10 Years of Brazilian Scholarship

British Council Brazil and the Hornby Trust

Editor: Chris Lima

List of contents

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

British Council Brazil and the Hornby Scholarship: 10 years of Brazilian Scholarship is a volume that offers six articles written by five Brazilian Hornby Scholars who were selected by the British Council to undertake M.A. studies in ELT at UK universities, alongside the mentor and guru of many, Sara Walker, MBE, whose lifelong dedication to the teaching of English in Brazil began in the early 60s and who continues indefatigably teaching and supporting associations of English teachers to this day.

The articles cover a wide range of highly practical and relevant topics, from government-funded teacher development in a rural zone to collaborative learning through peer mentoring and teacher communities; from an analysis of the complexity of the classroom environment to the use of the latest technology in motivating students. In addition, there is a useful chapter on the history, methodology and scope of corpus linguistics.

It is undeniable that a British Council Hornby Scholarship opens doors, in terms of both professional and personal development. It is a source of great satisfaction to the British Council in Brazil that over the past few years, such a high-quality crop of Brazilian scholars has had the opportunity to flourish through contact with peers from around the world and with the best of British academia.

Chris Lima, who is not only the originator of the idea for this collection, but the driving force behind it, responsible for liaising with the authors and editing their input, has been tireless in her dedication not only to this particular project but to many aspects of the ELT field in Brazil, not least the British Council's Online Community for teachers, discussion groups on literature and, of course, the field of Critical Literacy, which is steadily spreading across Latin America and the Caribbean growing from the seeds planted at the 2006 Hornby Summer School in Sorocaba, São Paulo state.

I would like to express my personal thanks to Chris, Sara, Analucy, Gabrielli, Marcus and Simone for their important work and look forward to observing the positive repercussions of this publication not only amongst Brazilian universities and education departments, but, increasingly, in staffrooms and classrooms of regular schools and language institutes all over Brazil, and more widely, as teachers and students transform themselves into action-researchers, inspired by the work of these scholars.

Graeme Hodgson

Director British Council Brazil

February 2011

Introduction
Chris Lima, Editor

In times of economic austerity the Arts & Humanities (AH) are usually the first ones to come under the axe. There seems to be a commonsensical understanding among those deciding where taxpayers' money should go that these are areas that do not bring immediate practical benefits to society and should, therefore, have their budgets reduced in order to invest public money in 'productive sectors', defense and, in terms of education, in the 'hard sciences'. Such an approach could be considered misguided to say the least. As Gopal (2010) points out in a recent article in *The Guardian*,

> The humanities will neither bring an end to wars nor prevent chronic hunger, even if literature, history and art have much to teach us about why these miseries persist. (…) The humanities will not save the world (has business studies?) but neither are they a solitary activity of no social consequence. (…) Education, culture and society are like the oceans, an ecosystem. Plundering and draining one area degrades the larger environment. (2010: online)

Cuts in the teaching of AH and Education in universities in Britain will mean that 'history and linguistics [will] become, once again, the preserve of a leisure class able to afford to learn languages, study paintings and quote' poetry (Gopal, 2010: online).

One may wonder why such issues should be raised in the introduction of a collection of papers written by Brazilian English language educators, most of them working in their own country. First of all, the phenomenon described above is not restricted to Britain; on the contrary, unfortunately, there seem to be national variations on the same theme all over the world. AH and Higher Education are apparently not highly favoured when governments have to tighten the purse strings. Secondly, the British Council and the Hornby Trust have also been affected by the recent economic crisis and forced to reduce the number of scholarships available to English language teachers coming from developing countries to study in the UK.

It is important to remember that without the financial support of the British Council and the Hornby Trust none of the contributors to this collection would have been able to take their Masters Degrees at British Universities. Without this support, none of the publications and educational projects generated by the advancement in the education of these individuals would have been possible. The larger ecosystem of English language teaching in Brazil would have been 'plundered' and degraded.

One of the objectives of this publication is to bring to light the considerable body of knowledge that was amassed by some Brazilian Hornby Scholars between 2002 and 2009. Their studies here take the tangible form of papers based on their final dissertations or other assignments written in the course of their studies. This publication renders their findings public and makes available to many the knowledge and expertise acquired by few. This publication is a way for contributors to return to the larger community of English language teachers in Brazil the investment made in their professional development by taxpayers, via the British Council, and donors, via the Hornby Trust. It is a way of demonstrating that investing in AH and Education can bring concrete benefits to the advancement of particular communities and the society as a whole since the many hours spent studying, reading and writing generated the practical outcomes and projects which are presented in this collection.

Chapter One is an account of the implementation and development of the *Tocantins English Project*, which was possible at the time due to the vision of the Secretary of Education of the Brazilian State of Tocantins, as well as the support and experience of the British Council and other international institutions. In this paper, Sara Walker tells us about some common problems faced by public school English language teachers in Tocantins and how this initiative sought to address them. Hers is a story of professional and personal involvement, of commitment to the profession and devotion to the cause of developing EFL professionals in Brazil, in both linguistic and methodological terms.

Chapter Two is the first in this collection written by a Hornby Scholar, Analucy Oliveira, who was also intimately connected with the Tocantins Project since she was one of the participating tutors. Her paper is a shortened version of her dissertation and her main concern is how to develop an ethos of collegiality among English language teachers, from initial teacher education courses to continuing professional development programmes. She proposes a peer mentoring programme to be implemented with trainee English teachers studying at her university in Tocantins. Although it sounds quite specific, the rationale behind such a project, and the practical

steps she proposes, could be easily adapted and adopted by others working with English teacher education in different institutions with similar contexts.

Collaborative work is also the focus of Gabrielli Zanini Barlow in **Chapter Three**, where she suggests an action plan for a five-year programme to establish and sustain an English language teaching community of practice in Paraná. She explores the notions, structure and principles behind the implementation of the proposed programme and also discusses resistance to change in existing teaching environments. She proposes ways of overcoming such resistance with activities based on the notions of experiential learning and dialogue among community members.

Chapter Four is the last in the string written by Hornby Scholars studying at the University College Plymouth of St Mark and St John (Marjon). Following on in the steps of Oliveira and Barlow, I also decided to take my Masters in Teacher Education and study at Marjon under the supervision of Professor Tony Wright. An inquisitive reader would probably be able to detect his all-encompassing influence on these three papers, detectable in some common themes and shared bibliography. My paper is *not* based on my dissertation, as are the others in this publication. It is actually based on my assignment for the Approaches to Teaching and Learning module and the reason for this is that its topic is more closely related to the issues relevant to Brazilian practitioners than the topic I chose for my final thesis. In this chapter, I counted on the invaluable contribution of a colleague in Rio, Bruno Cesar Barros, who provided an extremely interesting description and analysis of his teaching context. In this chapter I defend the idea of seeing classrooms as complex environments intertwined with the broader social-historical contexts in which they exist. A short version of this chapter was first published in the IATEFL *Voices*, 212.

If Chapter Four is the last one on a string of papers written by Marjon students, it is also the first in a series of papers written by Hornby Scholars coming from Rio Grande do Sul, also homeland to the authors of the final two chapters.

In **Chapter Five,** Marcus Ferreira da Silva brings back the theme of mentoring and collaborative learning explored by Oliveira, in Chapter Two, and Barlow, in Chapter Three. His paper is based on his dissertation and examines the challenges faced by EFL teachers while integrating the use of Interactive Whiteboard technology (IWB) into their teaching practice. He provides a personal account of how he overcame the fear of teaching with technology and proposes a mentoring programme in order to develop teachers' pedagogical and technical knowledge when using IWBs in English language teaching in public and private schools in Rio Grande do Sul.

Chapter Six is certainly the most technical paper in this publication and the only one focusing on linguistics. Simone Sarmento discusses therein the historical background, scope and methodological issues concerning Corpus Linguistics as well as its implications for research and the production of English language educational materials. Her data is based on the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with aviation students, but certainly the uses she proposes for Corpus Linguistics and concordancers are widely applicable in other teaching contexts.

When I finished my Hornby Scholarship in 2009, the expected course of action would be to go back to Rio Grande do Sul and back into teaching English as a foreign language. However, life sometimes takes another turn and I remained in the UK thanks to a scholarship granted by the Open University to continue my studies at doctoral level. However, I have never felt truly comfortable about it, even having the personal support of colleagues in the British Council and the tacit understanding of the Hornby Trust. I always felt that I had the moral and ethical obligation to give something back to the Brazilian ELT community. This publication is also a way of doing just this. When I had the idea of producing this collection of papers what guided me was the desire to share with other English language teachers in Brazil some of the things I have learnt and became empowered to do thanks to the Hornby Scholarship awarded me.

Furthermore, thanks to the generous contributions of my fellow Hornby Scholars, this publication also became a way of putting into practice the ideas of collegiality, collaborative learning and the creation of a teaching community of practice which are recurrent themes in the chapters that follow.

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Chapter 1

The Tocantins ELT Project 2003-2004

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Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the Tocantins English Project, a partnership between the State Secretariat of Education of the State of Tocantins [SEDUC-TO] and the British Council. This Project was set up in 2002 and carried out in the years 2003 and 2004. The description will highlight some of the common problems faced by state sector English teachers in Brazil and the attempts made during the project to address them. It will also ask, five years after the project ended, what lasting effects the project has had.

1. The origins of the Tocantins English Project

Like so many good things in life, the Tocantins English Project was full of surprises. The first surprise was when the Secretary for Education of the State of Tocantins approached the British Council, late in 2001, saying something to the effect of 'I've raised the funds and I want you to run the Project.' The British Council reacted with caution, given the logistical and structural difficulties of working in a poor northern State of Brazil.

The background to the Tocantins proposal was a large-scale ELT project the British Council was involved with in the more developed southern State of Paraná, with substantial funding, first from the World Bank and later from the Inter-American Development Bank. That project aimed to cater for several thousand state-school English teachers.

The then Secretary for Education in Tocantins, Maria Auxiliadora Seabra Rezende (affectionately known as *Professora Dorinha*), had heard about the *Paraná Project* and decided to set up something similar in her own State. While she spoke no English herself at that time, she felt that English language teaching should be given more attention in the public education system if Brazil were to compete in a globalised world. The funds the Secretary had accessed came from the Ministry of Education (MEC) and were aimed at the improvement of high school education (*ensino médio*) in the northern States of Brazil, under a scheme known as *Projeto Alvorada*. So she approached the British Council. The aim was capacity building for 374 Tocantins high school English teachers, 225 in the first year and the rest to be added in 2004.

My own involvement was another surprise. I first heard about the idea of a project in Tocantins at a social encounter with Eddie Edmundson in Recife just before Christmas in 2001. Eddie was working as a consultant for the British Council between two postings and was responsible for advising the Director in Brasilia on whether a project would be viable. Although I subsequently took part, as a consultant, in the baseline testing of teachers in March 2002, I only become directly involved as project manager designate, at Eddie's suggestion, in mid 2002.

2. Framework: public-sector ELT in Brazil

A vicious circle operates in pubic-sector English-teaching in Brazil, particularly in remote regions. Students generally spend four years of primary school and three (or sometimes four) years of high school doing English, usually with two 45-minute classes per week. This seems to be a case of too little, spread too thin. But the

problem is compounded by two further factors. Universities receive students with extremely low language proficiency at entry level, and often consider that their job is to give the students an academic grounding rather than a practical knowledge of the language. It is thus perfectly possible for a teacher to graduate from university after some five years of studies with a licentiate degree in Portuguese and English or in English alone, but with an extremely poor command of the English language for practical classroom purposes. In addition, there is a flourishing private-sector market for language institutes. These institutes may even have a vested interest in seeing that standards remain low in schools, since this boosts demand for their own services.

At all events, there is a fairly widespread idea that communication in English cannot be taught or learnt in a public-sector school. This leads to a low level of interest and motivation among students; but worse than that, often among teachers too. The forthcoming introduction of school English textbooks under the Ministry of Education FNDE /PNLEM scheme, which provides free coursebooks to public-sector schools, can be expected to bring an improvement in 2012. But until now, teachers have generally had to depend on photocopies or texts written on the board for their materials. Questions of syllabus design and progression have been sacrificed to the day-to-day survival needs of the teacher. It is easier to produce a gap-fill exercise on irregular verb forms or take a comprehension text to class than to attempt to teach students the rudiments of oral communication. The standard joke is that state-school students spend seven or eight years learning the verb 'to be' (pronounced 'Toby').

3. The state of Tocantins in 2002-4

Tocantins is Brazil's newest State, established in 1988. At that time, a roughly triangular section was carved off the north of the State of Goiás and given the administrative status of a separate State, with a brand-new capital in Palmas. The Belém-Brasilia highway, built around the time of Brasilia's inauguration as the capital of Brazil in 1960, runs straight though the State from north to south. This should make for reasonably good communications. But in 2002-4, the road was full of potholes, often turning journeys into radical adventures. And while it is possible to fly from Brasilia to Palmas in little over an hour, and from Brasilia to Araguaína in around 90 minutes, there is no air connection between Palmas and Araguaína. There are no flights between Brasilia and Araguaína on Saturdays or Sunday, either. This proved a particular problem for me, because when I was asked to become the British Council's Project Manager, my activities were part time. The job involved spending 3 or 4 days in different parts of Tocantins in alternate weeks, as well as   maintaining constant contact with the two part-time Project Assistants in the small office-cum-library we set up for the project in Palmas.
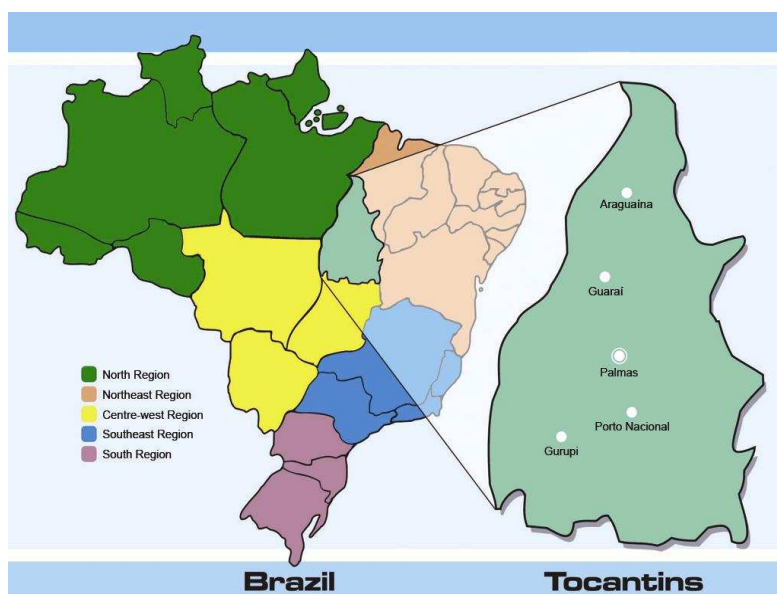

Figure 1.1: Map of Brazil and Tocantins. Designed by Robert Walker.

I note with some amusement that my very first report on consultancy work in Tocantins, dated March 24th 2002, says:

<u>Travel</u>: the bus (van) journey from Araguaína to Palmas is not recommended: the road is in a dreadful state and the hazardous trip takes over 7 hours. Sleep is impossible on the journey.

But I soon learnt to handle the journeys with ease. At the request of SEDUC, five teaching centres were set up in the towns shown on the map, and I came to enjoy my bumpy mini-bus rides around the State as I visited them.

In 2002, the mobile phone had not yet taken off in Tocantins, telephones were in short supply, computers were rare and internet connections were precarious even in the larger cities. Although schools were being equipped with computers and sometimes IT labs, English teachers did not always have access to them. SEDUC communicated with its teachers largely by mailings to regional branches, schools or individual teachers.

On the other hand, a new State has certain advantages. Among them were many new high school buildings. Classrooms in these are normally for 40-50 students, often with poor acoustics and only ceiling fans to help with the intense heat. But high schools barely existed in the region before the new State was set up. Up to 1988, middle class students attended private schools or migrated to Goiânia and poorer people had access to primary schooling only. So the mere existence of these buildings is an achievement. Some, like the Colégio Estadual de Palmas, have very good facilities, with an auditorium, an air-conditioned meeting room and a video room, as well as a swimming-pool, covered gymnasium and extensive sports fields.

According to the LDB (the basic educational guidelines law of 1996), primary education should be organised by municipal governments, secondary education by State governments. This process is still a little confusing in some States. But in Tocantins organisation on these lines is clear-cut and educational administration functions relatively smoothly.

 The transformation of the State University (UNITINS) into a Federal University (UFT), also turned out to have positive spin-off for the Tocantins English Project. The Secretary of Education, Professora Dorinha, has an academic background and had been involved in setting up a UNITINS campus before joining the State government. She is an effective and dynamic technocrat and remained in office for some 9 years, which certainly helped to give educational administration in the State coherence and stability.

With respect to the sociological scene, it would be fair to say that many teachers generally came from humbler backgrounds than English teachers in the south or southeast of Brazil or in the private sector. Many, if not most, were first generation university students and had grown up in households where books were not a normal part of life. Few had any real prospect of going abroad, fewer still had ever been to Britain or the USA and some had never been outside their own State. This, then, was the background to the Tocantins English Project.

4. Project design principles

The overall framework of the Tocantins English Project had three main aims:

- Training (language development classes for the teachers)
- Development (exchanges, workshops and immersion courses devoted to methodology)
- Sustainability (an attempt to create a cohesive and autonomous community of English teachers in the State, which would outlive the project and provide a more permanent benefit).

This framework was essentially the same as that of the Paraná ELT Project, but without the international links and on a much smaller scale. Given that finance for the Tocantins English Project was entirely Brazilian, from a fund to enhance teaching in the north of Brazil, it seemed logical to use and develop local resources as far as possible. There had been some talk of recruiting tutors from Brasilia or Goiânia and moving them to Tocantins to teach in alternate weeks. This was discarded in favour of recruiting tutors solely in Tocantins and working to upgrade their skills, where necessary.

Similarly, it became a principle that all Project activities would take place inside Tocantins. This led to a certain amount of improvisation. July immersion courses, in the dry season, were held in a local resort with the charming name of *Lagoa da Confusão* (Lake of Confusion). End-of-year immersions, in the rainy season, were held in Araguaína (2003) and Palmas (2004). Logistics were amazingly complex: they included hiring buses,

laying on meals, assigning teachers to accommodation, finding spaces for an auditorium and for workshops as well organising cultural activities, such as talent shows, singsongs, discos and the like, all for 200+ teachers at a time. All of this was handled with meticulous care and an unusually competent grasp of detail by our Project Assistant, Ana Lidia Rezende, working with Luiz Antonio Soares. And, of course, all these services and arrangements had to be provided within the project's fairly limited budget.

Expertise in teacher training was also sought inside Brazil rather that abroad, largely for reasons of cost. Guest speakers for immersion programmes included two trainers who had experience in Paraná as well as others (often, but not always native-speaker trainers) from different parts of Brazil with relevant experience to offer. Here I was happy to be able to draw on my own thirty years of ELT in Brazil and contacts made through my work with associations of English teachers, particularly BRAZ-TESOL. The ELT publishers, especially Macmillan, Pearson and Cambridge University Press, gave generous help funding trainers and providing books for the project library either free or at cost price.

5. Recruiting and training the tutors

I took over as Project Manager, in May 2002, under the line management of Hector Munro, Director of Learning at the British Council. By then, a group of tutors had already been identified by the British Council. Eddie Edmundson, still acting as a British Council consultant, and Chris Palmer, the Paraná Project Manager, had held interviews and made contacts in order to start building a trainer team. A dozen teachers from local universities and English language institutes had been identified. Their backgrounds, command of English and qualifications varied widely. Few of them had had extensive experience in communicative language teaching, only one had a Master's in applied linguistics. But they all felt it was an honour to take part in the Tocantins English Project. Team cohesion and tutor motivation were important parts of the success of the project.

Training sessions were held when feasible, starting with a session organised by the British Council in mid-2002, with Mariza Riva de Almeida of the Federal University of Paraná. Mariza became a key figure in subsequent immersion courses for the project and provided a link between Paraná and Tocantins. The same basic course material- the Macmillan *Reward* series- was adopted for Tocantins, partly because Mariza was able to provide extensive notes and back-up, emanating from her work with the Paraná Project. The publishers were also generous in providing materials at cost price and supporting the Tocantins English Project in a number of ways.

Tutor training became a key element of the Project in 2004, when a one-week intensive tutor training course was given in January by Paulo Kol and Piri Szabo, and follow-up observation and feedback was carried out by the same trainers during workshops given by the tutors at the immersion courses.
Dr Barbara Thornton, who carried out a serious and detailed evaluation of the project for the British Council, wrote this in August 2004,

> There was a wide range of experience on the part of the tutors. Some had extensive experience of teacher education while for others this was their first experience of training. However, all trainers interviewed felt that their skills had improved during their involvement with the project.

