Can teachers influence in their students’ motivational and anxiety levels through the use of certain teacher strategies, so that students are able to produce more oral communication in EFL classes?

Alejandra Leiva Matus

Abstract

This article presents an investigation on the implementation of a set of actions based on, or part of, motivational and anxiety-reducing strategies inside an English as a foreign language Chilean 10th grade classroom. Motivational and anti-anxiety interventions were deployed in the context of project-based learning unit about Literary Analysis and with the aim of aiding students to produce more oral communications in English. The study attempts to answer the question is it possible for teachers to influence in their students’ motivational and anxiety levels through the use of certain teacher strategies, so that students who are not used to speak in the foreign language are able to produce a greater amount of FL communication in classes? Through the implementation of the unit and the strategies carefully selected for this group of students and the analysis of data collected, the findings support the notion that teachers are able to influence their students by nurturing a stress-free and collaborative environment, in which learners are provided an important number of learning experiences and where effort is more valued than accuracy, L1 and error are learning tools and building student’s confidence is essential.

Keywords: classroom motivational strategies; anxiety; collaboration; project-based learning; oral production.

INTRODUCTION

Developing each one of the four language skills, listening, writing, reading and speaking, is essential when learning how to communicate in a Foreign Language (FL). Consequently, teachers, when planning and conducting sessions, should pay attention to the focus of their classes and try to find a balance and integrate the practice of these four interdependent parts of language, so production activities are as important as receptive activities. In the same vein, efforts must be made to prevent learners from only having, in the words of Scrivener (2011), “up-in-the-head knowledge”, that is to say, passive knowledge that does not get to be active knowledge, for example when a learner knows a good amount of FL grammar or vocabulary, but is not able to communicate in the foreign language. In case of oral production, some FL classrooms might seem to favor it, while others might neglect it. Oral production in the FL classrooms is probably the most cited source of anxiety (Mak, 2011; Liu & Jackson, 2008) for learners in general. Similarly, speaking in front of others in class seems to be the skill with which Chilean school students struggle the most (Díaz and Morales, 2015). This is probably because so many emotions and feelings are connected to producing language orally. That is why English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, as any FL teacher, should consider a number of factors that are essential to foster oral production in an EFL setting, such as environmental particularities, students’ characteristics and past experiences, classroom relationships and interactions, to name only a few. Some of these factors are intrinsically related to concepts need to be explained in order to continue with this article, since they served as the basis for the decisions made and actions taken inside the classroom as part of the development of a Project-based learning (PBL) unit. These concepts are Motivation, Anxiety and Collaboration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. MOTIVATION

Motivation, which is an umbrella term that gathers diverse cognitive and affective processes, is frequently referred to as the engine that moves learning, and helps overcome learning obstacles
such as anxiety. Dörnyei (2001) states motivation is responsible for "why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it" (p. 8). Consequently, when analyzing how to motivate and manage Chilean students, Epperson & Rossman (2013) discussed strategies based on the relationship between student motivation, participation and classroom management and state that learners who are motivated enough will be more willing to participate in class activities, especially when the teacher gives them the chance to be the center of the class and produce more language. Many other authors, such as Ur (2012), Harmer (2001) and Scrivener (2011) also assign an important role to students’ learning motivation. While motivation is important when acquiring a first language (L1), it is considered to be essential when learning a second language (L2). It is, according to Ushioda (2012), “widely recognized as a variable of importance in the L2 learning process, and possibly one of the key factors that distinguishes first language acquisition from SLA” (Second Language Acquisition) (p.58).

When talking about motivation some argue that learners’ motivation should preferably come from within the students themselves, for example as a result of a feeling of closeness to the English language, or from an interest related with the people who speak in the L2 and/or their culture. This is what Gardner and Lambert (1972) in the 1970’s called integrative motivation, and was supported by Harmer (2001) who considered that “students who felt most warmly about a language and wanted to integrate into the culture of its speakers were more highly motivated (and learnt more successfully)”. Of course, Gardner and Lambert’s instrumental motivation (1972), which refers to the interest in learning a language based on the things one can accomplish by using that language, can also be considered important.

In time, both dimensions of FL or L2 motivation were considered insufficient to explain how motivation moves learners to become engaged and sustain engagement through their learning processes and intrinsic and extrinsic orientations gained theoretical prominence as concepts that more adequately helped in the analysis of motivation and language learning. Dörnyei (2001) stated intrinsic motivation “concerns behavior performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction such as the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity”. At the same time, the author stated extrinsic motivation “involves performing a behavior as a means to an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g. good grades) or to avoid punishment” (p.10). He also further explained human motives were in a continuum between self-determined (intrinsic) and controlled (extrinsic) forms of motivation.

Particularly, intrinsic motivation has largely been discussed when talking about how to motivate students. According to Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) “attention was drawn to the importance of intrinsic motivation and how it could be fostered through engaging students in setting optimal challenges or short-term (proximal) goals and promoting feelings of success and competence” (p.404). Larsen and Rusk (2011) defend its importance by explaining intrinsic motivation works as a propeller for learning, since it relates to a more engaged and perseverant disposition from our students, which can translate into more effective learning. They also propose that factors such as a context of positive relationships, motivating environments, peer-to-peer influence, personal connection and interest towards activities and/or subject matters, as well as sustaining the conditions for intrinsic motivation in the face of obstacles and anxiety, allow for a better development of motivation and, consequently learning.

Indeed, extensive literature agrees on the fact that the higher the learner’s motivation to learn, the better the chances will be of the student to successfully acquire a foreign language.
As Harmer (2001) states, “whatever kind of motivation students have, it is clear that highly motivated students do better than the ones without any motivation at all” (p.8). In direct relation, there are questions regarding whether teachers can or not influence students’ motivation, especially intrinsic motivation. Is it at all possible that through certain actions a teacher could encourage motivation that comes from within the students themselves? If so, how can it be done
and what are those actions or strategies? The literature seems to back the theory that both the teacher’s motivational state and the teacher’s motivational practices are associated with the levels of motivation and engagement learners experience in their learning processes. Harmer (2001) refers to the close relationship between students’ motivation and the teacher’s influence when stating that it is through the teachers’ “attitude to class participation, their conscientiousness, their humour, and their seriousness that they may influence their students” (p.8). Furthermore, a study, carried out by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) in South Korea, which examined the link between 27 teachers’ motivational teaching practices and their students’ language learning motivation (more than 1,300 learners) through a set of questionnaires, sustained that “the language teacher’s motivational practice is linked to increased levels of the learners’ motivated learning behavior as well as their motivational state” (p. 55).

Since learners’ motivation depend on “various internal and contextual motivational influences and regulatory mechanisms” (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012, pp 397-398) it is safe to assume that these should be considered by teachers when structuring their classes in order to put in place the interventions or practices that could more efficiently nurture their learners’ motivation. This is true especially considering that, as Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) explain, these influences and mechanisms can have an enhancing or inhibiting effect on individuals, that is to say, they can either contribute to achieving a goal (in this case learning and communicative goals) or can discourage a person from continuing the pursuit of such goal. Decisions on what motivational strategies to use become highly important if the goal is to motivate language learners and keep them motivated, ultimately, moving from the motivation for a task, through motivation for a session, to a motivation that expands to the duration of a course and their entire education.

**Motivational Strategies**

Motivational strategies in a broad sense refer to motivational influences that one can consciously use to achieve a systematic positive effect, more specifically and, in terms of the teacher-student relationship, motivational strategies refer to the “instructional interventions applied by the teacher to elicit and stimulate student motivation” (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008, p.57). In 1998, Dörnyei and Csizér produced one of the most influential studies on motivational strategies. Answering the claims that, from a scientific point of view, theoretical analysis of L2 motivational strategies was not enough to justify their usage, and also realizing there was a need for narrowing the rather large set of possible “strategies that teachers should pay special attention to when trying to implement a motivationally conscious teaching approach” (1998, p.208), these authors set out to analyze which were the most used motivational strategies teachers implemented in order to motivate their students. Through empirical study, the authors gathered classroom data from a population of 200 Hungarian EFL teachers who answered two questionnaires on (1) how important they considered a selection of 51 strategies, already a reduced set out of the possible strategies, and (2) how frequently they used the strategies inside their classrooms. On the basis of the survey’s results of beliefs and practices, the authors revised a selection of ten motivational macrostrategies Dörnyei had compiled in 1996, which was referred to as 10 Commandments for motivating learners, even though they were rather suggestions or recommendations. The findings yielded a rank scale and a modified set of 10 commandments, as shown in the following table:
Later, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), especially considering the 10 commandments study from 1998 had been western-situated and that empirical studies on the topic were scarce, replicated this study, this time in Taiwan with 387 EFL teachers. The selected strategies included in two questionnaires were taken from Dörnyei’s (2001) more comprehensive and systematic framework of motivational strategies. Teachers had to answer the same two questions in relation to 48 strategies. According to their responses, the strategies were ranked and resulted in the generation of, once again, a new set of 10 macrostrategies or motivational clusters. The following is the comparison of the rank orders in both, the Hungarian and the Taiwanese studies.

