[Announcing the 2018 APAC-ELT Conference: Feb 1 - 3]

METHODOLOGY
CLIL, BLENDED SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHILDREN
SCIENCE, AUTISM

AWARENESS
MINDFULNESS, LEARNING JOURNALS

APAC ELT JOURNAL

Five things to do in life

It is said that everyone should plant a tree, have a child, and write a book (though not necessarily in that order). We would like to add two more items to that list, and we will do so in due course. But first we'll talk about modern life and the importance of participating in projects that you think are worthwhile.

For myriad reasons, our time is increasingly fragmented. It is becoming harder and harder to consistently have large blocks of time in which to focus on a task and carry it out thoroughly and well. We all have the greatest of intentions, especially at the beginning of September and January, but then things keep coming up, and we don't make good on those resolutions. As a society, our attention span is growing shorter: we tend to watch series more than films; read books that have larger print and shorter chapters than in the past; get our information from newspapers with such names as "20 Minutes" or from something called a "newsfeed"; and communicate with each other in "tweets", "posts", "whatsapps", "memes", and "emoticons". As a result, in our society, long, deep, well-developed spoken and written communication seems to be on somewhat of a decline.

> You'll never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.
>
> An Irish saying

Here at APAC, we've been noticing the trend for a while. From the deluge of proposals for plenary talks and workshops that we used to receive in the 1990s and early 2000s, nowadays we're getting an ever-dwindling stream of them, and from the burgeoning journal that we used to put out 3 times a year, we've come down to a lightweight, biannual publication. But, now that we've gone digital, the only reason for this is a lack of submissions; there are many promises to send something in, but then things come up, life gets complicated, time runs out, computers crash, ... Many projects peter out not because people don't like them or aren't interested in them but because they put off participating in them. They think someone else will do it, and in the end, nobody does. "Next year" is an adverbial of time that should only be used in extreme circumstances!

This year, fortunately, we still have articles to present to you. **Ana Guarinos**, a high school science teacher, gives us another of her CLIL projects that she carries out in conjunction with her school's English department. It is a good project for getting students to look up and become interested in how the universe works. **Emma Reynolds** offers us an informative article on mindfulness. In reading it, we realized how useful it could be to learn how to put mindfulness into practice. There's a lot to be said for making ourselves present in our own lives and retraining our minds to follow better trains of thought. **Eva Vigil** follows up her article on autistic children in mainstream classes in the previous issue with a case in point: what she learned from the first autistic student she taught English to. Some of the solutions she came up with will help us all to think outside the box. **Núria de Salvador, Ana Remesal, María José Rochera,** and **Núria Juan** address some of the issues involved in blended classes: the alleged digital natives, publicly available student work, and students' feelings regarding tasks and methodology. It's a helpful contribution to promoting good practice in innovation when one wants to take "TIC" and "TAC" in tow.

In some medical schools, the basic teaching philosophy is: "A student learns a procedure. The student does the procedure. The student teaches the procedure." Among us English teachers, we should also adopt such a philosophy: "A teacher learns about / develops an approach, method, or set of activities. The teacher puts it into practice. The teacher teaches other teachers about it."

So, whether or not you have it in you to write a child, plant a book, or have a tree (not necessarily in that order or in that syntax), everybody should make it a point to present something in the APAC ELT Convention and publish an article in the APAC Journal. Experts say, "You haven't really lived until you've done those two things." It may even create a healthy addiction.

Come to the Convention at Pompeu Fabra University on February 1, 2, and 3, and see what your colleagues have been up to recently... and then set your mind to making your own contribution to our collective pedagogical discourse!

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2018 APAC-ELT Convention

Rethinking Teaching: New Challenges, New Solutions

DATES: February 1st, 2nd and 3rd **(EARLIER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS!!!)**

Our annual ELT Convention is shaping up to be another big event. We have speakers coming from all over the world, along with quite a lot of excellent home-grown talent, all of whom will be talking about everything under the sun.

Primary school teachers will find ideas on collaborative work, CLIL, pronunciation, reading... you name it. There is even something to spark the interest of your sprouting Spasskys, your fledgling Fischers and your emerging Muzychuks!

High school teachers will have a wealth of topics to choose from: projects, use of video, things to enthrall digital natives with, activities that promote imagination and creativity. There's bound to be quite a few things you can take away with you to help you get your students to reach their boundless potential.

As for those who teach adults, there is plenty to discover. You'll be able to find out about different projects that have been carried out by Official Language School teachers, ways to deal with the mixed levels you often get in adult classes, and innovations.

And, of course, there will be plenty in the category of "general English teaching": fun and games, performances, and a hoard of material and information in the publishers' and bookshop stalls in the Exhibition Hall.

Don't miss your chance to catch up on everything in the English-teaching world!

See you in a few days!

Register for the Convention

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Let's Watch the Moon!

Ana Guarinos

Introduction

Who does not like to sit out on a warm summer night to watch the spectacle of the sky? When we look up, we will find stars, planets, nebulae and the great protagonist of our activity: the Moon.

What do we see when we look at the Moon? There are some people who see the head of a woman; some other people see the shape of some animal; and finally there are others who don't see anything but a circle of light and dark patches.

Be that as it may, we propose this activity to explain the changes that the Moon undergoes throughout its cycle, working on the astronomy concepts behind these changes and the science vocabulary of this field in a transversal way.

Context

This activity was born of the collaboration between the English and Biology and Geology departments of the Isaac Albéniz Secondary School in Badalona. The school is located in a middle-class neighbourhood in the city. Most of its students were born in Badalona, the immigration rate being low. Following the educational project of the school, the students are grouped together according to their learning pace. Groups showing a lower speed or those with an adapted curriculum have a lower student-teacher ratio, which makes individual attention possible. These groups are flexible and are evaluated at the end of the year, so that they can be rearranged depending on the development and the needs of the students.

We carried out this project with two groups:

- The first one showed a faster rate of learning. This group was composed of 31 students of a medium socio-economic level. Some of them studied English as an extracurricular activity in language schools.

- The second one had a slower rate of learning. It was composed of 15 students of a lower socio-economic level. Among them, there were some students with a curricular adaptation. The experience with this group is detailed in the "attention to diversity" section below.

Aims

The objectives are:

- To study the lunar cycle and identify the phases of the Moon.
- To work according to the scientific method.
- To use science vocabulary and to work on written expression in English.

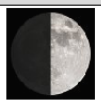
Activities

The work, which is carried out individually, consists of the three activities detailed below.

- ***Activity 1: LUNAR CALENDAR***

Students have to observe and draw the Moon, every day at the same time, during the period of the lunar cycle. For this, they have a blank calendar where the images of the moon appear at the beginning and the end of the cycle as a reference (Fig.1). Under each drawing the students have to write the name of the corresponding phase.

Fig. 1: Example of a lunar calendar in which the students have to draw and put the name of the lunar phases.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
22nd October	23rd October	24th October	25th October	26th October	27th October	28th October
29th October	30th October	31st October	1st November	2nd November	3rd November	4th November
5th November	6th November	7th November	8th November	9th November	10th November	11th November
12th November	13th November	14th November	15th November	16th November	17th November	18th November
19th November	20th November					
						

It is important to insist on the rule that the drawing must be as realistic as possible and must avoid the schematic representations that appear in some calendars.

It may happen that the Moon will be not visible on some days during the cycle due to weather phenomena such as clouds or rain. In these cases, students have two options:

- 1st option: Wait for the next morning to make the observation. If the sky is still cloudy, the student will need to take the second option.

- 2nd option: Search for the image of the Moon on the Internet, copy it and write this fact down in activity 2 (detailed below).

- ***Activity 2: DIARY***

The diary has two aims:

Firstly, students have to draw the position of the Moon with respect to a reference object such as a building, a tree or a lamppost. Since the observation must always be done at the same time of the day, this drawing will allow students to observe the relative position of the Moon in the sky and see how it varies throughout the cycle.

Secondly, this diary should collect the annotations made by the students about the appearance of the Moon (color, size, sharpness, position, brightness...). Also, it must make note of any significant event, such as a change in the time or place of observation, which could occur on weekends when the students go out with their parents.

- ***Activity 3: WORKSHEET***

The students are provided with a worksheet with some questions that will help them to reflect on their scientific practice, so that they become aware, on the one hand, of the changes of the Moon in the sky, their origin and succession and, on the other hand, of the application of the scientific method.

Finally, students are asked to make a hypothesis, based on the observations they have made, about when the next full moons and the next new moons will be, until the end of the year.