The trainer preparation provided by Macmillan at the outset of the project was felt to be useful in familiarising tutors with the book they would use during the training course but less useful in equipping tutors with the breadth of training skills required when they needed to go beyond the mere teaching of language and deal with issues of methodology. In this respect the trainer training course provided by Piri Szabo and Paulo Kol was felt to be very helpful.

There were mixed reactions on the part of tutors to being observed and counselled by Piri and Paulo. For some this was extremely helpful, while others found it somewhat traumatic. It was suggested that tutors might share their workshop plans ahead of time and receive suggestions from others beforehand since it was often too late to make changes once the immersion was under way.

Having tutors within the community was, however, felt to be extremely beneficial. As well as their regular teaching, they frequently acted as informal mentors on issues of both language and methodology.

6. Baseline testing of teachers

This began in March 2002. The picture revealed (using the Oxford Placement Test) was predictable: of 126 teachers tested, 114 were classed as beginners or elementary and only 11 scored pre-intermediate or intermediate marks (Appendix B - Table 1). The few students able to converse a little in English often had evangelical connections.

The intention was to begin the project almost immediately in 2002. However, there was a serious bureaucratic delay over the question of whether the State Government needed to hold a competitive bidding process to select the organisation to work in partnership with SEDUC-TO. Although this was finally resolved in favour of the British Council, it took many months and heavyweight legal opinions. The contract was finally signed and Tocantins English Project was not finally inaugurated until April 3rd 2003. A second round of testing and oral interviews was carried out at this point.

7. Training

The language development part of the programme began in April 2003, with 225 teachers taking part. Of these, 175 were classified as beginners or elementary and 50 as pre-intermediate or intermediate. They were arranged in 9 groups of 25, each group shared between two different tutors. Only the larger centres of Palmas and Araguaína had the luxury of a pre-intermediate group, which meant that stronger students often travelled quite long distances to get to their courses. Face-to-face classes were organised in intensive sessions, four hours on Friday afternoons and four hours on Saturday mornings in the five teaching centre towns (Palmas, Araguaína, Guarai, Gurupi and Porto Nacional).

A separate SEDUC-TO source of funding provided teachers from outside these centres with modest funding for transport and accommodation, and all English teachers taking part in the project were released from Friday classes to be able to attend their training sessions. This additional funding almost certainly accounts for the tiny drop-out rate (well under 10%) during the two years of the project. This compared favourably with figures for the Paraná project, where no funding was provided for teachers' travel and accommodation.

8. Development

Looking back, somewhat nostalgically, at the programme for the first 4-day immersion course in Lagoa da Confusão, I feel our opening words hit the right note.

> We are making a point of holding the Immersion Course in a tourist spot in our state, Tocantins. Conditions may not always be ideal, so remember....
> **don't criticise, make suggestions.**
> Both your accommodation and your study group have been chosen by lot - you are here to make new friends.
> You are here to practise your English. Please speak English all the time. If you don't know the words, improvise! Be careful- there are penalties for speaking Portuguese....

But the extent to which teachers took them to heart came as a pleasant surprise. Groups of participants walked around the little resort town speaking English to each other, and local inhabitants reported that they thought at first that they had been invaded by a crowd of American tourists.

We were extremely fortunate in that the Municipal Secretary of Education for *Lagoa da Confusao*, Conceicao Aparecida Carvalho and her husband Wilfredo were the owners of the disco/ night club which we used as our auditorium, dining room and social space. They were also excellent managers and laid on two good meals a day for over 200 people, besides facilitating our access to the local primary school and other facilities. But my outstanding memory of this immersion will always be one of the visiting lecturers, Grant Franklin, giving his workshops under the roof of in an open ice-cream parlour. Everything was improvised, but it all went surprisingly well.

The inevitable tensions between language development and methodology are pin-pointed here in a report by Paulo Kol, one of our visiting trainers, dated August 7th 2003,

> The language immersion provided a unique and much-needed opportunity for the teachers to activate and improve their language skills as well as develop professionally. Dividing the participants into groups according to level also ensured a more effective learning and sharing environment. The workshops were a good chance to get closer to the teachers, but this opportunity was initially somewhat wasted by the enforced use of the target language. As the course unfolded, it became clear that the teacher development moments were more productive, especially with the more elementary groups, when L1 became the medium of discussion. To a certain extent, this ought to be considered for the plenaries as well. In addition, the talks could perhaps be given to smaller audiences – say, 4 to 5 groups – this way allowing for a more interactive approach. These larger groups would rotate during the day to participate in the plenaries, just as groups did for the workshops.
>
> As regards the hours of input, it seemed that three workshops and a plenary per day was quite strenuous on both participants and instructors / speakers, specially given the intense heat and poor ventilation of some of the classrooms. The 2 to 4 o'clock sessions were particularly difficult.

The social events were important although not always carefully planned. The talent show and disco & party were superb, the fun & games evening lacked dynamism.

Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. Here is a sample, from one group, reproduced as we received it, without any corrections,

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The immersion course in Lagoa da Confusão was wonderful and very interesting. We learned so much.

VERY IMPORTANT: OUR SLOGAN

"Don't complain, make suggestions" and the objective of the course: Practice English, speak only in English..

*We want to congratulate all the tutors.

*the group G is "The best" and our slogan is <u>Smile</u> do you remember? Congratulations, Group G.

*In focus:
- Tutors' criativities;
- Workshops with different themes;
- The hotels;
- Breakfast in the hotels, lunch, coffee break and evening meal;
- All plenary
- We are thankful to Mariza, all the time sings to us.

Suggestions:

Only to continue the immersion.

  Live for today

  Dream for tomorrow

  Learn from yesterday.   [from the final feedback session 4.8.2003]

It is also worth noting that the July Immersion in the following year, 2004, included a trialling session for two modules of the new Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), which was formally introduced in Brazil the following year. Teachers' scores (and in one or two cases tutors' scores) were low, but the introduction of TKT in Tocantins was valuable, as will be seen below.

9. Working for sustainability

Two elements of the project were carried out specifically with a view to sustainability- the formation of an autonomous community of ELT professionals who would continue the work of the project beyond its brief two-year life. One of these was the university Specialisation course, run in 2004. The other was the foundation of the State Association of English teachers, APLITINS.

9.1 The Postgraduate Specialisation (*lato sensu*) Course at the Federal University of Tocantins – UFT

The Brazilian university system has an intermediate level postgraduate course, which comes between graduation with a first bachelor's or licentiate degree and undertaking serious research in a two-year Master's programme. This type of course is known as Postgraduate Specialisation (*lato sensu*). The course requirement is a minimum of 360 hours of class work, and the final outcome is that each participant produces a supervised research paper and presents it in public. The framework provides a useful introduction to research for those planning to go on to higher academic degrees. The qualification is recognised nationally.

The university specialisation course was not part of the initial plans for the Tocantins English Project- perhaps because British Council involvement both in Tocantins (and earlier in Paraná) had involved more international thinking. Desirable qualifications were seen, for example, as the Cambridge First Certificate and similar exams. But postgraduate specialisation was proposed, during 2003, as a specific request from teachers in Tocantins.

The State Secretary for Education, Professora Dorinha, gave us her blessing to negotiate a postgraduate specialisation course with the Federal University of Tocantins – UFT- on the condition that we did not add any expense to the project budget. Interestingly, although Federal Universities are not fee-paying institutions as first degrees and Master's courses are free to students, postgraduate specialisation is often used as a money-spinner and the fees charged by public universities may well be quite high. We wanted to use academics from all over Brazil for the specialisation course we designed, but even reducing their fees to a symbolic level, significant expense was involved because airfares and accommodation were needed. The solution we found was to offer the course to project teachers for a small fee - well below what universities usually charge. This was made clear from the start.

Negotiations with UFT were facilitated by the fact that it was a new university, interested in innovation and attracted by a triangular partnership with the British Council and the State Secretariat of Education. One of our project tutors, Maristela Borba, was a teacher in the modern languages and literature department of UFT. She was appointed coordinator of the specialisation course and took on the arduous job of handling university bureaucracy. She worked incredibly hard to get the course off the ground. The masterstroke was to get the university to give retroactive recognition to the 200 hours of language study the teachers had already done in 2003, as a foundation course. This meant the modular part of the course in 2004 could be carried out in only 150 hours.

Setting up the Specialisation course also required improvements to the project library, which had previously been devoted mainly to coursebooks and books of practical techniques. Again the publishers, notably Cambridge University Press, were very generous in letting us have the coursebook (*A Course in Language Teaching* by Penny Ur) and a whole series of reference books at very low prices.

In the end, as so often happens, the academic side of specialisation went very smoothly and the headaches were administrative. Here the newness of the university created a real problem: there was no proper financial infrastructure to handle the payments and expenses of visiting professors or the student fees. Maristela's talents were again seriously challenged, but the final solution was to have this side of the course directly administered by Maristela and our 2004 Project Assistants, Ana Lidia and Daniela, from the project office in Palmas.

A rigorous selection process took place to identify the 30 project participants to take the postgraduate specialisation course. The written text involved cloze, reading comprehension, translation from English to Portuguese and a composition, all on topics related to ELT and methodology, plus an oral interview. Some teachers may have been put off by the need to travel to Palmas in alternate weeks for the courses, or the fees to be charged, or the sheer amount of work involved in specialisation; but 64 project participants came forward and took part in the tests. Of the 30 selected to take the course, 25 reached the end and presented their monographs. Topics chosen for study ranged widely, from teacher motivation, to practical activities for student motivation, as well as the use of technology in language teaching. Virtually all the research took the form of case studies.

Some of the participants have since gone on to do their Master's, and a number are in key positions in academic institutions or in educational administration in different parts of the State. Many of the participants are active in APLITINS either as Board members or as regular participants in seminars and meetings.

9.2 APLITINS - the Tocantins English Teachers' Association

In July 2003, at the immersion course, the first meetings were held to found a State English teachers' association. Objectives and activities were discussed and statutes designed, using those of APLIERJ and BRAZ-TESOL as models. By chance, one of the visiting lecturers at the immersion was Albina Escobar, then president of BRAZ-TESOL, and her suggestions and comments were invaluable.

The association was officially launched with some ceremony at the December 2003 immersion in Araguaína. Local authorities came in smart suits and ties and I remember, with amusement, eyes being cast askance at the British Council English Language Manager at the time, for attending this ultra-formal gathering in rather casual attire. But Michael King was instrumental in securing British Council funding of R$ 5,000 to cover the legal and administrative costs of registering APLITINS.

Thanks to these origins, APLITINS has always enjoyed recognition and help from SEDUC-TO, the Sate Secretariat of Education. To this day, dates for seminars are discussed with the Secretariat and teachers freed from teaching to attend these meetings, as well as very practical help being given in the loan of a mini-bus to transport teachers and organisers from Palmas to Araguaína. APLITINS also provides an excellent forum for teacher development activities. Elisa Alcantara, one of the project tutors, now a lecturer at the Federal University of Tocantins- UFT in Araguaína, is researching the contribution of APLITINS and other teachers' associations to teacher development and I will be interested in reading her findings. Similar research was carried out by Daniela Debacco (Project Assistant 2004) at the University of Warwick after which she won a Hornby Award in 2006.

Since the end of the Tocantins English Project in December 2004, APLITINS has been the main channel for continuing contact between the British Council and the Tocantins teachers. The association has gone further than may others in Brazil by organising further training for English teachers. One such course involves training a group of teachers for TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) in partnership with SEDUC-TO and the Escola Técnica Federal in Palmas.

Postscript - 5 years later

Dr Barbara Thornton, writing in August 2004, sounded a note of caution,

> It is important not to overestimate what can realistically be achieved in the short-time that language training has taken place. While, undoubtedly, the level of teachers' English has improved, it would be unrealistic for them to be fluent speakers of the language given the number of hours they have studied.

One of my favourite visual recollections of the project nicely reflects this point,

Figure 1.2: Professor Benigno, Porto Nacional, December 2004.

The message on the blackboard reads:

> "Don't forget
> Tomorrow, will finish this course you might keep to studying during your life go on. Now you don't have Fernanda, Sara and Maristela with you
> So, be careful. You improve your English yourself.
> Love, Benigno."

What remains of all this activity? All the tutors I've contacted recently feel that they were valued, well-paid by local standards and given a chance to develop their professional skills through their work with the Tocantins English Project. Among the school teachers who participated, some have risen to high positions. Professora Maria da Gloria Natividade, a very good student in the Porto Nacional class, is now responsible for the day-to-day administration of English in high schools from her position as a coordinator for SEDUC-TO. Rosana Morales, at the Regional Educational Administration in Araguaína is similarly dynamic, well-placed and nostalgic about the good old days of the project. Both are active in APLITINS. Virtually all the members of the Board of APLITINS are still people who took part in the project either as students or as tutors.

While the British Council has few resources for face-to-face contact, teachers in Tocantins were recently given a chance to participate in an e-learning project. The dropout was high and something of a disappointment both to SEDUC-TO and to the British Council. For human, technological and social reasons, teachers may not yet have reached a level where they can cope successfully with international materials and autonomous learning. However, the comparatively low-tech course produced by the British Council for teachers in Brazil, *English Teacher's Portfolio*, has aroused interest and it seems new groups are about to be formed in Araguaína and through APLITINS. The American Embassy, in the meanwhile, has sent several Tocantins high school students to the USA as Youth Ambassadors and recently provided short training courses in Texas on US Culture for two members of the Board of APLITINS.

Some of the problems mentioned earlier, such as the poor motivation of high school students towards English classes have certainly not been solved, though there is anecdotal evidence that some of the teachers involved with the project are now planning more dynamic classes and making a very serious effort to engage state school teachers in learning English. It would be interesting if serious research could be undertaken into whether there are really any lasting effects.

For myself, both emotionally and professionally, acting as Manager for the Tocantins English Project was a landmark in my career, which now stretches over more than 40 years. I am most grateful to SEDUC-TO and the British Council for providing me with a unique professional challenge, which proved amazingly rewarding.

Appendix - Images from Tocantins

Tocantins Project Tutors

Tocantins Project Participants with the State Secretary of Education, Professora Dorinha (centre, in red)

The Specialisation Group

Teachers at work – Immersion days

Chapter 2

Peer mentoring programmes – an exercise in collaborative professional development

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Abstract

One aspect of teachers' working lives rarely given consideration within educational research is that of social interaction with colleagues. While research focuses strongly on linking teaching practices to students' learning outcomes, the social benefits of teacher collegiality for teachers themselves is often neglected. In this study, I examine teachers' perceptions among professionals working at the TEFL department at the Lutheran University of Brazil (ULBRA) and the importance of social interaction for their professional lives. I argue for incorporating a social dimension into existing concepts of teacher collegiality and speculate that social interaction among colleagues may be beneficial in two ways. Firstly, social interaction may promote better working relationships, which, in the longer term, may improve the quality of teaching and learning. Secondly, positive social interaction may improve the emotional health of the staff community, thus reducing stress and burnout. This study discusses how the use of peer collaborative mentoring strategies can help to enhance the professional development of teachers in Universities. It describes a project where members of the peer mentoring group play the multi-faceted roles of problem definers, information gatherers, information sharers and knowledge creators. The overall goals and activities of the peer mentoring scheme are also discussed.

Keywords: peer mentoring - professional interaction - collegiality

Introduction

This study was rooted in my own professional experience acquired through contact with my peers who are University lecturers in Brazil, and also with my colleagues on the Masters of Education in English Language Teacher Development at the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, in the UK. Through involvement with them, and through the significant influence that mentors have had on my career, I have become aware that teachers in different countries around the world are usually eager to learn about mentoring in teacher development and also likely to be willing to take more responsibility for their own professional growth, even though they sometimes lack information on how to do it.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a peer collaborative mentoring programme which seeks to bring experienced English language teachers together periodically to discuss, share ideas and develop a mentoring programme to promote their own development as professionals. As a result, it is expected that, in turn, this group of tutors would develop their own mentoring skills to be able to train other mentors and support pre-service teachers in their final year of preparation and subsequent careers as professionals in local schools. This programme is first intended to be implemented in Palmas, in the state of Tocantins, Brazil.

In this article I discuss my working context and its relationships with the broader social, political and educational context in Tocantins. This paper aims to bring together a range of approaches to and ideas about peer collaborative mentoring in teacher development in a practical way.

1. Social and educational context

I work in the TEFL Department at the Lutheran University of Brazil (ULBRA) in Palmas, Tocantins (Fig. 2.1). For many different reasons, the teaching reality is quite different from the ideal teaching and learning environment proposed by the PCNs - Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters (*Ministério da Educação*, online). First of all, there are only five English tutors in the department for a group of 60 students doing internship in local public schools in their final year of course work and practicum. These five tutors also have to teach other subjects to 340 undergraduate students and typically would have a working load of 40 classroom hours per week. This number of teaching hours usually prevents tutors from devoting special attention to their trainees. As these are evening courses, a typical working day starts at 19:00. The tutors have to prepare material and activities to teach a group of 40 students for three and a half hours with a 20-minute break. Each group meets only once a week.

The second reason for the gap between the ideal and the real teaching conditions is also a consequence of the amount of work. Tutors have a compulsory 2 hour weekly meeting 'to discuss their teaching problems and share ideas', but in fact what really happens in these meetings is that it is reduced the discussion of a long list of administrative topics provided by the coordinator. Virtually the only time available for tutors to share ideas is the 20-minute coffee break during their lessons. As expected, these sharing moments are very informal, unsystematic and insufficient because tutors hardly ever have the chance to meet all their colleagues at the same time.
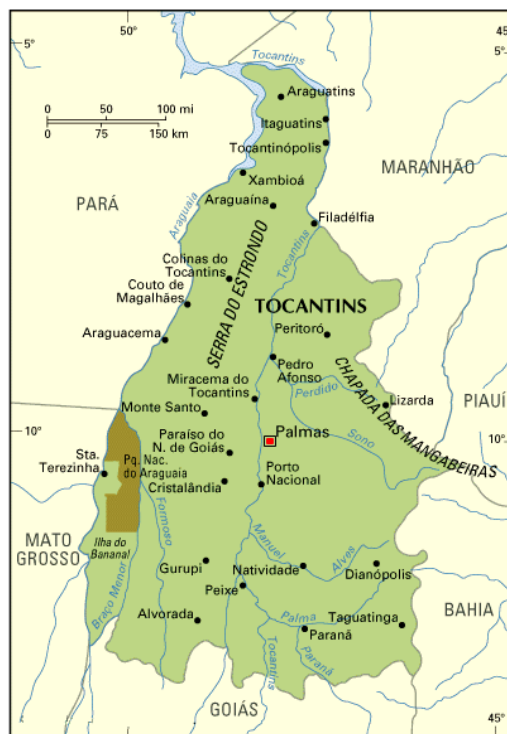
Figure 2.1: Map of Tocantins, Brazil.

Besides that, most tutors have never been prepared for or experienced any kind of mentoring programme. Most of them have had mentors in a very informal way through their careers, yet they have neither practiced mentoring, nor developed any mentoring course themselves, since mentoring programmes do not seem to exist at Universities in Brazil. Another difficulty is that a peer mentoring programme, in which colleagues work in collaboration/collegiality, would have to be approved by the departments and by the Boards of Teachers within Universities themselves, generating a number of financial and time management constraints.

1.1 Brazilian educational policies

In Brazil, major education policy-makers now endorse the practice of internship, where universities and schools act as equal partners in the professional preparation of teachers. In December 1996, the Brazilian Congress passed a new set of laws to regulate the educational system. Among other responsibilities, state governments must provide schooling for all children from 7 to 14 years old and offer teacher education programmes in order to enhance teaching and learning, lowering the high rates of dropout and increasing retention. Yet most in-service teacher education programmes available still put a strong emphasis on the acquisition of content knowledge, specific abilities and instructional strategies, relegating other aspects of teaching and learning to a very marginal position. They tend to just present prescriptive programmes for teachers to follow. Usually, these are short-term courses, open to individuals outside their school environment. To address this situation, research agencies are sponsoring long-term case studies to foster teacher development, to stimulate reforms in school practices and to propose new approaches for in-service teacher education programmes.

In contrast with traditional teaching practice placements, intern programmes are typically concentrated towards the end of the pre-service preparation, allowing students higher levels of autonomy and responsibility in the classroom and placing teachers in the role of mentors rather than supervisors. This is, at least in theory, what was determined by the PCNs, designed by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, to be adopted in Universities all over the country. Unfortunately, this is not what really happens in my working context.

1.2 Local Arrangements in Tocantins

There are two Universities that offer TEFL courses in the region. The University of Tocantins (UNITINS) is state-owned, so students do not pay tuition fees. The Lutheran University of Brazil (ULBRA), where I work, is private and students have to pay tuition to attend TEFL evening courses. Both Universities have similar procedures, approximately the same number of teachers (250 in total, 34 in TEFL departments) and approximately 400 students in their TEFL departments.