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<th>Taiwanese survey</th>
<th>Hungarian survey</th>
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<td>1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Recognise students’ effort and celebrate their success.</td>
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<td>3. Promote learners’ self-confidence.</td>
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<td>4. Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.</td>
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<td>5. Present tasks properly.</td>
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<td>6. Increase the learners’ goal-orientedness.</td>
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<td>7. Make the learning tasks stimulating.</td>
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<td>8. Familiarise learners with L2-related values.</td>
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<td>9. Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.</td>
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<td>10. Promote learner autonomy.</td>
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Furthermore, Sugita and Takeuchi (2010), following Dörnyei’s studies, conducted an empirical study on motivational strategies in Japanese EFL classrooms at secondary school level with 5 teachers and their 190 students. The authors described teachers’ actual use of 15 motivational strategies on the basis of self-reported frequency data, as well as investigated the relationships between the frequency of these 15 motivational strategies—considered as most important out of a total of 65 motivational strategies appropriate for lower secondary school—and the strength of students’ motivation. They found that there were only a few motivational strategies which showed a significant correlation with students’ motivation. The authors found that the effectiveness of some motivational strategies varied according to students’ English proficiency level. The motivational strategies that showed a strongest correlation with students’ motivation were (1) apply continuous assessment that relies on measurement tools other than pencil-and-paper tests and (2) share your own personal interest in the L2 learning with your students.

In sum, the research findings provide empirical support to the idea that the teachers’ motivational instructional practice has a positive influence on student motivation. The studies also suggest that motivational strategies may vary in importance depending on cultural factors and students characteristics. However, “context-appropriate strategies may indeed be influential in increasing student motivation” (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012, p. 404). In order to further our knowledge of motivation and motivational strategies, we must consider motivation is a complex and dynamic factor shackled to a variety of emotions. One of such emotions, which is usually linked to the
literature on motivation, and essential in this case study, is the concept of anxiety which will now be discussed.

2  Anxiety and anxiety treatment

Richards & Rodgers (2001) on their chapter dedicated to the Natural Approach state that its main representatives, Terrel and Krashen (1983), propose a set of hypotheses, one of which is relevant for this investigation, the **affective filter hypothesis**. According to this hypothesis, the learner’s emotional state works as a filter, either letting input freely pass or blocking input, with the consequences either of this two would have on the output. If the affective filter is low, less input will be blocked and acquirers will seek and receive more input, and interact with confidence, while the opposite is true is the affective filter is high. The affective variables for a successful learning process identified by the authors are **(1) High motivation, (2) self-confidence and (3) low anxiety**.

Anxiety is probably the most widely studied affective reaction to communication in foreign language classrooms. Specifically, language anxiety is a term that refers to negative feelings and emotions related to fear, which are associated with learning or using a language other than one’s native language (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Thus, it seems logical that the presence of anxiety would inhibit or even block learning and production and that the absence of it would be related to motivation and progress of a student’s learning process.

In a study carried out by Díaz and Morales (2015) on, amongst other topics, language anxiety during classes and oral activities, EFL Chilean students, from 5th to 8th grade, agreed that they felt anxiety thinking they could make a mistake or mispronounce a word and, in consequence, being laughed at or subjected to their peers’ jokes. This, as expected, had a direct effect on the learners’ lack of motivation to speak. As Scrivener (2011) explains it, in the process of becoming a more active language learner, students might feel foolish and be afraid of making mistakes. The Chilean study’s findings are interesting, because they relate also to the important issue of experiences, in this case past, which help shape the learners’ expectations and beliefs regarding language learning. Through a questionnaire on students’ perceptions towards their EFL classes, the authors analyze the affect in classroom environments and argue that anxiety is, indeed, essential in the path towards learning a foreign language, especially in schools, which are the places where the main, if not the only, exposure to the FL occurs, as well as being the environments that present the main opportunities for learners to produce the FL. Furthermore, Díaz and Morales, state this issue has yet to be raised or tackled by the Chilean educational system, which has been more focused on enhancing teacher training instead of focusing on the learning processes occurring inside Chilean classrooms and the role of students in the process of learning a foreign language. Consequently, one of the researchers’ final messages is that teachers should work on their abilities to generate a stress-free classroom environment, so that anxiety does not block the learners’ processes.

Most studies related to anxiety in foreign language classrooms are carried out using, or based on, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) presented by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986). Through the application of questionnaires based on FLCAS to 313 first-year Chinese ESL university students, Mak (2011) established there were five speaking-in-class factors that influenced levels of anxiety in learners of a foreign language, namely, speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation; uncomfortableness when speaking with native speakers; negative attitudes towards the English classroom; negative self-evaluation; and fear of failing the class/ consequences of personal failure. Mak also discovered that one of the factors that more effectively seemed to reduce learners’ anxiety when speaking was the possibility of using L1 if needed, while an important anxiety trigger was related to error correction.

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2 Translation by the author of this article
Usage of L1 in an L2 classroom

Although the notion of using L1 as a tool somewhat antagonizes with communicative language teaching approaches, which focus on the primary importance of L2 input and L2 interaction in L2 learning, when talking about the management of anxiety in EFL learners, there seem to be an opportunity for FL/L2 teachers to consider its usage. Basically, L1 is a mediational tool learners can use when communication problems arise and the possibility of using it inside the classroom is supposed to help students feel more comfortable, since they might feel they have a safety net. According to Mak (2011), the possibility of using their L1 if needed, alleviated or reduced anxiety in the students who participated of the study, especially at less proficient levels.

Some scholars such as Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2006) oppose the idea of using only English in FL classrooms and consider that when students share the same L1, it can provoke less anxiety by creating less threatening environments. Furthermore, Solhi and Büyükyazı (2011), in their study of nearly 110 Turkish EFL teachers’ perceptions, argued that L1 is one of the useful resources that learners possess and can add to the classroom work, however, used judiciously. The results of their questionnaire showed that one of the reasons teachers allowed learners the use of L1 in their classrooms, was to make them feel relaxed and confident, becoming then a facilitating factor for EFL learners.

Treatment of error

The aforementioned investigation carried out by Mak (2011) found that error correction was considered an important trigger for anxiety. Specifically, learners reported feeling anxious when they made mistakes in L2 and these were corrected by peers or teachers and also when teachers used students’ mistakes to further explain a point. This would suggest that a focus on fluency to build up confidence may be preferable, as well as delayed correction. Since negative attitudes toward a language, a teacher or a group can affect oral performance, it is logical that the formation of these negative attitudes should be avoided by attempting to provide students with a secure and comfortable learning atmosphere. If this is the goal, immediate use of students’ errors for teaching might be, indeed, counterproductive for accomplishing fluency and should rather be applied when the focus is on accuracy.

The detrimental idea of error correction derives from the fact that learners have not been taught to appreciate error as an important part of the learning process. In consequence, there is a need for changing the students’ perception of error and it is part of the teachers’ responsibilities to shape a new notion of error and help learners overcome the stigma that error usually carries, so that making an error becomes an experience they can learn from, an opportunity to advance and grow. Guerrero, Castillo, Chamorro & Isaza (2013) explain that a new vision of error is required in which error is no longer something to be punished, but a source from which to learn, in this case, a resource for acquiring language. If this treatment of error is incipient, attention must be paid to interruptions and corrections. Interrupting students when they are at the middle of an effort to utter a sentence can easily make them lose their train of thought. Furthermore, “constant interruption from the teacher will destroy the purpose of the speaking activity” (Harmer, 2001, p. 94). Ur (2012) argues that a much better approach is to pay attention and listen to the students’ exchanges and gather information that can be later translated into general corrections and explanations at the end of the class, while Scrivener (2011) states that when the focus is on fluency “instant correction may be less appropriate and could interfere with the aims of the activity” (p.225). All this would point to the importance of paying attention, as a teacher, to the possibilities of correction and to align these with the different classroom activities, the different goals for these activities and the learners inside the classroom.
According to Rubio (2004), quoted by Cordero and Morales (2016, pp 261-262) in their investigation about the level of anxiety students had while performing oral English activities and in order to find possible techniques or strategies to help them feel more secure, teachers should work on eliminating as much as possible the source of anxiety and help students fight against it. Apart from creating a positive and cooperative classroom environment, treating students with respect and showing a positive attitude themselves, teachers should “implement a non-threatening error correction practice, thus aiding students to develop a minimal stress level when using English to communicate orally with others and feel more motivated and satisfied in being able to express their ideas in the foreign language” (pp 261-262). Cordero and Morales’s investigation, conducted in 29 students aged 17-27, proved that the strategies recommended by Rubio were effective in helping students feel more secure when using English orally inside the EFL Classroom, and were recommended in cases in which teachers were faced language anxiety their classrooms. In the same vein, if teachers are interested in influencing students to practice their L2 speaking skills they will probably “want to create activities in which learners feel less worried about speaking, less under pressure, less nervous about trying things out” (Scrivener, 2011, p. 213).