Curriculum and programme

The activity was carried out in the middle of the first term, within the unit “Earth and the Moon” in the Natural Sciences course.

The basic theoretical concepts, such as the lunar cycle or the phases of the Moon, were explained following the syllabus of this subject. Then, by doing the activity, the students could see the validity of the theory in real life for themselves.

In parallel, in their English class, they worked on the necessary vocabulary and expressions to carry out the activity.

Evaluation

This activity had a double evaluation, from the standpoints of Natural Sciences and English.

Regarding English, the teachers evaluated the correct use of the language employed in the activity. Also, they corrected the previous exercises done in class related to the content of the activity, when applicable.

In the subject of Natural Sciences, which I teach, we had a feedback session to share the results and difficulties, once the lunar cycle had ended and the work was done. This way, we were able to do a joint assessment of the activity, which was, generally speaking, very positive.

As a teacher of the subject, I did the evaluation following the guidelines below:

THE STUDENT…	Yes	No
Draws the lunar phases properly.		
Relates the representation to the lunar phase.		
Collects the data in the diary systematically.		
Draws the Moon with respect to a reference object.		
Searches for the information he/she needs on the webpages provided.		
Recognizes the different phases of the scientific method applied to his or her own work.		
Is able to work out a hypothesis based on the data obtained.		
Hands in the work on time.		
Presents the work properly.		

Attention to diversity

As I said in the Context section, this activity was also carried out in a group that had a slow rate of learning, with curricular adaptation. This group was quite heterogeneous, but all of the students shared the same characteristic: an important lack of habits. Therefore, I couldn't ask them to do a systematic job of making the observations and recording the data.

We solved this problem by converting the work into a cooperative activity. We made a big calendar out of cardboard (the same calendar the students in the other group had as a worksheet), which we hung up in the classroom. Every day, one student was in charge of observing the Moon, drawing it and writing down the name of the phase in English. Sometimes the student in charge did not do his or her work. In these cases, we offered the rest of the class the chance to do the same task. And, if a student had observed the Moon without being assigned to do so and had made the drawing, I rewarded him or her with some extra points on the exam on the topic.

Obviously, the aims in this group were not as demanding as they were in the other. We focused on the responsibility of carrying out the observations and on the vocabulary of the Moon phases.

Conclusions

In my opinion, this activity accomplishes two main goals.

The first one is that, as a transversal activity, it allows us to open our students' minds and create connections between different academic subjects, as opposed to the compartmentalized learning to which they are accustomed. These connections allow for a deeper learning of the concepts worked on, and, in this case, they are even more significant, due to the procedural nature of the activity.

The second one is more related to my subject. When I introduced the activity in class, most students stated that they had never made observations of the Moon. For me, who has always enjoyed observing the night sky, this was really shocking. With this activity I achieved the goal of making my students aware of the beauty of the sky by simply raising their heads.

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Biodata

Ana Guarinos graduated from the University of Barcelona with a degree in Geology. She has been a high school Natural Sciences teacher (Biology and Geology) since 2008. At present, she is working in INS Montserrat in Barcelona.

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clever pants productions
interactive theatre in 110% english
Very entertaining and funny… students enjoyed interacting with the actors.
R. Ruiz, VILADECANS
10 out of 10 in all categories! We really enjoyed it... great quality and great scripts.
M. Cuscó, SABADELL
15+ YEARS' EXPERIENCE
5,000+ PERFORMANCES
600,000+ HAPPY STUDENTS
Simply great! My students loved it. The best performance we've had at school.
E. Soler, GIRONA
WORLD FAMOUS in CATALUNYA
Entertaining and fun because it made the students participate.
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Mindfulness – The Potential for Calmer, Clearer-Minded and More Content Teachers and Pupils

Emma Reynolds

Abstract

With the huge growth of interest in Mindful Meditation in the last few years as a way to combat stress, Emma Reynolds, an accredited teacher in MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) and Paws B Mindfulness for children (MiSP – Mindfulness in Schools Project), explores why we seem to have become an increasingly anxious society, what has sparked this new interest in meditation and what these techniques can hope to offer teachers and their students in their day-to-day classroom experience.

Introduction

The buzz-word "Mindfulness" seems to be selling everything from drinks to holidays these days. But what exactly is it and why is it being heralded as the next best thing – so much so that around the world schools, universities and the corporate world are engaging in programmes to help people become less stressed, more focused, more accepting and perhaps just a little happier…

What is stress?

Imagine this… You're on the motorway driving to the beach. It's a sunny day, and the children you are with are all chatting away excitedly about the day ahead. Suddenly a van driving very fast overtakes you, and you (or the driver if you don't drive) have to swerve out the way so as not to get hit by it. Slamming on the brakes, you come to a halt by the side of the road. The children in the back are screaming, and everyone is in a state of shock. You could have all ended up in a serious accident.

How do you think you might you feel? Bodily sensations might include a racing heart, muscles tightening, maybe sweaty palms, dry mouth? Mentally there might be angry thoughts flooding the brain, perhaps some rude words might be springing to mind for the driver of that van? If you take a moment you might even notice you feel some of those things right now, brought on by just reading the story.

So what would have happened? Well, your survival alarm bell would have been triggered and you would have gone into the fight or flight mode – ready to react to the perceived danger. Adrenalin and cortisol would have flooded through your body, getting you ready to do something. We can be thankful we have this automatic survival system – it gets us to move quickly out of the way of an oncoming bus without having to consider whether it's a good idea or not first. However this system can be triggered by much smaller events or perceived "dangers" such as an email dropping into the inbox from a certain person, a look from your boss that means "I need to talk to you", even just the thought of teaching *those* kids next. Triggers can be imagined scenarios – those thoughts that keep you up all night ruminating about all the terrible outcomes that might befall you and your family – or that awful thing someone said to you 5 years ago. This type of thinking is

very stressful – a looping state of thoughts that create emotions, which create more thoughts that in turn affect the body and manifest as tension, headaches, stomach problems and worse. The very system evolved to keep us safe is now making us ill.

So, what can we do? Well, more and more people are turning to Mindfulness Mediation as a way to work with this stress. Life events will always challenge us and there will always be stressors, but both teachers and children can train their awareness to notice when they are being triggered and choose to skilfully respond rather than stay on auto-pilot and become reactive. From schools, prisons and the corporate world to the National Health Service in the UK, many institutions are turning to secular versions of the 2,500-year-old Buddhist practices for the answer. Apps such as Headspace, Smiling Mind and the 8-week MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) course are just some of the ways people are helping themselves. MiSP (Mindfulness in Schools Project, UK) runs courses for teachers who want to offer mindfulness courses to their primary and secondary pupils. It's a growing movement with literally thousands of medical studies that show that we really can learn to control our moods and re-shape our brains to be calmer, clearer thinking and more content.

Why is Mindful Meditation of such interest right now?

In the West we are the healthiest, best fed, most educated we've ever been in the history of humanity and yet at the same time the most stressed out, depressed, anxious and addicted. So what is going on? The list is endless, but one major reason, it could be argued, is the increased use of technology and how that has speeded up our lives. The smartphone, for example, and all that it brings with it – apps, Facebook, endless emails, Whatsapp messages and games – distract us from the present moment. Instead of being in the real world we are caught in highly addictive, technology-driven behaviours, living through social media. One teacher of secondary, when asking her students what their greatest fear was, was shocked to hear it was the fear of not being liked on Facebook. It was a serious concern to many of her students. Not being liked on social media, no hit of dopamine for number of likes – social failure. In the teenage mind this is serious, serious stuff – and very stressful.

With more time spent on phones and computers and less time relating face to face we can suffer from feelings of disconnection. We can become isolated, and many studies have shown this disconnection itself creates anxiety. As a human race we thrive on personal connections and indeed on connecting to the natural world. The cry from parents, "Those kids should be running around outside, not in here on their computers" is justified.

And then of course there is the endless information we receive. We can feel bombarded by Twitter, Facebook and news channels with stories about things we can do nothing about. These stories become our reality, we tell ourselves how awful it is, we tell other people and now they feel awful. Remember the story at the start of this article? You may have felt the beginnings of your own fight-or-flight mechanism being triggered. Amazingly our bodies can't tell the difference between a real and perceived threat (just think back to any adrenaline-charged film you've seen recently and how it made you feel). Sensationalist news articles do the same thing to us, stoking us up, stressing us out.

