la Educación Primaria; los cursos se desarrollan en aproximadamente 13 clases de 3 hs cátedra cada una.
Using comprehension questions and reader-response strategies with second-semester university Spanish students

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Abstract: For most of the 20th century, literary criticism has focused on uncovering the author’s intended meanings of a given text. In contrast, reader-response theorists have concentrated on the role of the reader in literary interpretation. This article details an exploratory study which documents second-semester university Spanish students’ perceptions of their experiences reading children’s novels in Spanish. Learners participated in curricular engagements designed to facilitate their understanding and promote the development of their own interpretations of the books. Results of the study suggest that such engagements may either contribute or impede students’ comprehension and interpretation of literary texts due to various contextual factors.

Key Words: literature, comprehension, reader-response, children’s literature, interpretation

Resumen: Durante la mayoría del siglo XX, la crítica literaria ha enfocado en el descubrimiento del significado de un texto literario según el autor. Sin embargo, académicos en el campo de la teoría de la recepción han concentrado en la función del lector en la interpretación literaria. Este artículo describe una investigación exploratoria que intenta averiguar las perspectivas de estudiantes universitarios estadounidenses que leían novelas infantiles en español en clase al nivel elemental. Los estudiantes participaron en actividades para facilitar su comprensión y desarrollar sus propias interpretaciones de los libros. Los resultados del estudio demuestran que dichas actividades pueden contribuir o impedi su comprensión e interpretación de textos literarios debido a varios factores contextuales.

Palabras claves: literatura, comprensión, teoría de la recepción, literatura infantil, interpretación

Résumé: Pendant la majorité du XX siècle, la critique littérarite concentrait sur le sens d’un texte littéraire selon l’auteur. Néanmoins, les académiciens de la théorie de la réception focalisent leurs efforts sur le rôle du lecteur dans l’interprétation littéraire. Cet article décrit une étude exploratoire qui envisageait recoller les perspectives d’étudiants universitaires étatsuniens qui lisaient romans pour enfants en espagnol dans leur cours au niveau élémentaire. Les étudiants ont participé dans plusieurs activités pour faciliter leur compréhension y développer leurs propres interprétation des livres. Les résultats de l’étude démontre que ces activités peuvent contribuer o contraindre leur
compréhension et interprétation de textes littéraires à cause de plusieurs facteurs contextuels.

**Mots clés:** littérature, compréhension, théorie de la réception, romans pour enfants, interprétation

**Introduction**

In the early 20th century, critics frequently considered the life and times of the author when interpreting literary texts by perceiving texts as socio-historical documents possessing one “correct” interpretation: that of the author. The New Critics subsequently changed the direction of literary criticism by perceiving the text as an autonomous entity free from the writer’s control and authority and by viewing literary texts as self-contained units independent of authorial and sociocultural contexts. They argued that “the meaning of the text is never self-formulated; the reader must act upon the textual material in order to produce meaning” (Selden & Widdowson, 1993, p. 49). Reader response theorists explore readers’ experiences with literary texts, while reception theorists examine ways in which readers make meaning from literary texts. Although these scholars have approached the role of the reader in different ways, their shared interest lies in the exploration of the dynamic relationship between readers and texts (Kern, 2000).

Although the interaction between reader and text has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, this research study drew principally on the scholarly work of Louise Rosenblatt and her transactional theory of reading. Rosenblatt views the reading process as a triadic cycle between the reader, the text and the “poem” or a new text created by the fusion of the text and the reader’s experiences with the text. Her transactional theory of reading examines the active role of the reader in making meaning.

Rosenblatt (1994) defines a text as a “set or series of signs interpretable as linguistic symbols” (p. 12). In her view, a given text provides a range of “potentialities” (p. 69) to activate readers’ knowledge and previous experiences which readers subsequently use to make sense of the text. As the reader works to make meaning of the text, s/he “lives through” the text and “build[s] up the work under the guidance of the text” (p. 69) by establishing connections between his/her previous knowledge and life experiences and the story world of the text. The reader then
reflects on this process of blending the text with his/her life experiences. Rosenblatt explains that meaning does not reside entirely in the text or entirely in the reader but is “built up through the back-and-forth relationship between reader and text” (Karolides, 1999, p. 160). She argues that “the literary experience reside[s] in the synthesis of what the reader already knows and feels and desires with what the literary text offers” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 259) and that what the student brings to the literary experience is as important as the literary text itself.

Rosenblatt defines a transaction as a “two-way process involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 268). The reader “transacts” with the text by transforming the signs in the text into verbal symbols and fusing them with his/her personal knowledge and the emotions, memories and experiences the text evokes. The outcome of this transaction is a “poem”, or a new text derived from the amalgamation of the text, the reader, and the reader’s experience with the text. Rosenblatt argues that the reader creates this poem through a combination of the signs of the text, his/her previous life experiences, and the lived-through experience of reading the text.

**Literature Review**

Researchers investigating the role of reader response theory in foreign/second language classrooms have explored a variety of response engagements, including response journals, verbal self-reports, post-reading responses and focal practice.

Several studies have considered the use of response journals in language classrooms to help learners develop their own understandings of literary texts. Liaw (2001), for example, examined the use of response journals with ESL students in a Taiwanese university. As part of a freshman English course, students read short stories in English and wrote journal entries summarizing the stories and describing their personal responses to the stories. Students indicated that reading the stories helped them learn more about American society and culture, become more reflective and conscious of themselves and the world around them, and develop a strong sense of confidence in their reading abilities.

A number of studies have also explored using reader-response engagements with language students to promote their personal interpretations of texts. For example, Chi (1999) utilized such engagements with her Taiwanese EFL learners by asking them to read two short
stories and subsequently complete verbal self-reports and free oral post-reading responses to the stories. In their verbal-self reports, students read each short story and reported what they were thinking and feeling as they read the story. Students then read the story a second time and indicated how their previous understandings and interpretations had changed because of the second reading. Chi’s analysis revealed that students tended to (not) exhibit what the author termed “flexibility”, or “the forming and re-forming-of the participants' framework of sense-making through continual finding, building, and making sense of the texts” (p. 7). Those students exhibiting behaviors of flexible readers were actively involved in the process of comprehending and interpreting the stories. They trusted themselves in the meaning-making process by engaging in dialogic communication with the author and readjusting their understandings of the stories. Students demonstrating behaviors of inflexible readers, on the other hand, often felt it was primarily the author’s responsibility to make texts easier to understand. They tended not to include themselves in the story worlds of the texts and exhibited difficulties making connections between the stories and their own lives.

Additionally, González (2006) incorporated a focal practice approach in a third-year university Spanish course through the reading of a novel by Sandra Cisneros. The focal practice approach is designed to encourage students to develop their own responses to a text, share their personal responses of the text with others, and re-read the text to see if their initial responses to the text had changed. González recorded students’ responses to the text, conducted participant observations and a focus-group interview, and analyzed documents produced by him (observation field notes, reflective journal) and his students (final presentations). González found that the focal practice approach supported learners in accepting responsibility for their own learning, being motivated to read, and finding pleasure in reading.

These studies make important contributions to our current understanding of the role of reader-response theory in language classrooms. Liaw (2001) demonstrates that completing reading logs can help students dig deeper into texts and make connections between the texts and themselves. Chi (1999) and González (2006) show that reader-response engagements can help students develop their own interpretations to literary texts. Both studies indicate that students process texts more deeply if they make efforts to extract their own meanings from these texts,
engage in dialogic inquiry with the author, are willing to adjust their perceptions of texts as they read, and make connections between the texts and their own lives.

Despite their valuable contributions, however, these students possess several limitations. Although Liaw (2001) explores the use of response journals, she does not include reader-response engagements as part of the course curriculum. Although Chi (1999) does use response engagements with students, these engagements are used in a quasi-experimental setting and are not utilized in an actual classroom context. Moreover, the participants in these studies were advanced ESL students. Additionally, despite the fact that González (2006) does include reader-response engagements as a part of the Spanish course curriculum, the students in this study were advanced level learners only. The current study aimed to fill these gaps by using reader-response engagements with elementary-level students.

**Research Context**

This study was conducted with three sections of a second-semester Spanish course at a large university in the Southwestern United States: two sections during the fall semester of 2008 (Classes #1 and #2), and one section during the spring semester of 2009 (Class #3). Because I was attempting to investigate the implementation of a new curricular approach to teaching Spanish, and because my students were informants helping me understand the complexities of this new curricular approach, the students who participated in the study were those enrolled in sections for which I was the instructor. The Spanish course was taught using a communicative framework focused on developing students’ communicative competencies in Spanish, their acquisition of vocabulary words and specific grammatical features of Spanish, and their knowledge of various facets of the history and cultures of various countries in the Spanish-speaking world.

Students also read two children’s novels as part of the course curriculum: *Me llamo María Isabel* [My Name Is María Isabel] and *Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos* [Baseball in April and Other Stories]. Students in Classes #1 and #2 read *Me llamo María Isabel* in its entirety and two short stories from *Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos*. Due to time and curricular constraints, students in Class #3 only read five chapters from *Me llamo María Isabel* and did not read *Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos*. Each section met four days per week for sixteen weeks; one class
session each week was dedicated to reading and discussing the children’s novels. During these weekly sessions, students read a chapter or short story from each book in groups and either answered comprehension questions concerning the text (Classes #1 and #2) or participated in response engagements designed to elicit their initial interpretations of the text (Class #3). Students then took part in class discussions in Spanish to deepen their understanding of the text and explore aspects of Latino culture contained in the text.

The first book (Ada, 1993) describes the life María Isabel Sálazar López, a nine-year-old girl who emigrates from Puerto Rico to the United States with her family. On the first day at her new school, the teacher changes María’s name to Mary since there are already two girls named María in the class. The book traces the main character’s process of finding her place in a new land while also maintaining her cultural identity and heritage.

The second book (Soto, 1990) is a collection of eleven short stories in which the characters are adolescent Latinos from California. The stories use small events of daily life to elucidate themes common to all adolescents. Students in Classes #1 and #2 read two stories in the collection, ‘Béisbol en abril’ and ‘El Karate Kid’. The first story explores two brothers’ experiences playing for a local baseball team; neither they nor the team play well. Towards the end of the season, the team plays and loses against a much better team. After their defeat, the boys lose interest in playing baseball, and one brother quits the team to date his new girlfriend. In the second story, a boy is frequently bullied at school because of his small size. Inspired by the film The Karate Kid, the boy decides to enroll in a karate class to learn how to defend himself. He soon finds out, however, that the class is much more difficult than he had anticipated. Gilbert soon tires of the karate class and eventually stops attending the class altogether. He decides instead to read comic books since comics are not nearly as painful as karate.