ULBRA Palmas introduced intern partnerships into pre-service teacher education courses on a trial basis in 1995. Following the formal completion of their course work, trainee students, as associate teachers, can elect to undertake internships at public schools in the metropolitan area or in remote settings. The internship lasts for 6 weeks, during which interns are expected to undertake half a teaching load of regular school lessons. The rest of the time, they attend methodology classes, which focus on teaching methods, strategies and classroom activities. The Board of Teacher Registration provides interns with authorisation to teach, thus allowing them to practice in regular classrooms. Ideally, teachers and interns are encouraged to work in a mentoring relationship rather than in a supervisor/supervisee relationship, which is more typical in the practicum. Mentoring is thus conceived as a reciprocal professional development activity where partners (both universities and schools) attain beneficial outcomes, sharing experiences and observing each others' teaching. Although 'reciprocal mentoring' is perceived to have benefits for both partners, this is not to suggest that experienced teachers and student–interns are likely to benefit from mentoring in the same way, nor to the same extent. For example, student–interns are likely to want to experiment with a range of classroom activities during the internship period. Hopefully, discussions with an experienced teacher–mentor will encourage them to analyse the educational basis for their decisions and to relate this to their personal philosophy of education. This type of reflection, which is of importance as the student–intern comes to terms with the day-to-day reality of teaching, is also likely to benefit the teacher–mentor in a different way. The aspect to be investigated, though, is whether and/or to what extent this sort of professional relationship and reflective practice really happens.

2. Reseach tools and findings

In my experience as a course leader, I noticed that the tutors have, almost as a rule, been working in isolation. Most of them do not develop collaborative projects and do not know how to work collaboratively. I believe a peer mentoring scheme would create the opportunity to change this reality and help to promote tutors' professional development. In order to check my peers' perceptions and opinions about a possible mentoring programme, a questionnaire was designed (Appendix A) and sent via e-mail to other tutors in the department. Most of the tutors who responded have quite similar profiles: they have an average of 12 years of ELT experience at public schools and/or private language courses, and half of them have about 6 years experience teaching at university level. They have all worked in the Tocantins English Project (see Chapter 1 in this publication). Most of them are qualified English teachers and received their initial training at the University. Only two of them have a

Masters Degree or any other long-term training course; the vast majority has attended short, intensive courses, lasting no more than one month.

2.1 Data from the questionnaires

When asked in what form they preferred to receive information or input (Fig.2.2), most participants chose the option which reads 'collaborative work and discussions.' This, combined with the answers to questions on ways in which professional support can be improved in their teaching context, suggests that tutors feel the need to have moments to share and reflect upon their own teaching. Some of the comments were:

P1. It's necessary to have ... co-operative and collaborative work among teachers...

P2. I have little support available for teaching, because I don't have a good (co-operative and collaborative) interaction among the teachers…

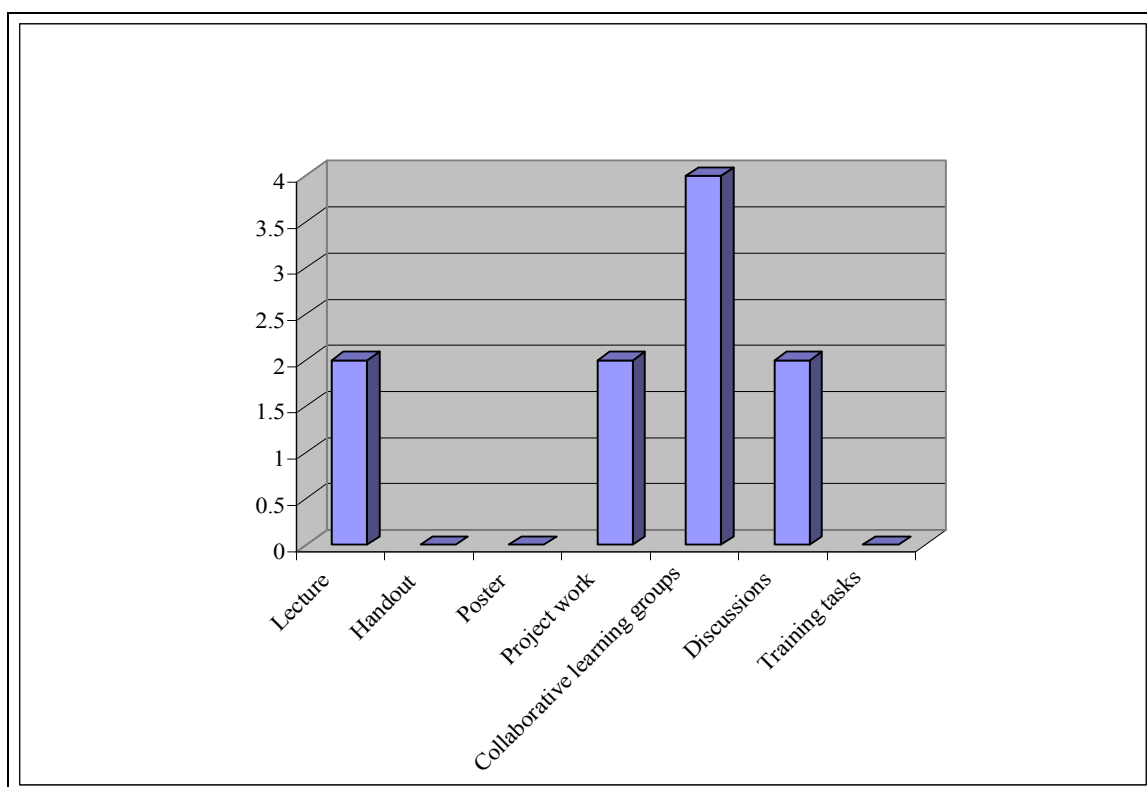Figure.2.2: Preferred form of input.

When asked if they could identify anyone who was a mentor to them and what this person did to assist them (Fig. 2.3), some answers were:

P3. A mentor is someone who provides the others conditions for being autonomous, new references, and discuss their own doubts.

P4. A mentor is someone that shows us that we have choices which help us broaden our horizons.
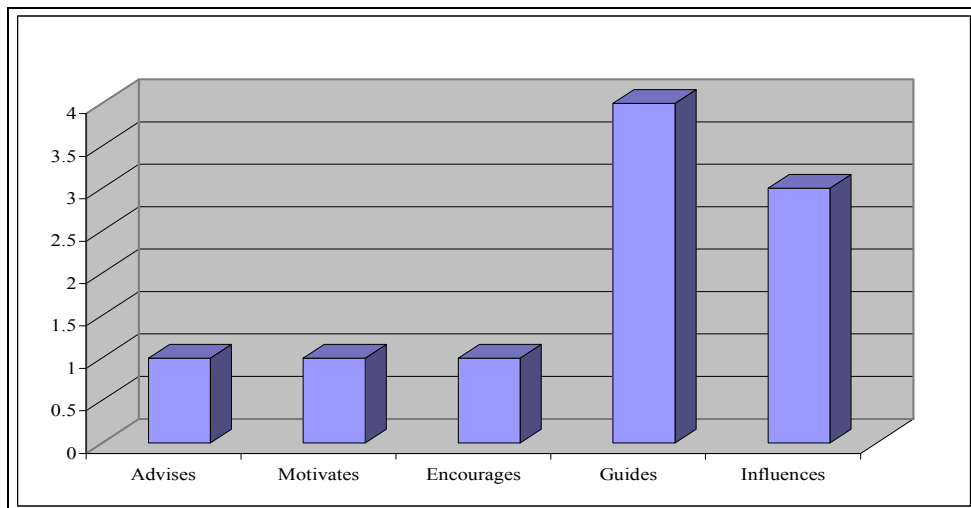
Figure.2.3: Ways in which a mentor is expected to provide assistance.

When asked to suggest ways in which professional support could be improved in their teaching context, some answers were:

> **P5.** Meeting with other professionals to discuss and exchange ideas.
> **P6.** Preparing topics for discussion (weekly) and pedagogical meetings.

When asked what they expected from a mentor (Fig. 2.4) most participants said that the mentor should be a guide.
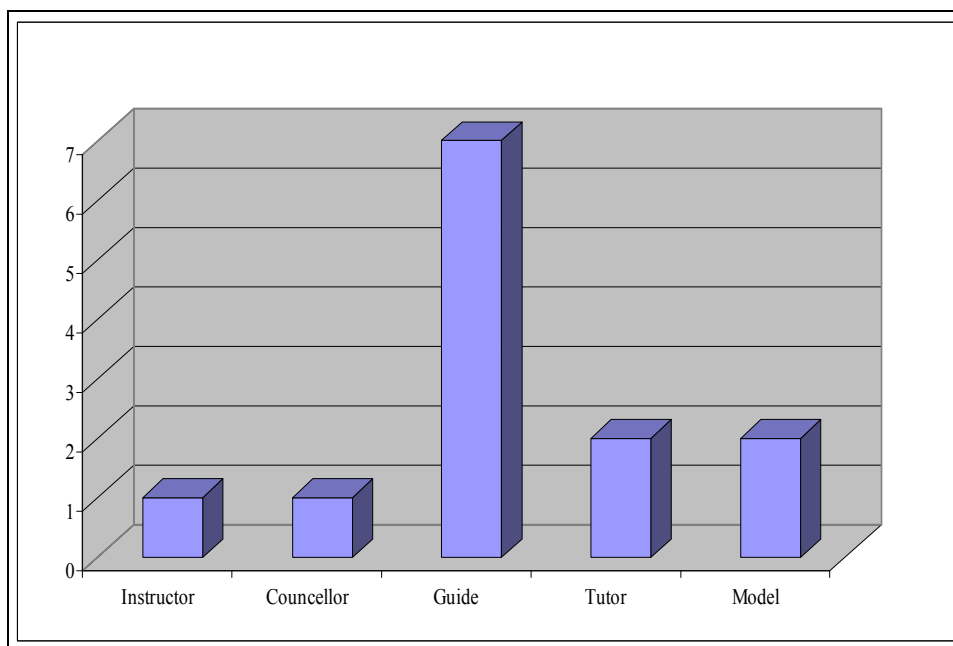
Figure 2.4: Mentor's roles

For the question, 'Do you ever work together with professional colleagues? In what ways? How does it benefit you?' (Fig. 2.5) , some of the answers were:

> **P7.** Not frequently. I've been working together with professionals in the ELT project and the best part of it is that we can share and exchange some experiences.
> **P8.** Yes, I'm working with colleagues ...and we plan the immersion activities together, we exchange experiences, we plan our objectives together and clear doubts.

P9. Yes, we usually exchange ideas, problems, good and bad moments in our day-by-day teaching. We can learn different points from different people.
P10. No, it's difficult the interaction with colleagues, they have little time for doing it.
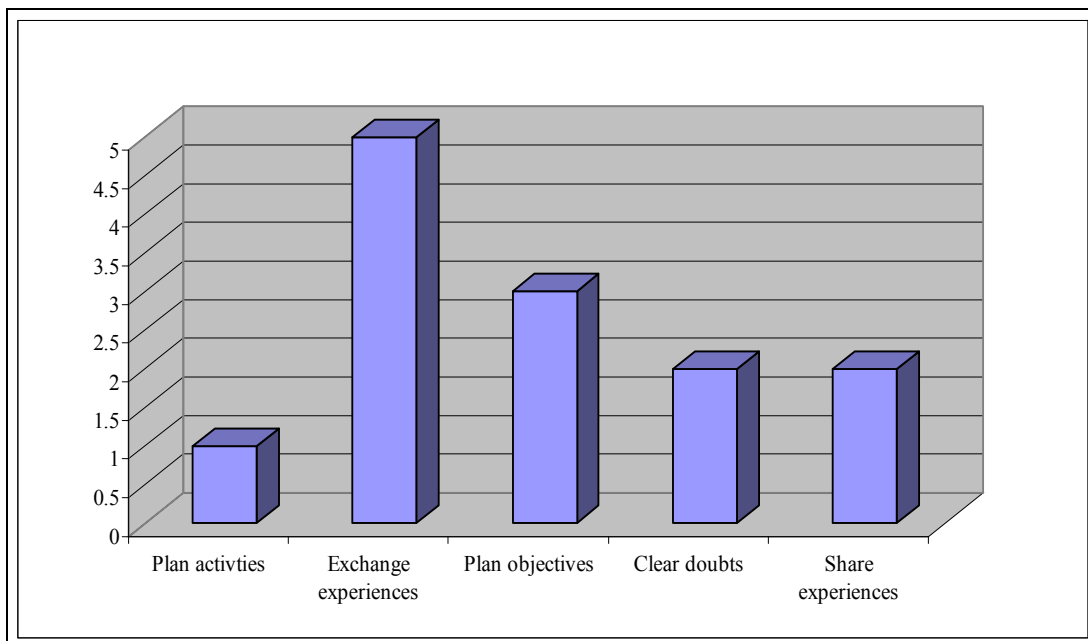
Figure 2.5: Benefits of working together

Questionnaires were sent to 14 ULBRA TEFL tutors. The number of replies was 14.

2.2 Findings

Most of the answers above seem to indicate that tutors perceive a need for collaborative work combined with a need to be led or guided. This combination may be an indicator of the importance of a mentor in the professional development process. In general, we can say that most tutors would like to work together in a more collaborative way. One of the reasons may be the fact that they have experienced it in the Tocantins English Project. However, most of them seem not to know how to start such collaboration and expect to be guided by a leader or mentor. These answers, in principle, confirm the assumption that what we need in our TEFL Department at ULBRA is a project to develop teachers collaboratively, through which they can share their doubts and fears, as well as their positive and less positive teaching experiences.

3. The right moment for change

Teacher development in Brazil used to be associated with in-service training or further education programmes offered by governmental or private institutions. The effectiveness of such programmes can be considered high, if they are seen from the point of view of methodological or technical training. However, they do not normally go very far beyond the usual updating on new teaching trends, techniques or aids or even on making teachers acquainted with a new syllabus adopted by the institution they work for. Nevertheless, it seems the time has come for the adoption of a wider concept of *development,* which does not necessarily exclude the aspects mentioned above, but which moves the focus from top-down decisions on *training* to a wider perception of *development* as a process of becoming increasingly aware of the quality of the learning atmosphere one creates (Widdowson, 1978: 35).

One of the reasons for this is that the country has slowly woken up from more than twenty years of dictatorship. The latent democratic forces, which enable critical reflection, have been released, opening up the doors for the construction of an *emancipating pedagogy* and for the improvement of critical educational practices. The nature of such practices can be easily justified by Habermas' (1974) theory of a critical social science in which he states that critique understands that its claims to validity can be verified only in the successful process of

enlightenment and in what it means in the practical discourse of those concerned. Teacher development programmes in the new century cannot fail to include an element of critical reflection as the full task of a critical educational science requires participants to collaborate with the organisation of their own enlightenment. It includes participation in the decision-making process by which they will transform their situations and some continuing critical analysis in the light of consequences of those transformations which can sustain the engagement in scientific discourse, the processes of enlightenment and practical action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

If teachers are to be participants in the construction of a new educational science, (i.e. with a critical view) they should be regarded as the main subjects of that structure. Yet how can they act as such if constraints of all sorts often prevent them from even following adequate training programmes?

A close examination of such constraints (Angus, 1995) reveals that in Brazil: (a) most courses are costly; (b) timetabling arrangements allow for little time off; (c) travelling time to training sites is long; (d) there are no adequate professional development plans to account for motivation; (e) working conditions often cause feelings of frustration; (f) there is little or no negotiation as to the contents of training courses; (g) follow-up procedures carried out by trainers are often inadequate for several reasons; (h) teachers are not involved in the general planning and administration of courses.

3.1 An attempt to change - The Tocantins State English Project
The British Council, in partnership with the Tocantins State Government implemented a project to improve English teachers' proficiency and enhance their teaching skills. The Tocantins State English Project (TEP) officially started in April 2002 under the coordination of Sara Walker, who has been working in English projects in Brazil since 1967. The tutors/trainers involved in the project were the same University tutors mentioned above, including myself and other English teachers from language schools from four larger cities nearby.

The aim of the project was to benefit serving secondary English schoolteachers in local public schools. There were 225 teachers involved in the project, and by the end of the project in 2004, they hoped to have 374 English teachers from all over the state. It had a face-to-face component, which took place in the cities of Araguaína, Palmas, Guaraí, Gurupi and Porto Nacional, and online component for those who lived in distant areas. Some criteria for participation in the course with waived tuition fees were: (a) to be graduates (BA) in TEFL and (b) to be serving in the secondary public schools. After enrolling, teachers had to undertake an Oxford Placement Test to identify their proficiency levels and to be divided in groups according to their command of English language.

The project was an attempt to enhance teachers' language proficiency and also teaching skills. Unfortunately, it did not prepare tutors/trainers to work in peer mentor collaboration because it was discontinued by the Secretary of Education (SEDUC). Although implementing peer mentoring was not one of the Tocantins Project initial goals, it provided tutors with moments to share their opinions in a much more reciprocal way, as we can see from the questionnaire extract below regarding opportunities to work together with colleagues:

> **P6.** I've been working together with professional colleagues in the ELT project and
> the best part of it is that we can share and exchange some experiences.
> **P5.** Yes, I'm working together with colleagues at the Tocantins English Project and
> we plan the immersions activities together, exchange experiences, plan objectives of
> the project together and clear doubts.

3.2 The importance of collaboration to achieve change in education
My experience and the answers given in the questionnaires lead me to believe that in teacher education we can no longer work in isolation. Teachers seem to have a great need to work together, to share thoughts, doubts and experiences. In this paper I want to suggest the implementation of a peer collaborative mentoring process in the workplace. Although conditions are very difficult in my particular teaching context, there are a number of people willing to help. Tutors expect mentors to be *guides* and this is a very significant aspect of the Brazilian pedagogical background, where teachers are expected to teach, in a traditional way, and learners are expected to passively listen and 'learn'. Teachers guide, students are guided.

To understand better this pedagogical view of education and to start a significant change in the educational process, we need to look within the education models of our society as a whole. We have to analyse what it is behind our current pedagogical approach that has inhibited change so far.

A strong society and economy are not possible without educated, competent, skilled and engaged citizens (Hargreaves, 1994: 134). As a society, it is our duty to work together to provide people with opportunities for development. When the whole educational community works together in a partnership or collaborative way to develop the education system, society itself benefits: schools improve because teacher's enthusiasm to work is enhanced; parents show more respect towards educators; families give children and teachers better support; and the school's role is recognised by society (Hargreaves, 1992: 88). As a result, the economy also benefits since companies can rely on better-qualified professionals, potentially enhancing the country's economy and guaranteeing its participation in the international market. Most importantly, students benefit from better participation in the classroom, showing better results in their learning processes and higher achievement in their grades, becoming active members of the communities where they live (Fullan, 1999:109). In general terms, they become better learners. When we talk about education, we are talking about the future of a nation and its citizens.

Working together, exchanging information, sharing decisions and collaborating in the learning process, everyone can contribute to the educational process and help to guarantee high-quality education. By the same token, TEFL tutors need to learn to work in a collaborative way rather than isolating themselves in their rooms. According to Vasques (2001),

> A very successful way to collaborate is to work with volunteers, tutors and mentors, who establish a very close relationship with the students causing very good results; because it provides links of friendship, even when the learners do not have learning problems, they feel well and confident with the presence of these educators. (2001:150)

A very efficient and manageable way to improve the school's work is to solve one of its main problems, through the support of its own community (Wright, 1994). This issue is addressed to those who participate and are interested in school life: school staff and/or educators - directors, coordinators, teachers, secretaries, administrators, students' families - and also the active members of the community to which the school belongs – community leaders, business people, religious leaders, civil servants. It show us that the schools can and must search for the community's support to solve most of its frequent problems, through the creation and development of partnerships for education – with the society members' help, through voluntary work, offering funds, materials and human resources. The integration of all of these efforts can result in a more comprehensible society, with capable students able to understand the world that surrounds them, to express themselves about it and become active agents in its improvement (Claxton, 1997).

4. Resistance to change

Even though the responses to my questionnaire seem to indicate that teachers are willing to work collaboratively and change the patterns of their interaction in schools, we cannot ignore that any change process implies challenge and is accompanied by some anxiety (Fullan, 1999: 32) and resistance. Teachers are challenged by unpredictable and ambiguous situations, in which the participants (students, peers, family and administrative personnel) are also subjects, acting according to their different and sometimes conflicting interests, values and perceptions. These conflicting interests can hinder any kind of innovation to be implemented if previous information and a well elaborated set of actions are not available and well managed by the project leader.