All of which feeds our negativity bias nicely. This bias is another part of our survival system evolved to make us focus on the "bad" things, so we can "fix" them, meaning we mainly ignore all the good stuff because it won't help us in survival terms. Here's an example you might recognise. Imagine your boss calls you into their office. Smiling, they tell you how well you are doing, that

your colleagues really enjoy working with you, that your presentation last week was spot on, etc., etc. They give you six or seven positive appraisals of your work. But then they say "All good. However, there is just this one thing you could work on….."

What do you go home with at the end of the day and tell your family about? All the compliments and praise you received, or the one comment about there being a need for improvement? Yup. That one. The one you need to ruminate on, puzzle through and ultimately "fix". That's your negativity bias in action. Because deep down in the oldest part of our brain is the amygdala, just waiting to press the alert button when there is a threat. And this problem could be a threat to your job, your mortgage, your family, your life... and off we go, back into circling thoughts, emotions, body tension and the rest.

Slowly we're realizing we need to balance things up a bit, perhaps slow down and enjoy the present moment, take in the good stuff, check in with how we are. And this is where mindful meditation can help. The practice of meditation has been around for thousands of years. But it has been the advances in neuroscience in the last 10 years that have really started to convince a wider public of its value. We are now able to connect people up to MRI scanners and actually *see* how meditation practices have positive effects on the brain. In one study (Walton, 2107), scans showed how certain areas in the brain have grown and thickened with the practice of meditation, areas linked to compassion and attention, with a whole variety of positive effects including improved well-being, focus and reduced stress – exciting stuff! All of which could be very useful in the classroom for teachers and students alike. By choosing to train our awareness and attention with our minds we can literally change the neural pathways of our brains.

The discovery of neuroplasticity

It used to be believed that once we became an adult our brain basically stopped forming and that our base-line happiness was set. So, if you happened to be a happy-go-lucky sort of a person, where life events didn't rock the boat too much – well good for you. However if you were the type of person to suffer from anxiety and depression, ultimately that's what you were stuck with. Outside factors would only have short-term effects. So, for example, the person with a more Eeyore-like outlook on life might experience a period of happiness if they, say, won the lottery, but after between 6 months and a year would eventually return to the same low level of happiness, with feelings of sadness and depression being much as they were before winning. Likewise the happy-go-lucky person might go through some serious life-changing event such as losing a limb in an accident and may also experience sadness and even depression for a while, but would eventually bounce back again to their usual selves and their base-line happiness.

However with the growing advances in technology we now know about neuroplasticity. The brain is constantly changing and adapting with our experiences, and we can turn this to good use, to literally re-wire our brains for happiness. In a way it's kind of obvious – we get good at what we practice and we already know this. When we first sit down to do a new activity such as learning to play the piano we're not very quick or able. With practice we get better and better, and part of the reason is the brain is helping you. New neuron connections in the brain are being made to help you with things such as hand-to-eye co-ordination. Practice makes perfect, as they say. This can be applied to other areas of one's life. If you are good at self-criticism and have a natural tendency towards it, well, that's what you practice and that's what you get better and better at. It becomes automatic, a default setting and potentially detrimental to your mental health and physical well-being.

So the question here is, if you can identify old ways of being that aren't serving you, if you find you get triggered easily and often, then isn't it time to practice something new?

So how can Mindfulness help?

We understand that stress is the fight-or-flight mechanism being triggered by perceived danger, real or imagined. It's in our genes to be on the alert for danger – our cavemen and cavewomen ancestors that didn't take notice of potential threats got eaten! We didn't get the genes from the more relaxed ancestors – their genes didn't make it. In a way you could say it's been survival of the fearful. Fear is hard-wired into us as part of our survival kit and the problem is we get triggered too easily by it in our busy lives. There are no tigers on the high street, but our caveman and cavewoman systems don't know that. The thoughts, emotions and stress on the body and mind can be exhausting. Teachers are very much on the front line and can suffer from burn out all too easily. And students, with a more heightened sensitivity to stress may find it more difficult to regulate their thoughts and emotions in the face of stressful life events such as exams.

So we can see there is a problem – we have a cave dweller's survival kit in a 21st-century body. Add to that the negativity bias, an ability to perceive imagined dangers as real, looping rumination and an automatic pilot that keeps taking us down the same well-trodden routes.

Training in mindfulness meditation can help in many ways. It trains the attention, so we become more aware of the wandering mind. Left to roam free, the wandering mind can take us to all sorts of places – rehashing events from the past, rehearsing (and worrying about) future possible situations. It takes us away from the present. Mindfulness is a type of training in catching the wandering thoughts and gently bringing us back.

It also trains us to tune into ourselves. The body is constantly "talking" to us, giving us an update on how we are. We may all recognise feeling butterflies in the stomach when nervous or anxious, most of us will have experienced how tension can manifest itself in the back and potentially create headaches. Often we ignore these messages, take a pill and carry on. Or have a drink, watch mindless T.V., surf the internet, eat... do anything but be with how we feel. Short term, this may work to some extent, but, long term, these coping mechanisms can also have a detrimental effect on our lives and our health.

Mindfulness is a radically different approach. It's about being fully present with the moment, not running away from the experience, but leaning into it, being with it. Jon Kabat Zinn, who created the MBSR course, says Mindfulness is:

"The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment."

So, being in the present moment, not on automatic pilot, noticing we are being triggered, waking up to the endless chatter in the head. One Harvard study (Bradt, 2010) reported that we are lost in thought on average 47% of the time. Eighty percent of that is negative thought, and 95%+ of those thoughts we've had before. We aren't present in our own lives! And we know that to be true – how many times have you eaten a meal and not really tasted any of it? Or walked into a room and had no idea what you went in for? Or finished a conversation with someone and realized you didn't really listen to half of what they were saying?

A key part of the mindfulness practice is getting in contact with your breath and body – finding

where stress manifests itself physically. This takes you directly out of your thoughts and nips rumination in the bud. In reality we can actually only concentrate on one thing at a time. As much as we like the idea of multi-tasking, it is a myth. We just get very good at switching attention very quickly from one thing to another – which in itself is not only tiring but unproductive. Calming, deep breaths signal to your nervous system that everything is ok, and that we don't need to be on high alert. Once we learn to notice when we have been triggered and are starting to be flooded with chemicals to aid us in running or fighting, we can make a conscious choice to respond skilfully rather than being reactive. And with time, we get better at it. We get better at what we practice. So if we practice noticing, practice calming ourselves down, practice awareness and non-reactivity, we get better and better at it. It gets wired into the brain.

Surprising and shocking life events will always happen, we can't control that. What we can control is how we choose to perceive them, which ultimately affects our experience of these events. Or as Jon Kabat Zinn says, "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf."

Conclusion

As people in positions of responsibility, I would suggest we all have a certain duty to be our best selves, for the good of everyone. Emotions are contagious. What energy do you want to take into the room with you? How will the tone you set affect the classroom experience?

Jon Kabat Zinn likens mindful meditation practice to tuning your instrument. No great musician, he suggests, would sit down and play with the orchestra without having taken time to firstly practice and then to tune the instrument. We must all learn to "tune up", not just for ourselves but for everyone we come into contact with. In an age where we take a great interest in our fitness and what we eat, it's interesting we let the very thing with which we perceive the world – our mind – roam free. A wandering mind is an unhappy mind, so they say. In MiSP they liken the mind to a puppy for children to understand the concept. A puppy runs around here and there, bringing you things you don't want, sometimes making messes. The suggestion for children is they can train their puppy-like minds, just as you would a real puppy, with care, kindness, practice and patience. By bringing attention to breathing, you can learn to calm yourself down and become more focused.

Once you as a teacher learn to be calmer and to make better, more considered choices on how to react, you might appreciate that these skills could also have huge benefits for the children you teach. It could give them practical things they can use to help themselves with everything from anxiety when it comes to exams, to making better choices, to helping develop better attention in the class, thus cultivating calmer, clearer, more content minds.

But be warned! If you are interested in including mindfulness into the school, it must begin with the teachers first. And they need to have their own practice going before offering mindfulness to the children. Here is a link to an interesting article on how to avoid "McMindfulness" (Bristow, 2017): https://www.mindful.org/4-signs-poorly-designed-school-mindfulness-programs. As they point out in the article, "you wouldn't ask a teacher who can't swim to teach a swimming class from a textbook."

With the UK leading the way in bringing mindfulness into schools, into the health system and even into politics (Booth, 2017), isn't it time to find out what it's all about? As Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist master and advocate for peace, says "Happy teachers will change the world."