Given that the theory seems to reveal that affective variables such as anxiety influence learners’ L2 performance, the implications are that all language professionals should respond, not only to students’ linguistic, but also affective needs, by trying to provide a secure and comfortable classroom atmosphere, where there is little or no fear of speaking and learners are free to take risks in the FL.

3. COLLABORATIVE WORK IN PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

One of Dörnyei’s (2001) macrostrategies or clusters is Promoting cooperation among the learners, since working with others fosters group cohesiveness by having students work with a purpose and bond through the experiences, which in turn increases the learner’s expectancy of success, since success is more obtainable than when working alone. Cooperation entails a mixture of academic and social goals and helps create a sense of joint responsibility, so when motivation is low, one can motivate the other. It increases the significance of effort in relation to ability and generates less anxiety and stress than other learning formats. Studies around the world sustain that students in cooperative environments (e.g. small group activities or project work in the communicative language teaching) have more positive attitudes towards learning, develop higher self-esteem and self-confidence than in other classroom formats, which is due to the fact that peer interaction is seen in modern language teaching methodologies as a necessary to build the learners’ communicative skills.

As many authors agree (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Vygostsky, 1986; Dewey 1938), collaborative environments allow the learner to socialize and socializing is where learning best occurs. It seems also that where motivational strategies and anxiety treatment can be better deployed is inside a cooperative environment where a group works together in order to accomplish a task. It is not strange, then, that when discussing group work as one of the variables of motivation Ur (2012) explains that learners performing a learning task through small-group interaction is a “form of learner activation that is of particular value in the practice of oral fluency (...) It has other advantages: it fosters learner responsibility and independence, can improve motivation and contribute to a feeling of cooperation and warmth”. (pp 232-233). Furthermore, students should be given the chance to work in pairs, then in groups, then in front of the teacher and later with the whole class group (Ur, 2012), as a way of developing self-confidence gradually.

In an investigation of the nature of L1 and L2 use in student/teacher’s interaction while engaged in pair/group work in L2 classroom discourse, according to Ghorbani (2011) “classroom observation

Translation by the author of this article
revealed that in pair/group work activities (compared with other classroom activities) students were more involved in using L2” (p.1657). Group work gives learners opportunities not only to produce more and more freely, but also the chance to be of assistance to other learners. This refers to what Vygotsky called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding which, from a social constructivist perspective, occurs in speaking teaching and learning when “a competent language speaker helps a less competent one to communicate by both encouraging and providing possible elements of the conversation” (Scriven, 2011, p. 227), so helping the less competent learner evolve in his or her learning process. Scaffolding is also crucial when the goal is trying to reduce anxiety. It refers to the temporary supports the teacher provides the learners until they are ready to assume enough responsibility for their learning process and support can be withdrawn gradually.

When creating lesson plans, with sessions where the purpose is enhancing motivation and reducing anxiety, in a communicative and collaborative learning environment, three theories should be kept in mind. Constructivist principles provide ideas to help instructors create learner-centered and collaborative environments that support critical reflection and experiential processes. Piaget’s (1969) theories claimed that students construct their knowledge through cognitive structures, which are “basic, interconnected psychological systems that enable people to process information by connecting it with prior knowledge and experience, finding patterns and relationships, identifying rules, and generating abstract principles relevant in different applications,” (Garner, 2008, p. 32). Learning through discovery learners are supposed to advance in their knowledge. Furthermore, another theoretical support is found in Vygotsky (1978), who added the social factor to Piaget’s constructivism. Vygotsky’s social constructivism argues that an individual learns by experiencing and doing and through social and interpersonal interaction. An important concept is the afore mentioned Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), formed by “the current or actual level of development of the learner and the next level attainable through the use of mediating semiotic and environmental tools and capable adult or peer facilitation” (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010 p.238). A student working alone can obtain certain amount of development. However, working with other more knowledgeable learners or a teacher, the individual is able to accomplish a higher-level task that could not accomplish on his or her own.

Project-based learning (PBL) is an effective approach which is in line with theories and concepts already mentioned. In PBL, learners construct knowledge, using as starting point their background knowledge and by doing i.e. experiencing. Dewey (1938) proposed that learning by doing has great benefit in shaping students’ learning. According to Dewey, students should have opportunities to take part in their own learning. He believed that they would succeed in environments where they were able to interact, both socially and with the curriculum, and where they are able to learn through high-quality experiences. This would be essential in the learner’s preparation for future life (Talebi, 2015). In PBL, there is a scaffolded instruction “when teachers use organizers that aid students in bridging the gaps that exists in knowledge and skill, and it makes the tasks manageable and achievable (Bell, 2010, p. 41).

In conclusion, Project-based learning, which uses the project as a vehicle of instruction in an environment where students are active participants in the development of their own knowledge, would be effective for the particular goals of the unit, since in PBL classrooms “students learn the fundamental skills of productive communication, respect for others, and teamwork while generating ideas together. Negotiating how to collectively solve a problem is also part of PBL” (Bell, 2010, p. 41).

This theoretical framework served as foundation for the construction of a pedagogical unit devised for a specific group of students in a specific context which will be analyzed next.
METHODOLOGY

Diagnosis

The following sections contain a report of the different aspects of the school environment and the class group for this intervention. The information included came from personal communications with school teachers and coordinators and a five-month personal observation (a log was kept in order to register some situations that seemed important), as well as the analysis of School Educational Project and the mission and vision of the international association they were part of.

Participants

The class group was one half of one of three 10th grade groups. Due to school policy, each class group was divided into two for English sessions. In a personal conversation, the department coordinator explained the reason for it, was to favor the process, considering it is a different language and especially because they wanted to favor the oral communication process. This class group was comprised of 14 students⁶, 5 boys and 9 girls (the original class had 30 students in total). The students went one of the English teachers’ classrooms and attended three 45-minute and one 30-minute English classes per week. The group, if not hugely motivated, usually showed a good behavior and disposition towards work.

The amount of opportunity for students to participate in the class was great. Even though the teacher conducted the sessions, the methodology was quite student-centered. However, even if student-centered activities were used and one of the reasons for divided the groups was to favor oral communication, the meaningful use of oral English amongst students when working on their own was extremely low. Students were not required to speak in English during classes, so they resorted to using L1 at all times. Consequently, opportunities to promote, develop and practice oral English were lost in every class. In the few instances learners were prompted to produce English orally, usually two or three of them participated (those who could communicate in English or in a mix of L1 and L2), while the rest mostly refrained from participating. Most importantly, it was observable that just a few of them had the confidence to speak in another language, whether they did it well or not, while most struggled and did not have the confidence or the motivation to utter simple sentences in English even though they might have been able to speak in English, even if not perfectly. This was a class with a number of favorable conditions, such as being a small group, being taught by a fully bilingual teacher, important exposure to the L2 (through trips abroad, advanced English speaker peers, family cultural capital, amongst others) which could have led to think they could show an intermediate or even high oral proficiency in L2. In other words, practicing their speaking skills in L2, should have been an activity that posed no real problem for most of these students. However, that was not the case. Even if some speaking tasks were carried out and an speaking evaluation was included throughout the year’s units (for example, presentations in front of the class), opportunities to develop speaking skills further seemed to be lost in most of the regular sessions. This seemed quite a waste, considering this group and context appeared to have much more resources than most other educational contexts in the Chilean Educative system.

Furthermore, because flexibility was an important characteristic of the community, most learners were not used to being challenged enough to complete their activities or produce a higher amounts of language. As a consequence, in the occasions they did feel challenged, frustration and anxiety arose easily, sometimes even causing students that would usually do well in drillings and tests become unable to perform tasks such as writing a 35-word message for a friend or answering correctly PET level speaking questions. They were mostly quite resistant to the unknown, and easily

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⁶ In this group, one student was a native speaker, and another was an advanced-level student of English. Thus, special programs were designed for them which usually emanated from the students’ interests, or from the training needed to sit different international tests. These two students will not be part of the implementation of this unit.
saw challenge in a different class structure or small “pushes”, such as being asked to carry out an activity given a fixed amount of time. So it was logical they felt more pressured when asked to produce language orally in front of the class or go beyond answering worksheets.