In order to make decisions valid for the whole group, teachers need to deepen their questioning and their understanding, trying to unveil hidden aspects of the reality they are facing and negotiating perspectives (Hargreaves, 1994). This kind of thinking is committed to action, it is rooted in each particular organisational context in which it takes place and produces new answers to overcome common problems. As teachers are personally and emotionally involved, and as the action plan is undertaken while they are practising, they cannot suspend action while reflecting. Their theorisation is precarious and marked by urgency (Hargreaves, 1994). At

ULBRA, tutors have to cope with 40 teaching hours a week and the almost innate tendency to follow the old traditional teaching/training process. To overcome these deficiencies and lend some validity to this complex process, teachers have to engage in collaborative reflection, dialoguing with the group, listening to others' difficulties and their different points of view, sharing perspectives, in an attempt to reach consensus. In doing so, participants are also learning to become more responsible, more committed, and more capable of criticising, analysing and understanding their practices, producing meaning and practical knowledge about teaching. This dialogical and reflective attitude is in itself a change in the school culture (Elliott, 1993). However, unfortunately at the moment this is not the kind of institutional culture we have, as we are still dealing with a culture of 'contrived collegiality, it is as if it has become mandatory that practitioners collaborate voluntarily' (Hargreaves, 1994:65). Whitaker, (1993) points out different reasons why some teachers may resist the innovation,

> When change is proposed we may feel bereft of the psychological props upon which
> much of our personal and professional credibility is built. So we fight to remain intact by
> seeking to preserve the status quo (1993: 62).

For some teachers there is a lack of trust; for others, jealousy ('This idea is not mine, so I don't want to help'), and others simply resist any kind of change because they are used to 'the old system'. Also, according to Whitaker (1993:62), some of the arguments teachers may use are:

- We don't have the time
- Let's get back to reality
- We don't have the resources
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks
- We've managed so far without it;
- It won't work in our department.(1993:62).

It is crucial to deal with resistance before and during the implementation of a peer collaborative mentoring program, and even in the follow-up activities. The following is a sample of the range of practical questions which need to be addressed:

- What will the structure and content of the mentor-mentee contact be?
- On what basis will the mentors be selected and by whom?
- On what basis will the mentees be selected and by whom?
- How will the mentors and mentees be matched or paired and by whom?
- When, where, how often, and for how long will mentors and mentees meet?
- Who will serve as the coordinator of the mentor program and what will be the coordinator's role?
- What records will be kept, by whom, and for what purposes?
- How will outcome be measured and who will be responsible for coordinating the program evaluation?

Lawson (1989) and Tomlinson (1995) have highlighted a number of critical components, which need addressing in implementing such programmes. Aside from the practical questions listed above, Lawson discussed the importance of these additional issues: (a) assessing the needs of teachers before implementing the program, and b) generating a broad base of support within the institution.

In the past, attempts to transform schools into critical communities faced difficulties derived from attitudes of resistance to change and from the bureaucratic structure of the system, called by Hargreaves (1989:19) 'A culture of Contrived Collegiality'. Teachers and students have learned to conform to the system and to obey social authorities. They have internalized an attitude of passive citizenship, a feeling of impotence and lack of engagement, as well as a concept of learning, which means listening, repeating, memorizing and reproducing. This is called the culture of silence (Freire, 1972; Hollingsworth, 1989; Shor & Freire, 1990; Garrido & Carvalho, 1996; Kincheloe, 1997).

One of the strategies to diminish resistance is to facilitate the building up of a critical teaching community (Kemmis, 1993), and to root reflective and investigative practices to make it possible for tutors at ULBRA to have more control over their working conditions. University researchers within the TEFL department at ULBRA can enhance this process by encouraging teachers' involvement in collective projects, such as the peer mentoring project, by introducing teachers to the investigative methods, by mediating tensions between the school and the educational system. Hargreaves (1994: 63) named it 'a culture of interdependent culture', and by giving voice and acknowledgement to their production, raising their confidence and autonomy. Changing the institutional culture diminishes teachers' resistance to changes (Zeichner, 1993; 1995).

A new institutional culture would potentially bring very good results in the long-run, as mentors working in the peer collaborative project may in the future interact with school teachers showing them how beneficial such project could be, and even being invited to provide training to other mentors within the community schools in Palmas and, perhaps, in the whole state. A peer mentoring programme would aim at developing a series of skills, such as the willingness to listen to your peers, ability to work in groups, self-awareness, as well as the ability to do classroom observation and give feedback. Besides that, it should,

- Provide a counselling approach which encourages individuals to disclose their frustrations and anxieties
- Provide sensitive and attentive listening to their questions and 'puzzles'
- Offer understanding
- Sense the anxieties involved. (Whitaker, 1993: 66)

However, it would be very naive to think that all problems faced by tutors at the institution would be magically solved by the implementation of a peer mentoring programme. There will be situations where the group will have to find out for itself the solution for its problems, but this also one of the most important features of a peer mentoring programme, i.e., participants' enhanced capacity to help each other to find contextualized solutions.

5. Implementing a peer mentoring programme

What follows is a more detailed description of some practical aspects to take into consideration when creating peer mentoring groups. It has my specific teaching context in mind, but its principles may be applicable to other institutions and teaching contexts in Brazil, or even other countries.

5.1 Group size
Group dynamics can also create some difficulties among their members. To sort that out, groups can be formed using self-selection, random assignment, or criterion-based selection. The choice of group size involves difficult trade-offs. According to Rau and Heyl (1990), smaller groups of three contain less diversity and may lack divergent thinking styles and varied expertise, which help to stimulate collective decision-making. Conversely, in larger groups it is difficult to ensure that all members participate. This study proposes a group size of five tutors. To be subsequently expanded so as to reach the total number of 12 University tutors in Palmas.

5.2 Follow-Up Activities and Evaluating Procedures
According to Slavin (1989:59), for effective collaborative learning and teaching, there must be 'group goals' and 'individual accountability'. When the group's task is to ensure that every group member has learned something, it is in the interest of every group member to spend time explaining concepts to group-mates. Research has consistently found that participants who gain most from cooperative work are those who give and receive elaborated explanations (Webb, 1985).

In the present project, the peer collaborative mentoring medium at the TEFL department should provide participants with opportunities to analyse, synthesise and evaluate ideas cooperatively. The informal setting facilitates discussion and interaction. The group interaction should help participants to learn from each other's scholarship, skills, and experiences. Participants would have to go beyond mere statements of opinion by giving reasons for their judgments and reflecting upon the criteria employed in making these judgments. Thus, each opinion should be subject to careful scrutiny. The ability to admit that one's initial opinion may be incorrect or partially flawed should be valued.

The peer collaborative mentoring group participants would be asked for written comments on their learning experience to reassure that the project is achieving its goals. In one of the follow-up activities participants are asked to give feedback on:

1. Benefits of the process of peer collaborative mentoring
2. Benefits related to the social and emotional aspects involved in the process
3. Negative aspects of peer collaborative mentoring.

Participants need to believe that they are linked with others in a way that ensures that they all succeed together. Each participant may have a different role (Klemm, 1994), but each role must be seen as crucial to the group process. Example of roles and the activities (Appendix B) involved could include:

- a reader who reads and interprets the assignment to the group, using the 'Six Category Intervention Analysis'
- an encourager who prods all members to participate in information gathering and discussion, we can also use the 'Six Category Intervention Analysis' (Appendix C)
- a summarizer who restates the group's consensus findings using 'That's exactly what I mean...' activity
- a checker who makes sure that all members can explain how to solve the assigned problem or generate the appropriate report material, using the 'Facilitator activity'
- an elaborator who relates the current concepts to what the group knows from previous experience, also using the 'Facilitator activity'
- a recording observer who keeps track of how the group is performing and how each member is fulfilling the assigned role, using the activity 'Mirrors'

There are many activities that the participants, playing different roles, can use according to the action learning set and the group's preferences. There should be a positive interdependence within the group, with participants making an effort to teach each other and learn from each other. Playing different roles within the group would enable participants to focus on certain aspects during the learning process and thus work more efficiently (Edge, 1992). It should also be a requirement to organise information gathering, or at least keep track of what each member has found, which could be done by the group leader/ facilitator.

5.3 The mentor's role in the evaluative process

Primarily, a mentor should be an instructor or mediator to participants. It is important to clearly explain the objectives of collaborative learning, which may be a novelty in countries like Brazil, where public schools and universities mostly teach traditionally. It may require some time for participants to get used to it. Hopefully, the ones that are reluctant at first will recognise the dynamic nature of this new form of teaching through peer mentoring and might notice a welcome change in their learning process.

It is also the mentor's/facilitator's task to explain the system of roles within the groups and to emphasise their positive interdependence. Some members may again be reluctant at first, and other members of the group may have the important role of guiding reluctant group-mates and helping them become more participative. Another significant element of the peer collaborative mentoring is effective interpersonal communication (Johnson and Johnson, 2000). Effective interpersonal communication basically refers to group members staying in contact with each other regularly, making sure that their communication is clear and to the point. This can be achieved using current information technology tools, such as debates and problem solving through online synchronous and asynchronous chat and email exchange, which could complement regular telephone and face to face interaction.

5.4 Group/Peer Evaluation

Evaluation of peer collaborative learning is quite a challenge as mentors cannot possibly participate in all chats, discussions and participants' meetings. How can members evaluate the learning process and not just the product? Two techniques that I have found work very well in the classroom are group/peer evaluation and in-class peer evaluation (Appendix C).

In order to promote participants' involvement in the above technique, the group is asked on one of the first days of the semester to discuss the evaluation of the process of peer collaborative mentoring (Fig. 2.6). First, they discuss it in their peer mentoring groups and then a team representative presents their ideas to the rest of the class and the mentor. Individual peer evaluations are shared so that members can develop self-confidence and feedback skills as they express how they feel about fellow group members.

Figure 2.6: Evaluation Technique

Another technique that can be used for in-class groups are video and 'live' presentations, which aim is to give members the opportunity to watch themselves teaching and interacting, so that participants can enhance their self-awareness, as well as ask and receive feedback at the same time doubts occur.

When there is a group presentation, the mentor can ask three or four participants who are not members of the presenting peer collaborative mentoring group to evaluate the presentation. It is essential to set the standards for such an evaluation, so that evaluators clearly know how and what to assess. For instance, the mentor could ask observers to give points on a scale from 1 to 10 to fluency, body language, grammar accuracy, vocabulary range, information, confidence and teamwork. Tutors can hand out a spreadsheet with those, or other, criteria to the filled in and with enough space for comments. The justification for grades in co-evaluation is very important. It is essential that participants are as unbiased as possible in their judgments and base their grading on the quality of the presentations according to some pre–established criteria.

Peer Collaborative Mentoring is a very enriching process, both for mentors and participants, the tutors. It is clear that the mentor's role in a peer mentoring group is that of a guide, a facilitator, or 'understander' (Edge, 1992), rather than that of a authoritarian ruler. It should be rewarding in that participants learn by themselves, improve their interpersonal/ social skills, share ideas, feel more involved, feel more dedicated, feel more confident, enjoy the class, teach each other, teach the mentor/facilitator, become independent learners, and maybe become better citizens in their communities.

It is important that the mentor constantly reinforces the process of peer collaborative mentoring; otherwise participants may start to see that as just an opportunity to achieve a good grade in the institution evaluation process. In due course, the participants would ideally become more and more collaborative.

Postscript

Future research studies need to investigate the effect of different variables in the peer collaborative mentoring process in teacher development, such as group composition - heterogeneous versus homogeneous - group selection and size, structure of collaborative learning and teaching, amount of mentor intervention in the group learning process, differences in preference for peer collaborative mentoring associated with gender and ethnicity, and differences in preference and possibly effectiveness due to different learning styles, all merit investigation. Also, an analysis of the group discussions would reveal useful information.

The process of writing this paper also generated some personal reflections. There is a scene in the film *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) that has caused a very deep impression on me: it is when one of the students stands up on the desk to prove to his teacher that now he sees the world in a different way. That is what has happened during my Masters course. I learnt to play many different roles, such as the learner, the group worker, the observer, the facilitator, the trainer, the course designer and the academic writer. This experience has made me look at learning from different angles, has broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of the process of learning and teaching. The experience of perceiving myself as being a learner has made me re-think my beliefs as a teacher and a trainer; it has made me see things from my learners' perspectives. The whole process revealed strong emotional and psychological aspects that were hidden inside me. As Ayers (1993) puts it,

> Teaching is not something one learns to do, once and for all, and then practices, problem-free, for a lifetime ... Teaching depends on growth and development, and it is practiced in dynamic situations that are never twice the same. Wonderful teachers, young and old, will tell of fascinating insights, new understandings, unique encounters with youngsters, the intellectual puzzle and the ethical dilemmas that provide a daily challenge. Teachers, above all, must stay alive to this. (1993:127-8).

It has been a long exciting, sometimes frustrating process of growth and development, a long road of learning critical thinking, understanding, making sense, self-development and self-realization. In this period I had important insights, such as to understand and deal with my own limitations, to respect my peers and tutors' different points of view, to accept criticism and re-start again, without giving up. My previous learning experiences in Brazil and the one I have had during my Hornby Trust scholarship were very different, but they both contribute to the professional I am now and to the professional I still want to be, because, as I have learnt, we are always learning.

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Appendix A – Questionnaire

Please complete the questionnaire. Please write as much as you want in the spaces provided. Continue in a separate sheet if necessary.

Part 1

1.1 What teaching experience do you have? Please indicate the number of years in the space provided.

School_____   College_____

University_____   Other (Please specify)_____

1.2 Are you qualified as a teacher of EFL? Please circle what is appropriate.

                        YES   NO

1.3 Where did you receive your initial training? Please circle what is appropriate.
   a.   Private University
   b.   Public University
   c.   Other (Please specify)_____

Part 2

2.1 How many in-service teacher-training courses have you attended in the recent three years?
If answer is none, please go to part 3

_____

2.2 What kind of courses were they? Please circle as appropriate.
a. intensive   b. extensive
Less than a month   significant period of time

2.3 Think of one particular course you enjoyed or/found useful. Please name it. What did you find the most or the least useful aspects of that course for your professional practice?
Most useful_____
Least useful_____

2.4 Did you learn anything significant from the instructor/tutor? Can you specify?

2.5 Do you think there are any other ways of development apart from courses?

Part 3

3.1 In what form do you prefer to receive input? Which do you think is the most important for you & your colleagues? Circle ONE.
   a.   Lecture
   b.   Handout
   c.   Poster
   d.   Project work
   e.   Collaborative learning groups
   f.   Discussions
   g.   Training tasks

3.2 Think back, about when you were learning to teach – can you identify anyone who was a "mentor" to you (either officially or informally)? List what they did that assisted you in your learning. What exactly did they help you learn about teaching?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.3 For you a mentor is:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.4 Do you have professional support available in your teaching context? Please describe this.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.5 Can you suggest ways in which professional support can be improved in your teaching context?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.6 What would you expect from a mentor?
   a.   an instructor
   b.   a counsellor
   c.   a guide
   d.   a tutor
   e.   a model

3.7 Do you ever work together with professional colleagues? In what ways? How does it benefit you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B – Activities

1. Facilitator's Activity

<table>
<tr><td>

- Take some time to reflect on the three conditions for facilitating learning, described in section 3.2. To what extent do you demonstrate these qualities in your own intentions and behaviour in the classroom? How do you know?

Carl Rogers formulated a set o questions to focus his own thoughts about himself as a facilitator of learning.

1. Can I let myself inside the inner world of a growing, learning person? Can I, without being judgemental, come to see and appreciate this world?
2. Can I let myself be a real person with these people and take the risk of building an open, expressive, mutual relationship in which we both can learn? Do I dare to be myself in an intensive group relationship with my peers?
3. Can I discover the interests of each individual and permit him or her to follow those interests wherever they may lead?
4. Can I be creative in putting them in touch with people, experiences, books-resources of all kinds – which stimulate their curiosity and feed their interests?

If, by some miracle, I could answer yes to most of these questions, then I believe I would be a facilitator of true learning, helping to bring out the vast potential to my peers.(Rogers, 1960 in Head & Taylor, 1997: 57

- What are your reactions on reading the questions?
- Are there times when you could answer ' yes' to one or some of them?
- Do you feel 'Well this is fine but...'? If so, then what are the buts? Try to be clear about your main but.

</td></tr>
</table>

Based on Head & Taylor, 1997: 57

2. Reflection Grids

Name of Activity	Purpose	Brief description	Feelings during activity	Implications for mentoring

Based on Bolitho & Wright (1993)

3. The Johary Window

	Things I know	Things I don't know
Things they know	Arena (open area)	Blind Spot
Things they don't know	Facade (hidden area)	Unknown

From: Luft, J. (1984)

Ideally, the largest area should be the Open Area in which you and I know a good many things about me, while the other areas should be quite small. The way this can come about is through sharing and feedback. That is, the more I let you know about me, the smaller my hidden area will be and the more the Open Area will grow. My Blind Spot will decrease if you give me feedback.

4. Listen silently

Listen with your full attention and in complete silence, while the speaker talks.
Reflection:
Speaker: How did you feel?
            Would you have liked anything more from the listener?
            At what points?

Listener: How did you feel?
            Would you have liked to do or say something?
            At what points?
            What did you gain/lose by not intervening?

Observer: Describe what you saw in the interaction

From: Head & Taylor (1997: 73)

5. Mirrors

All of us are very willing to give help to others, yet most of us have experienced times when the help we ourselves have been offered did not match what we needed, wanted or expected. Indeed there may have been times when we have even resented being offered help at all.

Aims
- to explore the nature of help

Suggested position in course: Before work on interventions
Materials: Small slips of paper, poster paper and pens
Timing: 45 minutes
Classroom organization: An even number of small groups of 4-6 people
Procedure:

1. Each group is given a pile of slips of paper. Working individually to begin with, half of the small groups complete the sentence beginning 'Giving help is...', the remaining groups complete the stem 'Receiving help is...' Participants work silently, writing as many different endings as possible, each on a new slip of paper, for a timed two minutes.
2. Individuals share and compare their endings in their small groups, categorizing them in any way they wish.
3. The small groups' task is to create a free verse poem with the title 'Giving help is...' or 'Receiving help is...', by putting their sentences in a suitable order. Although no ideas may be left out, exact duplicates can be, and some rewording may be allowed for the sake of the coherence or cohesion of the poem.
4. Poems are written up, possibly illustrated, and displayed in the form of posters.
5. Participants walk round and read the poems.
6. Comments are invited in a whole-group format.
7. Possible follow-up: participants are asked to keep a jounal for a week on the help they have given or received, and their reflections on these instances.

Variations: The whole group is divided in As, and Bs. Each half work on one of the two different stems. Then small groups are formed with; say two As and two Bs, to create a composite poem on 'Giving and receiving help'. Another variation would be to work on any other topic relevant to mentoring.

Comments:
We have found that some groups are reluctant to keep to the format whereby each sentence of the poem begins with the same stem. Although this need not matter, it does seem to make the poem less powerful, and provide fewer ideas.

From: Malderez & Bodóczky, (1997: 60)

6. 'That's exactly what I mean!'

Aims:
- To practice attentive listening, paraphrasing and summarizing
Suggested position in course: Near the beginning of the course, early in active listening practice, before complex role-play activities
Suggested position in session: After initial awareness-raising activities (see, e.g. 5.2 *We don't listen when...,* and 5.3 *We listen when...*)
Materials: Board or flip chart
Timing: 20 minutes
Classroom organization: Whole group to individuals to pair work to whole group

Procedure:
1. Course leader elicits a definition of paraphrasing from the group.
2. The group brainstorms the language of paraphrasing, e.g. 'In other words...', 'So you mean...?', 'What you mean is...', 'So...', etc., and these are collected on the board.
3. The course leader asks participants to paraphrase a fairly complex sentence, or text, such as, 'I've always thought it might be interesting to look into the question of whether other nationalities use the same body language as we do, because I have a feeling that some of the basic misunderstandings between foreigners com from misinterpreting each other's body language. 'Participants try to paraphrase the sentence. If they are not *exactly* correct, the course leader says something like, 'Well not quite, what I meant was...', then paraphrases the original sentence, and asks them to try paraphrasing the new one, until the course leader can honestly say 'That's *exactly* what I mean.' The course leader may want to continue the demonstration with further comments on the same topic, with the participants paraphrasing each new thought, or may prefer to go straight into pair work practice.
4. Participants prepare a complex statement of belief or opinion on anything discussed so far on the course.
5. Participants, in pairs, say their prepared sentences for their partner to paraphrase as demonstrated in Step 2.
6. Whole-group discussion on strategies for achieving understanding.

Variations: Step 4 could be given in advance as preparation
Comments: If team teaching, the demonstration can be done between course leaders, which will undoubtedly have the added advantage of showing how difficult listening/paraphrasing is for everyone.