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Biodata

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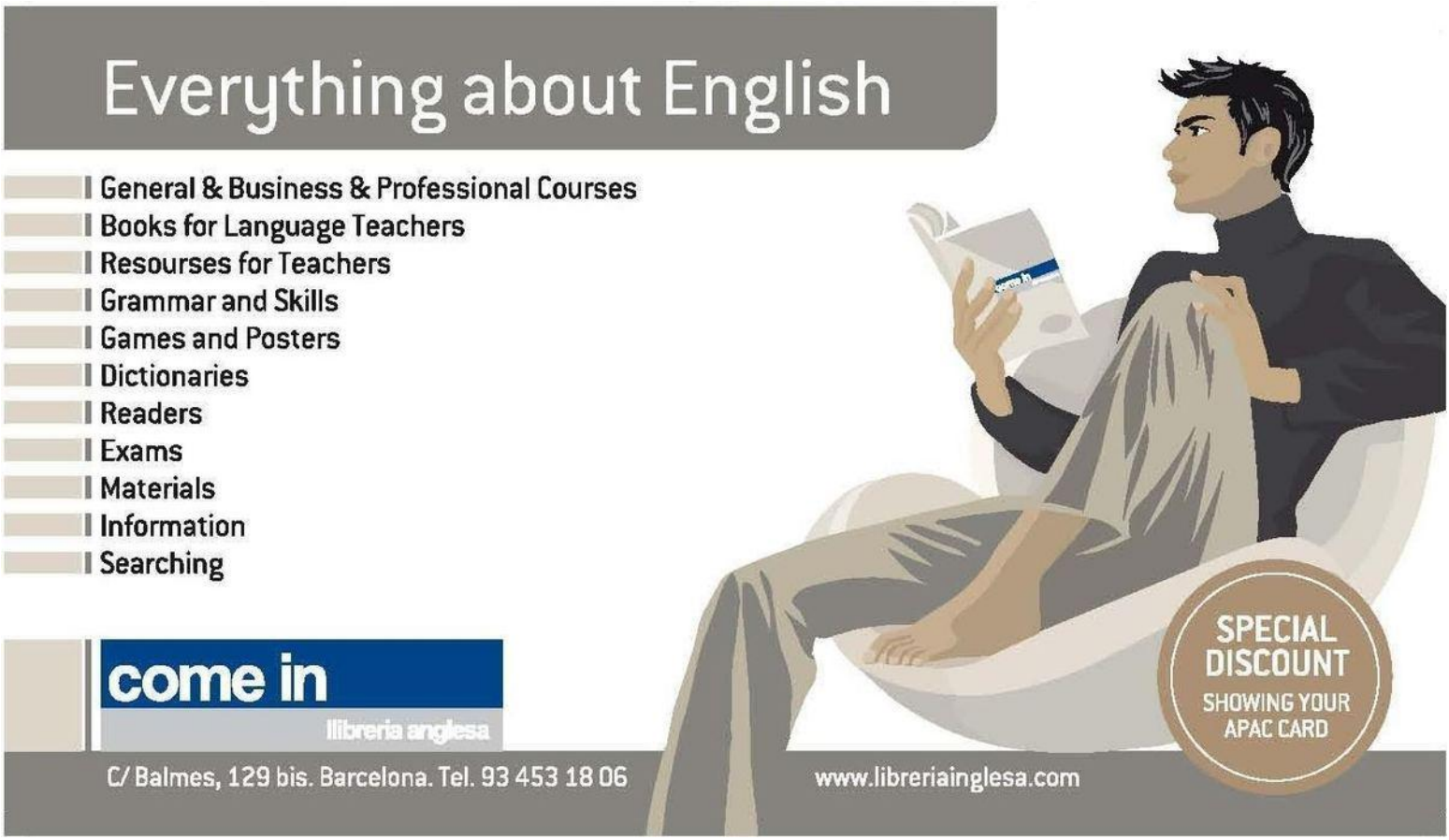


A Personal Experience of Teaching English as a Foreign Language to an Autistic Child

Eva Vigil Aran

Abstract

The Catalan government's Decree 150/2017, of 17 October, calls for focusing educational attention on students in the framework of an inclusive educational system. However, theories and realities are sometimes ages away from each other. Most teachers really know that in day-to-day school life, it is difficult to plan classes taking into account all the singularities their students have; there is no time to coordinate with the rest of the teachers involved in the students' learning processes; the English teacher has no pedagogical knowledge about special education children and s/he has to cope with a reality that is sometimes difficult to resolve. So, in the end, one ends up learning by trial and error. The following is an intimate article about how I learnt from my ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) student and improved my ways of teaching him English.

Introduction

The following article is based on personal experience, help and advice from special educational needs teachers and other professionals linked to ASD children's learning processes. It consists of comments on activities and routines used in tackling my first ASD learner in an English class. The following is a series of teaching practices carried out with a high-functional ASD child with communicative intentionality. It does not pretend to be academic at all, but more of an experience-sharing article, trying to give ideas about how one could better reach their ASD learners in the English class.

Professional and academic recommendations on teaching LD children a FL

Sparks (2006) comments that IQ (intelligence quotient) tests are not useful as a prime criterion for classifying students as LD (language disability) ones because there are many other variables to take into account such as cognitive and affective ones.

Arries (1999) points out that there is not a single method proved to be effective in teaching a FL (foreign language) to students with LD. She bases her studies on Dunn's approach: a student-centred learning one. Arries also states that reducing LD students' anxiety and distractions helps them in their learning process.

Wire (2005) mentions, according to her experience, that routines and repetitions in teaching ground language are very useful for the learning process of ASD children. Wire used instructions with visual supports and social interactions to teach a foreign language to her high-functioning student. She also avoided giving multiple instructions to her student due to the difficulty that ASD children have in tackling lot of verbal language. The last point that Wire notes is motivation as a crucial component for involving ASD children in their learning process.

Psychologist Marta Selva, a specialist in autistic children, in an interview given in Quirón hospital, commented that ASD children have lot of visual memory and that is why pictograms in their learning process are very important. She also recommended that I take into account not only mechanical memory but also comprehensive memory.

Elisenda Sabanés, a speech therapist and therapeutic pedagogue, suggested that I make the teaching process as experience-based as possible for the particular autistic child that I was teaching and whom she had known for years.

Personal experience

Diego is an eleven-year-old, high-functional, ASD child who is quite motivated in regard to the English language. He watches YouTube tutorials in English, reads the English subtitles of some tutorials, and, if they are on TV, he watches cartoons of interest to him in English. So, this is quite important to take into account as a starting point, because English for this particular ASD child is of interest to him and he is motivated towards learning it.

I have to say that all the adaptations used to teach English to Diego were methodological ones rather than curricular ones. When Diego had English as a subject, he used to attend regular English class with the rest of his classmates one hour per week and he did English in a special education class another hour per week. In the special education support class, he shared teachers with some other special education children. For a year, there was a speech assistant in the school who helped a lot in carrying out activities in English with Diego one-on-one. For different reasons, time and a lack of professional staff among others, not all the adaptations that this child would need were made, but as many as were possible were implemented. He went through a very standard kind of teaching-learning process, and I am conscious that these children should follow a very particular way of teaching, in order for them to get the most out of the lessons. However, even though Diego was evaluated taking into account different variables, he also took exams and wrote activities from the book just like the rest of his classmates.

Firstly, I would like to comment on different kinds of methodological adaptations made to the activities and tests Diego had to take as well as on the way to treat him when in class. Following Wire (2005), there are small concessions that should be given to these children. One of them is providing them with more time to do things, so Diego used to take the English term test in two days. The listening exercises were stopped each time that an important piece of information was given to provide him with more time to answer the questions completely. Otherwise, he would not answer the following one, even when he knew the answer. He needed to complete the task asked of him before moving on to the next one. Another concession made to him was that he never took work home to complete, because he used to make a big effort to accomplish all the demands from all the teachers and different subjects in the school.

The final test terms were given to the special education teacher some days beforehand so she could adapt the pictures, making them more realistic, using coloured ones, providing more space between one exercise and the next so that Diego would not feel overwhelmed by information. She also used to draw lines in the special way Diego was used to when writing.

On days when it was really difficult to work with him, such as Mondays, because the weekend had broken up his daily school routines, teachers in general tried not to worry much about it, gave him time to get used to school again, and normalized the situation when possible, not overwhelming

him and not letting him do everything he wanted. It was a matter of trying to find a fifty-fifty situation.