Seventy-eight students were enrolled in three sections of a second-semester university Spanish course for which I was the instructor; sixty-eight students consented to participate in the study. 89.2% of students were between 17 and 21 years of age. 52.6% of students were male, and 47.4% of students were female. 69.2% of students identified themselves as Caucasian or White.
Data Collection and Analysis

Four data sources were included in the study: journal entries, surveys, focus-group interviews and a composition.

Students in all three sections completed periodic journal entries in which they reflected on their experiences reading the children’s novels. Students wrote their entries in English so that they could freely express their perspectives on the children’s books without their imperfect knowledge of Spanish preventing them from accurately conveying their perceptions.

Participants in Classes #1 and #2 completed two surveys (Surveys #1 and #2), and participants in Class #3 completed one survey (Survey #1) in English. This first survey asked students to summarize their experiences reading Me llamo María Isabel and note salient features concerning the Spanish language and Latino culture; the survey was administered after students had finished reading the book. The second survey asked students to evaluate their experiences reading the two short stories in Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos and explore linguistic and cultural connections they made with the stories. Survey #2 was administered in Classes #1 and #2 after students finished reading the stories; the survey was not administered to Class #3 since the class did not read these stories.

Three focus-group interviews were conducted in English during the study, two in Classes #1 and #2 and one in Class #3. Classes #1 and #2 were divided into two groups of approximately thirteen students each for logistical considerations to maximize student responses; Class #3 was not divided into smaller groups since there were fewer students in this section. During the first focus-group interview, students reflected on their experiences reading Me llamo María Isabel. During the second focus-group interview, students considered their experiences reading the two short stories in Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos. Students in Class #3 completed one focus-group interview but did not take part in a second interview since they did not read Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos. The focus-group interviews provided students with an opportunity to explain and expand on their responses on each survey respectively. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was videotaped; significant quotes from the interviews were subsequently transcribed.

Finally, students wrote a composition in Spanish in which they compared and contrasted their feelings concerning their names with those of María Isabel. In the composition, students reflected on María Isabel’s feelings about her names and their impressions of their own names.
Two research frameworks structured the study: teacher research and grounded theory. Teacher research was selected as a framework since I wished to learn more about utilizing children’s literature as a curricular approach with my students. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) define teacher research as “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers” (p. 2). They contend that, by collecting and analyzing data, devising a plan for collecting and analyzing data, and reflecting on and make sense of their experiences, teacher research allows educators to answer meaningful questions about their own teaching and their students’ learning. Teacher research thus framed the study in order to help me make sense of my students’ experiences reading the children’s novels in a systematic and intentional way.

Additionally, grounded theory was incorporated as a second framework in order to better understand and develop an initial theory about the role of children’s literature in language and culture acquisition. According to Creswell (2009), grounded theory guides researchers in constructing a theory of a given phenomenon based upon the perspectives of the participants. Grounded theorists collect data concerning a given phenomenon, analyze the data through conceptual categories, develop an initial theory from the conceptual categories, and continue to collect and analyze data until the theory is established (Glesne, 2010). This study utilized grounded theory as a methodological framework by using students’ perceptions as a basis for establishing a theory of how elementary-level students in Spanish view reading children’s literature in Spanish.

This study utilized purposeful sampling in its design by recruiting participants who would provide information-rich data for the study (Patton, 2002). Since teacher research was one framework that shaped the study, and since my goal was to develop a theory concerning the use of children’s literature in Spanish with elementary-level students studying Spanish at the college level, I selected participants for the study among students from my own classes.

The study incorporated the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) by using themes and categories to build theory. The data for the study were analyzed through open coding by reading the data sources several times and identifying tentative themes emerging from the data. An initial analysis memo was constructed which listed each theme, a working definition of the theme, and several student quotes exemplifying the theme. In order to perform a deeper
analysis of the data, the themes were then reshuffled, reorganized and grouped into broader categories, which were triangulated amongst the data sources.

**Curricular Engagements**

In Classes #1 and #2 (the “comprehension” group), the curricular engagements focused on developing students’ comprehension of the children’s novels. Learners read a given chapter or short story, completed comprehension questions in Spanish about the text, and discussed their answers to the questions. Below is an example of comprehension questions students answered for Chapter 1 of *Me llamo María Isabel*.

1. Cuando eras niño/a, ¿te gustaba el primer día de clases? ¿Por qué (no)?
   
   *When you were a child, did you like the first day of school? Why (not)?*

2. ¿Está María Isabel contenta este primer día de clases? ¿Por qué (no)?
   
   *Is María Isabel happy on her first day of school? Why (not)?*

3. Cuando María Isabel camina hacia el autobús, ¿qué le pasa?
   
   *When María Isabel walks to the school bus, what happens to her?*

4. ¿Por qué el vestido María Isabel es importante a ella?
   
   *Why is María Isabel’s dress important to her?*

5. ¿Por qué María Isabel decide llevar el vestido este día?
   
   *Why does María Isabel decide to wear that particular dress that day?*

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**Figure 1:** Comprehension Questions for Chapter 1 of *Me llamo María Isabel*

In Class #3 (the “interpretation” group), students participated in curricular engagements designed to help them develop their own interpretations of the children’s novel. Instead of answering comprehension questions, students participated in various response engagements as they read a given chapter in *Me llamo María Isabel*. The class then discussed in Spanish their responses to the engagement and their understandings/interpretations of the chapter.
Several response engagements were used with students in Class #3. For example, the Graffiti Board engagement (Short, Harste & Burke 1996) prompted students to document their initial feelings, impressions and connections through single words, complete sentences and/or pictures. I read aloud the first chapter of Me llamo María Isabel as students completed their Graffiti Boards and subsequently shared them with a partner. This engagement provided students an opportunity to document and consider their initial thoughts and impressions of the text.

Figure 2 below is an example of Kendall’s Graffiti Board. The student is beginning to develop initial thoughts and perspectives on the chapter while also verifying his/her (mis)understanding of the chapter.

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The book was very descriptive of what she was wearing. The mention of the backpack was very often. It did not seem that her mother made a big deal about her first day at a new school which I thought she would have. She seems like a brave girl and is kind of anxious but nervous to start class. Did it say that the kids weren't welcoming to her?

Figure 2: Graffiti Board

A second response engagement students participated in was Say Something (Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). Students read Chapter 3 of Me llamo María Isabel in groups. One student read one page of the chapter aloud while other students in the group followed along. After the student finished reading, the group shared their thoughts, impressions and personal connections and asked questions about parts of the chapter they did not understand. This cycle continued until the...
group finished reading the chapter, after which they stopped to reflect on their impressions of the chapter as a whole. This engagement allowed students to share their thoughts and questions with other group members while also providing them with opportunities to consider their perceptions of the chapter as they were reading.

A third response engagement used with students in Class #3 was a Written Conversation (Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). Students individually read Chapter 4 in *Me llamo María Isabel*. After having read the chapter, students were separated into pairs. Without talking, they exchanged one sheet of paper back and forth between them while engaging in a written conversation about the chapter in which they recorded their thoughts and impressions of the text and/or responded to a question or comment written previously by the other partner. Each pair participated in several cycles of the written conversation. This engagement helped students think more deeply about their views of the chapter while also helping them consider perspectives of the text that may be different from their own. Figure 4 is an example of a written conversation between two students about Chapter 4 in *Me llamo María Isabel*. Each line of the conversation expands on and/or extends the student’s view of the chapter from the previous line.
A fourth and final response engagement students engaged in was Save the Last Word for Me (Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). After having read a text, students select a quote or short passage from the text that they find significant. One student begins by sharing his/her quote/passage while the other students in the group share their thoughts and impressions about the quote; the first student then explains why s/he selected the quote. The activity is designed to maximize the variety of responses to students’ quotes and help them consider multiple perspectives and interpretations of the text.

Class #3 participated in a variation of Save the Last Word for Me. Students divided themselves into groups and read Chapter 5 of Me llamo María Isabel. Each group selected a phrase or sentence from the chapter that they found important or significant, wrote their group’s phrase or sentence on the board, and explained in Spanish why their group selected the sentence.
Students participated in this engagement in groups and as a class in order to expose them to various possible interpretations of and perspectives on the chapter.

The curricular engagements outlined above were included in the study to support students’ comprehension of the children’s novels as well as their understanding of various aspects of Latino culture. In Classes #1 and #2, the engagements focused on promoting students’ understanding of *Me llamo María Isabel* and *Béisbol en abril y otros cuentos*. In Class #3, the engagements centered on students’ initial comprehension of *Me llamo María Isabel* and the subsequent development of their personal understandings of the book. Students’ comments can help us better understand the role of the curricular engagements in accomplishing these goals.

**Findings**

Several abbreviations will be used when presenting students’ quotes. “C’ refers to the class the student was enrolled in, “J” refers to journal entries, “S” refers to surveys, “FGI” refers to the focus-group interviews, and “CP” refers to the composition. All students’ names are pseudonyms.

Numerous students in Classes #1 and #2 believed that the comprehension questions contributed to their understanding of *Me llamo María Isabel* because the questions provided them with the organizational structure of a given chapter, thus helping them focus on what was important and significant in the chapter.

- I think that [the comprehension questions] have been helpful because they outline the chapter we are about to read or give us a focus for the chapter and help keep us on the right track. [Naomi, C#2, J#2]
- The [comprehension] questions act as a guide to steer us on the right direction as to what the chapter is going to be about. [Naomi, C#2, J#4]
- I think that [comprehension questions] act as guidelines and give hints about what the chapter is about. [Naomi, C#2, J#3]

According to these students, the comprehension questions facilitated their comprehension of *Me llamo María Isabel* because the questions developed their awareness of the narrative structure of the chapters they were reading.
Students also maintained that the structure of the questions provided them with opportunities to compare/contrast their life experiences with those of the characters.

- I think with the [comprehension] questions [we] were able to pick out what they mean because we’re comparing the questions to ourselves… [Mackenzie, C#1, J#3]
- I really liked how on the worksheets we did, you asked us questions about our lives, which allowed me to better understand the question[s] about the book. [Tim C#2, S#2]

Other students noted that the comprehension questions impeded their comprehension of the children’s books because the questions forced them to focus on specific details within a given chapter instead of helping them understand the chapter as a whole.

- The negative experiences I had [reading Me llamo María Isabel] was when you gave us a sheet of questions to answer. I would read for the answers, not to understand the book. [Barry, C#1, S#2]
- When we would use the [comprehension questions] I would just look for the answers and that was it, I did not always understand what was going on in [Me llamo María Isabel]. [Barry, C#1, J#3]
- When given a worksheet, you tend to focus only on the parts of the chapter that specifically relates to the questions. [Gabriella, C#2, J#3]

Students in Class #3 identified various positive aspects of the reader-response engagements. For example, certain students noted that the Graffiti Boards contributed to their comprehension of the children’s novels because they were able to record their evolving understandings of the books.