Sessions

The English department was divided into 4 cycles (subdivisions), each with two English teachers and a coordinator, working together in order to make decision regarding class work, materials, class environment, and any special situation that needed special treatment. English classes were mainly organized around a program of activities, product of the collaborative work carried out by each cycle’s teachers, who very loosely followed the Chilean National Curriculum in terms of objectives, contents or topics. No textbooks were used during classes. Instead teachers prepared the material for the activities in each unit (worksheets, power point presentations, schedules, guidelines, and video or important websites’ links).

In the sessions, once the central topic of a unit was introduced during the unit’s first session, students would work usually individually on tasks (usually in worksheets) such as, filling in gaps, rephrasing, correcting, listening, reading texts, answering questions, researching, planning, etc. Mostly, students were expected to self-regulate, which proved to be somewhat easy considering the majority of students had been educated “using” this model since pre-school. In general, teachers communicated in English, although Spanish was also used especially to clarify contents, instructions and doubts in general, and translations were given freely. On the other hand, as previously stated, there was an enormous amount of L1 use in the learners’ interventions. Students usually preferred to speak in L1 even though their comprehension of L2 appeared to be good. Usually, they decided if they preferred working alone or in pairs the emphasis was not on how they worked, but that they did work. Evaluations were varied, with tests being very scarce and commonly replaced by production of leaflets, posters, reports, virtual logs and sketch notes.

It is important to mention the organization of sessions did not usually follow the pre, while and post sequence. For example, objectives were stated during the presentation of the unit (first class) and sometimes reminded orally during the sessions, teachers only occasionally started with the activation of previous knowledge, most class work was never fully reviewed, and there was not a formal closure or there was no closure whatsoever. Besides, not much attention was paid to corrective feedback. Sessions were mostly treated as part of a whole, a continuum of activities which had to be performed in order to carry out a final task or a project. It is also worth noting that each class was very limited in activities with one up to three activities per class. One activity could occupy more than one class, in which case, students just carried on working in the following classes as if it was just one long class.

School Environment

The school where this intervention was carried out is a private school part of an international lay association of the Catholic Church, founded in 1911, which declared to be committed to evangelization, human advancement, and social transformation through education and culture. Students from this school come from high-income families with interests, beyond religion, associated with social awareness. The school’s class groups range from Initial Level (preschool) to 12th grade and class groups never exceed 36 students; the enrollment for year 2018 was of 1370 students. There are openings in Initial Level and all places for 1st to 12th grades are usually taken, since students usually study at the school from initial level through 12th grade. This was important because it means teachers knew the students since the start of their educational process.

The school context appeared to be quite favorable in almost every aspect. It was a welcoming, respectful and flexible environment where students usually expressed themselves very freely and
were led towards autonomous work and had no significant problem working alone or in groups. However, production might have been a bit slow in most cases. The school’s curricular approach aimed at favoring the acquisition of contents, abilities, competences, attitudes and values contained in the Study Plans, within the framework of personalized education, with a strong emphasis on the use of methodologies and practices that promoted the student’s autonomy and the flourishing of the student’s own identity. Their concept of education placed the human being at the center, so students developed integrally and creatively in what respects to their affective, cognitive, metacognitive and interpersonal worlds. The school’s goal was the development of a well-balanced, informed, updated person with a clear personal identity, life philosophy, convictions and opinions generated through reflection, judgment, and internalization (PIE). It seems important to mention that according to the school’s SIMCE test reports of 2016, when compared to schools at the same or similar socio-economic level, the results for all cognitive subjects measured were lower in this school. While, all personal and social development indicators, namely academic self-confidence and school motivation, school environment, citizen training and participation and healthy lifestyle habits, were higher.

**School requirements for the unit**

The school posed some requirements that limited the freedom with which the unit was developed. They are as follows:

- School program stated that this unit had to be built around the book *The Bride Price*.
- School procedures required the first class to be mainly about the presentation of the unit.
- Students had to read the book prior to the start of the unit. The week prior to the beginning of the unit was given to ask vocabulary or comprehension questions. Time during classes was not to be given for reading purposes.
- The school did not have any language objectives for book units.
- The end-product of the project had to be a sketch note.
- There would be **no grades** associated to the unit.
The unit

Considering the characteristics of the context and the participants, a unit was devised according to the school requirements, but which also served the purpose of putting into practice a set of motivational and anxiety-reducing strategies that could aid the pursuit of more English oral production in an EFL classroom. In the span of twelve 30 and 45-minute sessions this unit led to further investigate whether or not these strategies would help accomplish the goal of aiding students to communications orally in the foreign language. The unit followed a number of theories by authors (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978; Ur, 2012; Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2010; Kumaravadivelu 2003, 2006) who agreed on the fact that, in order to motivate students’ participation and to reduce or avoid anxiety, so it does not become a communicative obstacle, collaborative environments seemed to be more appropriate.

A Project- based learning (PBL) unit seemed to be the appropriate kind of unit in this case, since it would allow for more opportunities of participation and independence, while providing a purpose that mobilizes action and communication. In this unit, it served the purpose of presenting students with many opportunities for expressing ideas and feelings, discuss and make decisions orally while developing their knowledge of Literary Analysis. In devising the unit, the research done on PBL by The Buck Institute of Education and their eight essential elements of project design were followed, namely:

1. **Key knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills:** Student learning goals, content and skills.
2. **Challenging Problem or Question:** there should be a meaningful, level-appropriate problem or question driving the project and students work to solve it.
3. **Sustained Inquiry:** A continued process of students asking questions, finding resources to answer the questions and applying the new information.
4. **Authenticity:** A project should contain a connection to the real world.
5. **Student Voice and Choice:** Students should have a say in what they create and how it is created.
6. **Reflection:** Students and teachers both reflect on the project and the process.
7. **Critique and Revision:** To discuss favorable and unfavorable aspects of the project.
8. **Public Product:** Students work becomes public through display/presentation. (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015)

The PBL unit was complemented with the implementation of the set of strategies, selected by the researcher after careful analysis of (1) the experience and observations collected by the teacher from working with the learners as a trainee for seven months (students’ performance and personal characteristics), (2) the environmental characteristics of the group, and (3) the specific goals of the pedagogical unit and the investigation. The selected macrostrategies or clusters are those that seemed to have the most potential in order to making students incorporate more L2 in their oral interactions during class. The strategies came from previous theory and research produced in the field of psycholinguistics mainly by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2001; 2013) and literature related to anxiety in education and motivation in education. Within each cluster, emphasis is on two or three constituent strategies. Once selected, they were deployed through concrete actions and messages (see **Important actions and Important messages** below). The following is the set of macrostrategies or clusters:

1. **Proper teacher behavior** (constituent strategies: Be yourself in front of students; Establish good rapport with students).
2. **Recognizing students’ effort** (constituent strategies: Recognize students’ effort and achievement; Monitor students’ progress and celebrate their victory; Promote effort attributions)
3. **Promoting learners’ self-confidence** (constituent strategies: Provide students with positive feedback; Encourage students to try harder; Make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct).

4. **Creating a pleasant classroom climate** (constituent strategies: Create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking; Bring in and encourage humor; Avoid social comparison)

A. **Project Summary**

In this Project-based learning unit, students explored the possibilities of analyzing a book through the study and analysis of its literary elements. The need was born from the fact that they had a hard time reading three literary books for different subjects at the same time, probably because they did not know what to pay attention to in a book. In a first stage, the learners, individually, thought about their experiences reading the book, *The Bride Price*, a book laden with cultural references, relate it to other reading experiences, and come up with ideas for approaching a book in a meaningful way through discussion with others. Later, in project teams of three, students brainstormed and organized ideas and research steps, conducted research, evaluated, discussed, formulated and prepared their own book analysis outline as a conclusion of the research. This research served as support to create and present a Sketch Note showing a deep understanding of *The Bride Price*, which was to be featured at the Library, so students benefited from the process and the community benefited from the result. A feedback session was considered, to ponder on the effectiveness of the project and provide and receive feedback. It is important to mention that this session, however, was suspended due to the school changing their class program at last-minute. Sadly, no time was given for this last class afterwards and the unit had to be shortened once more. In short, then, students were invited to work collaboratively to define important aspects of book analysis that could help them grasp the meaning of a book in any situation. Throughout the whole process, one of the most important goals was that as much oral production in L2 was maintained. Since there was no grade involved in the process, learners were expected to show lack of motivation. That is why a series of teacher motivational strategies or interventions and strategies focused on reducing anxiety levels in students were put in place to aid this group of students who were used to using very little L2 in classes and expressed feelings of anxiety when they were faced to do so.