Last but not least, I used to take advantage of every moment I ran into him outside of class to exchange some words in English. I used to ask where he was going, what he had done in the previous class; any time was a good time to talk with him in English.

Secondly, I would like to focus more on special activities adapted to the way Diego learnt. As commented on by Wire (2005), motivation is of utmost importance for these children, so I decided to use a point of interest of his to teach him comparatives and superlatives in English. Diego was really interested in Marvel characters, so I created some cards with the different Marvel characters and their powers (see Figure 1). Diego attended the regular English class and heard the same explanations as the rest of his classmates about the structure of comparatives and superlatives in English. However, because sometimes he presented some disconnections, the auxiliary teacher explained the structure by using Marvel cards and giving him examples of how to make a comparative sentence. It was not easy, and Diego seemed to have some difficulties in understanding the structure. So I created different cards with adjectives and the words *more, than, -er,* so the auxiliary teacher could make a game with some words and the Marvel characters. It consisted of challenging Diego, who could make most sentences by moving the "word-cards". By the end of the fifth class, he was managing the comparatives and superlatives perfectly. Then, I wanted to test Mrs. Selva's recommendation about checking on his communicative functionality, and I constructed faulty comparative sentences on purpose to see if Diego would correct me. He did.

Figure 1. MARVEL CHARACTERS cards

Character	Durability		Strength		Fighting		Speed		Energy		Intelligence	
Black Widow	3	3	2	3	4	6	2	3	1	3	2	4

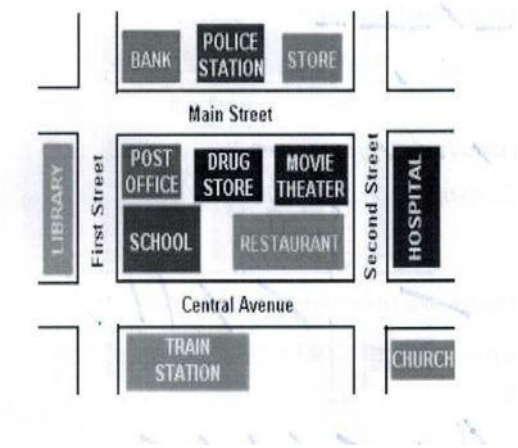
Character	Durability		Strength		Fighting		Speed		Energy		Intelligence	
Captain America	3	4	3	3	4	7	2	3	1	1	2	3

The second experience is related to the learning of prepositions. In the regular class, I was teaching prepositions. I handed out a 2-dimensional map with which the rest of the class did not have any kind of trouble telling me if the building was *opposite, in front of, behind* or *next to* some other building. However, Diego kept saying that a building was *below* or *above* a given building. At first, I could not understand why that was, but then I realized that it might be a problem with

how the activity was presented. So, I made up a 3-dimensional map with pictures of different buildings stuck to toilet paper rolls (see Figure 2). Then, Diego had no trouble at all in expressing where the buildings were.

Figure 2. Maps used in mainstream class and with Diego.

2D MAP **3D MAP**



The third experience was related to creating experience-based activities. Diego enjoyed "Skylanders" a lot. The auxiliary teacher and I created a small shop where Diego had different kinds of Skylander characters he had to buy (see Figure 3). So, he learnt the structures *Good…*, *Could I have…, please?*, *How much is it?* and how to do maths in English by handing over money and getting the proper change back. To check if he could remember vocabulary from previous years, the Skylander characters were replaced with different kinds of food he had to buy. Diego performed outstandingly.

Figure 3. Skylander shop.

Conclusion

To conclude, I cannot say that everything and every piece of advice would work with any autistic child who is learning a foreign language. Yet, I believe that if all teachers who work with these kinds of students share their practices, we could benefit from them, because what might not work for one might work for another. My last piece of advice is to let these students teach you how they need to be taught.

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Biodata

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Vindicating the H-factor in Blended Secondary Education: Listening to the Students' Voices

Núria Salvador, Ana Remesal
María José Rochera, and Núria Juan

Abstract

In this paper, we report on a teaching experiment in a secondary school English as a foreign language (EFL) class. Twenty-one tenth-grade students and their experienced teacher participated in an innovative English program in which poor EFL writing results were tackled. The teacher engaged the students in a blended strategy which aimed at supporting self-regulated learning through open, public, learning journals elaborated by the students on a wiki platform throughout a whole academic year. We carried out a case study to evaluate the effectiveness, suitability and sustainability of the program. The students evaluated the experience via a pre- and post-appraisal questionnaire. Results point to the need for a reconsideration of three basic aspects: (1) the specificities of adolescent learners as informed by recent literature from neuropsychological research, (2) the doubtful notion of e-nativeness in learning contexts at the secondary level and (3) several basic, quality, pedagogical criteria concerning writing tasks in L2 teaching and learning.

Keywords: learning journal, students' views, adolescence, public design, blended learning.

Introduction

In this article, we present the results of a blended instructional experience at the secondary level. The need for the innovative experience was grounded on the discouraging results of EFL-writing among the students, coinciding with the reports of the European Commission (2012), which revealed that in most educational systems English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing is a big challenge. It seemed sensible to take advantage of new ICT devices and resources to promote a blended experience to complement face-to-face instruction with a parallel online activity involving interweaving tasks (Remesal, 2011). The introduction of new learning and social technologies into the classroom certainly sets a challenge for secondary teachers. Educators need to find the delicate balance between incorporating new technologies into the classroom and doing it for the purpose of enhancing learning processes and challenging digital native students (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008), who mainly tend to use tech-devices for social networking and leisure (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008; Sánchez, Salinas, Contreras & Meyer, 2011).

Despite having satisfactory learning results regarding some improvement in their writing skills, the majority of the students reported dissatisfaction with the experience as a whole. We carried out a case study to pay special attention to the their appraisal of the experience, based on the use of open, public, online learning journals supported by teacher feedback, with the purpose of awakening the students' learning awareness and self-regulation.

Current developmental research on the peculiarities of the teenage learners informs us about the need to consider differential aspects that went unnoticed by researchers on e-learning until now, as far as we know. We call for giving importance to considering this "H-factor" (the *human factor*). Listening to the students' voice is an essential requisite for educators to advance in offering better-informed and better-grounded learning experiences if we want to gain the highest benefit possible

from technology.

The adolescent learner in e-learning literature

Most of the seminal research on e-learning and b-learning processes has been carried out on tertiary education students – pre-graduate to post-graduate (Journell, 2010). One might wonder to what extent research policy and accessibility to natural contexts with the chances to test out innovative tools have contributed to this research bias. Only more recently, once in the 21st century and with web 2.0, a few researchers have begun to directly address secondary school students as particular subjects, in alignment with the introduction of web resources into compulsory education. Some of these few studies underline the importance of offering creative opportunities (Alvermann, 2008), as well as implementing motivational strategies, and caring for a tight structure of instructional programs (Weiner, 2003). Other authors refer to the adolescent reluctance to engage in online social interaction as something to be questioned (Journell, 2010).

Indeed, recent research in the field of developmental psychology points to the peculiarities of the adolescent brain (Blakemore & Frith, 2005; Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Far from disharmonizing, these results stay on track with the 'classical' Piagetian developmental theory, contributing to its elaboration with new empirical evidence. In particular, we take notice of the adolescent learner as a special subject concerning motivation, and the regulation of thinking processes. Also, recent developmental research informs that the adolescent is more sensitive than adults to immediate short-term rewards, also more sensitive to social comparison and social exposition. At the same time, they have difficulties in controlling executive functions; thus, complex cognitive processes, such as planning and evaluating their own learning process, still need close adult support and guidance (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; Oliva, 2004). During this developmental phase, we grant a greater importance to the social world around us (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Hence, changes in the school context or changes within the school context are more intensively experienced, affecting social cognitive processes. During adolescence (Blakemore, 2008), human beings show an increased susceptibility to peer influence, and we worry more about other people's concerns about our actions, thoughts, and appearance (Choudhury, Blakemore & Charman, 2006). Thus, as educators, we must question our practices and evaluate their adequacy if we aim to engage the teen-learners and help them become protagonists of their learning process.

New technologies in the secondary classroom: vicarious experiences in a blended public context

To date, new technologies have already inundated the secondary classroom on a one-way journey, last but not least through personal devices. Thus, teachers need to evaluate their potential and find innovative ways to gain a learning benefit from the new context. Indeed, the mere fact of being a so-called 'digital natives' does not guarantee the students' ability to use new technologies for learning (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin 2008; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Teachers must make a specific effort to propose techno-pedagogical designs, that is, particular teaching and learning contexts that incorporate different technological tools into the process (Lafuente, Remesal & Alvarez-Valdivia, 2013; Onrubia, Rochera & Engel, 2015).