- I think that the whole Graffiti Board when you were reading to us helped me understand a little more. The purpose of that was to jot down what got out of the readings and record some familiar words to help us understand the book better. That Graffiti Board helped me and is definitely something that you should do with other classes. [Wyatt, C#3, S#2]
- I liked that we were jotting down whatever we felt like while we were listening to the book because that gave me a chance to write down things I remembered in the book and also gave me a chance to write down questions as well. [Kendall, C#3, J#2]
• One thing that I really like about reading *Me llamo María Isabel* is using the Graffiti Boards as a response. Using these seems like a good way to accurately express immediate reactions to the text. [Savanna, C#3, J#2]

• I also prefer [the Say Something engagement] over answering [comprehension] questions because we are so worried about answering them that we just look for any words and try to get it [answering the questions] done rather than understand what is going on. [Damon, C#2, J#3]

Students also indicated that the Graffiti Boards helped them make personal connections between their life experiences and those of María Isabel.

• Graffiti Board[s] helped me connect my feelings to those María [Isabel] may be experiencing. [Ethan, C#3, J#4]

These students indicated that the Graffiti Boards promoted their understanding of the children’s novels because this activity allowed them to document their thought process as they read the books while also helping them connect their life experiences to those of the characters.

**Discussion**

Results of this study demonstrate that the curricular engagements contributed to students’ understanding of the children’s novels by helping them visualize the narrative structure of the chapters and short stories they read and affording them space to verify their comprehension and record their understandings of what they were reading. However, students also concluded that, in other respects, the curricular engagements did not facilitate their comprehension of the books since they either focused learners’ attention exclusively on specific details of the texts or prevented students from understanding what they were reading. In Classes #1 and #2, for example, students indicated that the comprehension questions contributed to their understanding of the books because the questions allowed them to focus on important events in given chapters by signalling the overall organization of the chapters. It is conceivable that students with lower proficiency in Spanish as well as students less familiar with the narrative structure of the novel may have benefitted from the linguistic and structural scaffolding provided by these questions.

Other students, however, noted that the questions hindered their comprehension of the books because, instead of trying to understand each chapter as a whole, they tended to scan the
chapters for specific information that would help them answer the comprehension questions. Students with higher proficiency in Spanish and/or students who are more familiar with fictional narrative structure may have possibly felt that the questions guided them to one particular perspective and prevented them from forming their own interpretations of the books. In Class #3, students noted that the reader-response engagements helped them understand the novels by documenting their thinking about the books and sharing their perspectives of the texts while listening to those of their classmates. Students stated that the responses engagements also helped them make connections between the characters’ life experiences and their own. Several students did note, however, that they encountered difficulty completing the Graffiti Boards while listening to a read aloud of Chapter 1 of *Me llamo María Isabel* because they were unable to focus simultaneously on what they were hearing and what they subsequently documented on their Graffiti Boards. As with the comprehension questions, students’ proficiency level in Spanish may be one possible explanation for this finding.

The curricular engagements also aided students in creating connections between their life experiences and those of the characters. The engagements facilitated students’ amalgamation of reader, text and textual experience or “poem” (Rosenblatt, 1994). This supports findings obtained by Liaw (2001) and González (2006) in that the response engagements deepened their transactions with the children’s books. Students’ reactions to these activities indicate that they were able to create an initial, albeit somewhat superficial, interpretation of the children’s books. This may have possibly been due to students’ unfamiliarity and lack of experience with these engagements. Additionally, they may have encountered few opportunities to develop their own textual interpretations in previous literature courses.

Students’ comments suggest that both types of curricular engagements facilitated their understanding of the books and supported them in making connections between the experiences of the characters and their own lives. This is a somewhat surprising finding, considering that the comprehension questions were structured to help students understand the main points of the children’s novels, while the responses engagements were designed to facilitate their interpretations of the books. This finding suggests that, rather than including only comprehension questions or responses engagements exclusively, educators might use both types of engagements to strengthen students’ textual comprehension while also assisting them in developing their own
understanding of texts and establishing linkages between their own life experiences and those of
the characters. Literacy education has traditionally presumed that comprehension precedes
interpretation in the belief that students need to understand what they are reading before they are
able to construct their own interpretations. This finding suggests that interpretation may develop
alongside or even precede comprehension. In other words, students may in fact need multiple
opportunities to develop their own initial interpretations of a given text before they can understand it.

Conclusion
Results of the study demonstrate that comprehension questions and response engagements, if
designed appropriately, can support students’ comprehension of texts while also facilitating the
development of their own interpretations of these texts. As noted above, findings suggest that,
contrary to traditional criticism, comprehension does not necessarily precede interpretation.
Students need time and space to make their personal connections with a text before they are able
to understand the main points of the text. Rather than attempting to uncover what a text “means”,
students need opportunities to first develop their own understandings of a text that subsequently
help them comprehend the salient points of the text. Rosenblatt (1982) contends that “the notion
that first the child must ‘understand’ the text…before it can be responded to…is a rationalization
that must be rejected” (p. 273). It is my hope that this article will aid and support language
educators as they work to provide students with opportunities to develop personal and
meaningful relationships with literary texts.

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Investigating the use of readability metrics to detect differences in written productions of learners: a corpus-based study

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Abstract: This paper deals with the use of readability metrics as indices of learners' linguistic features in a written corpus of Spanish learners of English L2. Seventeen measures of readability are presented and computed for 200 samples of written argumentative essays extracted from the corpus NOCE (Díaz-Negrillo, 2007). Support Vector Machines (SVM) are used in order to detect which are the metrics that perform better at detecting differences in learners’ productions belonging to students enrolled in the first or in the second year of an English major. Metrics based on sentence length, number of sentences, and number of polysyllabic words are reported to be the most accurate ones for the classification of learners' linguistic features.

Keywords: readability, learner corpora, SVM, written essays

Résumé: Cet article analyse les métriques de lisibilité dans une perspective de détection des niveaux des apprenants hispanophones en anglais L2 à partir d’un corpus de productions écrites. Dix-sept métriques de lisibilité ont été calculées pour 200 essais argumentatifs extraits du corpus NOCE (Díaz-Negrillo, 2007). On emploie la technique des Séparateurs à Vaste Marge (SVM) pour déterminer les métriques qui caractérisent le mieux les différences entre les productions des apprenants de première et deuxième année en anglais. Les métriques fondées sur la longueur des phrases, le nombre de phrases, ainsi que sur le nombre de mots polysyllabiques sont celles qui aident le mieux à détecter et à classer les étudiants selon leurs caractéristiques langagières.

Mots-clés: lisibilité, corpus d’apprenants, SVM, productions écrites

Resumen: Este artículo trata sobre el uso de métricas de legibilidad como indicadores de las características lingüísticas propias a dos niveles de aprendices españoles de inglés L2. Presentamos y calculamos dieciséis medidas de legibilidad en 200 textos argumentativos extraídos del corpus NOCE (Díaz-Negrillo, 2007). Utilizamos SVM para averiguar qué métricas son capaces de detectar diferencias entre las 200 producciones, pertenecientes a alumnos de primer y segundo curso de Filología Inglesa, respectivamente. Las métricas basadas en la longitud de las frases, el número de frases y el número de palabras polisilabas son las que presentan mejores resultados.

Palabras clave: legibilidad, corpus de aprendices, SVM, producciones escritas
Introduction

This paper is an empirical study that deals with the use of readability metrics as indices of linguistic features when comparing two groups of learners of English. The goal of this study is to show that readability metrics, combined with a machine learning approach, can be used to detect clusters of writing features that correspond to different groups of learners. The introduction of this paper is a brief overview on the concept of readability and the use of readability metrics in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Learner Corpus Research (LCR). The rest of the paper is organized as follows: section 2 describes the corpus and the readability metrics used in this study; section 3 presents raw results and analysis of the scores; section 4 introduces the use of Support Vector Machines (SVM) in linguistics and Natural Language Processing (NLP), as well as the results for the data under scrutiny; finally, section 5 presents main conclusions and a discussion.

Readability and readability metrics in SLA and LCR. Although the difficulty of a text may be measured in many ways and according to several features, readability refers to the understanding of the text as such, i.e., how easy or how difficult a text is to be understood by a reader or a group of readers. One of the most famous definitions, written by Dale and Chall (as cited in DuBay, 2004, p. 3) states that readability is composed by “[…] all those elements within a given piece of printed material that affect the success a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimal speed, and find it interesting”. McLaughlin (1968, p. 188) creator of the SMOG readability formula, considers readability to be “the degree to which a given class of people find certain reading matter compelling, and necessarily, comprehensible”, and according to DuBay (2004, p.3), readability is simply “what makes some texts easier to read than others”. Therefore, readability can be seen as the combination of linguistic features that make a text more or less readable for a particular audience. In that sense, the aim of the creation of readability metrics is to account for text readability, somehow measuring or quantifying the difficulty or the easiness of written materials.

Readability metrics are essentially mathematical formulae containing different linguistic features that “map a text to a numerical value corresponding to a difficulty or grade level” (Heilman, Collins-Thompson, & Eskenazi, 2008, p. 71). Most of the classical readability metrics are built on linear models (Sung, et al., 2015, p. 340), and parameters of the formulae are usually related to lexical and syntactic features, such as the use of content vs. function words, lexical diversity, or syllable counts. Recent approaches to readability metrics,
however, include more complex algorithms with a larger number of parameters (see, for example, François, 2011), some of them related to unigrams modelling (Collins-Thompson & Callan, 2005), or discourse-based characteristics (Feng, Jansche, Huenerfauth, & Elhadad, 2010), among many other possibilities.

Traditionally, the role of readability measures in SLA has been connected to the difficulty of the texts that were to be read by learners. In other words, readability measures have been used in order to determine if a text is appropriate or not for learners of a particular level. In that sense, the teaching applications of readability measures are straightforward: teachers may need to know if the texts they are using are adequate for their students. Thus, readability metrics have been generally applied to texts that could (or could not) be used for learners of a certain level or of a particular group age. Readability formulae were also typically applied to the comparison of textbooks, in order to assess the complexity of the manuals. Nowadays, however, with the emergence of the field of Learner Corpus Research (see Granger, Gilquin, & Meunier, 2015) and the massive collection of learners’ productions, new ways of applying readability to the study of SLA and language teaching have appeared. For instance, Vajjala and Meurers (2012) showed that application of learners’ SLA based lexical features as part of the readability formulae yielded high accuracy in readability results. Lu (2010) created an automatic system for the assessment of learners’ productions based on some of the parameters used in most readability metrics.