B. **Role of the Teacher**

This unit was implemented by the teacher in training (researcher), referred to as the teacher. The titular teacher of the class group was also mentioned, since she was almost always present in the classroom. In this unit, the teacher is an agent, a participant inside the classroom trying to engage students in the investigation needed to solve a problem, orientating and facilitating the learners’ process (the access to knowledge and the acquisition and use of it). The teacher organized tasks and class rules, decided assessment tools to evaluate the learning process of students.

C. **Role of the learner**

The learners are expected to be active participants of the process of building up their knowledge through the classroom experiences in collaboration with their peers and the teacher. They are expected to critically analyze, formulate theories, discuss with arguments and make decisions and to express feelings and opinions orally and in written form in order to solve a problem and produce a project product. Furthermore, learners are expected to engage in the production of oral communication in the FL.

D. **Unit objectives and Success Skills:**

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5 See the materials in Annex 1
Unit objectives
At the end of the Unit the students will be able to:
- Analyze aspects of a book
- Talk about a written and oral text exposing and discussing their ideas in pairs and groups
- Expressing their feelings, interpretations and points of view regarding a literary text, orally and in written form (sketch note)

Success Skills
Success Skills for the unit were:
- Speaking
- Critical thinking
- Team work
- Collaboration
- Organization and Creativity

E. Sessions Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Stages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unit Presentation/ Search project question or problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion on Cultural elements / Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Video and discussion on literary analysis: elements/Planning research</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Research on Literary Analysis (themes, characters, settings, plot, imagery, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Research on Literary Analysis (themes, characters, settings, plot, imagery, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Challenge day (characters map - character description)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Working on what is outlining ideas and starting outline for sketch note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Development of theme and outline of ideas for the sketch note</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Discussing and understanding relevant themes: analysis of extracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Discussing, weighing and selecting the most relevant theme for the sketch note</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sketch note draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sketch note draft and teacher review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sketch note production/ decision making/ teacher monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sketch note production/ decision making/ teacher monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sketch note production/ decision making/ teacher monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Presentation feedback (from peers and teacher) and closure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This sequence had to be modified. Some sessions (nos.7-8-10) were not fully carried out or did not occur due to changes in school programming. Final session was cancelled due to last-minute changes in school programming.

F. Unit materials:
1. Ppt presentation explaining the Unit (Visual aid) including calendar of activities, guidelines, rubric, and Peer Checklist and for all instructions and directing questions, since students struggle with paying attention and/or retaining instructions.
2. Google classroom for uploading instructions, materials, ppts and presentation of the unit: for students to have all the information available to them.
3. Worksheets (examples: analysis of Snow White, excerpts of text on Outline; themes analysis, challenge worksheets with list of characters, etc.): to guide activities.
4. Videos for warm-ups and discussions: to induce or support discussions, or show content on literary analysis (examples: cultural differences, controversial topics, interview of the book’s author and literary elements).
5. Ppt presentation with tips for production and analyses (examples, try to provide a complete answer, support with arguments, etc.) in order to guide students’ performance in tasks.
6. Ppt presentation with relevant definitions (examples: culture, cultural shock, tradition, inheritance, etc.) to help broaden students’ vocabulary and analysis perspectives.
7. Self-Assessment Checklist for research process: to guide students on their research process and elicit short discussions.
8. Ppt presentation on Book Relevance with questions.
9. Ppt presentation with important tips for sketch notes such as Ideas over artistic abilities, present clear ideas in coherent ways, think about the readers.
10. **Ppt presentation with sketch notes examples** always available to students: top orientate production.

11. **Rubric** (projected in production sessions and available to students).

12. **Materials necessary for the sketch notes**: cardboard, crayons, pencils, papers, pictures, prints, etc.: necessary for the project’s product.

13. **Sandwich feedback**: for peer feedback.

14. **Students’ oral production checklist**: for the teacher to record aspects and obtain a clearer view of the students’ oral performance.

**G. Unit assessment**

As previously explained there was no evaluation associated to this unit. However, guidelines and a rubric were prepared in order to guide students in their process of devising and producing a sketch notes as product of the project. Both were shown during the presentation session, uploaded to google classroom and also presented in most of the production sessions. The rubric was built around the categories of Information accuracy, Neatness, Information organization/layout, Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation, Focus on Task, and Team Work and Respect for others.

**H. Important actions and messages**

After carefully observing this intervention’s particular 10th grade group under the light of the five speaking-in-class factors Mak (2011) discovered that influenced levels of anxiety in learners, it would be safe to assume that (1) speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, (2) fear of consequences of personal failure, and (3) negative self-evaluation are related to the anxiety these students feel in general when asked to perform a task most of them consider challenging. The literature indicated that students felt more confident speaking in front of others if they had the possibility of using their L1, if needed, and that a non-threatening treatment of error and the notions of errors as a natural part of speaking a foreign language were also important. The unit implementation included actions and messages that originated from these findings and the motivational strategy clusters selected. The messages were relayed to students in the guidelines, from the presentation class onwards, in reminders in instructional ppt presentations, and continuously in the teacher discourse:

**Actions:**

1. In order to make the process of speaking more in classes as stress-free for the students as possible, and taking into account Ur’s (2012) practical tips, one of the variations introduced in this unit was the use of a monitor of L1 (the sheriff, different from the leader and the keeper) which also agrees with one of the important factors in project-based learning, which is the use of roles in the process of performing a task. The sheriffs were continuously reminded of their job to help their team maintain the usage of L2 while making decision in order to carry out the unit tasks. Keepers, on the other hand, were in charge of keeping all the information gathered, while leaders were the main link to the teacher and the ones who should remind their peers to focus on working.

2. A non-threatening error correction practice and changing the students’ perception of error by introducing a new understanding were needed. Error correction was scarce during most of the class. However, when monitoring the teacher would pay attention to mistakes, so she could correct those that repeated or that were related to content students were supposed to be familiar with. Correction would be made in front of the whole class, but to nobody in particular.

3. The teacher tried to the best of her abilities to interrupt students only using scaffolding techniques such as nodding and agreeing; concisely asking for clarification of words or meaning, asking brief questions or using sentence heads to encourage speakers continue speaking; unobtrusively saying the correct form of an incorrect word only if necessary; providing correct pronunciation if students seemed hesitant about it; providing a word or phrase if students seemed to need it (Scrivener, 2011).
4. To nurture learners’ confidence the teacher tried, to the best of her abilities, to celebrate the students’ effort and achievements (utterances of full sentences, utterances of complex sentences, utterances of complex ideas, and even usage of words in the less proficient level).

5. Easing the speaking process by allowing students enough preparation time and gradual practice of producing messages by, first, working in pairs, then in small groups without and with the teacher’s participation and, finally, addressing the whole class group.

6. Taking advantage of the good relationship developed between teacher and the learners and the good classroom environment, the teacher devised a sort of “catchphrase” she would say out loud and to no one in particular to remind students (1) that one of the main objectives of the unit was to produce more oral communication in L2, (2) to code-switch back to L2 or (3) that they were using L1 excessively. Whenever, while monitoring and guiding the learners’ work, the teacher noticed students had switched to L1 completely or where using L1 more than necessary (beyond their needs and capabilities), she would say the phrase and continue her tasks.

Messages:

1. Use of L1: The objective was for students to use of as much English in conversation as possible, even though, at times, they could resort to using Spanish if they needed, even if their utterances ended up being a mix of English and Spanish or only including some FL elements in a message mostly in L1 (this, in case of the less proficient learners).

2. Effort: The important thing in the sessions and the process was that students made the effort of speaking more in FL. What mattered was that they tried, not accuracy.

3. Error: Since the goal was to speak more in English, it did not matter if mistakes were made. Mistakes were a good thing, one more element of the learning process that allows us to acquire more knowledge.

4. Collaboration: respect for others and responsibility emphasizing the roles in each group and the support of each other.

5. Confidence: Since students had been learning English since pre-school, they had knowledge even if at different levels. They were all capable of speak more in English.
**Data Collection**

For the qualitative case study, data were collected from the researcher’s classroom observation data, gathered with a record protocol which included descriptive and reflective notes; short interviews with students in the last stage of the process; and a student performance checklist. All students’ names were avoided, referencing them through letters corresponding to first names. Many researchers have noted that one of the most common methods of classroom research is observing/recording. However, most of the motivational strategies are unobservable. Researchers also have argued that an alternative to observation is to ask people to report their experiences and thoughts. This was done through short interviews. According to Dörnyei (2001), “in the classroom context, it is rare to find dramatic motivational events that reshape the students’ mindsets from one moment to another. Rather, it is typically a series of minor events that might eventually culminate in a long-lasting effect” (p.25).