One of the salient features of online devices is publicity and visibility in front of others. Social media, which most of the modern adolescents are probably used to, are the absolute example of this social visibility (Ahn, 2011; Livingstone, 2008). Hence, in our study, the notion of 'vicarious

experience' became a central aspect: vicarious experiences allow students to observe what others do, whether right or wrong, and helps them understand expected behavior (Bandura, 1982). Some authors suggest that vicarious participation can be a critical step towards developing self-regulation abilities for some learners, especially in computer-mediated contexts (Kessler, 2013; Sutton, 2000).

Indeed, a public learning environment can potentially boost learning and make not only feedback but also any production by itself a source of guidance for learners. On the downside, vicarious experiences can raise the risk of plagiarism, but Hämäläinen, Ikonen, and Porras (2009), who also designed a public journal in a wiki, found that their participant-students valued vicarious experiences highly, while plagiarism did not occur. On the other hand, students stated that accessing what other students had done gave them a chance to evaluate and improve their own work.

With online platforms, public vicarious scenarios are easy to implement. Students' productions can be accessed anytime by any stakeholder, providing repeated, significant opportunities for guidance. Thus, writing is no longer a solitary activity, and the production and revising efforts can be shared (Tuzi, 2004; Hämäläinen, Ikonen & Porras, 2009).

Learning journals to promote students' self-regulation: the benefits of online devices

Learning diaries or journals (LJ) are first-person accounts of a learning or teaching experience, consisting of regular report entries (Bailey, 1990). LJs can pursue different pedagogical objectives, like uncovering students' viewpoints to instruction (Porto, 2007), or assessing learning strategies as part of students' learning (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Glogger, Schwonke, Holzäpfel, Nückles, and Renkl, 2012). Research links journals to stimulating critical thinking and deep learning, as well as to training students to manage their learning (Zimmerman, 2002). An efficient LJ that aims to guide students to improving their learning strategies should help them to file, articulate, review, monitor and reflect on instruction. It can, thus, be an instrument of guidance towards self-regulated learning (SRL), that is, the result of applying strategies to monitor our cognition (Pintrich, 1999). Pintrich describes SRL as an active, constructive process whereby students are capable of setting goals and then they plan, monitor, regulate and control cognition, motivation, behavior, and context, for the attainment of these goals. Thus, SRL is a deliberate, judgmental and adaptive process that good students are effective at, and, furthermore, it is content specific (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). Guiding students to developing SRL is especially crucial at the secondary level because a primary function of compulsory education is the attainment of lifelong-learning skills (Zimmerman, 2008). However, in secondary education, we must acknowledge that a reactive self-regulation is more common, as students are not yet experts, likely causing dissatisfaction and defensive reactions (Zimmerman, 2008).

In EFL instruction, Porto (2007) points out that LJs help increase students' exposure to EFL and force them to review instruction. They are a useful tool for understanding and guiding students' cognitive strategies and metacognition in EFL because they can make covert strategies visible. To that very purpose, online technological devices are particularly useful, since they provide free accessibility and any-time-any-place retrievability. This transparency of the process is especially helpful for the teacher, as it facilitates assessment processes (Lafuente, Alvarez-Valdivia, & Remesal, 2015), enabling sustainable feedback (Carless, Salter, Yang, and Lam, 2011), which can be responded to by the student, initiating feedback loops (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

The study: leading questions and method

This preceding theoretical search led us to question how an online wiki space could be implemented in a secondary classroom to enhance vicarious learning experiences, considering the specificities of adolescent learners. Hence, our study focuses on identifying the specific constraints of implementing an innovative blended design of online learning journals in a secondary education context. Listening to the students' voice is crucial in this process of educational innovation, as any change needs to count on the learners' engagement if educators want to promote their agency.

To evaluate the instructional experience, we formulated the following research questions:

1. What is the secondary students' appraisal of the instructional experience concerning learning sources offered in the blended course?

2. What is the secondary students' appraisal of the online public design?

3. How did the experience affect students' SRL?

Participants and context

We carried out a case study of a teaching experiment with a mixed-method but mainly qualitative approach to understand the participants' perspective and the learning effects as comprehensively as possible (Merriam, 1998). The participants were a class of 10th graders, aged 15 to 16, in a working-class state school in Catalonia and their English teacher, who was a long-experienced teacher but newly arrived at that school. There were 26 students in her class (15 boys and 11 girls) whose parents provided informed consent for this research; however, due to absenteeism, only data from 21 students could be considered for analysis. Together with the secondary teacher, we designed an instructional experiment to put the above-listed leading questions to the test (Taber, 2013).

The teacher designed a structured template for the LJ to help students improve their writing, which consisted of grammar and vocabulary tasks in a low-to-mid-range cognitive level spanning abilities from remembering to understanding and applying (Churches, 2009). The teacher pursued a first rise of metacognition through second-level tasks in which the students were asked to identify and reflect on errors committed on an exam. The journals were accessed and stored on a wiki platform. At the beginning of the year, one class period was dedicated to presenting the wiki platform to the students, in the school's computer lab. From that moment on, the LJ was considered a complementary space, parallel to the habitual face-to-face program, that is, completing the learning journal was meant as a long-term homework assignment throughout the course, requiring thus, a set of self-regulatory abilities and out-of-school access. Writing in the learning journal was compulsory, and the teacher declared it a prerequisite for passing the course.

At a second step within the assessment program (Coll, Mauri, and Rochera, 2012; Lafuente, Alvarez-Valdivia, and Remesal, 2015), the teacher offered feedback on the examples of grammar and vocabulary in use that the students provided, in her attempt to help them self-correct and reflect on their errors. Finally, the students were expected to react to her feedback and improve their written productions.

Data collection

Data was collected during the second semester of the school year, although the instructional program lasted the whole year. We gathered complementary data at different moments during the process. All the students' actions in the LJ through the wiki space were collected; also students responded to a pre- and post-experience appraisal questionnaire, and interviews were carried out with a selected sample of students to elaborate on their answers to the questionnaires; finally, the teacher also wrote a reflective journal during the course.

For the sake of space, in this paper we will concentrate on the results of the students' questionnaires. We administered the same questionnaire (Q) twice, to gather students' satisfaction with the instructional design, the first time (Q1), right after the students had become familiar with the design (February) and last time (Q2), just before the end of the school year (June). The questionnaire consisted of 29 statements where students would rate different aspects of the instructional experience from 1 to 10 points, in line with the grading system used in their school (1 being the worst rating and 10 being the best). Table 1 presents the items of the questionnaire, organized by thematic sections. A final section of the questionnaire included an open question to gather ideas and free comments on the experience.

Table 1. Items comprising the questionnaire

Appraisal of technical access conditions	Connecting to the Internet is easy.
	Using the wiki is easy.
Overall evaluation of the course	How I liked ...the English course this year
Overall evaluation of different learning resources in the course	...The teacher.
	...Other students.
	...The online textbook.
	...The online workbook.
	...The easy readers.
	...The films we watch in class.
	...The Internet.
Appraisal of the public conditions of the wiki (observing others' work)	Seeing what my classmates do in the wiki is fun.
	Seeing what my classmates do in the wiki is interesting.
	Seeing what my classmates do in the wiki is useful for understanding what I have to do better.
	I like being able to see what my classmates do in the wiki.
Appraisal of the public conditions of the wiki (others observing one's work)	Seeing what I do in the wiki can be fun for my classmates.
	Seeing what I do in the wiki can be interesting for my classmates.

	Seeing what I do in the wiki helps my classmates understand what they have to do better.
	I like my classmates being able to see what I do on the wiki.
Learning self-awareness as a first step towards regulation	I have worked hard in the Learning Journal.
	I have followed my own pace.
	Understanding my errors helps me to improve my English. I learn by correcting my errors.
	The Learning Journal assessment criteria help me to improve my English.
	Using the Learning Journal helps me to improve my learning.
	Correcting what I do on the Learning Journal is useful to improve my English.
	Making corrections, following the teacher's feedback, helps me understand grammar.
	Making corrections, following the teacher's feedback, helps me understand vocabulary.
	I like improving the accuracy of my writing.
	I learn English better when I can write about the things that matter to me and / or I like.