In this paper, I aim to change the traditional point of view of readability metrics. Following Lu (2011) and Vajjala (2018), I am not using readability metrics in order to see how difficult a text might be for a given level of proficiency. Rather, I am applying readability formulae to learners’ productions so as to see what readability metrics can tell us about learners’ use of linguistic features and the differences between two groups of learners. This approach is based on the claim that there exist specific linguistic features, also known as ‘criterial features’ (Hawkins & Buttery, 2010; Hawkins & Filipović, 2012) related to each level of learners’ proficiency.

**Methodology**

For this study, 200 written productions were selected from the NOCE corpus: 100 samples belonging to first year college students, and another 100 samples belonging to second year college students. All students were enrolled in an English major when the corpus was compiled. The 200 selected samples were randomly taken from the first wave of collection of
the corpus, in years 2003-2004 at the University of Granada. Productions range between 250-300 words and all texts are argumentative, with varied topics, such as the role of new technologies or the importance of learning languages. Although the corpus has been manually annotated with the error tagging system EARS (Diaz-Negrillo, 2009), the samples here used were in raw, unannotated files. Consequently, a pre-processing stage of the texts including the removal of some error tags and lemmatization of the texts was carried out before the computation of readability metrics.

It should be noted that no placement test was taken prior to the compilation of the corpus so that there is no real indicator of learners’ proficiency levels. Although students in the first year of their degree are supposed to have a B1 level according to the CEFRL, there is no precise test that confirms this assumption. The same applies to learners in the second year, who are supposed to have a B2 level. As a consequence, the application of readability metrics to see differences between the two groups of learners seems particularly suitable for this corpus, because results may help detecting differences or similarities between the two groups.

**Readability metrics.** Seventeen measures of readability are going to be used in this study. All the metrics, which are explained below, are available in the R package `{koRpus}` (Michalke, 2017): ARI, Dale & Chall, Bormuth, DRP, Coleman-Liau, Farr-Jenkins-Paterson, Flesch, Flesch – Kincaid, Fog, FORCAST, Linsear-Write, LIX, RIX, SMOG, Spache, Tuldava, and Wheeler & Smith. For brevity’s sake, only a short description of the metrics and their formulae are presented here, readers who wish to know more about the different parameters are referred to the papers where the formulae were originally written.

ARI: The Automatic Readability Index (Senter & Smith, 1967) is computed through the ratios of the number of letters per words, and the number of words per sentence. The original formula gives the result in form of a grade level (GL), but the simplified formula is the one that will be used here:

\[
\text{ARI} = (\text{words per sentence}) + 9 (\text{word length})
\]

Dale & Chall Readability Formula (Dale & Chall, 1948): it is based on the sentence length and the use of difficult or complicated words. In order to define what a difficult word is, Dale and Chall created a list of 3,000 words. 80% of these words are said to be known by fourth-grade readers. Therefore, words that do not appear in this list denote some difficulty, and they are classified as “hard words”. This formula has to be applied to 100 random words selected from a text.

Score: \( (0.1579 \cdot \text{percentage of hard words}) + (0.496 \cdot \text{average sentence length}) + 3.6365 \)
Bormuth’s Mean Cloze and Grade Placement: Bormuth formulae (Bormuth, 1969) are famous because of the use and the prediction and the use of mean clozes. A mean cloze is the percentage of words that have been correctly written in a cloze test. And a cloze test is simply a text where one word, every four or five, has been deleted. The higher the percentage of the mean cloze (therefore, more words have been completed) the easier the text is considered to be. Bormuth’s formulae were validated by being contrasted with actual mean cloze tests, instead of being validated by correlating them with other readability metrics.

\[
\text{Mean Cloze (M) } = 0.886593 - 0.083640 \times \left( \frac{\text{number of letters}}{\text{number of words}} \right) + 0.161911 \times \left( \frac{\text{number of words from the Dale–Chall list}}{\text{number of words}} \right)^3 - 0.021401 \times \left( \frac{\text{number of words}}{\text{number of sentences}} \right) + 0.000577 \times \left( \frac{\text{number of words}}{\text{number of sentences}} \right)^2 - 0.000005 \times \left( \frac{\text{number of words}}{\text{number of sentences}} \right)^3
\]

Degrees of Reading Power (Bormuth, 1969): it consists on the transformation of Bormuth’s Mean Cloze on a scale of 0-100, in which 30 means very easy, 50-60 normal difficulty, and 100, very hard. The corresponding formula is:

\[
\text{DRP} = (1 - \text{Mean Cloze Score}) \times 100
\]

Coleman-Liau (Coleman & Liau, 1975): the formula first estimates the Cloze Percentage (ECP) and then implements its result to get the final Coleman-Liau score:

\[
\text{ECP} = 141.8401 - (0.214590 \times \text{number of characters}) + (1.079812 \times \text{sentences})
\]

\[
\text{CLI} = \left( -27.4004 \times \frac{\text{ECP}}{100} \right) + 23.06395
\]

Flesch Readability Ease (Flesch, 1948): it gives a score in a rank between 0-100, being 0-30 very difficult; 60-70 the standard difficulty, and 90-100 very easy. Flesch’s scores are correlated with school grades (USA) and with the estimated percentage of the adult population of the USA (see Flesch, 1949).

\[
\text{FRE} = 208.835 - (1.015 \times \text{average sentence length}) - (84.6 \times \text{average number of syllables per word})
\]

Farr-Jenkins-Paterson Index (Farr, Jenkins, & Paterson, 1951): it is a recalculation of Flesch index that takes into account the average number of one-syllable words (osw).

\[
\text{Score: } 1.599 \text{ osw per 100 words} - (1.015 \times \text{average sentence length}) - 31.517
\]

Flesch-Kincaid (Kincaid, Fishburne Jr, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975) is used to convert the FRE score into a grade level (GL):

\[
\text{GL} = (0.39 \times \text{average sentence length}) + (11.8 \times \text{average number of syllables per word}) - 15.59
\]
Fog Index (Gunning, 1952): it is the first index that included the counting of ‘hard’ words (words with more than two syllables) per 100 words as a variable of the equation to get the readability score:

\[ \text{FOG} = 0.4 \cdot (\text{average sentence length} + \text{number of ‘hard’ words}) \]

FORCAST (Caylor, Stitch, & Fox, 1973): originally meant to be used to assess readability in army technical documents, it gives a grade between 5 and 12.9, 12 standing for a really difficult text. The FORCAST rate in a sample of 150 words is calculated in this way:

\[ \text{FORCAST} = 20 - \frac{\text{number of one-syllable words}}{10} \]

Lensear Write Index (O’hayre, 1966): is not actually presented as an index of readability. O’hayre explains that this formula is more about “writeability”, that is, it concerns the writer, and not the reader. The formula aims at helping writers to use simple, one-syllable words, that O’hayre (1966, p. 6) considers to be “the words most natural to English”. The formula also uses sentence length. If the score is between 70-80, it is an average readable text. Scores above 85 denote simplicity, whereas scores under 65 imply complexity:

\[ \text{Score} = \text{number of one-syllable words} + (3 \cdot \text{number of sentences}) \]

Björnsson's Läsbarhetsindex, (LIX) was initially designed to be used with texts written in Swedish (Björnsson, 1968). Texts scoring 20 are considered to be very easy, texts scoring 40, average; and text scorings 60 and above, very difficult. The formula was successfully tested when applied to 11 languages (Björnsson, 1983).

\[ \text{LIX} = \text{number of words per sentence} + \text{percentage of words with more than 6 characters} \]

Anderson’s Readability Index, RIX (Anderson, 1981, 1983): it is a modification of the LIX index. RIX was specially designed for English texts, and the score can be easily transformed into a grade level following the chart proposed by Anderson (1983). RIX scores are normally between 1.5 (very easy) and 7.2 or above (very difficult). A text with a RIX score around 3.7 can be considered standard in terms of readability.

\[ \text{RIX} = \frac{\text{number of long words}}{\text{number of sentences}} \]

Simple Measure of Gobbledygook, SMOG (McLaughlin, 1969): it uses the count of polysyllable words, that is, three or more syllables, in 30 random sentences of the text.

\[ \text{SMOG} = 1.0430 \sqrt{\text{number of polysyllabic words}} + 3.1291 \]

Spache grade (Spache, 1953) was originally designed to analyse readability in textbooks used in primary grades. It uses the average sentence length per 100 words (ASL) and the percentage of “unfamiliar” words. Unfamiliar words are defined as words that do not appear in the list of 769 easy words made by (Dale, 1931).

\[ \text{SG} = (0.141 \cdot \text{ASL}) + (0.086 \cdot \text{percentage of unfamiliar words}) + 0.839 \]
Tuldava Text Difficulty Formula (Tuldava, 1993): It uses the logarithmic transformation, number of sentences, syllables, tokens and words.

\[
\text{Tuldava} = \frac{\text{number of syllables}}{\text{number of tokens}} \cdot \ln \left( \frac{\text{number of words}}{\text{number of sentences}} \right)
\]

Wheeler & Smith: it was conceived for the use of teachers in primary grades. In their article, the authors offer a table of equivalences of the grades that can be used to interpret the scores (Wheeler & Smith, 1954, p. 398).

\[
\text{WS} = \frac{\text{number of tokens}}{\text{number of sentences}} \cdot 10 \cdot \frac{\text{number of two-syllable words}}{\text{number of tokens}}
\]

As can be seen in this inventory, some metrics are language independent, whereas others are specific to English, Swedish or German. However, the implementation in {koRpus} relies on the English version of TreeTagger (Schmid, 1995), allowing the possibility to extend all the metrics to the investigation of English. It should be noted that language independent methods rely heavily on the number of words and on syllables and mostly try to offer a linear conversion from school grades to complexity scores. After this technical presentation of the metrics, analysis of the scores will be presented in the following section.

Results

First, all productions were POS-tagged using TreeTagger (Schmid, 1995). Second, the 17 readability metrics were computed for both subsets of corpora and the corresponding scores were pooled into a matrix. Third, a last column with the corresponding year of each production was added (year 1, corresponding to students in the first year, and year 2, corresponding to the second year). For all the computed metrics, mean and standard deviations corresponding to the two groups are summarized in Table 1. It is worth noticing that the interpretation of raw results is not straightforward, given that some results are quite counterintuitive. For instance, some of the metrics, such as Bormuth, Coleman.Liau, Farr.Jenkins.Paterson, or Flesch, show that mean scores in year 2 are higher than in year 1, whereas all the other metrics show that mean scores in year 1 are actually higher than in year 2.