In class, students were usually organized in groups of two or three, 4 groups in total, while engaging in group work/discussion. The researcher’s role was that of participant, meaning there was interaction between researcher and participants and that the participants were aware of being studied. However, the learners did not realize the focus was on speaking, but thought the focus was on producing a sketch note, that is to say, they believed the focus was on the end result of the unit, not in the process.

### 3.1 Instruments and methods

**Class Observation and Checklist:** The group was observed for twelve sessions (of 45 and 30 minutes). The researcher recorded observations of the learners’ speaking performance and personal reflections on them. The rationale of classroom observation was to obtain a clearer picture of the students’ development of their English speaking skills during their interactions and see if they changed during the process. Observation particularly focused on students’ attitudes towards using L2 in the classroom and what functions were behind their expressions. Through observation a Checklist was kept by the researcher in order to see what learners could use English for.

**Interviews:** Additional information for the study was elicited through open-ended interviews with ten of the twelve students that started this unit. One of the students left the school after the fifth session on the unit and another one ceased to attend due to sickness after the tenth session. The students were separated from their group and asked to be interviewees. The short semi-structured interview to each student was conducted in the classroom in the last stage of the unit. Each interview lasted three to five minutes and was audio-recorded. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, in order to allow students to express their feelings and ideas more fluently and fully. The rationale for the interview questions was to gather their perceptions of their speaking performance during the unit’s sessions, and especially to find if it had been difficult to speak in English or not if and what were the reasons for their performance.

**Data Analysis**

Data were collected and analyzed by the teacher/researcher. First, all observation notes and interview data were analyzed. Second, the collected data were organized into two groups: (1) speaking development and (2) students’ perceptions post process. Then, the data were reread a number of times in order to find meaningful data (key words from the interviews and field notes). These annotations were compared and interpreted in order to obtain findings. In case of the checklist, data was analyzed and compared. In order to compare what learners could do in English. Data from two sessions at the beginning of the process was compared to data from two of the last sessions of the process. Furthermore, one set of data (Student uses English words in a mostly L1 message) for only the learners who used no English at all or just a few words was compared. Classes were grouped so there was data for all students on all variables.

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6 See student’s performance checklist format in Annex 2.
FINDINGS

Students Learning Outcomes

Content-related Outcomes
Based in class observation, unit objectives, and rubric, all students advanced in terms of grasping the concepts of literary analysis through the analysis of a book’s themes and literary elements. It was observable that the sequence of work helped more engaged students. These students then clarified aspects for less engaged students. All teams were able to develop a sketch note, although displaying different levels of analysis and comprehension. However, it was clear from the product and the observation while monitoring that students gained and retained some useful concepts learned, such as literary elements, setting, plot and symbolism, and themes. Students were able to discuss literary topics. All this could suggest that even though there was no extrinsic motivations related to grades, through collaborative work, scaffolding and negotiation to solve problems, all components of PBL, a sense of engagement is produce, even if not as strong as desired, agreeing with Bell (2010) who defends that through consistent employment and practice of the skills related to PBL lead to proficiency.  

It is important to mention that in the first and second sessions, more than half of the group expressed their major difficulty when reading had been how boring book was (which had also been detected during the diagnosis). However, since this was one of the problems leading the project most students understood the importance of reading the book in the end.

Note: Lexical or grammar contents were not part of the unit.

Skills-related outcomes
Based on Data analysis, all students showed at least a minimal improvement in their speaking skills. Even though discussion was not carried out fluently and systematically in the FL, considerable changes were clearly observable namely:

1. At the end of the process, all students were able to greet the teachers in English, which speaks of the installation of a habit.
2. At the end of the process, all students with the exception of one had, to a certain extent, increased their ability to express personal needs orally.
3. At the end of the process, all students with the exception of two had increased their ability to ask questions in English.
4. At the end of the process, all students with the exception of one had increased their uses simple phrases in English.

Moreover, the existence of someone, inside the teams, in charge of monitoring L1 (the sheriff) and reminding the rest to use L2, was mentioned by three of the students in different teams as something that helped them speak more in L2 in classes, supporting claims by Ur (2012) regarding the fact that even if there are were no penalties, just the notion that someone was there monitoring, aids in keeping students on track, as well as supporting the benefits of collaborative work and scaffolding.

Students who started to speak more in English were very comfortable with being able to use Spanish, if needed, and they would usually remind their classmates of that possibility. Furthermore, four students expressed while engaged on a task and or in the interview that it was easier to speak more because they could use “Spanglish”. Some of them even would even joke with the idea of

7 See Sketch Notes in Annex 3
8 See Graphics with the variation ranges in Annex 4
speaking “Spanglish” during classes. These findings show that the possibility of using L1 as “back-up”, as argued by many authors such as Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2006) and agreeing with the study by Mak (2011), apparently has a positive impact in reducing learners anxiety, and in consequence aiding the development of speaking.

At the end of the process, only two of the students expressed that speaking in English had been somewhat difficult. Considering the general positive results, it would appear that collaboration, a new treatment of error, as well as building students’ confidence and the reduction of anxiety influenced most students in a positive way.

**Attitudinal Outcomes**

First, one interesting finding is the fact that from the 6 class groups (5 taught by other teachers and this particular group), only the group observed in this study had read the book the unit was built around by the beginning of unit (requirement of the school curriculum). This finding seemed to be influenced by rapport the teacher had developed with the students, since two weeks prior the beginning of the unit, this group’s teacher took the time to speak briefly with each student to ask them if they had finished the book and to remind them the importance of reading the book in order to start working in the unit, which was also going to be part of the teachers’ implementation. The other teachers explained they had also reminded their groups, several times. However, they had done it in front of the whole class instead of individually. Thus another assumption would be that messages relayed to the entire group are not as engaging as those relayed individually, perhaps because the latter generate in the learners a greater sense of responsibility on their own learning process. Also related to rapport is the fact that the teacher perceived an important amount of engagement in speaking had to do, not only with the collaborative, warm environment and the realization that making mistakes was not a problem, but with the fact that, in a way, many learners associated speaking in English with the teacher and as soon as they saw her, they would know that they were in an English speaking zone, where they could say “silly” things to the teacher as long as they said them in the FL, and they could have fun just talking. These finding would mirror Dörnyei’s studies that mention rapport as an important motivational strategy.

Second, according to the interviews carried out, all but two students felt they had practiced more English than during the rest of the year and showed a much better attitude towards speaking in the FL in class. This appeared to be directly related to the fact most of the learners realized they actually could speak more than they thought they could and were speaking in previous units. This would seem to prove that building self-confidence influences students’ performance positively as supported by Dörnyei (2001) and Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2010) and Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér (1998).

During the interviews, in answer to the question, what helped you or made you speak more? (in case they had), some students said “it is easy to speak, because everybody is doing it”, “he helps me speak more”, “these two force me to speak, or they don’t work with me!”’. This showed that a collaborative, peer influences, stress-free environment influences students to speak.

Almost all the students, when reminded to code-switch to English, would do so, even though 2 of them would resort right back to using Spanish altogether and one would resort to using Spanish sentences with some words in English, especially before her peers’ motivation or influence. Furthermore, regarding the use of the phrase “English Class!”, the teacher’s perception is that students understood the idea that there were implicit messages behind it, such as “you can use Spanglish” (a mix of L1 in order to help the production of L2), “you can mistakes” and “the important thing is that you try to express your feelings.
There were no comments regarding the message that effort was far more important than not making mistakes. However, also it is the teacher’s perception that the awareness of it did contribute to a more relaxed environment and a more stress-free and better oral performance.

**Reluctant learners:**
It might be important to analyze further the three more reluctant learners.

1. Reluctant Student 1: (RS1-AF) has a weak sense of affiliation and interest in the L2 (she had expressed that she hated English in more than one occasion), which is also fueled by a poor relationship with the titular teacher. In several occasions this student tried to speak in English and was able to utter simple phrases correctly or with few mistakes. However, these efforts would only occur if the titular teacher was not in the classroom (which seldom happened) or if she was not near enough to hear. The student had no problem, exclusively, greeting the researcher in English when entering the classroom by the end of the unit sessions.

2. Reluctant Student 2: (RS2-A) has low self-motivation and a continuous negative discourse regarding her capabilities, how embarrassing most tasks are and how unable she is to understand and carry out tasks successfully. Her answers usually are similar to “I can’t speak”, “I don’t know how to...” and “I don’t understand”. These explicit insecurities are accompanied by lack of effort.