Analysis

Case studies accept a mixed-method approach (Merriam, 1998), depending on the nature of data. In our case, data from the students' responses to the appraisal questionnaire required a quantitative approach first of all, which was later complemented with a qualitative interpretation. The internal reliability of Q1 and Q2 was calculated with Cronbach's alpha, reporting a satisfactory global value of .96 in both surveys (Gadermann, Guhn, and Zumbo, 2012).We used the Wilcoxon test to locate statistical differences between students' responses, as we were dealing with a two-sample rating questionnaire that involved 'before' and 'after' measures, with a small, non-normal distribution sample. The threshold for interpreting the evaluation of students' satisfaction was a value of 5, as the students are used to, following the norm for tests in schools in the region, where 5 is the passing mark, and 10 indicates excellence.

Results

We present results in three subsections, according to our research questions.

Question 1: General evaluation of the blended course and learning resources

Technical access to the wiki platform had to be confirmed, as a pre-requisite for evaluating the experience. The students reported having easy access to the internet. However, they also reported trouble in using the wiki platform; as Table 2 shows, nearly one quarter (23.8%) of the students rated the usability of the wiki platform below 5 (mean 5.67, SD 2.73). Indeed, some students reported technical difficulties when incorporating pictures as the vocabulary tasks demanded of them.

Table 2. General evaluation of the course and learning resources (p <.05, 2-tailed) Value 1-10

	Q1 Mean SD	Q1 Rating above 5 % n	Q1 Rating equal 5 % n	Q1 Rating below 5 % n	*Q2 Mean SD*	Q2 Rating above 5 % n	Q2 Rating equal 5 % n	Q2 Rating below 5 % n
Connecting to the Internet is easy.	*8.10 2.12*	90.5% 19	4.8% 1	4.8% 1	*8.86 1.56*	90.5% 19	4.8% 1	4.8% 1
Using the wiki is easy.	*5.67 2.73*	57.1% 12	19% 4	23.8% 5	*5.81 2.29*	57.1% 12	19% 4	23.8% 5
How I liked... The English course this year	*6.19 2.14*	71.4% 15	14.3% 3	14.3% 3	*5.90 1.61*	71.4% 15	14.3% 3	14.3% 3
...The teacher.	*6.86 2.73*	66.7% 14	19% 4	14.3% 3	*7.14 2.13*	85.7% 18	4.76% 1	9.52% 2
...Other students.	*5.76 2.59*	52.4% 11	19% 4	28.6% 6	*6.62 2.09*	71.4% 15	14.3% 3	14.3% 3
...The online textbook.	*4.57 3.04*	38.1% 8	14.3% 3	47.6% 10	*4.57 2.71*	38.1% 8	14.3% 3	47.6% 10
...The online workbook.	*6.90 2.17*	85.7% 18	4.8% 1	9.5% 2	*7.43 1.75*	80.9% 17	14.3% 3	4.76% 1
...The easy readers.	*4.52 3.01*	33.3% 7	19% 4	47.76% 10	*4.24 2.96*	28.6% 6	14.3% 3	57.4% 12
...The films we watch in class.	*7.29 2.24*	85.7% 18	4.8% 1	9.5% 2	*6.57 2.18*	57.1% 12	23.8% 5	19% 4
...The Internet.	*7.57 1.83*	80.9% 17	19% 4	0%	*7.86 1.42*	100% 21	0%	0%

Apart from these technical aspects, an initial general result to note is that the global evaluation of the course was barely satisfactory, even decreasing by the end of the experience, though not significantly. Thus, we can report that the class did not enjoy the English course very much: the

novelty of the experience challenged the students' comfort zone. The global appraisal of the course was 6.19 (SD 2.14) points in February (Q1) and 5.9 (SD 1.61) in June (Q2). This decrease was not statistically significant, though.

Regarding the evaluation of the diverse learning resources of the course, the results show that there was an increase in positive evaluation of the teacher, hence an increase in acceptance and trust of the teacher's actions and instructional proposals between February and June. Despite the lack of significant increase, it is noteworthy that by the end of the course, the positive evaluation of the teacher (rating over 5) had risen from 66.7% to 85.7% (mean 6.86, SD 2.73); meanwhile the negative evaluation (below 5) fell from 14.3% to 9.52% (mean 7.14, SD 2.13).

The evaluation of the other classmates as resources for learning also experiences a remarkable change during the semester. The positive evaluation rises from 52.4% to 71.4%, while the negative evaluation falls from 28.6% to 14.3%, despite no statistical significance, we must acknowledge this positive change from a qualitative perspective.

Regarding the rest of the learning resources (online textbook, online workbook, easy readers, films watched in class, and the Internet), the only improvement we find is in the appraisal of the Internet as learning resource, with an absolute consensus on a positive evaluation (all students over 5 points, an increased mean and a decreased deviation) by the end of the course.

Question 2: Evaluation of the public wiki scenario

The public scenario of the LJ offered by the wiki device experienced the most noteworthy change in the students' appraisal during the course. As Table 3 shows, there was a significant increase in the perception of the wiki as a source of fun (14.3% to 43% giving a rating of over 5 points; 57.1% down to 33% giving a rating below 5). Seeing what other classmates do in their own LJ also increased its potential interest (42.9% to 52% over 5 points; 38.1% down to 19% below 5). At the same time, there was also a significant increase in the positive perceptions of the chance for other classmates to see and for one's own chance to benefit from seeing the productions (from 23.8% up to 52% over 5 for 'fun'; from 19% up to 43% for 'interesting'; from 42.9% up to 52% for 'chance to learn'; from 19% up to 24% for 'other classmates seeing my work'). In other words, there seems to be a light increase in acceptance of the open learning scenario, which would foster chances for vicarious learning. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the acceptance of others likely seeing one's own productions is always less valued than the chance of oneself observing what others do, and hence favoring a lurking behavior.

Table 3. Evaluation of the public learning scenario (p <.05, 2-tailed)

	Q1 Mean SD	Q1 Rating above 5 % n	Q1 Rating equal 5 % n	Q1 Rating below 5 % n	*Q2 Mean SD*	Q2 Rating above 5 % n	Q2 Rating equal 5 % n	Q2 Rating below 5 % n
Seeing what my classmates do in the wiki is fun.	*3.52 2.44*	14.3% 3	28.6% 6	57.1% 12	*4.90 2.23 .0434 **	42.8% 9	23.8% 5	33.3% 7
Seeing what my classmates do in the wiki is interesting.	*4.48 2.52*	42.8% 9	19% 4	38.1% 8	*5.52 2.23 .0316 **	52.4% 11	28.6% 6	19% 4

Seeing what my classmates do in the wiki is useful to understand what I have to do better.	*6.38* *3.02*	71.4% 15	4.8% 1	23.8% 5	*7.10* *2.32*	80.9% 17	4.8% 1	14.3% 3
I like being able to see what my classmates do in the wiki.	*6.10* *2.96*	57.1% 12	9.5% 2	33.3% 7	*6.19* *2.66*	57.1% 12	14.3% 3	28.6% 6
Seeing what I do in the wiki can be fun for my classmates.	*3.57* *2.16*	23.8% 5	19% 4	57.1% 12	*5.33* *2.27* *.0085* *	52.4% 11	23.8% 5	23.8% 5
Seeing what I do in the wiki can be interesting for my classmates.	*3.90* *2.30*	19% 4	28.6% 6	52.4% 11	*5.29* *2.17* *.0173* *	42.8% 9	23.8% 5	33.3% 7
Seeing what I do in the wiki helps my classmates understand what they have to do better.	*4.90* *2.55*	42.8% 9	19% 4	38.1% 8	*6* *2.39* *.0188* *	52.4% 11	28.6% 6	19% 4
I like that my classmates can see what I do on the wiki.	*3.90* *2.61*	19% 4	14.3% 3	66.7% 14	*4.86* *2.22* *.0085* *	23.8% 5	42.8% 9	33.3% 7

Question 3: Arousal of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) behaviour

As Table 4 presents, there was no statistically significant change in the students' SRL behaviour, despite the teacher's intention with her instructional design. Nevertheless, a qualitative reading of the results permits us to draw out some relevant facts. First, by the end of the course, three-quarters of the group of students had the feeling of having worked hard on their diary. The number of students who indicated a level of effort below the threshold went down from 5 to 3. Moreover, and more importantly, the students declared that they were able to work at their own pace. In other words, they found their way to organize their agenda to accomplish the LJ tasks in parallel with face-to-face classes.