In order to see if the differences between the means of the two groups are statistically significant for each metric, a statistical test is needed. Since data was not normally distributed, multiple Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed, as a non-parametric alternative to a t-test. Results are also summed up in Table 1. Only metrics presenting a \( p > 0.05 \) show a statistically significant difference between the means of year 1 and year 2. That is, four out of the seventeen readability metrics here used (namely Bormuth, Coleman-Liau, DRP, and
FORCAST) do not show statistically significant differences between the means of the two groups. Therefore, one may infer that these metrics do not reflect major variability between the two groups, whereas the other metrics do detect some differences. Yet the interpretability of the results is confusing: even if these four metrics were removed, 13 metrics with their corresponding scores remain to be evaluated. One possible way to spot which metrics are the most accurate in detecting the differences between the two subsets of corpora, and to reduce the number of metrics, is to use machine learning approaches.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for readability metrics and Kruskal-Wallis results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readability index</th>
<th>Year 1 (n=100)</th>
<th>Year 2 (n=100)</th>
<th>Kruskal-Wallis test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARI</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>8.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bormuth</td>
<td>36.88</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>37.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman.Liau</td>
<td>54.85</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>55.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale.Chall</td>
<td>26.73</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>30.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRP</td>
<td>-3,587</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>-3,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farr.Jenkins.Paterson</td>
<td>63.65</td>
<td>13.61</td>
<td>68.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch</td>
<td>65.67</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>71.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch.Kincaid</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOG</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORCAST</td>
<td>8.87</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>8.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linsear.Write</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>11.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIX</td>
<td>42.24</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>36.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIX</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOG</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>10.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spache</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuldava</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheeler.Smith</td>
<td>60.14</td>
<td>26.37</td>
<td>48.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p* values marked with an asterisk are inferior to 0.05 and allow the rejection of the null hypothesis of the Kruskal-Wallis test: equality of ranked means for the two groups.
Support Vector Machines (SVM)

SVM is a type of classifier, a form of machine learning, consisting on algorithms that learn how to detect patterns related to specific classes, or, in this case, particular groups. In this case, a classifier can recognize which of the metrics reflect patterns associated with each one of the four groups; and thus, which of the metrics perform better at classifying productions within groups on the basis of the scores. Here, the use of a classifier does not only account for the assessment of readability metrics, but also for the fact that each group has a particular set of features (i.e. scores associated to each metric) that differentiate it from the other group. Jarvis (2011, p. 130) states that “the classifier-driven approach offers a clearer picture of how well learners’ group membership can be predicted on the basis of their language behaviours”. Therefore, applying the classifier-driven approach to the present study means to assess how well learners’ group membership can be predicted on the basis of their readability metrics scores which are, in a way, a characterization of their language behaviour in written texts.

SVM is a very well-known and powerful discriminative classifier, widely used in supervised learning. It is very popular among the NLP community, in particular in Part-of-Speech (POS) tagging tasks (Giménez & Marquez, 2004), textual semantic similarity (Béchara, et al., 2015), sentiment analysis (Mullen & Collier, 2004; Prabowo & Thelwall, 2009; Song, He, & Fu, 2015), speaker recognition (Campbell, Campbell, Reynolds, Singer, & Torres-Carrasquillo, 2006), or dependency analysis and dependency parsing (Yamada & Matsumoto, 2003; Nivre, Hall, Nilsson, Eryiğit, & Marinov, 2006), among other applications in linguistics.

In the investigation of readability, the use of machine learning (ML) methods has increased in recent years. Since readability metrics, as seen in a previous section of this article, are essentially mathematical formulae, the use of ML is especially suitable for both assessing readability results and the creation of more sophisticated and data-oriented readability metrics. For instance, Shen, Williams, Marius, and Salesky (2013) carried out a study with SVM classifiers in which they showed that the most reliable predictors for text difficulty across languages are length and word-usage features; recurrent parameters of readability formulae. Pilán, Volodina, and Johansson (2014) designed a method for grading sentence readability for leaners of Swedish with SVM incorporated in corpus-based automatically generated exercises through an online platform. Sung, Lin, Dyson, Chang, and Chen (2015) used 30 linguistic features that were fitted into a SVM model to create a readability index for learners of Chinese that automatically classify learners’ texts into
CEFRL levels. Sung et al., (2015) showed that SVM methods can be used to improve readability models by adding multilevel linguistic features in a study carried out with a corpus of Chinese textbooks, and Zalmout, Saddiki, and Habash (2016) used readability indices and SVM to show that grammar-based textbooks presented a more coherent progression than communicative-oriented textbooks.

Applying SVM to the data. The choice of SVM among many other machine learning techniques was motivated by several reasons. First, as seen above, there is an increasingly interest for the use of SVM in research on readability metrics, and all readability studies in which SVM has been used have yielded high accuracy results. Second, SVM also appeared to be suitable for the dataset studied here: SVM does not assume data to be normally distributed, SVM algorithms are robust as to the presence of outliers; and most importantly, SVM can deal with collinearity between variables. An implementation of SVM with radial-basis function kernel (RFB) was chosen, being one of the most standard kernels used in scientific studies due to its accuracy (Hsu, Chang, & Lin, 2003; Sung et al., 2015).

The SVM algorithm transposes data into a high dimensional space and creates a hyperplane that allows for the separation and classification of the data. It then selects the subset of the data that is most representative of the dataset and develops, from this subset, the hyperplane that best generalizes for classification. It also calculates a penalization value for the amount of misclassified training data, and this parameter \( C \) is also included in the formula. Larger values of \( C \) may result in more accurate classification, but at the cost of overfitting the data; thus, a model with a lower value of \( C \) was preferred in this study.

The goal of applying SVM to the data under scrutiny in this paper is then to predict the groups (year 1, year 2) on the basis of the readability scores. In order to do so, the same data frame, where scores of readability metrics were pooled and class labels (year 1, year 2) were added, was used to compute SVM with the \{caret\} package. During the training phase, data was split into a training set and a testing set. The training set was used to develop the statistical model that was later applied to make predictions with the testing set. This procedure was repeated 10 times (the data was split into ten subsets, each one of them considered to be independent). As a result, the whole dataset has been part of both the training and the test set, which is known as a ten-fold cross-validation. Eventually, the confusion matrix presented in Table 2 was generated: it shows that most productions belonging to the second year were correctly predicted (except for 9 that were assigned to year 1), but it also shows that the model misclassified 31 year 1 productions, assigned to year 2. In conclusion, it seems that year 2 has some features that differentiate it from year 1, but intrinsic features of year 1 are not so clear-
cut for the model. Accuracy of the model was 80%, and the final values used for the model were $\sigma = 0.1395$ and $C = 1$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Confusion matrix of SVM predictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 predicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowing that the model performed with an accuracy of 80% and that it managed to classify accurately most of the texts belonging to Year 2 – although it struggled with texts from year 1 – the next step was to compute variable importance in order to know which of the 17 metrics were responsible for this classification. This step is crucial, since detecting which metrics allow for classification of the texts will also indicate which are the linguistic parameters that differentiate students from the first and the second year, respectively. Figure 1 shows a plot of the importance of each variable for the model: the three more useful predictors are FOG, LIX, and RIX; whereas the four less important predictors are DRP, FORCAST and Coleman-Liau. Recall that the four less important predictors are, in fact, the four metrics that did not detect any significant difference in the means of the two groups when the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed.

Figure 1: Importance of each readability metric for the SVM model
Conclusions and discussion

Results yielded by the SVM model showed that three metrics were particularly useful to detect differences between the two groups of students: FOG, LIX, and RIX. Linguistic parameters behind these formulae are roughly sentence length, use of polysyllabic words, number of words per sentence, and number of sentences:

- **FOG** = 0.4 · (average sentence length + percentage of polysyllabic words)

- **LIX** = number of words per sentence + percentage of words with more than 6 characters

- **RIX** = \( \frac{\text{number of long words}}{\text{number of sentences}} \)

These three metrics are quite simple to compute, and parameters are almost unmodified by mathematical operations. All in all, it seems that metrics based on very basic aspects of the use of the language, such as sentence length, or the amount of long words, appear to be the most accurate to find differences in the two subsets of corpora under scrutiny. Conversely, metrics with lowest performance at differentiating the groups were those that relied on more complex mathematical operations, and particularly, on the use of mean cloze.

In regards to the complexity detected by the formulae, it should be noted that metrics assume that the use of longer sentences and longer words would result in less easily-readable texts, i.e. more complex productions. However, from the point of view of learners of English, this may not always be the case. One of the intrinsic difficulties of English for Spanish learners is the use of phrasal verbs, which are roughly the combination of a relatively short verb and a preposition (e.g. *put on, check out, get in*….). The (over)use of phrasal verbs may be transposed by some metrics as more simplicity in the average score of readability, whereas Latinate alternatives, often preferred by Spanish learners (e.g. *accelerate*, instead of *speed up*, because of the Spanish counterpart ‘acelerar’), are normally longer in syllable length and therefore transposed by the metrics as more complexity in the score. Nevertheless, since Latin-based words are often employed by Spanish learners, this simplistic vision of word length based on approximation of syllable count as indices of complexity may not be accurately applied to Romance language learners of English. Quite the opposite, metrics should rather take into account the use and the variety of phrasal verbs. But because in this paper native speakers and learners have not been compared, and only different groups of learners are taken into consideration, this hypothesis on the use of polysyllabic words has not been validated.

Something similar happens with formulae that include parameters related to the use of words considered to be “difficult”, or “sophisticated”, on the basis of pre-delimited lists of complex words, such as the Spache, Harris-Jacobson or the Chall-Dale formulae.
1953; Harris & Jacobson, 1974; Chall & Dale, 1995). Although these metrics have not been particularly useful for the classification of learners in this study, there is an important caveat in their use that should be noted: the implemented word lists were originally designed for native use, and the applicability of these inventories to learners may not be as accurate as expected. Again, consider that learners with Latin L1s may often employ classical or neoclassical compounds, as well as words with Latin origin instead of the Anglo-Saxon equivalents, due to the influence of their L1. Whereas for English native speakers these Greco-Latin words may seem more complicated, or “difficult”, for learners with Romance L1s some of these words come up naturally. Conversely, as stated before, the use of phrasal verbs appears to be more complicated to manage. Therefore, a learner-based inventory of “difficult” or complicated words may substantially differ from the one of natives, at least for learners whose L1 is a Romance language. In that sense, a specific index of readability for learners could implement an adapted version of learner wordlist of “easy” or “difficult” words.