3. Reluctant Student 3: (RS3-M) has low self-motivation and a great ability for “weaseling” his way out of tasks. He does not express being embarrassed. However, careful observation leads to believe he is quite shy and afraid of making mistakes, so he hides behind humor and mischief. He is used to not try hard enough. The student expressed in the interview “I never speak. I usually don’t speak much in classes and never in English class, so... no, I did not speak in English in general...the whole year”. The student did however, greet both teachers in English by the end of the unit sessions, if one of his team mates initiated greeted first in English when entering the classroom.

It is interesting to mention student RS2-A was in the same group with the two most proficient students who were not particularly interested in speaking in English if the teachers was not near or engaging them. RS2-A did not seem to feel motivated by their team mates at all since the most proficient learners provided just would allow RS2-A to speak in L1 and they would answer her in L1. In turn, RS2-A’s team mates would code-switch to English without considering she might not understand. On the other hand, RS1-AF, whose team mates showed a good disposition and a better proficiency level and started to speak a lot more quite easily, showed improvements because her team mates encouraged her humorously and continuously. This seems to show that in peer-work and peer-effect, the peers’ proficiency not necessarily is more important than the peers’ attitudes and disposition in terms of motivating and encouraging a less proficient learner.

**Teacher Learning Outcomes**

The factors that can inhibit or aid students develop their learning and language skills, which in part, or mostly, depend on the teacher, are essential when preparing and teaching a class. Of course, the factors will vary from context to context and from student to student, but already having in mind what the influencing factors might be and what strategies one can use is a huge step to becoming a better facilitator. Having the chance to try out some strategies was already a huge eye-opener and

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*Students’ quotes have been translated by the author of this article.*
a fruitful experience and lesson on paying attention to context and learners, and trying to figure out what can be of use in the students’ process.

The findings agree with the fact that the L1 should be seen as a useful tool for lowering language anxiety and making students feel more comfortable when communicating in L2. However, teachers must remember to teach their learners L1 should be used only when needed and should not be over-used. Similarly, trying to develop a stress-free and safe environment, at times, may lead to less production, so keeping a balance in mind is fundamental.

One situation, worth reflecting on is the following. During the interviews, in answer to the question, what helped you or made you speak more? (in case they had spoken more), a student said “because we were forced to” and another said “you made me do it”. When asked to elaborate on how they had been forced, the first student said, because you are always saying “English Class!!” and the second said “because it was in the objectives in the unit presentation!! And you are always reminding us to do so!” Even though, these comments were expressed with humor, the apparent pressure some students might have felt could have been avoided if the message of the teacher not trying to force them, but still wanting learners to make their best effort had been more explicit or clearer.

**Improvements**

The present unit and research was limited in many aspects. In terms of the research, the study was limited since it was conducted in only one school, and only in one small group of students in a very specific context. Moreover, the effectiveness of the motivational strategies described is studied not as in-depth as they could be, since this study only gives us some notions of the influences of a set of strategies. Data-collection methods used could be improved. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate strategies separately, with control groups and apply detailed pre and post surveys on students’ perceptions. In this study, observation was used. Observation, however, has the limitation that it might not necessarily provide the full picture of the teachers’ the motivational strategies influence. Future studies would need more exact methods of collecting the data.

Lastly, even though the pedagogical implication of the findings seems to have been favorable, the effectiveness of the influence of motivational strategies differed according to students’ proficiency level, attitudes and personalities. More study should be carried out in order to analyze this further. Future investigations could also include concepts related to motivation in education that this study did not consider, such as peer effect and Dörnyei’s concepts of L2 self and ought-to self, especially in the work with less motivated students and low self-image students.

In terms of the unit, and in order to engage students also though interesting topics, perhaps using a book that is not so culturally specific or which has not been so simplified would be a good idea. Furthermore, considering the two challenges worked quite well, perhaps more activities such as those could be included.
References


ANNEX 1: Unit materials created by the researcher/unit teacher

Unit 7
The Bride Price
Book Analysis (Sketchnote)
Guidelines

Objectives:

★ To analyze different aspects of a book.
★ To talk about written and oral texts exposing and discussing ideas.
★ To acknowledge the importance of team work, collaboration and respect for others.
★ To learn about aspects of book analysis in general, so that the work developed in the unit is helpful for future reading processes.
★ Expressing feelings and points of view regarding a literary text, orally and in written form.

Steps!

★ First, you have to finish the book, if you haven’t.
★ In two more classes you will form groups of three. This will be your project Team.
★ During the unit we will work on producing a correct book analysis which will be developed in a Sketch Note (there will be discussion sessions, research sessions, preparation sessions and production sessions).
★ During the process, we are going to work on understanding what it is to analyze a book. (This unit is not about summarizing the book. It is about analyzing the book’s meaning or meanings).
★ Your sketch note should be attractive, and creativity is important. However, emphasis is on IDEAS, not art (if you can draw a stick figure, you can do this!).
During our last session, sketch notes will be shown to the class, so we can all reflect on the ideas and give feedback.

We will try to communicate in English as much as possible (Spanglish is also allowed). **We don’t have to be perfect, we just need to try.** It is the effort that matters.

During the whole process 3 things are essential
1) Collaboration
2) Respect
3) Support

Your sketch note must include:

- Formal aspects (your class and your names, clear handwriting because you must think this will be seen by others, illustrations and organization must be appealing and clear for the viewer.)
- Your own analysis, which must be clearly developed. Ideas must be coherent and cohesive.

Grammar and other requirements:

- Spelling
- General grammar (including punctuation and capitalization)
- Coherence and cohesion in the ideas presented
- Timing (delivered on the last class assigned for the task) 23rd /11
- Group and individual work (proper use of materials, use of computers, teamwork, respect for other classmates work, etc.)

November 2018

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- Start II°A
- Start II°B
- Start II°C
- II°A (2nd class)
- II°B (2nd class)
- II°C (2nd class)
- II°A (3rd class)
- II°B (3rd class)
- II°C (3rd class)
- II°A Comp Paula
- II°B Comp Paula (4th class)
- II°C Comp Paula (4th class)
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Unit 7: Book Analysis

Work on the questions on this worksheet and return it to the teacher at the end of the class.

Message in a Story

I.

Messages are everywhere, including fairy tales. You may remember *Snow White and the seven dwarfs* (in case you do not remember it very well, here below you can find a Summary). In your opinion, what are the messages or themes behind *Snow White*?

Remember Worksheet must be returned
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Summary)

Once upon a time, a Queen gave birth to a beautiful baby and she named her Snow White. Sadly, the queen died shortly after and the king remarried a vain woman who became Snow White’s stepmother. The stepmother liked to look in her magical mirror and ask it who the fairest in the land was, to which the mirror always returned the answer, ‘You, queen.’ Except one day, when Snow White was seven years old and her beauty had surpassed her stepmother’s, the mirror’s answer was ‘Snow White is lovelier than you!’ Filled with rage, the wicked stepmother ordered a huntsman to take Snow White out to the woods and kill her, but he could not bring himself to kill the little girl, so he abandoned her in the forest.

Snow White wandered through the forest until she saw a cottage. Inside, she found seven places laid out for dinner, seven beds: seven of everything. She ate out of each of the plates set out at the dinner table and then tried each bed, until she found one that was comfortable, and fell asleep. The occupants of the cottage – seven dwarfs – returned from mining for gold in the nearby caves, and saw that an intruder had eaten from their food.

The seven dwarfs found Snow White and were impressed by her beauty. In the morning she woke up and told them her story, and they agreed to let her stay with them, and look after the cottage while they went out to work. They warned her to be vigilant, since the evil queen could find out that she was still alive, and try to kill her again. Time passed and one day, the wicked stepmother asked the mirror who was the fairest in the land. The mirror answered that Snow White still was the fairest and told her where the girl was.

The wicked stepmother, disguised as a pedlar, went to the dwarfs’ cottage, and convinced Snow White to take a comb as a gift. When the comb made contact with Snow White’s black hair, she dropped down, and the wicked stepmother believed her mission to kill Snow White was accomplished. However, the dwarfs managed to revive Snow White and warned her again to be more vigilant and to never talk to strangers. The wicked queen learned from the mirror that the girl was still alive, so she set off again for the dwarfs’ cottage. This time, dressed as a sweet old lady, she tempted Snow White to eat a delicious apple she had brought with her. Snow White reluctantly accepted and as soon as she bit the apple, she dropped down dead. The queen was overjoyed and returned home to ask the magic mirror who was the fairest of them all. This time the mirror answered, ‘You, my queen.’
The dwarfs were saddened by Snow White's death, and laid her to rest in a glass coffin. But then a prince came by and was captivated by the dead girl's beauty. He begged the dwarfs to let him take the coffin with him, and they reluctantly agreed. As soon as the prince picked up the coffin, the piece of poisoned apple fell from Snow White's mouth and she was revived. The prince asked her to marry him, and she said yes. The wicked stepmother learnt that a new queen was getting married, and went to the wedding to see this new queen. When she saw that it was Snow White, back from the dead, she was so consumed with rage that she fell down dead. Snow White, lived happily ever after with the prince.