From: Malderez & Bodóczky, (1997: 89)

Appendix C - Peer observation and feedback activities

1. Role-play observation sheet

TASK:		
During the role-play: Observe the 'Mentor' and 'Mentee' and make notes under the headings in the sheet below. **After the role-play**: Review what happened, getting the 'Mentees' and 'Mentors' reactions, using your notes to give evidence of what happened. Decide as a group what you have all learnt from the experience, and be prepared to share this in the whole-group round-up at the end.		
Stages of discussion	Examples of what the 'Mentor' said	'Mentees' reactions/comments

From: Malderez & Bodóczky, (1997: 170)

2. Observer's task

Tick each time you hear the mentor say.   'What I think you mean is...'   'What you mean is...'   'So you are saying...'   'In other words...'   'So you mean...?'   'So...'   Other:

Malderez & Bodóczky, (1997: 178)

3. Feedback activity

Six Category Intervention Analysis is based on the idea that our intention determines the quality of our help, and that we can become more effective helpers as we become more aware of our hidden, half-hidden and conscious intention within any helping situation. Once we are clear about our intention, it is much easier to choose words, gestures and behaviour that accurately convey that intention.

- Can you recall an occasion at work when you have wanted to talk to someone about a problem, and their response has seemed less than helpful?
- Can you say what the other person did to give you this feeling? For example, did she talk more than you? Did she shift the focus away from you and onto herself or someone else? Did she offer solutions, which didn't fit? Did her body language give you the message that she wasn't listening or didn't believe what you were saying?
- When a student comes to you for advice, do you think that you normally give it in an authoritative or a facilitative manner? If you decided that you would like to try using a different style of helping from the one you normally use, what would this involve for you?
- Is there one category that you tend to avoid? Can you think of possible reasons for this?

From: Head & Taylor (1997: 76)

4. Self observation schedule

Observation sheet A1
Observation for development of and by self

If possible, record your lesson (90 min. Cassette). This will help you have a more objective memory.

SEVEN KEY QUESTIONS

1. What were the best points of the lessons?

Best Points	Reason

2. What did students actually do? (Write, speak, play, sing, etc.)

What they did	% of class involved	What I'd planned for them to do	How did what I did affect this?

3. What did they learn?

What they learnt	Evidence	What I'd planned for them to learn	Reasons for any differences

4. How worthwhile were the activities?

Activity	Grade (1-5)	How could I improve or replace it?

5. What have I learnt?

What did I discover in the lesson?	What have I discovered on reflection?

6. What do I intend to do now?
Action points:

7. How do I feel, having observed myself?

From: Malderez & Bodóczky, (1997: 209).

Chapter 3

Fostering collaborative work through teacher communities

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to (a) describe a teacher community and (b) set an action plan for a five-year programme to establish and sustain a community of practice. I shall start by defining communities and their relevance for teachers' professional development *in loco*. Secondly, I will suggest an action plan for creating a community for teachers located in a town in Paraná, Brazil. Finally, I shall comment on the strategy proposed for the initial steps of a five year programme to establish and sustain a community of practice.

There is plenty of evidence (Rosenholtz, 1989: 73, in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992: 61) that teaching is a collective rather than an individual enterprise. Barlett (1990: 203-4) notes that teaching is essentially an interactive process among a group of people learning in a social setting. Abdal-Haqq (1996, in Good and Weaver, 2003: 442) suggests that effective professional development provides teachers with the opportunity to interact and collaborate with each other. There is also evidence (Grugeon et al, 1989; Gates, 1989; Abott et al, 1989; Little, 2003) that teachers learn from each other when they share their anxieties, findings or daily achievements. Woods (1992: 6) points out the value of informal everyday interaction. Professional development is an essential component of retaining high quality teachers. Collaboration and sharing amongst teachers are important tools for fostering development. One way of achieving that is by bringing teachers together into communities (Good and Weaver, 2003).

Keywords: teacher communities – sharing and caring

Introduction

Little (2003: 940) points out that there are many reasons for *conservatism* in teaching practice, but one avenue is to explore what constructions of practice are afforded by and through the ordinary workplace exchanges that constitute teachers' communities of practice. Grossmand et al (2000) note that,

> There are many reasons to cultivate teachers' professional community – from providing opportunities for teacher learning to enrich the possibilities for student learning, from retaining talented teachers to enabling teachers to work together towards a common goal (2000: 55)

Teacher communities bring benefits for teachers, students and the whole school. They constitute an important contributor to teacher development, the collective capacity of schools, and an improvement in the practices of teaching and schooling (Little, 2003: 913). They are one way to bring teachers together, minimising the sense of isolation. Researchers (Little, 2003: 913) point out that the conditions for improving teaching and learning are strengthened when teachers collectively:

- Question ineffective teaching routines
- Examine new conceptions of teaching and learning
- Find generative means to acknowledge and respond to difference and conflict
- Engage actively in supporting one another's professional growth.

Andrews and Lewis (2002: 239) define teachers as a community of collaborative individuals that is underpinned by concepts of collaboration, deprivatization of practice, reflective dialogue and taking a pedagogical leadership. Features associated with teacher communities show that:

- the groups demonstrably reserve time to identify and examine problems of practice
- they elaborate those problems in ways that open up to new considerations and possibilities
- they readily disclose their uncertainties and dilemmas and invite comment and advice from others; and artefacts of classroom practice (student work, lesson plans, and the like) are made accessible (Little, 2003: 938).

Walker (1975, in Andrews and Lewis, 2002: 239) reported on a professional community with a shared vision for enhancing student outcomes. This community had been built through a process of deliberation, a process which, he mentioned, enabled people to share assumptions, values, beliefs and mental images – developing common understanding through exposing educational platforms and developing a shared system of working principles. Brandsford et al (1999: online) argue that an important way to enhance teacher learning is to develop communities of practice, an approach that involves collaborative peer relationships and teachers' participation in educational research and practice.

1. Teacher communities

The word *community* itself has a broad definition and it is widely used nowadays, especially on the Internet, where individuals join virtual communities. In general terms, a community addresses the act of bringing together a group of people who share the same interests or beliefs. This 'bringing together' can happen face-to-face or virtually, as in the case of online communities. Grossman et al (2000) alert us to the fact that communities may be losing their meaning. They comment that

> From the prevalence of terms such as "communities of learners", "discourse communities" and "learning communities" to "school communities", "teacher community", or "communities of practice", it is clear that *community* has become an obligatory appendage to every educational innovation (2000: 6)

It seems that the main focus of a community changes every time its denomination is changed. For example, one may understand that a teacher community is different from a community of practice. For me, all communities have the same primary aim, which is to bring people together to share and learn with each other. In my understanding, they differ only in topics of interests. For instance, a fishing community will get together to talk about their concerns over the scarcity of certain fish during winter, or simply to chat with each other and narrate their adventures in the open sea. Similarly, a community of learners will get together to learn how to do things, to discuss a book they read or an innovation. What those two communities have in common is that both bring people together and give them opportunities to discuss issues of their interest. As this study is of interest for teacher educators and teachers of English, I decided to opt for a single term to address the proposed community and its features. Henceforth, I will refer to it as a *teacher community.*

1.1 What is a teacher community?

Community entails a 'group of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger et al 2002: 4). Bellah et al (1985: 333 in Grossman et al, 2000:8) stipulate that a community corresponds to a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision-making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it. For example, a group of Geography teachers decide to get together and discuss ways to help their learners use maps effectively; or a group of literature teachers organises literary meetings for reading novels or poems and commenting on new strands in the literature.

As a community develops, its members evolve with it. Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and establish ways of interacting. They may even develop a sense of identity (Wenger et al, 2002: 5). A community has the potential for professional development which encompasses three views suggested by Hargreaves and Fullan (1992). They (1992: 16) argue that understanding teacher development as a whole process involves not only knowledge and skills teachers need but also understanding 'what sort of person' the teacher is and the context in which most of them work. A successful programme should focus on the development of teachers' self-awareness, present new knowledge and skills to help them cope with their

everyday practice, but should be delivered in their own context. In associating with each other, teachers give and receive attention, knowledge and support. Moreover, a community arises in the context which is familiar to its members.

1.2 What is the purpose of a teacher community?

Due to rapid changes in socio-cultural contexts around the world, educational settings are also being affected. Teachers have been encouraged to work more with their colleagues and access the expertise they need to improve their practices (Hargreaves, 1999: 1). Brandsford et al (1999: online) note that community-centred environments involve norms that encourage collaboration and learning. Working together can be accomplished by means of communities. Grossman et al (2000: 10) argue that a teacher community provides an ongoing venue for teacher learning. Learning is, so far, the main aim of any community.

In some previous research carried-out for teacher training purposes, I identified some issues affecting working conditions of teachers of English located in two Brazilian towns in the south of the country and suggested the creation of a teacher community as a means of addressing those issues. The community I envisioned for that particular context would have the purpose of (a) promoting professional learning and (b) bringing teachers together to share the experiences, joys and worries of their everyday practice.

1.3. The structure of a teacher community

Wenger et al (2002: 27) argue that all communities share a basic structure, which comprises three elements: the *domain* of knowledge*,* a *community* of people who care about this domain and a shared *practice* for this effective domain.

The *domain* of knowledge creates common ground and a sense of common identity among the members of a community. It inspires members to contribute and participate, guides their learning and gives meaning to their actions. When members know the boundaries and the edges of the domain, they are able to decide what to share, how to present their ideas and which activities to pursue (Wenger et al 2002: 28-32). The domain consists of key common issues or problems which members of a community experience. For example, in a community of English teachers, the standard of language proficiency set by authorities can be perceived as a problem, so those teachers will get together to discuss and try to find possible solutions for that. They are united by a common concern and the same goal. In establishing the domain of a community, teachers need to understand the meaning of their actions, which can be achieved by learning new things and by making sense of pre-existing knowledge. Guidance to set the domain may require an approach which focuses on the development of skills and knowledge (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992).

The *community* of people is an important element because learning is a matter of belonging as well as an intellectual process, involving not only the mind but also the heart. It encourages a willingness to share ideas, expose one's ignorance, ask difficult questions, and listen carefully (After Wenger et al, 2002: 28-9). Falcão and Szesztay (2006: 17) present some reasons why teachers of English may want to work together:

- To improve the practice of language teaching and learning
- To promote high standards of initial and in-service language teacher training
- To foster and promote scholarship relating to language teaching
- To foster high academic and professional standards
- To break down the isolation that teachers experience both in their classrooms and their institutional settings
- To encourage cooperation and mutual support
- To foster the articulation and development of teacher-theory concerning classroom language learning
- To offer a regular forum for the introduction for the production and exchange of materials and other resources
- To encourage the development of foreign language teacher identity and collegiality
- To provide opportunities for personal language development

A community is formed by individuals who interact and learn with each other. It is grounded on individuals' commitment, not only of time but also of energy. Sense of belonging and identity are strong elements for the sustainability of the community. Not only does a community have common elements, but it also welcomes and values the diversity that enriches the ongoing learning process. This element gives emphasis to the members

who form the community. It values and enhances their contributions to the development of the community. It considers an approach, which focuses on the development of personal skills.

The *practice* is a set of frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories and documents that community members share (Wenger et al, 2002: 29). Practice denotes a set of common approaches and ways of doing things. Each individual has their own way of doing things, finding solutions for problems and making decisions. One of the objectives of a community is to establish a common set of practices among its members. Effective practice evolves with the community as a collective product. I would like to argue that establishing a common practice for the members is only possible if it is embedded in the context where this practice takes place. For example, setting a communicative approach as common practice in a context that does not offer means for it would be difficult. In defining their frameworks for practice, the members of a community need to match it with the context in which they operate. This third element requires a careful look at the context where a given community is being set-up.

The structural elements (Fig. 3.1) described below have connections with approaches to professional development suggested by Hargreaves and Fullan (1992).
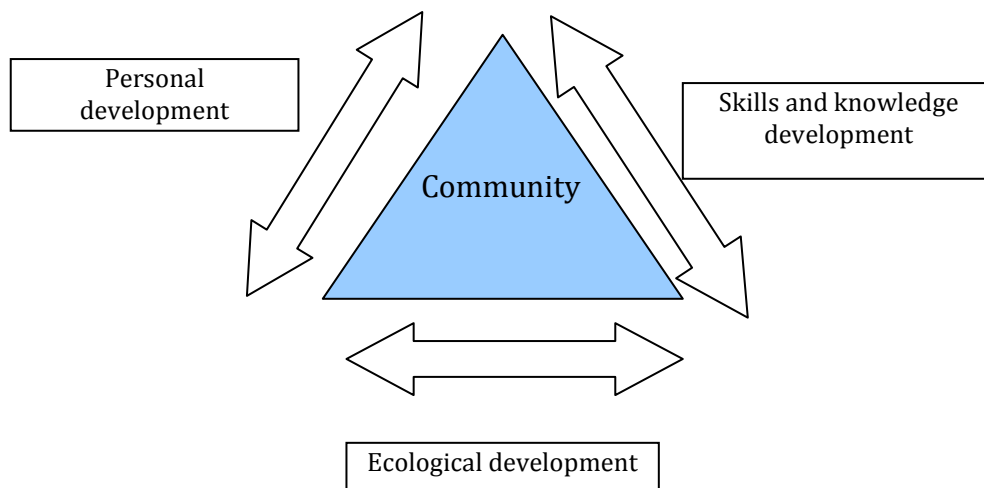
Figure 3.1: Structural elements and "approach emphasis" of a community of practice.

1.4 Principles for operation
Communities, which develop around established principles and have defined goals, are more likely to succeed if they have an identity. The principles underpinning the process of setting-up a teacher community in a given locality are related to principles for professional development programmes. A community is part of the whole process and one of its outcomes. Nonetheless, communities need domains and they can be grounded in a set of developmental principles. The community proposed in this article is oriented by the following principles:

1. Exploration of professional and personal experience as a starting point
2. Open dialogue among participants
3. Work with colleagues and peers
4. Reflection on experience – past and present
5. Focus on value

(After Wenger et al, 2002: 51 and Wright, 2005)

Those principles would be achieved by means of activities, such as workshops, seminars and others.

2. Implementing a teacher community - a plan for action

Principles are the guidelines of any successful enterprises. They are the backbones of organisations and communities. In this section, I shall comment on how the principles described above could be applied in practical terms in a specific Brazilian context. I shall focus on the structure, goals and sub-goals and implementation of a proposed programme, as well as on some of the issues that may prevent it.

2.1 Time frame and structure of the programme

Conventional professional development programmes often present innovations to teachers in one-shot workshops or development days (Tomlinson, 1988; Hoban, 2002). These types of programme tend to lose their efficiency when teachers return to their teaching context. To avoid this, the programme I am proposing is a long-term one, run for five years in teachers' working context – the school. Each year should be divided into three interdependent phases. The length of each is variable and should be defined after the implementation of the previous one. The first phase of the programme, in year 1, is designed to set participants' agendas. Once this stage is concluded, tutors and participants should discuss and decide on the next phase.

It should be noted that, at this stage, it is impossible to offer precise information and details of each phase of the programme because the outcomes of a previous phase set the aims of the next one. A provisional structure and time frame with primary goals for each of the years of the programme is proposed in the table below (Fig. 3.2). A provisional outline for the initial phase in year 1, which will correspond to a series of workshops in materials development is also discussed, as it corresponds to the starting point of the programme.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Goal: Setting participants' agendas and establishing the *domain* of the community	Goal: Setting-up the community	Goal: Strengthening ties in the community	Goal: Expanding the community inside the school	Goal: Expanding the community outside the school

Figure 3.2: Proposed objectives and time frame

2.2 Goals of the programme

Grossman et al (2000: 13) argue that the improvement of professional practice is the most common rationale in formulations of teacher communities. The overall goals of the programme are (a) to provide an opportunity for teachers' professional and personal development and (b) to set up a teacher community in a town, in the state of Paraná, Brazil. The sub-goals of this programme are:

- To raise participants' self-awareness of their practice
- To enhance critical reflection
- To promote ongoing communication among teachers of English from different schools and, later, among teachers of other subjects
- To foster cooperation in schools

Goals and sub-goals will be pursued through an appropriate approach which respects and values teachers' previous experiences and leads them to reflect on their actual practices. Such an approach is described in the literature as the experiential learning approach, which will be discussed in section three.

2.3 Desirable outcomes

Moon (1999: 28) mentions that in order to improve the outcome of learning, learners need to be aware of the current practice, situation or level of knowledge so that they can better conceive the learning that is required. Through this programme, it is hoped that participants have had opportunities to:

- Experience a learning community through collaboration and group work
- Increase their self-esteem
- Maintain positive and reflective attitudes towards learning and teaching, and
- Build up trust in each other.

In order to achieve successful outcomes, participants need to be engaged in the activities proposed in the programme. To enhance participants' engagement, it is necessary to value them as professionals and as individuals. Moreover, the programme needs to present strategies for participants to cope and sustain the new experiences and learning acquired during the sessions in the programme. The training approach needs to be congruent with principles, goals and outcomes of the programme.

3. The training approach – experiential learning

Edwards (1996) notes that in-service courses are often designed to enable trainees to implement a specific teaching programme, not to enable them to question that programme and to contribute to its development. In Brazil, the purposes of some in-service training (INSET) programmes do not differ much from this. As Oliveira (2003: 11) notes, most in-service teacher education programmes available still emphasise the acquisition of content knowledge, specific abilities and instructional strategies. They present prescriptive practices and strategies for teachers to follow.

Freeman (1989) points out that in any coherent model of teacher training, the approach adopted should reflect the principles of the teaching proposed. As for the approach, Bolitho (1996: 28) emphasizes three points to be considered when designing and delivering in-service programmes:

1) that teaching is first and foremost, a 'doing" profession and that teachers understandably become impatient when exposed gratuitously to theory which seems to have no direct relevance to what they 'do'. Teachers of English in the context set in this article would benefit more from sessions where they can learn things and implement them in their context. Some of the previous in-service programmes teachers had the opportunity to attend failed to present things that can be useful and relevant not only for the teachers but also for their learners. What works in one location may not necessarily work in another.

2) that teachers often do not take kindly to theoretical 'inputs' provided by academics who seldom enter a classroom themselves. Teachers, better than anyone else, know what really happens inside a classroom. It is natural that they feel uncomfortable listening to someone who has never been in a classroom or who swapped it for a research centre, imposing ideas that are dissociated from real teaching contexts.

3) that most teachers are ready to think carefully about what they 'do' everyday and would like to be thought of as 'principled practitioners.' Teachers' experience and practical knowledge needs to be valued and acknowledged. Moreover, teachers need to be provided with activities that help them reflect and understand the theoretical principles behind their practice. It is, therefore, important for them to develop their 'personal theories'. (1996: 28)

In order to achieve this, special attention to the training approach should be given. Approaches which do not encourage teachers to reflect on their own practice and on the understanding or their personal theories do not seem to be effective.

3.1 Experiential learning

Experiential learning was firstly defined by Kolb (1984). According to Kolb (Ur, 1996: 6), in order for optimal learning to take place, the knowledge acquired in any one mode needs to be followed by further processing in the next; and so on, in a recursive cycle (Fig 3.3).
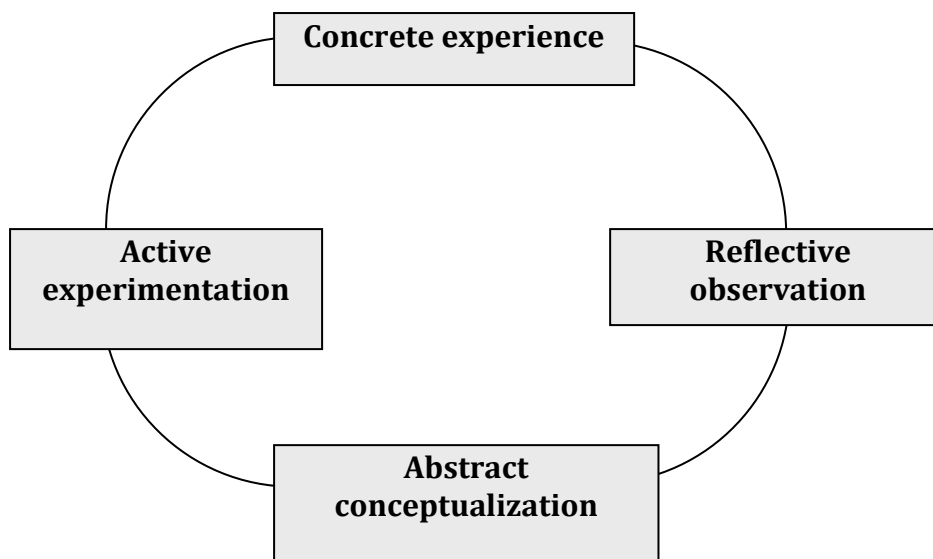
Figure 3.3: Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984)

Miettinen (2000: 68, in Beard and Wilson, 2003: 37) argues that Kolb's learning cycle does not illustrate the fact that empirical (i.e. experiential) thinking based on action has limitations:
- It may result in false conclusions
- It may not help us understand and explain change and new experiences
- It may cause mental laziness and dogmatic thinking.