All in all, this paper has shown that readability metrics can be used to detect differences in the use of linguistic features among different groups of learners. Although the two groups compared were assumed to have a different level because learners were in different years of their BA in an English major, no placement test was taken and, therefore, strong claims in terms of the validation of the metrics to detect differences between levels of proficiency cannot be made. This study shows that three readability metrics are particularly useful for the detection of differences in the data under scrutiny – FOG, LIX, and RIX – and confirms that the use of SVM models for classification on the basis of readability-based scores yields good results. Finally, this paper has pointed out that in Second Language Teaching (SLT) and Second Language Learning (SLL), the use of readability metrics and ML techniques is not wide spread. Yet, the use of these techniques would give teachers and SLA researchers new tools to monitor learners’ writing progression.

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References


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1 Before running the model, correlations between all pairs of metrics were computed using Spearman ‘r’, a standard procedure for the correlation of variables in non-normal distributions. This procedure showed that some of the metrics were highly correlated, which may be an issue for some machine learning techniques; and specially, for regression.

### Appendix: R script

```r
### Investigating the use of readability metrics to detect differences in written productions of learners: a corpus-based study. 2017. ###

library(koRpus)
library(tm.plugin.koRpus)

# setting the path for Treetagger
set.kRp.env(TT.cmd="set/your/path/to/treetagger/english",
lang="en", TT.options=list(path="set/your/path/to/treetagger", preset="en"))

# importing the texts individually, but all within a same complex object
noce_year1 <- simpleCorpus(dir=file.path("~/","Desktop","noce_firstyear"),
lang="en", TT.options=list(path="/treetagger/path/here", preset="en"))

## readability

# readability---
noce_year1_read <- readability(noce_year1, hyphen = NULL,
"DRP", "Farr.Jenkins.Paterson",
"Flesch", "Flesch.Kincaid", "FOG", "FORCAST",
"Linsear.Write", "LIX", "RIX", "SMOG", "Spache",
"Tuldava", "Wheeler.Smith"), parameters = list(),
```
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Tan necesario como indispensable en el ámbito de las lenguas de especialidad resulta el volumen editado por Gil-Salom y Soler-Monreal bajo el título *Dialogicity in Written Specialised Genres*, en el que se aborda desde un enfoque contrastivo el tema de la comunicación interpersonal y la dialogicidad lingüística en el discurso escrito en una multiplicidad de perspectivas delimitadas por los géneros, las disciplinas, las lenguas y los patrones culturales. Especial mención debe hacerse al espacio que ocupan en este trabajo los géneros digitales o cibergéneros, los cuales imponen una nueva forma de relacionarse en la escritura y que se estudian en este volumen desde una perspectiva dialógica.

A pesar de esta ambiciosa alta variabilidad concentrada en los capítulos que contiene el libro, las investigaciones en ellos desarrolladas tienen en común el análisis de la compleja interacción textual establecida en el escrito entre escritor y lector, como también comparten el uso de la metodología de corpus y el enfoque intercultural (inglés, español e italiano) que sigue las premisas temáticas (sociales y pragmáticas) y metodológicas definidas por la retórica intercultural en su segunda etapa (Connor, 2004; Sánchez-Jiménez, 2015), contribuyendo a crear una unidad de conjunto en torno al conocimiento en esta área de investigación.

Los géneros escrutados en los ocho capítulos que contiene el libro se pueden agrupar en *informativo* (libro de texto), *expositivo* (artículo de investigación, tesis doctoral) y *evaluativo* (reseña) (Shaw, p. 211), si bien los géneros que predominan son estos últimos, lo cual no es de extrañar si se tiene en cuenta que es en este tipo de escritos en el que la dialogicidad se manifiesta de manera más clara y relevante.

Como señalan las editoras en la Introducción, los enfoques lingüístico, semiótico, pragmático y sociológico son empleados a lo largo del libro para analizar el complejo fenómeno de la dialogía en el uso del discurso escrito (p. VII). En este fluido diálogo que se
establece entre el autor y el lector, los escritores proyectan su voz en el escrito con la finalidad de representarse a sí mismos en el texto, posicionándose (stance) ante el vals de voces que intervienen en el discurso, negociando el significado (engagement) en la exposición de sus ideas y anticipándose en cada momento a las posibles objeciones y posiciones alternativas mantenidas por el lector y el resto de miembros de la comunidad epistémica a la que este se dirige (Hyland, 2008, p. 7).

Desde una perspectiva constructivista, la identidad del escritor se perfila en los textos en cooperación con el discurso de los otros, ya que los patrones retóricos que se utilizan para establecer la posición en el texto definen al individuo y lo diferencian del resto de autores. En este intercambio lingüístico los escritores deben seleccionar cuidadosamente los recursos retóricos que les permiten persuadir a la audiencia de la validez y la certeza de las ideas contenidas en sus textos. Es por ello que en este volumen se han analizado los elementos gramaticales del metadiscursivo interpersonal -seguidos de la nomenclatura utilizada por Castelló, Corcelles, Íñesta, Bañales y Vega (2011) en español- que expresan posición (stance) e intertextualidad (engagement), reparando en el valor pragmático y discursivo de estos recursos lingüísticos, los cuales se repiten en diversos capítulos a lo largo del libro: enfatizadores, matizadores, estrategias de cortesía, verbos introductores de las citas, marcadores de actitud, marcadores de implicación, auto-referencia. El éxito de la comunicación interpersonal dependerá de la presencia de estos elementos, los cuales definen la interlocución entre el escritor y el lector en el discurso.

El libro se divide en dos partes. La primera se centra en la posición del autor en el texto y en la construcción de su relación con los lectores del escrito, mientras que la segunda se dedica a las interacciones dialógicas que ocurren en los géneros especializados en línea. El primer capítulo viene precedido por un prefacio a cargo de Flowerdew, quien sitúa e introduce el marco temático y disciplinar con un estado del arte que sirve para contextualizar los artículos que siguen. Tras esto, el capítulo introductorio de Hyland, una autoridad en la materia, describe los elementos interactivos y dialógicos del discurso académico (posición e intertextualidad) y revisa las aportaciones más importantes realizadas en este campo en las últimas décadas. Su investigación sobre la dialogía en el género del artículo de investigación en ocho disciplinas académicas diferentes remite a los resultados de su estudio publicado anteriormente en 2005 y 2008, cuyas conclusiones resultantes siguen aún estando vigentes en un género que resulta fundamental para entender el discurso académico.

En el capítulo primero de la primera parte, Soler-Monreal y Gil-Salom investigan los efectos evaluativos implicados en los verbos introductores de las citas a través del análisis de
las estrategias de cortesía en el capítulo de la revisión de la literatura de tesis doctorales escritas en inglés y español. Los resultados del estudio muestran cómo los escritores en lengua inglesa hacen uso de un mayor compromiso en el establecimiento de sus relaciones con las otras voces incluidas en el texto, mientras que en los textos españoles sus autores tratan de enmascarar su posicionamiento para evitar cualquier tipo de confrontación personal.

Tras estos dos primeros capítulos dedicados a la escritura académica producida por escritores expertos y estudiantes de doctorado, en el capítulo segundo Carretero analiza las reseñas de cine escritas en español y en inglés por críticos profesionales y aficionados al cine, utilizando la Teoría de la Valoración de la Lingüística Sistémico Funcional. La autora muestra cómo la interacción mantenida por los escritores con sus lectores difiere en los géneros contrastados. En el tercer capítulo, Diani analiza los artículos de reseña de libros históricos escritos en inglés e italiano y los compara con la reseña de libros históricos. La autora concluye exponiendo que se trata de géneros bien diferenciados, con un comportamiento discursivo distintivo a la hora de establecer las relaciones de posición e intertextualidad en el escrito, resultando ser los primeros más interactivos y complejos. En el siguiente estudio, Gea-Valor explora cómo se construye la propia identidad en el texto junto a la de los lectores en la crítica periodística de libros de ficción mediante el análisis del metadiscursivo interaccional de reseñas publicadas en inglés en el New York Times y en Newsweek, del que resulta que el tono evaluativo propio de la crítica se adereza con un vivo diálogo establecido con la audiencia con el propósito de captar su complicidad y solidaridad en el escrito.

En el primer capitulo de la segunda parte, Suau-Jiménez explora la comunicación interpersonal y dialógica en el género discursivo en línea foro de viajes de Tripadvisor, en cuya investigación la Teoría de la Acción Dialógica del Juego de Weigand resulta central. Como en otros capítulos del libro, el análisis cualitativo -contrastado con el cuantitativo- de las muestras le permite a Suau-Jiménez esclarecer comportamientos estandarizados relevantes ejercidos por los escritores en su relación con los lectores y con la comunidad epistémica de pertenencia, en los que la autora observa una relación singular en torno a los marcadores interpersonales de posición e intertextualidad analizados, sobre la que destacan dos ideas principales: el género de foro de viajes en línea es polifónico y en él se mezclan un número indeterminado de voces con usos interactivos similares de marcadores interpersonales en los que se difuminan los límites entre autor y lector. La segunda idea hace referencia al tono coloquial de este discurso (lenguaje híbrido a caballo entre el discurso oral y el escrito) en contraste con la información contenida en las páginas web clásicas de turismo en línea.
Dolón realiza un estudio socio-semántico sobre la construcción de la identidad del cliente “niño” como actor social en las páginas web oficiales de turismo y los foros de opinión de turismo encuadrados en el marco metodológico del Análisis del Discurso Crítico, géneros sobre los que observa diferencias en los comportamientos estereotipados mediante los cuales se caracteriza al niño con respecto a sus gustos y sus habilidades. En el tercer y último capítulo de esta segunda parte, en un meritorio esfuerzo por comprender la transferencia de los textos tradicionales impresos a un nuevo formato más dinámico en Internet, Yus parte de la hipótesis de que el modo en que los escritores usan el lenguaje para negociar las relaciones sociales varía en este nuevo contexto. Para ello, analiza las interacciones dialógicas expuestas en cuatro géneros académicos dentro de tres escenarios diferenciados por la transferencia desde textos reproduizados a textos adaptados y textos nativos en la red. Las conclusiones a las que llega este autor abundan en la idea de que Internet altera la dimensión interpersonal y el modo en que los escritores y lectores establecen sus relaciones en el discurso escrito.

En el capítulo conclusivo que cierra el libro, Shaw reflexiona sobre cómo ha evolucionado la escritura en la era digital y cuáles son los nuevos retos a los que se enfrenta el concepto de la dialogicidad en el futuro del discurso escrito tanto en el contexto académico como en el de las lenguas profesionales. Shaw distingue seis dimensiones de análisis de las que se sirve para caracterizar las investigaciones desarrolladas en los capítulos precedentes. A modo de conclusión, comenta que la web 2.0 ha transformado la naturaleza de la autoría en los géneros discursivos, así como la comunicación interaccional que se establece entre el escritor, el lector y los miembros de la comunidad epistémica. Por este motivo, bajo la premisa de que el contexto académico debe reflejar siempre lo que sucede en el mundo real, Shaw coherentemente recomienda que no se enseñe ni promueva en el ámbito académico el empleo de un elevado número de marcadores interpersonales en la comunicación escrita, ya que en los géneros digitales se hace un uso menos frecuente de estos recursos lingüísticos.