Regarding the conceptualization of errors in the learning process, the students' answers reveal a slight improvement. By the end of the course, all four of the students who rated these two items below the threshold level had changed their minds and had declared at least a basic acceptance of the idea that understanding and correcting errors is a source of learning. We find a similar change in the global evaluation of the LJ and its assessment criteria shared with the students.

In contrast with these initial positive results, the students show no evolution, and in fact even a slight involution, in their appraisal of the teacher's feedback on grammar and vocabulary tasks and of making corrections following this feedback as being useful resources for understanding the specific learning contents. Indeed, despite a positive evaluation of the feedback from the beginning, altogether, and even with a little increase, there is basically no change in the number of students rating above, at or below 5 concerning grammar tasks and there is even a decrease concerning vocabulary. Nevertheless, we find small positive movements again (though not significant) in the items referring to the students' agency (on improving accuracy and choosing writing topics).

Table 4. Awareness of the learning process (p <.05, 2-tailed)

	Q1 Mean SD	Q1 Rating above 5 % n	Q1 Rating of 5 % n	Q1 Rating below 5 % n	*Q2 Mean SD*	Q2 Rating above 5 % n	Q2 Rating of 5 % n	Q2 Rating below 5 % n
I have worked hard in the Diary.	*5.90 2.83*	52.4% 11	23.8% 5	23.8% 5	*6.86 2.26*	76.2% 16	9.5% 2	14.3% 3
I have worked at my own pace.	*6.90 2.66*	76.2% 16	9.5% 2	14.3% 3	*8.10 2.02*	85.7% 18	9.5% 2	4.8% 1
Understanding my errors helps me to improve my English.	*6.95 2.73*	76.2% 16	4.8% 1	19% 4	*7.10 1.92*	76.2% 16	23.8% 5	0%
I learn by correcting my errors.	*7 2.66*	80.9% 17	4.8% 1	19% 4	*6.95 1.94*	71.4% 15	28.6% 6	0%
The Learning Diary assessment criteria help me to improve my English.	*4.43 2.64*	42.8% 9	9.5% 2	47.5% 10	*5.67 2.24*	47.6% 10	33.3% 7	19% 4
Using the Learning Diary helps me to improve my learning.	*5.52 2.34*	61.9% 13	9.5% 2	28.6% 6	*5.57 2.01*	57.1% 12	19% 4	23.8% 5
Correcting what I do in the Learning Diary is useful for improving my English.	*6.05 2.62*	71.4% 15	9.5% 2	19% 4	*6.14 2.56*	66.6% 14	9.5% 2	23.8% 5
Making corrections, following the teacher's feedback, helps me understand grammar.	*6.76 2.32*	76.2% 16	14.3% 3	9.5% 2	*6.90 1.76*	76.2% 16	14.3% 3	9.5% 2
Making corrections, following the teacher's feedback, helps me understand vocabulary.	*6.52 2.42*	66.6% 14	19% 4	14.3% 3	*6.43 2.04*	57.1% 12	33.3% 7	9.5% 2

I like improving the accuracy of my writing.	*5.48* *3.25*	57.1% 12	9.5% 2	33.3% 7	*6.33* *2.33*	47.6% 10	33.3% 7	19% 4
I learn English better when I can write about the things that matter to me and/or I like.	*6.81* *2.93*	71.4% 15	14.3% 3	14.3% 3	*8.00* *2.02*	85.7% 18	4.8% 1	9.5% 2

Discussion, pedagogical implications and conclusions

Globally considered, the students' appraisal of the learning experience was not as positive as the teacher and researchers hoped for, since the average values come out below 7 (out of 10). However, a closer look at the results allows us to reflect on likely causes of these less-than-optimal perceptions and what might be improved.

First of all, we find that the students had quite a lot of trouble when using the wiki page on which the LJ was hosted. This seems to strengthen the arguments of those who question current adolescents' 'e-nativeness' and call for them to have specific learning opportunities in order to develop strategies for using ICT instruments for purposes other than leisure and social networking (Ahn, 2011; Alvermann, 2008). The teacher in this study devoted only one session at the beginning of the course to presenting the wiki interface to the students. Probably, more time should have been spent to ensure the students' ability to manage the platform before engaging in the individual, out-of-class activity. Also, the highly structured LJ could be revised to better adjust its structure to the technical characteristics and limitations of the e-tool, avoiding obstacles and cumbersome actions.

Despite this initial difficulty, there is an improvement in the students' appraisal of the teacher herself and other learning resources offered in the course, including classmates. In other words, as time passes by and the students grow more confident with the program and the teaching style of their new teacher, they also learn to appreciate it better. It seems that there is, hence, a matter of basic trust underlying the situation (Carless, 2009): as the students progressively comprehend the basic functioning of the assessment program proposed by their new teacher, they grow confident in the teacher's actions and particularly in her feedback system. Another point to highlight is that by the end of the course the students value the Internet as a learning resource more highly than they value other concrete online resources which are, so to say, self-contained, such as the complementary online workbook. Thus, there is a positive effect of the instructional experience, since students start to reckon the learning-tool potential of the web.

There is also an improvement in the perception of classmates as potential learning resources, which leads us to the second research question. Indeed, the open, public nature of the wiki platform which hosted the individual LJs might have been an actual challenge for the adolescent students' social perception and particularly their social, affective sensitiveness (Blakemore, 2008; Choudhury, Blakemore, & Charman, 2006). Again, we learn that the secondary students needed to build up basic trust to accept being exposed in front of others. Plus, they needed time and the opportunity to try out the possibility of seeing what others may do as a source of learning for themselves. As a matter of fact, by the end of the experience, this aspect of the instructional program was valued significantly higher in all its sections, but the increase was even more significant in accepting the chance of seeing what others do, not as much in others possibly seeing

what oneself is doing. That is, a particular lurking behaviour is favoured (Nonnecke, Andrews, and Preece, 2006). Perhaps, this lurking behaviour should be considered seriously and accepted as another learning opportunity, and as a source of vicarious learning (Bandura, 1982, 2005).

Vicarious designs could help students learn more efficiently, but educators should find ways to make them less threatening to adolescent students by creating safe environments, particularly if the tasks are complex and unfamiliar. Perhaps narrowing down the social openness to a small-group level would be a pedagogical option to consider, not only to reduce social exposure but also to reduce the number of responses from others and the resulting amount of stimulus to be managed by each student in a meaningful manner.

Finally, concerning the arousal of an initial self-regulative behaviour, the results show, first of all, that the instructional design was successful in activating the learners. The blended proposal allowed them to find their personal pace to a certain extent, as they reported, although only the analysis of activity logs in the wiki space (which is still in progress) will tell us about the actual activity of the students. The students' answers point to the fact that writing the structured LJs as proposed by the teacher led them to develop or reaffirm a certain awareness of the value of errors in the learning process. Nevertheless, there was some rejection (regarding no change in evaluations) when asked about the usefulness of the teacher's feedback on the specific grammar and vocabulary tasks. In other words, we interpret an implicit criticism of the content and the activities within the LJ, rather than the fact of doing the LJ per se. Previous research already identified the content-specificity of self-regulated learning (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Pintrich, 1999). In our case, the students rebelled against low-level cognitive tasks (Churches, 2009) while they called for more creative opportunities. In this experience, the teacher designed tasks which consisted of writing single sentences. The students' responses allow us to consider that if the focus on grammar and vocabulary in use were embedded in the production of paragraphs rather than sentences, students would be able to learn about paragraph design, which, apart from being an integral element of writing tasks, provides more grounds for discussing aspects related to structure, coherence, and cohesion. Refining paragraphs is an assignment that is more meaningful to communication than just correcting grammar or vocabulary errors. Furthermore, it gives more room for creativity and less space for adverse monitoring. In the end, focusing on paragraphs would increase the cognitive load of the task (Churches, 2009) while the workload would decrease (Glogger et al., 2012).

To sum up, our study is especially informative for educators wanting to implement blended SRL strategies in the secondary classroom with the assistance of new technological devices. Adolescence is a period of life in which the evaluation of peers is crucial, and rebellion against adults' impositions is part of the daily menu. Thus, the pedagogical potential of public platforms improves as trust is built up between the students and their teacher. We vindicate the importance of considering adolescence as a sensitive learning period in which educators need to increase caution. Up to now, e-learning research has very rarely paid attention to this period of life. Secondary students' ICT-abilities are not at all guaranteed (Alvermann, 2008), and teachers should invest time in ensuring basic abilities. Finally, greater creativity and meaningfulness of the tasks should be favoured to promote students' engagement.

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