Miettinen (ibid) also claims that Kolb's experience and reflection occur in isolation and that there is a necessity for the individual to interact with other humans and the environment in order to enhance the reasoning and conclusions drawn. Ur (1996: 7) points out the cycle needs to be enriched by external sources of input, which could be understood as participants' own experience.

Beard and Wilson (2003: 16) argue that experiential learning is, in essence, the underpinning process to all forms of learning since it represents the transformation of most new and significant experiences and incorporates them within a broader conceptual framework. Jarvis et al (1998: 46) define experiential learning as the process of creating and transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses. It is the process through which individuals become themselves. Miller and Boud (1996: 8-10, in Jarvis et. al, 1998: 46) summarise the principles of experiential learning, as follows:

- Experience is the foundation of, and stimulus for, learning
- Learners actively construct their own experience
- Learning is holistic
- Learning is socially and culturally constructed
- Learning is influenced by the socio-economic context within it occurs.

For Moon (1999),
> The distinguishing features of experiential learning are that it refers to the organizing and construction of learning from observations that have been made in some practical situation, with the implication that the learning can than lead to action (or improved action) (1999: 20)

As Beard and Wilson (2003: 39) point out, maximising the power of the experience, through combining different ingredients, will maximise the learning. This approach, then, seems to be the most appropriate for the sessions proposed within the programme. It offers participants the opportunity to practice and to reflect upon the activities they will take part in during the sessions. By reflecting, their awareness of self and of teaching beliefs is raised. Another important aspect of this approach is that it elicits dialogue, which is the 'fuel' of teacher development sessions (Wright, 2000: 5). Dialogue is a key element for teacher development in a teacher community.

3.2 Training principles – Valuing teachers' experience

Teachers, like students, are learners, and in order to continually develop and encourage teacher effectiveness throughout the course of an individual's career, teachers must stay current in educational theory and practice (Good and Weaver, 2003: 439). According to Kolb (Ur, 1996: 6), in order for optimal learning to take place, the knowledge acquired in any one mode needs to be followed by further processing in the next; and so on, in a recurrent cycle. However, as Ur (1996: 7) points out, the cycle needs to be enriched by external sources of input, which could be understood as participants' own experience. This experience can be previous or shared, as Bolitho and Wright (1997) mentioned. Experience can be shared through opportunities to talk and work with peers. When sharing with colleagues, teachers can express their thoughts and feelings. Verbal interactions are helpful in aiding learning (Mercer, 2000; Jarvis, 2005). Bolitho and Wright (1995 and 1997) argue for the importance of taking into account participants' experience and providing them with opportunities to reflect on such experience, in a comparative way. They (1997: 61) present a modified version of Kolb's learning cycle (Fig. 3.4).
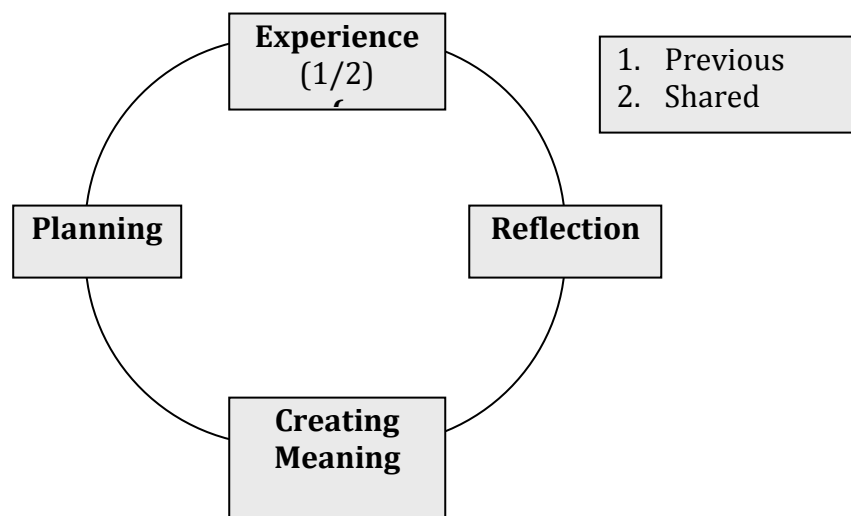

Figure 3.4: Learning Cycle by Bolitho and Wright (1997)

Bolitho and Wright (1995: 61) note the following advantages of this modified version of the learning cycle:

1. It values past experience as a basis for learning. Participants have more to add to training sessions than is imagined. Their experience goes back from the time when they were students to their present job. Understanding why and how we do things we normally take for granted helps us develop self-awareness.
2. It enables participants to contribute to the agenda for learning. More often than not, participants' interests are neglected in in-service programmes.
3. It leads to raised awareness as well as the acquisition of new knowledge.
4. It provides relevance for new ideas by allowing participants to relate them to their working contexts.
5. It frees trainers from having to provide input on every aspect of the topic, allowing them time and space to enable participants to explore the topic for themselves.

3.3 The power of talk

Talk is a key element in any process aimed at professional development. As Little (2003) observes,

> …the teachers' talk serves as a principal resource in getting on with their work, while simultaneously reflecting and constructing the identities of and social relations among the teachers. The ongoing talk both conveys and constructs what it means to teach and to be a teacher, and to do so in this school, with these students and among these colleagues. Representations of classroom practice occupy a central place in that talk and thus in the public construction of teaching practice and professional relationships (2003: 937)

Nias (1998: 1261) also notes that teachers learn a great deal from talking with and listening to those whom they respect for their craft skills and high standards, but whom they also see as accessible and non-judgemental. Wright (2000: 4) comments that by 'opening up' and talking, we often find our roles, our values

and our beliefs. We also become aware that so much that was unconscious is reached through talk. We should not forget that talk is used *to get things done* (Mercer, 1995: 67). By talking with each other we can express our concerns, ideas and beliefs. We can find our voices both as individuals and professionals. When teachers talk to each other they create a bridge for sharing knowledge and experience. For teachers, this sharing is associated to simple sharing of 'tips' but, in depth, it is a way to know what a colleague is doing, how she is teaching, or how her students behave. The teacher is collecting information about her colleague's working context without crossing the boundaries of privacy. Mercer (1995) mentions,

> The creation of shared knowledge and understanding is rarely, if ever, a matter of simply pooling information. Information can be accumulated, but knowledge and understanding are only generated by *working* with information, selecting from it, organising it, arguing for its relevance. People use talk to *account for* opinions they hold and the information they provide (1995: 67).

Talk, when explored appropriately and fostered amongst teachers, is a key element for any attempts for professional development. By talking, teachers can expose their thoughts; by listening to each other they can also make sense of their practice.

3.4 The experiential learning approach in practice

What follows is an example of how the principles of Experiential Learning Approach could be applied during the sessions proposed for this programme. Different techniques should be used during the course with same described purpose. During the Materials Development (MD) session, participants perform an activity using their own textbooks.

1. Experience: Participants do an activity from a textbook they are familiar with. Then they reflect on their experience by 'gridding' it and discussing it with their colleagues.
2. Reflection. Tutor provides information about criteria for textbook evaluation and how it could be used to benefit their learners.
3. Creating meaning. In pairs, participants evaluate one unit of a textbook that they frequently use and propose some changes.
4. Planning. During the week, participants have the chance to try out the modified version of the unit or activity.
5. Experience: They comment on their experience with their colleagues and write about it in their diaries.
6. Reflection. In the following session, participants talk about their experience, commenting on advantages and difficulties they had when trying-out the adapted unit with their students.

Summary

Teachers are natural communicators and do benefit from talking to each other. Talk is a powerful tool when fostering and establish communities of practice. It is also vital that communities are established where teachers are to be found, in their workplace.

In this article I sought to describe the meaning of a teacher community and its relevance to enrich teachers' everyday practice. An action plan was also proposed for a five year programme to establish and sustain communities of practice in schools located in Brazil.

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Chapter 4

Classrooms as complex environments

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Abstract

Classrooms are complex spaces which have been metaphorically described as gardens, stages, football pitches, coral reefs and even golf courses. What all these metaphors have in common, besides the complexity of the settings themselves, is the complexity of the interactions within these environments and their connections with the broader cultural and social ecosystems they belong to. Using the description of a public school classroom in Brazil as the starting point, this paper examines some aspects that influence interactions occurring in the language classroom, which contribute to the establishment of what we may call 'classroom culture'. It argues that by looking at classrooms and their cultures, teachers and researchers would be better placed to develop a broader understanding of some of the forces that facilitate or, in contrast, resist educational and pedagogic changes in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Key Words: classroom culture – classroom interaction – changes in education

1. Voices from Brazil

For all the differences among peoples and cultures around the world, if we had the opportunity to enter classrooms located in various countries, we would probably be able to recognise almost immediately the sort of place we were stepping into. Some have four walls; some do not have them at all. Some have desks, some have benches; some have none of these. Some have the latest information technology tools; some have just a blackboard and chalk. What they all have in common, though, and what makes them almost instantly recognisable, is the presence of teachers and students performing quite familiar tasks or activities.

Considering the widespread and central place of classrooms in education, it is perhaps surprising that only towards the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first have they started to become the focus of research and analysis. Looking at the modern times in ELT (1900 to the present day) - from Palmer's ergonic system (1921) to A.S. Hornby's concern with structural patterns (1954-6) to the 70's communicative approach (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004: 326-7) - we realise that although researchers and applied linguists have constantly focused on pedagogies and methodology, little attention has been given to the space where such things come to life: the English language classroom. Only late in the 20th century did ethnographic studies of the ELT classroom start to be carried out in order to try to understand how learning takes place in this context. Some of these studies include Wright (1992) in Cameroon, Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1995: 59-72) in the Solomon Islands and Canagarajah (1995: 208-23) in Sri Lanka.

This paper is not the result of ethnographic research, but it does take the description of a classroom in Brazil as the main source for an examination of classroom life. This account was provided by a colleague working in one of the many disadvantaged inner-city public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Barros (2009) describes his working conditions (lines 3-6), gives us a glimpse of the physical features of his classroom (line 9-12) and also provides some information about his students and his relationship with them (lines 12-17).

> **Imbariê, Brazil – in a public primary school classroom (part 1)**
>
> 1.   I enter the room carrying some copies of an extra activity I've decided to use in order to try to motivate my students to do some language work. I've paid for the copies myself. The school has a photocopier but teachers have a quota of copies and any extra material must be provided by the teachers themselves.
> 5.   There is just one tape recorder, TV and DVD player for the whole school, and if teachers want to use a song or film in class we have to book them in advance. There are no textbooks or bilingual dictionaries on hand and I make use of my handouts and the board to present and practice language. The only piece of education technology permanently available in the classroom is the
> 10. chalkboard. Students sit in rows facing the chalkboard and the teacher and it is hard to move to monitor students' work, but it seems it is the only way to accommodate the number of pupils, which may vary from 35 to 45. Most students are Afro-Brazilians and come from deprived families living in the community where the school is located. There is quite a lot of talk in
> 15. Portuguese (their L1) among students and I also usually use Portuguese, instead of English, to communicate with them. There is a respectful and friendly atmosphere. There is quite a lot of laughter and the kids seem to enjoy being at school.
>
> *Barros, (2009)*

The description above brings to the fore some of the issues that have been the concern of many ELT professionals and educators, namely the nature of classroom life and the roles of L1 and L2 in different socio-historical contexts. Barros' account also raises the issue of the relationships between the internal and external forces influencing language teaching and learning, which particularly reinforces the idea of classrooms as complex and dynamic environments.

2. Classrooms as complex environments

Breen's (2001) metaphor of the coral garden seems an appropriate point of reference for our discussion of the overt and covert aspects that influence language classroom culture. He argues that,

> Just as gardens of coral were granted magical realities by the Trobriand islanders, a language class (…) is an arena of subjective and intersubjective realities which are worked out, changed, and maintained. *And these realities are not trivial background to the tasks of teaching and learning a language* (emphasis in the original). They locate and define the new language itself as it never existed before, and they continually specify and mould the activities of teaching and learning. (2001: 128)

Complex systems, from gardens to coral reefs to golf courses, have sophisticated and elaborate characteristics which are the result of the interconnection of a series of interdependent factors and elements, thus creating an intricate pattern of relationships between their components which gives them a recognisable yet unique design. Such factors can range from immediately noticeable aspects, such the physical space and behaviour patterns, to extremely elusive and barely discernable facets, such as the notion of time and classroom participants' cognitive-affective states. Wright (2005: 9-16) divides such factors into two groups, which he calls 'observables' and 'unobservables' (Figure 1). His classification guides us in the analysis of the factors that affect classroom life and influence the process of change in ELT education.
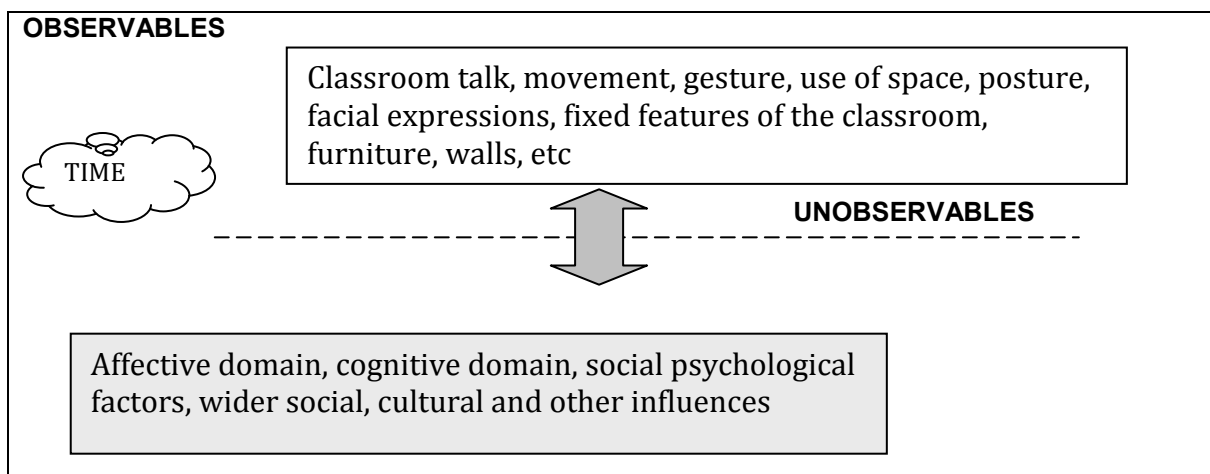
Figure 4.1: Observables and unobservables in classroom life (After Wright, 2005: 16)

Although Wright's model can help us to conceptualise these ideas of discernable and less discernable factors affecting the classroom interactions, we should consider that, in fact, there is a constant flux of influence between these two given groups. The observables constantly affect the unobservables and these, conversely, also continually influence the more tangible aspects of classroom life. This view of the dynamics between both kids of factors is in line with the theory of *reciprocal determinism*, where individual and environmental influences are interdependent (Jarvis, 2006, 50). We could say, for instance, that the absence of teaching materials in the classroom in Rio (lines 3-6) could potentially affect the teacher and students' motivation to engage with written language in English; on the other hand, the peals of laughter could be considered the physical manifestation of a respectful and friendly atmosphere (lines 16-17). This environmental permeability and flow of influences is represented by the dotted line and the two-way arrow in Figure 4.1.

3. Some observables

It is not in the scope of this paper to examine each of the observable aspects that influence classroom life. What we can do is to look at some narratives of classrooms in the hope that they can help us realise that there are certain issues involving the teaching-learning process in classrooms that should not be taken for granted, such as the space and its physical resources, as well as the way language is used in class.

3. 1. Physical space

Narratives from some classrooms around the world show that they share some physical features similar to the ones displayed by the classroom in Brazil mentioned here (lines 6-12). Describing a classroom in KwaZulu, South Africa, Chick (2001: 230), points out the frontal position of the teacher with 'students crowded into multiple-seat wooden desks arranged in rows facing the board.' Likewise, in her portrayal of a classroom in Japan, LoCastro (1996: 49) highlights the frontal position of the teacher with students sitting in rows of individual desks and chairs, facing the front of the room and the board. Any attempt to understand classrooms has to examine aspects that are visible, such as seating arrangement, furniture and the places occupied by the teacher and learners since not only do they reflect, but also tend to shape the interactions happening inside the classroom. For instance, the fact that students at a university in Indonesia had very few copies of the textbook prompted learners to sit closer to each other, forming groups around colleagues who had one of the few copies available in the room (Coleman, 1996, 66). The lack of space to comfortably accommodate 35-45 students in the Brazilian classroom forces the students to sit in rows and the teacher to limit his movements when monitoring students' work and thus preventing him from interacting with many of his students on a more individual basis (lines 8-9).

3.2 Classroom talk

Socio-cultural theory claims that human development is dependent on social interactions and that learning is embedded within social events and influenced by external factors. According to Lantolf (2000),

The most fundamental concept of socio-cultural theory is that the human mind is *mediated* [emphasis in the original]. In opposition to the orthodox view of mind, Vygostsky argued that as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely, instead, on tools and labour activity, which allow us to change the world, and with it, the circumstances under which we live in the world, we also use symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships. (2000: 1)

One of the most powerful of these symbolic tools, or signs, is *language*, which appears in Wright's (2005) conceptualisation as *talk*. It is through the use of language and para-language that people attempt to make feelings and ideas understood to other individuals in the cultural groups they belong to. As Kramsch (1998: 3) puts it, 'Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives.' Language is observable and tangible in the conversations that take place among classroom participants and in the texts written and read in class by both teachers and learners. Moreover, it is *through* language and *in* language that internal and external forces mutually influence each other and shape the complex nature of the ELT classroom. The Brazilian students' low level of English proficiency prompts the teacher to use L1 perhaps in an attempt to establish social links and create a positive atmosphere in the classroom, which he seems to hope will have an encouraging effect on his learners' motivation to engage in the L2 lesson (lines 14-16). In a social-cognitive analysis of L2 classroom discourse in English language lessons at a secondary school in Cameroon, Wright (1992: 86) links classroom discourse to 'broader social and cognitive influences from outside the classroom' and sees discourse as a way of creating and preserving classroom cultures.

4. Some unobservables

'NOW, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!'

<div align="right">Dickens, C. Hard Times.</div>

Dickens' description of a Victorian 'plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school-room' (1994: 1) may sound to some teachers and students quite familiar and disturbingly contemporary. In many English language classrooms around the world special, and sometimes undivided, attention is still given to the *facts* of language - syntax, lexis, and phonetics - and the *facts* of language practice – reading, writing, listening and speaking. Quite frequently, little or no attention is paid to the wider social and psychological forces affecting teachers and learners and, thus, the teaching-learning process itself. However, the adoption of any approach to teaching is not only a matter of pragmatic decisions about the content or the sort of activities teachers propose to their learners; actually such decisions are deeply rooted in the 'unobservable' factors and the ideologies that inform teachers' decisions on such matters.

4.1 Affective-cognitive and psychological factors
For Breen, the permanent tension between the 'internal world of the individual and the social world of the group' (2001: 130) creates a specific cultural psychological reality in the classroom shaping the individual and collective learning processes and affecting the quality of classroom life, regardless of teachers' pedagogical choices. For him,

> The classroom as culture extends across islands of intersubjective meaning and depths of subjective intentions and interpretations which only rarely touch the surface of talk and which the discourse itself often deliberately hides. (2001: 128).

An example of 'unobservable' affective-sociological factors affecting pedagogic decisions is the one described by Allwright (1996: 210) when reporting the apparently inexplicable classroom behaviour of teachers and learners who prioritise social interaction at the expense of pedagogic purposes. In his description of the social dealings between teachers and learners in an intensive English summer course at a tertiary institution in the

USA, Allwright notices that the teachers' social considerations have precedence over the pedagogic ones and the *facts* of language. The episode where an experienced native-speaker teacher decides not to clarify the meaning relationship between the verbs *look* and *see,* leads the researcher to speculate if such a decision was not the result of the teacher giving precedence to the socialisation in the group over educational pressures. He concludes that to reach a 'general understanding of language classroom behaviour' (Allwright, 1996: 213-225) we should take into consideration the opposing social and pedagogic 'unobservable' forces affecting teachers and learners' actions. Such forces clearly influence the quality of the learning experience and, consequently, the quality of classroom life. For Gieve and Miller (2006), the quality of the classroom experience has to be understood bearing in mind the socio-historical and interpersonal frameworks constructed by classroom participants (2006: 20-1). For them,

> As members of our communities of practice, we have multiple and complex identities; teachers are not *only* teachers and students are not *only* students [emphasis in the original] (…) There is an inherent integration between our personal and institutional lives in the classroom, which is paradoxically ignored in most educational contexts. (Gieve and Miller, 2006: 19)

The Brazilian teacher does not, however, limit himself to the description of his physical environment. On the contrary, his narrative makes plenty of reference to his students' and his own behaviour: from his concern for improving students' language experience, providing copies of activities (lines 1-3), to the description of the affective atmosphere in the classroom, which he defines as 'respectful and friendly' (line 16).