En resumen, los estudios contenidos en este volumen permiten comprender cómo se realiza la comunicación interpersonal y dialógica en textos especializados escritos en diferentes géneros a través de las lenguas inglesa, española e italiana. Se trata en su mayoría de investigaciones descriptivas que muestran los entresijos de la dialogicidad en géneros minoritarios (a excepción del artículo de investigación y de la tesis doctoral), por lo que se echa en falta en el volumen el análisis de estos recursos retóricos en géneros dirigidos a un público más amplio que permita una aplicación pedagógica conducente a la generación de nuevos textos especializados por parte de escritores novedes en la disciplina.
Por otra parte, en el libro también se registra la mutación en la representación de la voz del autor en los géneros en línea o cibergéneros que permiten comprender la evolución de este fenómeno en los últimos años a través de los textos analizados en los distintos capítulos, siendo este uno de los mayores aciertos y aprovechamiento del libro. De sus conclusiones se colige que los géneros tradicionales retienen intacta la distinción clásica entre escritor y lector, mientras que los nuevos formatos surgidos en la era digital se caracterizan por la confusión de estos roles en la web, lo que se instrumentaliza en los escritos mediante la desaparición significativa de los marcadores de interpersonalidad. Como consecuencia de este hecho, el lector asume el control y maneja el proceso de lectura, de modo que el autor puede deshinibirse de la tarea retórica de guiar al lector a través del texto. Es por este motivo que Sánchez-Jiménez prefiere hablar de wreaders (en español escrilectores) en su estudio, haciendo referencia con este neologismo a un híbrido que remite a las palabras writer (escritor) y reader (lector), con el cual se indica que los lectores son potenciales escritores, y que los escritores desempeñan también la función de lectores en los textos.

Tanto la cantidad de los géneros como de lenguas analizados en este trabajo pueden ampliarse en futuros proyectos que prosigan la labor científica iniciada con esta publicación, para los cuales este libro supondrá un modelo de calidad a seguir, validado por la profundidad y la rigurosidad de los estudios realizados y por la coherencia que se mantiene en la elección de la metodología de corpus y el enfoque contrastivo aplicado a todos ellos. En este sentido, permitaseme concluir esta reseña subrayando la relevancia del foco de atención de esta publicación y de lo significativa que resulta esta aportación para los estudios del discurso académico y de las profesiones. Este volumen es, en definitiva, una contribución necesaria a la exploración y la comprensión de la voz, la comunicación interpersonal y el uso de la lengua en su función evaluativa, a partir del que se establece un modelo multiperspectivista que pueden continuar futuras investigaciones en innumerables combinaciones posibles.

Por último, cabe reivindicar la necesidad de acometer este tipo de estudios en lengua española. La línea de investigación que analiza estos elementos discursivos está prácticamente ausente en español, si obviamos los escasos trabajos aislados carentes de sistematicidad o aquellos otros que, como ocurre en este volumen, incluyen la lengua española como elemento de contraste del inglés, pues son estudios que han sido generados con la finalidad de comprender mejor el funcionamiento de estos fenómenos en ese contexto lingüístico. La necesidad de entender la comunicación dialógica en esta era de transición tecnológica –en la cual no dejan de surgir nuevos géneros digitales– demanda una respuesta comprometida por parte de los investigadores en el ámbito de los estudios del discurso escrito en español que
defina los mecanismos discursivos utilizados en este tipo de interacción, para lo cual el libro reseñado supone un excelente modelo.

Referencias

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David Sánchez-Jiménez trabaja como Assistant Professor en New York City College of Technology (CUNY), tras haber enseñado en diversas instituciones de España, Filipinas, Hungría y Estados Unidos. Completó su formación académica en la Universidad de Salamanca y en la Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, en la que recibió el Premio Extraordinario de Doctorado del curso 2014-2015. Su investigación se centra en la organización retórica del discurso académico, la interculturalidad retórica y sociopragmática en textos escritos en el ámbito de las segundas lenguas y el aprendizaje de la ortografía en ELE.
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Interview

An interview with Dr. Suresh Canagarajah on academic mobility, language and literacy

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Interview (June, 2017)

Interviewer: Hello Suresh. Could you please share with us your response to the accusation that mobility is a newly fashionable term in academia without significant implications for scholarship?

Suresh Canagarajah: I think it is a fair criticism because lots of people talk nowadays about the “mobility turn”. People are sick and tired of all kinds of “turns”. For example, people talk about the “linguistic turn”, the “spatial turn” – all these things are trends in academia. So it has to be agreed that mobility is not something new, mobility has always been there. It is part of human development from ancient history. People have always been moving, people have always felt connected. May be the only thing to be said about modern time is there is technology. And a lot of things related to recent technological developments, like digital technology and travel, which
make mobility easier. And I think it is David Harvey, the geographer, who talked of compression of space-time difference. Somebody has put it rather humorously. They say “geography is history”, meaning place has been conquered by time. Place difference does not make any sense anymore. It’s history! They mean that spatial differences do not matter any more. You can be anywhere at the same time. So, isn’t that interesting? Geography is history. They claim that there is no barrier to mobility and to what we can do. We can be instantaneously in multiple places, for example.

So some people might say, along those lines, along with the idea that geography is history, that mobility is a new phenomenon. That because of the technological difference, etcetera, mobility has intensified – which is acceptable. But I think I would push back against the notion that mobility is an academic trend, or new trend that has more significance. What I think is that although mobility is ancient, and mobility has always been there in many different periods, we have not been addressing mobility properly. For example, in linguistics, or even sociology or cultural studies, we have made all activities into structures. You know, in linguistics, every language is treated as having its own structure. And so what structure means is that we have made activities static. So I don’t know whether they use this term in your field of education, in some fields they call the study of particular society, language or culture as a synchronic study. And synchronic means, you make it stand still in time. Diachronic is historical study. The founding of modern linguistics is based on synchronic study. Making language stand still in time as a structure is the proper form of study. Because you know, of course, it is easy to study language as a structure that is not moving. I think that trend has been there in a lot of disciplines, where we have been studying different social phenomena as a structure. I think mobility becoming an important turn in academic fields makes us question the whole development of academic fields studying static structures. So, although it is a fashionable turn, I think mobility is an important development. We have been able to address things that we have not been able to address in the past. One example, as I mentioned earlier, is moving away from static, structured ways of looking at language or communication or society to looking at all of these as mobile, as moving in space and time. So, for that reason, although it is questionable, I think it is an important development because people have not been talking about mobility as an important phenomenon in their lives.
Interviewer: Thank you Suresh. What difference does mobility make to doing research on language and literacy, then?

Suresh Canagarajah: We have been thinking about languages as each having a separate structure – like English is separate from German, German is separate from Italian, That all of them have their own structure. But mobility reminds us that before these structures are formed, all languages are mobile. One of my friends, Jan Blommaert, a Belgian sociolinguist, puts it this way: he says we have to think of languages as mobile resources. Languages are words that are moving everywhere. So, for example, English has three words from my native language, Tamil, and people who would listen to my accent would say, “You are not a native speaker of the language of English, you don’t know English”. They forget that they have taken over my words in their language and are treating them as part of their language. Another way of putting it is: all languages have mix of words which they have borrowed from many cultures, many communities, many languages. But scholars have not been addressing language as a mobile resource. We have always been addressing language as a static, grammatical structure. So it is important for linguistics now to think about how languages are made up of mobile resources. We have appropriated words and grammatical structures from multiple languages, cultures, and communities – and that is true for all languages.

Or, another way to put it is: all languages are characterized by contact between languages, between people, between cultures. But when we look at them as separately structured, we ignore all these histories of contact. So we are now trying to address what it means to look at language interactions as made up of mobile resources. Just to give you one example: when I am speaking in English and I use a Bengali word with you, some native speakers might say that this is not English. What I would tell them is English already has many words that it has borrowed from so many cultures and this is an ongoing process; that languages are interacting with multiple languages, appropriating a lot of resources from other languages. And what’s wrong with it when two people talk, and they mix English with Bengali or Tamil? That is how languages are made. So you can see the problem. Purists would say you should keep English separate, almost as if English is a distinct, pure language. But I would say: because of mobility, English has the traces of its mobile history with many languages. And that is ongoing.

So you see it makes a big difference in linguistics to think about language mixing and
language switching as a natural process rather than an unnatural process. In literacy, it is the same thing. We have taken texts as an isolated product, one text separated from other texts. But thinking about mobility in literacy would make us think how texts travel through time. Take for example Bhagavad Geeta. There is a lot of history and a lot of time difference in how Bhagavad Geeta as a text evolved. Some of it might have evolved in the oral kind of literature, people told these stories orally or narrated them and then it became a text. And when a person in the United States reads Bhagavad Geeta, would they understand it in the same way as somebody in India understands it? Earlier, people would say all texts mean the same everywhere. That is the tradition of autonomous literacy; that is, keep the text separate, or keep the text objective, separate it from history, separate it from culture, the text can speak for itself in any time, all time. So this is an objective way of looking at the text and saying this text means this meaning or this theme for all time, for all people. But now we are beginning to question that. I say text travels and they make many different meanings for many people. This does not mean relativism, such as I understand Bhagavad Geeta differently from you, and all meanings are fine. But it actually calls for more “negotiation”. That is the word I use for my publication.

Negotiation means how do I engage with the history of this text from my own positioning? You know, from where I come from. I come from Sri Lanka, from the Tamil community, or if I am living in the United States, I am a bilingual who speaks different languages. How does my difference make me look at Bhagavad Geeta or read Bhagavad Geeta differently? How can I engage with the history or the many interpretations Bhagavad Geeta brings from over time? Actually it calls for more engagement, more responsibility. So mobility in literacy brings into focus the production, reception and circulation of texts. It reminds us not to take the text as a finished product, but that it has been written by someone over time, that it has been received by people over time differently in different places. So what has happened in the course of this textual travel? This poses new questions for literacy, not to take texts as a static finished product as in autonomous literacy, but to take texts as mobile, that are travelling through time and therefore calling for more responsible interpretations.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Suresh. That was very informative and very interesting. Does mobility create new challenges for English language teaching?
Suresh Canagarajah: Yes. Already the examples I gave for the previous question suggest a lot of new questions for linguistics and for literacy. But there is a new problem for English language teaching. Earlier when we taught English in our countries to second language speakers or multilingual speakers, we said we have to teach English in a way that our students can talk to people in Britain or talk to people in the United States. So native speaker proficiency was the norm. These are the people who owned the language and therefore we said that’s our target. Now, with mobility, we are using English not only with the native speakers but also with so many other multilingual people. So when I speak English with you, a Bengali, why bother about the native speaker norm? It does not make any sense to us. We bring a very different background with English.

