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Teaching and Learning EFL in Spanish Speaking Contexts

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Teaching and Learning EFL in Spanish Speaking Contexts

The teaching and learning process of English as a Foreign Language has been studied thoroughly through the years and the scenarios. This issue pretended to gather some results of research about the topic conducted in contexts where Spanish is the first language of the students.

On trying to get as much research results as possible, we invited professors of a great number of universities in Spain and Latin America to submit their contributions to this issue. It was a big surprise to learn that at least in Latin America, there is no so much research on the topic as there is teaching.

Raquel Criado and Aquilino Sánchez in their article “English Language Teaching in Spain: Do Textbooks Comply with the Official Methodological Regulations? A Sample Analysis”, try to verify up to what point ELT textbooks used in Spain comply with the official regulations prescribed, which fully advocate the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT). For that purpose, they selected and analyzed seven representative textbooks of secondary, upper secondary, teenager and adult educational levels. They discovered that in all the materials prevailed above 50% of communicative nature, and that the remaining non-communicative block was covered by activities focused on the formal features of language (grammar and vocabulary). They concluded that the resulting degree of dissociation between official regulations and what is really found in teaching materials may be positive.

The difficulty perceived by seventh grade students in connection to listening activities in the English class, at some public schools in San Juan, Argentina is studied by **Marcela Morchio** in her article “Listening as an Easy Skill: Analysis of a Particular Context”. The author finds as a result of her research that there are several factors that act as constraints on the language learning situation. Professor Morchio with a team of teachers tried to find some possible explanation for the difficulties students were confronted with when learning English at school.

They studied the causes of those difficulties and tried to suggest some possible pedagogical interventions to overcome them. They investigated the teacher, the student, the contents and the context.

Carmen Foz-Gil and Isabel Gionzález-Pueyo's contribution to this issue, "Helping Spanish SMEs Staff Develop their Competence in Writing Business Letters", reports on the development of a website tool aimed at helping Spanish small and medium enterprises (SMEs) staff to write their commercial correspondence in English. The website was developed with ready-to-use materials, easy-to-manage and flexible enough to serve both as a helping tool at work and as an autonomous e-learning device. The aim of the authors was to compile a comprehensive collection of sentences, phrases and even paragraphs of high occurrence in business letters which could be used as patterns in a wide range of situation or communicative events likely to happen in the process of an international commerce transaction. The paper reports on the methodological criteria and the rationale behind the development of the tool, and describes the steps involved in the design process

Minoritized peoples in Ecuador have the right to learning another language and reinforce their own at the same time? **Marleen Haboud** discusses this topic in her article "Teaching Foreign Languages: A Challenge to Ecuadorian Bilingual Intercultural Education". After describing the Ecuadorian main linguistic and educational policies in regards to the teaching of foreign languages, the article analyses the contrasting viewpoints of indigenous and non indigenous peoples towards the process of teaching-learning foreign languages, and offers some suggestions and general parameters related to foreign language teaching in the multilingual context of the study.

Fernando Miño-Garcés presents *Learning for Life*, a teaching-learning philosophy used as a way to motivate native Spanish speaker students learning English as a foreign language, and to help them be the constructors of their own knowledge. In his paper "Learning for Life, a Structured and Motivational Process of Knowledge Construction in the Acquisition/learning of English as a Foreign Language in Native Spanish Speakers" he states that in the Learning for Life philosophy, the learner is the center of the process and becomes the creator of his/her own knowledge. To get to this new dimension in learning, acquisition is emphasized, and the principles of this philosophy are applied in the EFL classroom. The definition of the philosophy and its principles are presented, and explained in detail as to how they can be applied in the teaching of a foreign language. This paper also explains the difference between acquisition versus learning, and what process should be applied in the classroom to emphasize on acquisition, and not so much on learning.

Evaluation is a very important part of the teaching-learning process, **María Martínez-Lirola and Fernando Rubio**'s contribution "Students' Beliefs about Portfolio Evaluation and its Influence on Their Learning Outcomes to Develop EFL in a Spanish Context" analyses the benefits of using a portfolio as a means of evaluating student progress and the beliefs from which students draw their learning and motivation. Two studies conducted at two universities in Spain to explore students' opinions of portfolio use surprisingly revealed that students found effort and daily work as the main beneficial aspects for their learning and motivation. The authors suggest that successful replication of this study in diverse contexts would imply that portfolio implementation can be a powerful instrument to empower students' motivation to learn. The article also discusses other results related to portfolio use

Knowing the vocabulary size, both receptive and productive, of learners is very important to have an idea of what FL tasks learners are able to perform. It is said that having a large vocabulary size is essential to interacting in the foreign language. But, how do students develop their receptive English vocabulary size? **Melania Terrazas Gallego and María del Pilar Agustín Llach**'s "Exploring the Increase of Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge in the Foreign Language: A Longitudinal Study" tracks the increase in the overall word reception knowledge of 224 young pupils, and conclude that the development of these students' receptive English vocabulary size is incremental and constant, and that Learners increase their receptive vocabulary knowledge in a significant way from one grade to the next. The rate of the gain remains constant across grades.

We would like to finish by expressing our gratitude to all the contributors to the volume for their professionalism and patience in the process of editing this monograph. We would also like to thank the referees who have supplied valuable feedback and advice to the authors.