II.

Now that we have practiced getting the important messages in a story, can you describe which are, according to you, the messages or themes behind The Bride Price?

____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

If you could choose one important thing about the book The Bride Price, what would it be?

______________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
**Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**

**What are the messages behind Snow White?**

- In your opinion, what are the important themes or messages in Snow White?

**Themes:**

- It may partly be to teach children that the world is big and bad, and that they shouldn’t trust blindly in what strangers tell them (as evidenced by the innocent Snow White’s readiness to believe what the evil stepmother tells her).

**Themes:**

- Envy and jealousy ultimately eat away at the person who feels them. In other words, these feelings make a person become self-destructive.

- Vanity, too – the magic mirror is a clear symbol of the wicked stepmother’s self-regard – will lead to unhappiness, because you will always be destined to compare yourself with others.

***DID YOU THINK OF ANY OF THESE?***
Discussion

- Gather in 2 groups and take some minutes to analyze and answer the question you were given.

1. When does a book become interesting?
2. How can I get the message of a book?

- Once your group has decided on the most relevant ideas, write them on the board.

**Kids from the Kalbelia Tribe in India**

- While other toddlers learn to walk and talk, the children of the Kalbelia tribe in Rajasthan, learn the ancient art of “snake charming”.

**Opinions**

- Dylan Plays roblox 4 months ago
  What is wrong with these people:
  • 1. there is a bunch of people there and nobody is fighting the cobras.
  • 2. what kind of parents are they that just leave their baby with cobras.
  • 3. is there a camera guy?

- Christian Munso 3 years ago
  We attribute the snake as evil or villainous but no animal is really evil, animals of different species and different animals all together, can work together in order to survive.

- Rainy Byrd 1 year ago
  the true story of Voldemort and Harry

**Why?**

- Because in some parts of India Snakes are as common as cats.

- Besides, this tribe of Indian gypsies work catching snakes (pretty much like when people find rats or mice at home and call the pest control). From the snakes’ venom, kalbelia people make medicine for the eyes.

**From worksheet 1…**

- To the question “If you could choose one important thing of the book The Bride Price, what would it be?” you answered…

  (insert answer or answers)

- Can we relate these situations? How?
Some important concepts

- **Culture** is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.

- **Cultural heritage** is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.

TRADITION

The transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way.

(custom is an enduring way of behaving or doing something that is specific to a particular society, place, or time. A long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another. (Merriam-Webster dictionary))

CUSTOM

A traditional and widely accepted way of behaving or doing something that is specific to a particular society, place, or time.

mənˈnən ˈkʌstəm dɪˈmændɪd ðæt ə ˈpɜːrson ʃʊld hæv ɡɪfts fɔːr ðə ˈkɪlbɔt"

“How did you, as a class, realize or think of those cultural aspects?”
LISTENING AND SPEAKING ACTIVITY: (video will be played 3 times)
It is time to define team mates and form the project teams (3 people).

First, watch video *How to Analyze Literature*.
During a second and third time, *take notes*.
In your project teams, share your appreciations on the elements of book analysis.

Planning
Plan your research sessions (2).
Using the video as a starting point, discuss and reach decisions on what to research in the following 2 classes in order to analyze The Bride Price and create your Sketch note.
When you are ready, show your planning to the teacher.

Resources
* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pr4BjZkQ5Nc
Class 4-5

1. Work in teams, remember team work and respect for your group is part of the project.

2. Research on information to help you carry out the book analysis (listen to videos, read information, take notes on relevant information, and discuss and select what information you will need). Remember: from this research your analysis of The Bride Price will emanate.

3. This research is about book analysis, not book summary.

4. Use L2 while working as much as possible and do not start using L1 immediately.

When the session is about to end, take some minutes to assess your progress and to discuss these three questions:

Do you have the information you had previously listed when you planned?

Did you find something new?

What did you find?
Challenge day

Challenge One
- Each Team must create a map of relationships based on the list of characters the teacher provides (activity will be timed and judged to find a winner).
- REMEMBER to use as much L2 during the process as possible.
- Once the time is up, each group must choose a representative to explain the map.

Challenge Two
- Each group must form a complete description of 3 main characters using only emojis (activity will be timed and judged to find a winner). You select the characters.
- Try to use L2 during the process.
- Once the time is up, each group must choose a different representative to explain the de.
5. Challenge 1 **Map of relationships** (15 minutes). You have been given a list of characters. You will have 15 minutes to create a map of relationships between as many characters as possible.

Scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>1 point each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character correct relationship</td>
<td>1 point each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bonus</strong>: Using English communicate when making decisions.</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Challenge 2 **Emoji Description (2 characters)** (10 minutes). For this challenge you must pick 2 characters.

Scores:

<table>
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<th>Characters</th>
<th>10 point each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More <strong>complete and meaningful description</strong> (number of emojis)</td>
<td>2 point each meaning emoji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description <strong>Explanation</strong></td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bonus</strong>: Using English communicate when making decisions.</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. What is relevant about a book?
2. What is relevant about this book?

You have 3 minutes to brainstorm at least 5 ideas about what makes this book relevant.

Excerpt discussion:
You have been assigned a snippet (excerpt, fragment) of the book. In groups of 3 answer the questions in the worksheet in order to discuss the meaning of the snippet.

- Have you identified/ defined the relevant theme you are going to analyze in your Sketch note?
- What is it?

Gather with your project teams and summarize what your snippet was about (conclusions about the excerpts meanings and the relevance of the themes).

Themes in the Bride Price

Name(s):

Read the snippet (fragment, excerpt) you were assigned:

1. Dick, one of the houseboys who worked for another family in the house, looked towards her and looked away again without speaking. Most young Nigerian men spent a year or two as houseboys. They worked for their unmarried cousins or uncles and went to night school, while their male relations saved up the bride price for their future wives. Aku-nna’s own father had been a houseboy too.
2. Why should my mother live with your father? Asked Aku-nna, puzzled.

Ogugua laughed. 'You're almost fourteen and you still don't know our customs! Your mother will become my father's wife. My father has inherited everything your father owned, and he has “inherited” your mother too.'

3. 'You must take care.' Ogugua said. 'Don't get too friendly with that teacher. He is not one of us. No nice girl from a good family is allowed to talk to him.'

4. In the old days, when the white men first started their Christian schools, the local free men had no use for them. They sent their slaves to school to please the white men, while their own free-born sons stayed at home and followed the old traditions. Later events showed, however, that it was these educated slaves who got the top jobs. The sons and grandsons of these ‘slave’ families were now so rich and powerful that they seemed to command the respect of everyone.

5. ‘Unfortunately, her own father did not live to enjoy this wealth. But not to worry—Okonkwo is almost a father to her now.’ They smiled at their father's cleverness. ‘He needed the money to become and Obi’, they thought. ‘Aku-nna’s bride price will provide that money. She will marry a rich man, and make us rich too.’

Based on the snippet, answer the following questions with your group.

1. What does the snippet refer to?

2. What could be an appropriate theme that emanates from the snippet?

3. How can you support that theme? (Provide at least one extra literary element related to the theme in the excerpt).
Sandwich Review

Team: ____________________________________________

Checklist:

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<th></th>
<th>Star</th>
<th>Two Stars</th>
<th>Three Stars</th>
<th>Four Stars</th>
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<td>Organization: the contents are coherent and easy to follow.</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interesting and clear ideas.</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
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<td>Book analysis: The sketch note reflects the process of analysis (themes, literary elements: characters, plot, settings, etc.).</td>
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Be honest with your thoughts, but considerate as well.

**We like how you …**

---

**But we feel you could improve …, perhaps you could try…**

---

**Finally, we think it's great how you …**

---
## ANNEX 2

### CHECKLIST

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<th>greets in English</th>
<th>asks questions in E</th>
<th>uses simple phrases in English</th>
<th>uses English words in a mostly L1 message</th>
<th>comments</th>
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### Values and Points

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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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ANNEX 3

Sketch Notes

[Diagrams and notes about Chaminism and women, arranged marriage, inequality between men and women, and the bride price traditions.]
ANNEX 4: Graphics showing checklist results

Graphics 1-4 show the comparison of different capabilities of students at the beginning and end of the process.

*Student F left the school, so no comparison is possible.

Graphic 5: Comparison of performance of learners who used no English or only some English words in a mostly L1 message.