The affective and cognitive aspects of individuals' identities and their social interactions in the classroom are the sea bed of Breen's (2001) archipelago of coral islands. They are the aspects which are, paradoxically, usually ignored, but to which Coleman (1996: 26- 27) calls our attention in his *Emotional Competence Framework*. He divides these competencies into two groups, personal competence and social competence. Personal competence includes: (a) self-awareness, or the ability to recognise one's own emotions, strengths and weaknesses, self-worth and capabilities, (b) self-regulation, or the ability to manage one's emotions and impulses, maintaining standards of honesty, integrity, flexibility and taking responsibility for personal performance, and (c) motivation, or the emotional tendencies that guide of facilitate reaching goals. Social competences determine how we handle relationships and include empathy, or the 'awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns' and social skills, which make us adept to induce desirable responses in others.

The considerable importance given to emotional and social factors clashes with the Gradgrindian mechanistic view of education and life (Dickens, 1994). Such a view could be seen as one of the manifestations of a 'scientific', positivistic philosophy which represented people as 'reactive, passive, robot-like' (Askew and Carnell, 1998: 12). The Dickensian students are not people in the sense of having an identity. They are 'little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim' (Dickens, 1994: 4). Furthermore, when asked for the definition of 'horse', Sissy Jupe is rendered speechless, since an identity that is suppressed is unable to produce language that is meaningful to itself. As Mercer (1995) puts it

> Teachers and students do not leave their personal and social identities outside the classroom door, and classroom talk is one means for expressing and maintaining such identities, as well as redefining them. (1995:47)

We may just as well wonder how many Sissy Jupes we encounter in language classrooms around the world who are unable to 'speak English' because their language and their identity have been split by our educational practices. It may also make us consider the affective-psychological factors as some of the possible reasons for the Brazilian students' and teachers' decision to communicate in their mother tongue (lines 14-16), even though practising the target language should have precedence in an English language lesson.

4.2 Wider socio-cultural influences

Besides the affective-cognitive and psychological aspects mentioned above, there are other socio-cultural and historical factors that contribute to the construction of any given classroom culture. For instance, it is not by chance that Dickens situates his fictional classroom in an industrial area in the north of Victorian England. The relationships between the characters - teachers and students - in Dickens' school, reflect and contribute to maintain the conceptual framework of power and work relations that informed the Industrial Revolution. Dickens knew that classrooms cannot be dissociated from the larger socio-political and historical contexts they belong to. The Dickensian school was as much a product and a formative influence on its society as any educational system can be. According to Jarvis (2006),

Education has always reflected the forces that shape society (…) Educators can always be tempted to neglect the broader social changes that influence what they do – to reject theory in favour of good professional practice. But good practice does need to be informed by some awareness of the world around us. (2006: 13)

Similarly, the world around the Brazilian classroom is concisely but very well depicted by Barros (2009), who mentions the levels of violence in the community (lines 18-21), the role of religion (lines 24- 28) and the influence of mass media in his students' perception of their own identity (lines 28-31).

Imbariê, Brazil – public primary school (part 2)

Imbariê has long been known as one the most violent places in the state of Rio de
20. Janeiro. This is probably due to a never-ending civil war amongst drug dealers
(and sometimes also the police) for the control over that area, which in turn makes
Imbariê a permanent conflict zone. Our students, for the most part, come from poor
social backgrounds. A few of them live in complete poverty and the majority comes
from dysfunctional families.
25. Religion plays an important role in their lives. Understandably, their parents see it
is a way of keeping them away from drugs or the violence on the streets. The
majority belong to evangelic sects. Most of our students are Afro-Brazilians but
everything that is African-oriented is condemned by their religion. Growing on an
image of a blue-eyed white Jesus and watching soap operas where the protagonists
30. are usually white people make it hard for them to see themselves as beautiful and
intelligent human beings. They do everything they can to look like the actors they
look up to.

Barros (2009)

Although many teachers are quite prepared to recognise issues of power and politics affecting language and official educational policies, many others still show a certain tendency to ignore such influences and look at classrooms as if they were sheltered from wider social forces. As Auerbach (1995: 9) says, the real teaching that goes on 'behind closed doors is often conceived of as a neutral transfer of skills, knowledge or competencies.' Yet, an alternative way of looking at classrooms is to see them as spaces where internal and external factors influence the way teachers and students behave, use and understand language. For Wright (2005:101), the classroom is part of a large web of relations where social and cultural aspects intersect. This view is also expressed by Candlin & Mercer (2001) who state that,

No language teaching and learning takes place (…) in a classroom which is isolated from the world of experiences and personal engagements and investments of learners outside the classroom itself. In that sense, the wider *social context* [emphasis in the original] of life outside the classroom has an important effect on what takes place in these interactions between learners and teachers, and among learners. (2001:1)

In an ethnographic study of classroom discourse carried out in Hong Kong, Lin (2001) observed that the social background of the classrooms where English was taught had a strong influence on the way learners perceived classroom practices and the usefulness of learning English. It also shaped their reactions to the language itself. Students from an upper-middle-class girls' school displayed a positive attitude towards English saying that it was important for their future lives, whereas boys from a working class neighbourhood tended to have a skeptical and aggressive attitude towards English, describing it as irrelevant and 'boring'. For the researcher, the exploration of the 'sociocultural and institutional situatedness of classroom practices' (Lin, 2001: 285) was the first step in a process of discovering possible creative alternatives for change in students' attitudes towards English.

What distinguishes Dickens' fictional Victorian pupils from real contemporary Brazilian and Chinese school children are the unique webs of social, historical and political relations in which they find themselves. What makes then similar is an understanding that in education, perhaps more than anywhere else, 'individual and environmental influences are interdependent' (Jarvis, 2006: 50). What these classrooms have in common is the

fact that there is an area in the classroom life that is not so immediately evident. Even being detectable through students' behaviour, such interactional manifestations are actually the product of hidden cultural, social, political, economic and historical contexts, which Wright (2005: 16) calls 'wider social, cultural and other influences.' They are the seabed of Breen's (2001) coral garden.

5. Classrooms as dynamic cultures

Classroom cultures are not fixed or final; on the contrary, they change over time and throughout the process of interaction between the observable and unobservable factors that influence the classroom. Although it is possible to identify some of the essential features of the language classroom culture (Fig. 4.2), understanding classrooms eventually becomes a process that each teacher and researcher will have to undertake in their own contexts, since each particular classroom has its own dynamic culture, which is the product of the individual and group construction of knowledge which participants embark on.

Interactive: dynamic, unpredictable verbal and non-verbal group interactions
Differentiated: amalgam and permutation of participants' different social realities
Collective: juxtaposition of individual and group psychologies and experiences
Normative: membership is evaluated against group norms and behaviours
Asymmetrical: differentiated power relationships among teachers-learners-learners
Conservative: participants seek security and relative harmony in the group
Jointly constructed: knowledge is dynamically constructed and re-constructed in the group
Immediately significant: how and why things are done directly affect teachers & learners

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Figure 4.2: Features of classrooms as culture (after Breen, 2001: 129-34).

The interplay between the features listed above informs the processes of change and maintenance of such an ecosystem, becoming an important aspect to be considered. Wright (2005: 97) sees an 'inherent conservatism and tendency towards normed relationships' in the classroom which may, in part, explain why methods, approaches and new trends take quite a long time to take root in classrooms. Historically, formal education has been a vehicle for the advancement of the religious and political agendas of established powers (Briggs, 1997: 175- 99). Nevertheless, such establishing forces are counterbalanced by waves of change in a perpetual movement of stabilising and destabilising forces that ultimately keep systems dynamic in nature (Hall, 1995: 35-38).

Change, either planned or dynamic, is omnipresent in all aspects of life and perhaps we could say that education is the sphere of life where change is, or should be, consciously pursued and creatively engendered. According to Brookfield (1995),

> We teach to change the world. The hope that undergirds our efforts to help students learn is that doing this will help them act toward each other, and toward their environment, with compassion, understanding, and fairness. But our attempts to increase the amount of love and justice in the world are never simple, never unambiguous (…) The cultural, psychological, and political complexities of learning and the ways in which power complicates all human relationships (including those between students and teachers) mean that teaching can never be innocent. (1995: 1)

Introducing their 'Transformatory Approach', Askew and Carnell (1998) argue for a holistic approach to learning which takes into consideration the learner, the group and social contexts and the learning process. Learning is seen as a process which happens throughout the individual's life, both in formal education and in the society as a whole. For them, the 'values and goals for learning in the classroom' (1998: 167) have to be congruent with the ones of the learning community. Transformation and change are an integral part of the learning process. Writing about the function of education, Bruner (1986) says,

> The language of education is the language of culture creating, not of knowledge consuming or knowledge acquisition alone. Culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and negotiated. (1986: 123)

The classroom is a dynamic entity which has to be interpreted in context and the teacher's role is to help learners 'incorporate the instability and diversity of the sociocultural context into the fabric of the classroom culture' (Tseng and Ivanič, 2006: 142). What is more, it is the teachers' role to help learners to see changes, in language and in society, from a historical and potentially constructive point of view and actively and creatively influence and contribute to them.

Summary

This paper started with the description of a classroom in Brazil and moved towards a brief analysis of the overt and covert factors that influence ELT classroom life and social interactions. It proceeds with an examination of some of the physical, linguistic and broader socio-cultural aspects that shape classroom cultures. Both language and education are seen here as processes of change not only within the confines of the classroom, but also in the society as a whole. It has disputed the assumption that classroom cultures, identities, knowledge and language are fixed givens and supported the idea of the language classroom as a live, dynamic ecosystem perpetually struggling for balance. Looking at some classrooms around the world helps us realise that teaching and learning are complex processes where learners and teachers are both the subjects and objects of noticeable and less manifest factors that influence their classroom lives.

The process of writing this paper has made me acutely aware of the importance of taking such factors into consideration in any analysis of classroom life and has prompted questions which could be considered as possible areas for future enquiry. Aspects to be investigated could include the implications of such an understanding of classroom culture for: (a) the design and delivery of teacher training programmes, (b) the introduction and adoption of new methodologies and approaches in ELT and (c) the assessment of the role and impact of formal education in different socio-cultural contexts.

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Chapter 5

Interactive white board technology and Brazilian EFL teachers: an investigation into the role of mentoring as a gateway to professional development[1]

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges faced by teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) while integrating the use of Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) technology into their teaching practice. It seems fundamental that EFL teachers undergo a process of mentoring while learning how to integrate the use of IWBs in their teaching practice. This mentoring process entails teachers revising their different knowledge domains. These domains are: general pedagogical, subject matter, pedagogical content and knowledge of pedagogical technology. It can be said from the data analysis that use of IWB technology without sufficient training encourages a teacher-centred approach to teaching. This research proposes a mentoring programme in order to develop EFL teachers' pedagogical and technical knowledge.

Key Words: ELT – IWB technology – mentoring

Introduction

This article is aimed at raising awareness of EFL teachers, especially those working in the public education sector, regarding the importance of acquiring and developing technology skills in order to provide more meaningful and interactive learning opportunities to EFL learners.

Besides revising the theory on different domains of knowledge necessary for teachers to integrate technology in their EFL classroom, this paper also provides a personal account of how I overcame the fear of teaching with technology. My interest in the field started as soon as I arrived in England[1] and had contact with the British educational system. I could see then how teachers integrate technology into their practice and the difference it makes to students' participation and interaction in the foreign language classroom. I felt motivated to do some research and designed a project which allowed me to experience the processes of learning how to teach with technology. I hope my experience, reported in this article, will motivate other EFL teachers, especially those in the public education sector, to also design their own research projects and professional development plans and to believe that it is possible to take advantage of the technological resources available to teach in a more interactive way.

The first part of this paper suggests that EFL teachers should rethink their teaching practices in order to make use of technology with a student-centred approach. Some believe that, in general, students nowadays could be called 'digital natives', whereas teachers could be considered 'digital immigrants' (Prensky, 2001:1). Our students are known as 'digital natives' as they were born and grew up surrounded by all sorts of technology,

and we, teachers, are known as the 'digital immigrants' because we have to adapt to this new technological environment as well as a faster way of thinking and interacting.

Accepting these concepts raises an important question: what kind of knowledge do teachers need to have in order to fulfil the needs of their digital native students? These issues, as well as the importance of forming communities of practice at school where teachers can exchange their knowledge and expertise, will be discussed throughout this paper. I will then present my research project, which consisted of keeping a diary where I registered my expectations, anxieties, challenges and successes, while learning how to teach with technology.

1. A student-centred approach to teaching

It could be said that approaches to teaching are strongly connected to education policies adopted, approaches to teacher education and the resources available to teachers. There seems to be a variety of factors that hinder the efficiency of the EFL teaching and learning process in Brazilian State schools, such as the lack of national curriculum guidelines and guidelines for assessment and evaluation; inadequate qualification and preparation of professionals, as well as inadequate teaching materials (Bohn, 2003:159). Not only do these factors have a direct bearing on how teachers manage their classrooms, but they also influence Brazilian teachers' attitudes and approaches to new technologies. This chapter restricts the discussion to the teacher education factor.

Above all, there seems to be a lack of training and preparation for teachers, which would be fundamental to enable them to integrate new technologies into their teaching practices and to focus their attention on pedagogy rather than on technology itself. Some teachers seem to be overwhelmed with the arrival of new technologies at school, especially Interactive White Board (IWB) technology. As a consequence, teachers tend to end up focusing their attention more on the board itself than on their students, which leads to a teacher- and technology-centred approach, rather than to a student-centred approach which, according to Brown (2001:46), implies activities and techniques that fulfil students' needs and expectations as well as offering choices for students in terms of innovation, creativity and techniques that give students some control.

EFL teachers have many challenges to overcome in order to teach this new generation known as 'digital natives'. Teachers need to rethink their teaching beliefs and practices, so that they can fulfil their learners' needs. According to Prensky (2001) today's learners grow up surrounded by technology and are usually familiar with interactive media. However, interactivity, for the scope of this article, refers not only to technical interactivity, but mainly to pedagogic interactivity fostered by the use of technology. It has two aspects: firstly, it means "learners' skills to communicate and interact with computers" (Richards and Schmidt, 2002:265), and secondly, in language learning, it refers to learners' ability to 'acquire language when they collaborate and interact with other speakers' (Lantolf, 2000 cited in Lightbown and Spada, 2006:47).

A student-centred approach to teaching, focused on student-student, has a direct bearing on teachers' roles and responsibilities (Tudor,1996:230); this means that any changes that happen in the way students communicate and interact in the world and in the classroom, influences the way teachers are expected to communicate and interact with learners. Learning a language is an interactive process between the teacher and the students; hence both teachers and learners need to be in tune and speak the same language. Nonetheless, teacher training courses do not seem to fully prepare teachers to base their classes on a student-centred approach and consequently making changes in order to adapt to a more interactive way of teaching becomes a challenge for most teachers (Tudor, 1996:230).

Teachers' willingness to innovate and rethink their classroom practices depends a great deal on their previous training and personal approach to teaching. It is a process that involves not only the individual teacher, but also the students, the school and the whole community of teachers (Tudor, 1996:232). Our educational system was not outlined to teach this new generation of 'digital native' students (Prensky, 2001:1). Digital technologies have created a new way of learning and communicating, which is more interactive and entails the need for immediate responses to action. Consequently, teachers ought to rethink their teaching pedagogies since most current school practices offer very little interactivity to the students (p.1); thus, students often feel de-motivated and unwilling to participate and interact in class. It seems that learners simply cannot pay attention in class and do not see the reason why they should ask questions or participate actively in the lessons. Schools need to rethink

their methodologies and approaches so that they resemble the outside world, where the pace of interactivity is much faster and the level higher.

As already mentioned, these changes in methodology towards a more interactive way of teaching depend a great deal on teachers' attitudes and motivation (Kadel, 2005: 34). It depends on teachers' willingness and openness to innovate and face the challenges of learning new ways of teaching and interacting with their learners (p.34). Teachers committed to their professional development should be positive and eager to learn about new technologies in order to improve the quality of their lessons. According to Mouza (2006:405), technology is the element within the field of teacher development that needs most improvement and development. She argues that teachers are challenged with technology's arrival at school, as now teachers are supposed to rethink their methodologies and beliefs about teaching and learning in order to incorporate new tools in their classrooms. The main aim of professional development should be to generate changes in teachers' classroom practice in order to attain higher levels of student achievement. Teachers usually attend workshops which provide them with a 'sit and get' training without follow-up activities (p.405). Conversely, these workshops and training sessions should enable teachers to use technology in an effective way in their classrooms, so that they could adopt a more interactive way of teaching. It can be said from the above that a student-centred approach to teaching creates many challenges for EFL teachers. These challenges demand that teachers become more aware of their role as teachers and facilitators in the EFL teaching and learning process, so that they can focus their attention on students and on language learning, instead of focusing attention specifically on new technologies. It is also important to emphasise that teacher training should empower teachers to develop their general pedagogical knowledge, as well as their technological knowledge, so that new tools can be used meaningfully in the EFL classroom. It is the central argument of this paper that such challenges could be met and changes achieved by incorporating mentoring into teacher training programmes. However, before discussing the adoption of mentoring we should consider what kind of knowledge EFL teachers need to have in order to meaningfully integrate technology in their classrooms.

2. EFL teachers' pedagogical technology knowledge (PTK) and professional development

EFL teachers' successful use of technology in the classroom depends on their pedagogical technology knowledge (PTK). PTK is formed by other knowledge domains, namely, teachers' general pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Guerrero, 2005:258). It is necessary to review the knowledge domains mentioned above as they form the basis for teachers' PTK and have an effect on teachers' instructional practices (pp.258).

The first domain, *general pedagogical knowledge*, consists of fundamental classroom organisation and management knowledge (Shulman, 1986:13). Teachers' general pedagogical knowledge consists of their knowledge of strategies for creating positive learning environments, effective classroom management and clear instructions (Borko & Putnam, 1996:675). General pedagogical knowledge can be developed through practice and training. I have been teaching EFL in Brazil for 15 years and from the outset of my professional life I have been trying to develop my pedagogical knowledge, so that I can facilitate learners' learning process. Although I had a very good level of proficiency in English language when I started teaching EFL in Brazil, I had little pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills; hence, I consider it essential for EFL teachers to develop not only their subject matter knowledge, but also their pedagogical knowledge.

Subject matter knowledge consists of teachers' knowledge of organising and selecting central and peripheral concepts for their disciplines (Shulman, 1986 cited in Guerrero, 2005:253). This knowledge regards the way people organise their thinking and link ideas. Teachers ought to know how to integrate their subject matter with other disciplines in a coherent way so that students can see the benefits and connections among the disciplines they are studying and learning. Therefore, teachers ought to constantly keep updated their subject matter knowledge so that they can facilitate students' understanding and make the teaching and learning process more effective.

Pedagogical content knowledge regards how teachers understand their subject matter and how they facilitate learners' understanding of their subject matter (Shulman, 1986:9). Developing pedagogical content knowledge seems to be a matter of practice and experience. It might be positive for teachers to exchange experiences and ideas with their peers in order to develop it. Teacher training courses and workshops seem to entice teachers' motivation and willingness to learn and innovate; however, when teachers are alone in their classrooms and do not keep in touch with each other to discuss or exchange materials and ideas, many seem to end up de-

motivated and unwilling to innovate. It is still necessary to think about what is missing to connect teachers' development programmes to their everyday practices at school.

Although there seems to be enthusiasm and investment of educators and researchers in the use of technology in education, the literature identifies a gap regarding teachers' pedagogical technology knowledge (PTK) (Guerrero, 2005:256). This domain of knowledge regards fundamental technology knowledge as necessary for teachers to be able to integrate technology into their instruction practice. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that teachers' PTK alone is enough; on the contrary, teachers ought to integrate all the domains mentioned previously in order to be remain updated and teach in a meaningful way. According to Guerrero (2005):

> The need for training and development in the pedagogically appropriate uses of technology is accompanied by a deficit in contemporary conceptualizations of knowledge with respect to educational and instructional technology. (2005:258)

The PTK domain is not very different from the domains previously mentioned because it involves teachers' subject knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and content pedagogical knowledge; however, it differs from these domains in terms of specific operational technology skills and instructional strategy procedures. PTK demands technology-specific management skills, instructional and pedagogical knowledge, increased subject matter knowledge and knowledge of how and when best to use technology in the classroom. PTK is a domain of knowledge that enables teachers to see beyond the technical affordances of a tool (Guerrero, 2005:258); it entails teachers' ability to integrate technology adequately in the classroom to facilitate instruction and enhance student learning processes. Needless to say, technology operational skills are essential in order to enable teachers to use technology in their classes; however, technology cannot be the centre of attention in an EFL classroom; it should be a means to foster students' learning. Teachers should view technology as an instruction tool to facilitate student learning processes (pp. 260). Teachers should have these ideas very clear in mind so that they can invest their energy not only in learning how to operate new technologies, but mainly in how to benefit from exploring the pedagogical potential afforded by these new teaching tools.