The new problem now is: we have to accept diversity and unpredictability in communication. I do not know with whom I am going to use English at any given time. Perhaps it is not going to be an Anglo person from the United States. It can be anyone from anywhere in the world because of globalization, because of mobility, because of diversity. So my big question is: how do I teach English for unpredictability? And that is a big question because teachers want convenience in their teaching. It is easy if there is one structure, one norm. They would love to say: “This is the right way to use English, and if you learn it in this way you are going to be fine”. And what I am saying is, that is a very wrong approach because this student is going to meet people who come with different norms. So if a teacher teaches only one norm, maybe the native speaker norm, it is not going to be enough anymore. Because you do not know with whom you are going to use that language. People tend to bring in their own norms like: Indian English, Bengali English, Pakistani English, American English, Nigerian English.

So my question is: how do we teach English for unpredictability? So that is taking me away from norms, such as saying that this is correct English. I am not worried nowadays about what norms to use in my teaching or communicating, but how to use English with people who bring different norms? There is a shift from what to how, right? What I mean by “how” is: when I meet a person from a different background who speaks differently, how can I communicate in a way that I make sense to them and what can they do to make sense to me? So the question now is, we can’t assume that everybody knows this grammar or the way I pronounce something in sentences. I am saying we have to consider the how of talking. That is: you bring a different accent, you bring different words, I bring different words and grammar; how can I communicate
in a way that I can make sense to you and you make sense to me? So this is actually making a shift from grammar to strategies, or norms to practices. So I am actually using my time with my students to teach them negotiation strategies.

A lot of people say multilingual people think on their feet, meaning that as they talk to each other, they are figuring each other’s norms. Now, in schools we don’t teach students’ to think on their feet. We tell them: “here is the grammar, memorize it, master it and you should be fine”. So they become impatient with lot of other migrant speakers. That is because they think: “hey, I learned the grammar in school, my teacher taught me and told me this is the correct way, and if you are not speaking it that way then it is your problem”. If you assume that there would be unpredictability in all conversations, then English language will have to change. We can’t depend on one grammar. We might have to move from grammar to practices, or from grammar to strategies, and think of what kind of strategies may help us renegotiate norms or co-construct new norms when we talk in a context of diversity.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, Suresh. Does the glorification of mobility in this neoliberal era make the demands of indigenous and postcolonial communities for their own sovereign land sound old fashioned or backward?

**Suresh Canagarajah:** Yes. I guess in the neoliberal dispensation people talk about flexibility as the norm. We should be flexible to move anywhere, to move to other countries, other places for jobs. I guess the logic is that whatever the market dictates, whatever is profitable or marketable, we should do that. We should be able to leave a country, go to a new place, because that is where your production would be cheaper or marketing would be more profitable. So flexibility is treated as an important phenomenon in neoliberalism and therefore mobility, crossing borders for work, education, for products, for ideas is considered more profitable. But at the same time, being placed is also universal and ancient. People like homes, a space that they can call their own. As I mentioned earlier, mobility has been there since ancient times, but placement has also been there since ancient times. Now we need to figure out how to bring these two together, not to think of them as dichotomies or opposites.

Actually, in some circles they have a bad word for valuing mobility without being placed. In the study of cosmopolitanism, they have a nice word: “rooted cosmopolitanism”. And what
that word means is although you are a global citizen, you also have a strong acceptance of where
you belong, you also have a pride in where you come from. On the other hand, if you are not a
rooted cosmopolitan you can be a wishy-washy, airy-fairy person. You pretend like “I do not
belong anywhere” or “I belong to the whole world”, without any identity or commitment. People
say that is impossible: you cannot belong everywhere, you have to belong somewhere. If you say
you do not belong anywhere, you might not have a strong sense of identity and acceptance of
who you are. On the reverse of rooted cosmopolitanism, therefore, there is a term ‘elite
cosmopolitanism’. There are people who are flying all the time, they are so rich, they are in
airport lounges drinking, eating all kinds of strange foods. They do not have the sense of
belonging and a lot of people feel that is possible for rich people. People with rooted
cosmopolitanism understand where they come from, but also have a global point of view and a
global acceptance of diversity. Those people might be better situated to make better contributions
to society.

So, what I am trying to say is: thinking of mobility without sense of place is first of all not
possible, there is always a sense of place. Also, it may not be good for people to think of
themselves as not belonging anywhere. So I would say that even in the context of mobility and
neoliberalism, I can appreciate how some communities feel that they have a right to their own
lands, they have a strong desire for home – for place, to being placed. The only qualification I
will make is that the place that you claim should not be treated as homogeneous or pure, because
many people have lived in this place for centuries before, and still live there. Sometimes when we
think about communities, we think of them as homogeneous and we close our eyes towards lot of
diversity. Take for example Bangladesh. There are a lot of Christians in Bangladesh. If some
people define Bangladesh as an Islamic community, belonging to the Islamic Bengali
community, they might ignore other people who are Bengali but different.

So people do make claims for their land, which is an important thing. But they have to
just remember: there is a lot of diversity even in the places they make claims for. The other thing
is that their places have traces, evidence of mobility – meaning that other people have lived there
before, they have left their marks on these lands before. Say, even in Bangladesh, the fact that it
is a very bilingual country shows the evidence of colonization of British there. And so if it is
possible for indigenous communities to make a claim for their land, which is totally acceptable,
they must also keep their eyes open to diversity and mobility. We are still open to influences
from mobility even when we are not moving. There are other things which are moving, like ideas, media, interactions with other communities for economy and politics. I think it might be possible to keep both things together. To be placed, to be proud of your place which you call home, but also be open to mobility.

Interviewer: Right, just one last question. I am also working on academic mobility, especially on scholars returning to Bangladesh after western training/education. What do you think could the prospects and challenges be for these scholars?

Suresh Canagarajah: A couple of things we need to consider, like why the returning scholars might not be contributing locally. Sometimes the issue is that the local scholars do not like the returning scholars, as they bring in new ideas, new knowledge. There is a power struggle, so to speak, where the local scholars feel they should hold on to their local status, their hierarchy. I experienced that when I went to Sri Lanka after my PhD. I was young, had just received my PhD. But some of the senior scholars in my university wanted me to be very quiet, and not to do anything new. Part of the fear was that they might not know the things that I had studied abroad. You feel sorry for them, sympathize with them, as sometimes they do not have access to all that information, the new books, the new research. So they feel a little insecure. That is why they want me to be quiet. That is one problem from the point of view of local scholars.

But there is also a problem from the returnee’s point of view. Sometimes we do not know how to make the connection between the new knowledge and the traditions back home. The returnees have a condescending attitude towards the local educational enterprise. They think these people are so old fashioned, they are so traditional, they are so superstitious. For example, in Bangladesh, I can imagine there might be educational institutions which are religious, which are Islamic. Therefore they would not be consistent with the secular knowledge that we bring from abroad. There can be a tension.

So there can be problems on both sides. Here again, the word I used before, “negotiations strategy”, might be important. That is, we cannot be one-sided. We need to figure out how to adopt a balanced approach to the local. So what I would try to do if I go to Sri Lanka is: first of all, acknowledge that there are also good things to traditional systems and local approaches. In my context, Sri Lanka, what was popular was very personal and narrative forms of knowledge,
where people would not care to be objective, scientific, or impartial in their approach. They would be personal. They would tell stories. However, there is an appreciation of some of these approaches in the West. There is a reaction against empiricism. People are saying: “we are pretending to be a machine or a robot who does not have any feelings”. We are people with values and assumptions about what is good knowledge. So, what I found was there is something good about the local way of approaching knowledge, which is narrative and personal. But how can we also make it a little more disciplined and more responsible? Because, sometimes, this local knowledge and personal knowledge in our local universities end up in fights, rumors, fisticuffs, people fighting with each other. What I tell them is: it is ok to construct knowledge from your personal experience, but can we adopt a position where we act responsibly or can we say things that others might agree upon? Or can I see how my own experience relates to other peoples’ experience? Or acknowledge that just as I have values or assumptions about how things work, other people also have their values and assumptions. So, that calls for a negotiation, right? It has to be a two-way approach; one has to try to understand the local traditions and approaches, and then also be critical of the empirical, secular traditions they are bringing from the West. And also how to introduce the good things they are bringing locally in an understanding way.

So, that is what I tried to do when I returned to Sri Lanka, and in some cases it worked. People appreciated it and said: “You are translating things that you have in a way that we can understand and appreciate”. And here is another problem when we introduce something as new, fashionable and superior in our country. There is immediately a reaction. People do not like that because they think you are trying to make them look inferior. On the other hand, if you present it as: “See, what we are doing locally, one tradition in the Western academy would agree with you, like the personal and the narrative” – then there is a nice opening to talk further. Then you can say: “We also need to be careful and disciplined”. You can introduce them to narrative research, or auto-ethnography in the West. Then they will say: “Oh, I see this is how they talk about personal experience in the West”. So, eventually, out of this, I think there might evolve a hybrid academic culture which is good for everybody – where the local scholars will feel we can appropriate the new knowledge according to our history and traditions, but also evolve, develop some new ways of looking at it that are a continuation of what we are doing here. And the returning scholar can also learn if they are heavily influenced by the West. They can see how to connect their new knowledge in relation to the local practices and they can also evolve.
I think part of mobility is also hybridity, in the sense that there is always going to be some mixing. Which brings me back to the first question about language contact, language mixing. And the same thing happens in knowledge. In a talk I gave in University of London last year, when I was a visiting scholar there, I called it “creolizing the Humanities”. And what it meant is people think of Creole language as a mixed language. Long time back they did not even think of it as a language, they thought it was like a polluted language and a functional language of uneducated people. But now creolization is becoming a key word for all disciplines. And I was actually drawing from creole practices in linguistics to say how, in academic work, we can also be creole scholars. In the example I gave you of the local and the global in terms of your returning scholars, there is creolization of knowledge. But creolization can also mean interdisciplinarity, how we relate our knowledge in one field to the knowledge in other fields. Or it can also mean how we can relate our knowledge of one geographical location, say England, to knowledge of another geographical location, say Bangladesh or China or India. So developing knowledge today is kind of multi-sited and it draws from multiple sources, whereas in the past the enlightenment tradition looked at knowledge as belonging to one community. Europe had all the knowledge, everybody else does not know what they are doing, right? So if you think of your academic world also as a form of creolization that rises out of mobility, then it is possible that returning scholars will engage better with local educational practices, intellectual traditions, and develop something new and constructive.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Suresh.

**References**


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