Having mentioned the domains of teacher knowledge and mainly pedagogical technology knowledge, the next section analyses how teachers can benefit from creating communities of practice in the school so that they can exchange their knowledge and pursue professional development. In order to reflect upon the challenges faced by public school teachers with the arrival of technology in the school, I will discuss Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) technology, which is still not available to most EFL Brazilian state school teachers, but which might reach our public education system in a near future.

3. EFL teachers' IWB mentoring and communities of practice

When IWB technology is used in language teaching, the lack of specific IWB teacher training seems to be the main reason for EFL classes becoming teacher-centred, or board-centred, where learners are passive without interacting among themselves (Dudeney and Hockly, 2007: 124). The appropriate integration of IWB technology into the EFL classroom seems to depend mostly on teachers' beliefs and classroom management skills. Teachers' perceptions of how languages are learned have a great influence on the way they teach. IWB technology might enhance student learning and interaction in the classroom provided that teachers believe in a communicative way of teaching; otherwise, language classroom practices might become teacher-centred and students might become merely recipients of information.

Specific IWB training for teachers is essential in order to enable them to take up this new teaching tool effectively. There is no point in schools investing large amounts of money in IWBs unless teachers are well prepared and confident about integrating IWB technology into their lessons. The British Council has adopted IWB technology on a large scale and has invested heavily in in-house training for their teachers at British Council teaching centres worldwide. Besides that, many companies in the UK, such as Promethean, provide training for IWB use, both face-to-face and online. According to Guerrero (2005:257), technology has the role of serving as an instructional tool and it consequently demands specific operational skills and procedures in order to be effective.

However, PTK implies more than simply learning how to use the technology and acquiring skills to deal with the tool; mainly it implies the necessity of learning how to integrate the technology in the teaching and learning process. Technology should support the teachers' instruction and not be the focus of their attention. Yet, it is not

an easy task for teachers, who do not have confidence in the use of technology, to appropriate the interactive technical and pedagogical affordances enhanced by IWBs. This is where mentoring can play a significant role.

Mentoring programmes seem to suit EFL teachers' technology knowledge needs because it can make possible, by pairing those more technology savvy with those less technologically skilled, to help the latter overcome the impact of integrating new technologies into the classroom. This mentoring process among EFL teachers is based on the socio-cultural theory of learning, which emphasises that learners develop their cognitive process through mediation and social interaction (Lightbown and Spada, 2006:47). For the scope of this study, EFL teachers are seen as learners, who need to rethink and develop their skills and learn how to teach with technology. According to Lantolf ,

> The central and distinguishing concept of Sociocultural Theory is that higher forms of human mental activity are mediated. Vygotsky (1987) argued that just as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely, instead, on tools and labour activity, we also use symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves (2000:80).

Sociocultural Theory understands learning as a shared process which is constructed through social interaction among individuals. Language is the tool which facilitates the scaffolding between a more expert individual and a novice learner. Scaffolding is the help provided to learners in order to guide their learning process and enable them to solve problems (Wood et al, 1976, cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:195). This supportive dialogue provided to novice learners has beneficial effects when provided within a learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is a concept that helps to explain how knowledge or skills are acquired and how learners are able to reach higher levels of achievement through the guidance of a more expert individual (Vygotski and Koulin, 1986: 187-89). SCT theory underpins this project because it is my firm belief that effective learning is based on cooperation and interaction among people.

It is common to identify teachers going through an unsettling period, when they feel worried and insecure regarding their abilities to use new technologies in their teaching practice (Ward et al, 2002:554). This anxiety is explained by Fuller (1969) in his Change Theory, which explains how teachers develop from an initial stage of 'self-focus' to a later stage when they are concerned with the 'impact on others' (Ward et al, 2002:555). This means that innovation and integration of technology first impact on teachers' self-esteem and perception of their knowledge and skills to use new technology, making them concerned primarily with their own technology uptake and learning. At a later stage, teachers begin directing their efforts towards the integration of new technology to facilitate their students' learning process.

Mentoring, according to Jacobi (1991 cited in Ward et al 2002: 555), is the direct contact between a mentor and a *protegé*, and should be socially sustained. There are three functions within a mentoring programme that help teachers to reduce stress while facing a new challenge: a) direct assistance or professional development, b) emotional support and c) role modelling. Direct assistance is related to the participant's concern in the self-concern stage; emotional support consists of providing assistance to participants' personal and management concerns and role modelling regards assistance on the impact of innovation on others. Peer mentoring has enhanced various advantages namely: a) addressing change by providing support to pre-service teachers, b) assisting teachers through social collaboration and c) fostering teachers' awareness of the change process (Jacobi, 1991 cited in Ward et al 2002:555). It can be said from the above that a peer-mentoring programme should aim at enhancing social interaction and collaboration among teachers in order to facilitate the integration of IWBs into their teaching practice. This mentoring process should be based on the SCT perspective and target enhancing EFL teachers' cooperation and interaction.

A new trend in research into teacher development seems to focus on teachers' learning communities or communities of practice (Hindin et al, 2007:350). The rationale for these learning communities is that when teachers get together and share knowledge and expertise, they have the chance to rethink their teaching practice, their role as teachers as well as their content knowledge. While rethinking their practices, teachers identify new areas that need to be addressed in the classroom, as well as identifying necessary changes in previous practices. Teachers have different beliefs and approaches to teaching; hence, through the interactions within a community of practice, it is possible to learn with peers and develop professionally. The concept of communities of practice, regarding teachers' professional development, reinforces the idea that learning involves social participation (Wenger, 1998:6). It entails the necessity of teachers being active participants in their communities of practice in order to construct an identity within these communities. This theory does not substitute other social theories; rather it adopts stances of these theories in order to underpin its constructs. The major elements of the theory of communities of practice are *meaning*, *practice*, *community* and *identity*.

Meaning is related to our ability, as individuals or groups, to associate our experiences to the world in a meaningful way; *practice* relates to our participation in historical and social events; *community* involves the social aspect of our engagement and participation in the group; and *identity* concerns our role as participants of a certain context within a community. The concept of teachers' communities seems to suit teachers' needs in order to exchange knowledge and rethink their teaching practices. In order to provide an example of a mentoring process, the next paragraphs will discuss my own IWB learning process.

IWB technology in English language teaching (ELT) in Brazilian state schools is still far from being a reality due to the lack of investment in the public education system. However, with the fast development of technology and cost reduction, IWB technology might reach the public education system in a near future; hence soon teachers are likely to have to face the challenge of learning how to teach with this tool. I will describe my own learning process in order to provide an example of how it is possible to face the challenges of learning and integrating technology in our teaching practice.

4. Research method

I have chosen different research tools, such as auto-ethnography (my diary), class observations (other teachers' lessons and my own) and semi-structured interviews, as I believe that comparing my own insights with other EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences while learning how to use IWBs would make it possible to widen my understanding of this technology. I felt that having been through this learning process myself, I would be better prepared to integrate IWB technology in my classroom, as well as motivate other Brazilian EFL teachers to pursue professional development and further their technological knowledge. In my investigation, the nature of data is qualitative and my aim in using diverse research tools is to gather insights from different sources.

In order to carry out this research, I designed a project, which allowed me to experience and reflect on my own process of learning how to operate and integrate IWB technology into my teaching practice. One of my aims is to become a teacher trainer in the future and by experiencing the challenges of acquiring and broadening my own technology skills I hope to be better prepared to understand other EFL teachers' needs, while learning to teach using IWB technology themselves. This research project is based on auto-ethnographic research, which is explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as:

> an autobiographical genre of writing and research, that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. (2007: 39)

In this research approach, the researcher plays a central role while learning and reflecting on his own learning experiences; looking into his own social context, and relating it to his inner self. The researcher's personal experiences are essential because they provide the basis for this kind of research. Self-study, according to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001:13), is a new trend in the teacher education field. Auto-ethnography involves readers in the research process by enticing their curiosity and interpretation and is aimed at challenging and illuminating rather than confirming and proving ideas. While reflecting upon my diary entries, I have identified three main themes: a) the impact of IWB on my role as an EFL teacher, b) the impact of mentoring on my IWB learning process and c) the main classroom management changes fostered by the use of IWB technology. These insights are explained in subsequent paragraphs. By the same token, I needed to understand how these themes affect other EFL teachers using IWB technology. I therefore observed three classes in private language schools in England and interviewed three teacher trainers: two English and one Brazilian. The aim of my observations of other teachers' usage of IWBs was to contrast classroom management practices employed by teachers who have received IWB mentoring with those used by teachers who did not receive any kind of IWB training. The idea was to assess the role of mentoring on EFL teachers' use of IWB technology, and also to gain insights and learn with these teachers how to use IWB adequately in the EFL classroom, in order to avoid making the same mistakes they were making.

This study follows a qualitative research tradition which according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) is

> a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. Qualitative research study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (2000:3)

The IWB mentoring I was given was aimed, from the outset, to make me reflect and overcome my anxieties regarding technology. I was very careful and registered honestly my insights in a diary, so that other EFL teachers could profit from reading it. The issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research, according to Kumar (2005:153), are important aspects to establish the accuracy of the procedures adopted while searching for answers to research questions. Regarding measurement procedures, validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure. In order to be able to guarantee validity in research, it is necessary to justify each procedure by providing evidence of the study and making links between the questions and the results (Kumar, 2005:154). The issue of reliability regarding auto-ethnographic research is explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), who point out that

> Since we always create our personal narrative from a situated location, trying to make our present, imagined future, and remembered past cohere, there's no such thing as orthodox reliability in auto-ethnographic research. (2000:751)

Also according to Denzin and Lincoln (apud), it is always possible to check the reliability of our work by exchanging ideas and reflecting on our colleagues' feedback (pp 751). Regarding generalisability in auto-ethnographic research it is possible to imagine ourselves experiencing the situations described in the story. I was careful to write my story in a way that it could possibly enable the reader to experience similar feelings.

5. Research instruments

In order to provide triangulation, the following instruments were used: researcher's diary, classroom observation (myself teaching, as well as observation of other EFL teachers' classes) and semi-structured interviews. According to McDonough and McDonough (1997:198), triangulation is a common approach in introspective methods where we use a number of research tools in order to give greater validity to our research. My interest was to reflect upon my own learning process, as well as compare my insights with other EFL teachers' feedback; thus, the research instruments mentioned above were used and integrated into my research.

The process of writing a diary helped me to become a more reflective teacher, also enabling me to become aware of my strengths and weaknesses regarding technology usage, especially the IWB. Diaries are important research instruments in education as they foster teacher reflection (McDonough & McDonough, 1997:120).
Also, in order to help me to reflect and assess my teaching performance, I asked a colleague to film my lesson. This was a rewarding experience as I could integrate a new tool into my lesson plan and classroom practice. According to Jupp (2006), those who support the auto-ethnographic approach argue that:

> reflexivity about oneself and about the research situation, that is, being aware of one's position in the context of research rather than denying it, is vital to a full understanding and is not completely at odds with forms of 'truth' or validity.(2006:16)

As my own lesson was filmed, I could reflect on my performance while teaching with the IWB. I could analyse how I managed to integrate the IWB activities with other activities in the lesson. I could also understand that the IWB training I had received was essential for its positive flow. I tried to involve the learners in a natural way, so that the emphasis was on learning and interaction, rather than on the board. As it was almost the end of term at University, it was difficult to gather students to participate in my class but I managed to find two students to attend it. Although the learners were meeting for the first time, they got along well and interacted positively in class and felt motivated to go to the board, give it a try and perform the tasks. It is important, however, to consider that the positive atmosphere in class might have been a consequence of being in such a small group and the fact that students were in direct contact with each other.

The class observation sessions were aimed at reflecting on the impact of training or mentoring processes on EFL teachers' classroom management in order to try to identify whether teachers who did not receive any kind of training would focus their attention on the technology itself, fostering a board/teacher-centred approach to teaching. Moreover, considering that one of the aims of teaching a foreign language is to enhance learner interaction and communication skills in the classroom, I observed the way teachers integrate IWB technology to involve and engage the learners in the classroom, enhancing their student-centred teaching approach. As defined by Kumar (2005),

classroom observation is a purposeful and systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place. (2005:119)

I adopted a non-participant stance while observing the lessons because I did not want to interfere with the natural flow of activities. The initial intention was to film the lessons, but since it would involve getting permission from parents and students and raise some ethical issues, it was decided that I would instead register the observed interactive events in a notebook. Although I tried to avoid interfering with the lesson flow, I noticed that in some classes, both teacher and students felt uneasy owing to my presence in class, which must be considered when analysing my observations. Although I did not participate in any activity in the lessons I observed and sat at the back of the room, behind the students, the fact that I was taking notes made some students feel puzzled about my presence in class. I think I should have better prepared the teachers for my observation, so that they could have explained to students the purpose of my presence in class.

Owing to the qualitative nature of my research, I needed to gather more insights and widen my understanding about IWB technology in the EFL classroom; therefore I designed a semi-structured interview for EFL teachers. The aim of the interviews was to better understand the impact of IWB training on EFL teachers' classroom management. I needed to get teachers' feedback on the kind of IWB training they had had and to what extent this training was enough to enable them to start integrating this technology into their teaching practice. I chose a semi-structured interview format, instead of a structured interview because I wanted teachers to feel free to add to my questions, expand their thoughts and contribute to my understanding of their IWBs usage in foreign language classrooms. According to Kumar (2005:123), interviewing is a common method of gathering data from people and it can be structured or unstructured, according to the degree of flexibility. He emphasises that interviews are more appropriate for complex situations and have wider applications. Moreover, information can be supplemented and questions can be explained. I conducted four interviews; two in England and two in Brazil.

As I was living in England at the time, I needed to interview teachers from Brazil via Skype and because participants were very busy, I needed to be objective and structure the interviews in such a way that they would last no more than 15 minutes. I recorded the interviews on a digital recorder, so that I could transcribe the information gathered, enabling me to reflect and gain insights while transcribing the recordings. Before conducting the interviews, the questions were piloted in order to check their objectivity and avoid bias or leading questions.

The class observation sessions and the semi-structured interviews enabled me to confirm my hypothesis that the use of IWBs without sufficient training fosters a teacher-centred approach. Consequently, I could conclude how important it is to integrate the IWB in the foreign language classroom as a tool to facilitate teacher instruction and as a means of enhancing student interaction.

6. Mentoring experience

Based on the data gathered in my diary it can be said that the IWB mentoring had an essential role in my professional development. My mentor's primary aim was to help me feel familiar with the tool and provide me with a hands-on approach to IWB usage. I started using the IWB from the outset of the mentoring sessions. This had a significant effect on my learning process as I could put into practice all the information and guidance I was receiving. The initial feelings of anxiety and lack of confidence were slowly overcome by more positive feelings and attitudes. I understood the importance of planning the classes thoroughly in order to integrate IWB technology in the classroom. It is possible to identify in my diary that my general pedagogical knowledge was an essential asset, which enabled me to overcome my lack of technological knowledge. It is important to emphasise this aspect, as it might help other EFL teachers to be aware of the importance of keeping a balance between pedagogy and technology. It can be said that I acquired an autonomous stance while receiving mentoring on how to use IWB.

This first tutorial lasted for one hour and enabled me to try out using the IWB. My main concern was to imagine that I was teaching and I needed to involve the students in the class. I felt more confident in the second tutorial. I owe the development of my confidence to the mentoring process and the 'scaffolding' my mentor provided. According to Wood et al (cited in Mitchell and Myles 2004), scaffolding is,

the process of supportive dialogue which directs the attention of the learner to key features of the environment, and which prompts them through successful steps of a problem. (2004:195)

I could feel that I was learning and progressing confidently because of the assistance and scaffolding I was receiving and through the dialogue with my mentor. Similarly, it could be said that EFL teachers can profit a great deal from the exchange of materials, ideas and dialogue with their peers, as well as being supported by a more technologically expert colleague. According to Vygotsky and Koulin (1986:191), the teacher plays an active role in the learning process, as he is responsible not only for creating an appropriate learning environment, but also for facilitating the learner's process through communication. Hence, the role of the mentor in my training was essential as she guided me through the learning process by interacting and enabling me to develop my technical skills. Socio-cultural theory enables us to understand the role of communication in learning because it provides insights regarding the use of computers in the learning process. Learning is dependent on interaction with others and, therefore, computers should never be seen as a substitute for teachers; on the contrary, new technologies, such as the IWB, should be seen as tools that facilitate interaction and communication between teachers and students.

Final considerations

This small-scale research project aimed at investigating the role of mentoring as a way to enable EFL teachers to make use of Interactive Whiteboard technology to foster a student-centred approach to teaching. My aim with auto-ethnography was to be able to register my insights in a diary while being mentored in the IWB learning process. This experience of learning how to use and integrate IWB technology in my own teaching practice through mentoring enabled me to overcome my lack of technology skills, as well as my reluctance towards technology use in the classroom. Owing to the informal and individualised approach acquired in the mentoring process, I could build up my confidence to use technology in the classroom in my current teaching practice.

In addition, I wanted to obtain insights from other teachers on how they have taken up the use of IWBs in their classes; hence I observed three lessons and interviewed four teachers (two British and two Brazilian). Through class observations, I confirmed my research hypothesis that EFL teachers' use of IWBs without training promotes a teacher/board-centred approach to teaching. I could also understand that training only is not enough. I therefore suggest peer mentoring as a way to enable EFL teachers to acquire and develop their general pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, content pedagogical knowledge and to build up their pedagogical technology knowledge. This highlights the importance of creating a community of practice at school where teachers have the chance to exchange and cooperate with each other and build up their new domain of knowledge to promote technology innovation in their classrooms. Although teacher training courses in general focus on technology to motivate and inspire teachers to innovate and make changes in their classrooms, they tend not to empower teachers, because when teachers go back to their classrooms they feel isolated and do not have the conditions to put into practice the ideas they had in those short training or workshop sessions. According to Walters (1988), teacher-training courses should fulfil participants' needs not only as teachers but as trainees. Hence, an on-going mentoring process seems more appropriate to empower teachers to develop their domains of knowledge through cooperation with their peers.

It is argued in this paper that we are now teaching a new generation of students with a more dynamic and interactive learning style; consequently, it entails teachers' need to rethink their teaching practices. Students have a faster pace and rhythm of learning, hence the necessity to use innovative teaching methods and tools. It can be concluded from the discussions above that IWB technology has the potential to enable teachers to energise and motivate their classrooms through the different modalities and interactive affordances inherent on the board. However, it greatly depends on how EFL teachers decide to explore these affordances to promote interaction and engagement in the classroom.

These new ways and tools for teaching, nonetheless, create many challenges for teachers who need to be open to learn and revise their teaching practices. Teachers now need to be aware that they do not possess the control of knowledge. Students now have a say in the classroom and are expected to contribute to the teaching and learning process. This might entail unsettling moments for teachers, where they will find themselves insecure and overwhelmed with so many changes. Therefore, it is important to create EFL teachers' communities of practice, which enable these professionals to interact and socialise in order to learn together. Socio-cultural theory provides the framework for this research and claims that learning is not an individual process. EFL teachers might profit a great deal from belonging to communities of practice where they can share their experiences and knowledge.

It is also argued in this paper that EFL teachers might profit even more when they engage in a mentoring process for learning. My auto-ethnographic project enabled me to undergo the process of being mentored while learning to use IWB technology and it can be said that this mentoring process was responsible for the accomplishment of my ultimate goal, which was to be able to use IWB to teach an EFL lesson. The mentoring programme I experienced helped me to overcome my anxieties regarding the use of technology in the classroom as well as empowering me to see beyond the tool itself and focus on its potential pedagogic uses.

Mentoring had a very positive effect on me because I could, through interaction and negotiation of knowledge, widen my horizons. Consequently, I suggest that directors of studies and principals of schools motivate their teachers to create communities of practice and pair up teachers with different levels of pedagogical and technological knowledge, so that through peer mentoring they can adopt and integrate IWB technology in a meaningful way into their language classrooms.

Although this research has yielded very positive outcomes, it is important to mention some of its limitations. The first limitation is the short period of mentoring I was exposed to, due to the deadlines I was expected to meet to accomplish my research. The second drawback is that, as I was not teaching English whilst studying, I needed to invite students to participate in my project which, in a way, hindered my process of analysis of possible changes in my role as an EFL teacher. The third limitation I identified is that although I managed to register my insights while observing other EFL teachers using IWB technology, I would have profited more had I filmed these classes, which was not possible The final constraint is that although my teaching context is in Brazil, due to the fact that I was not living in Brazil when I carried out this research I could not observe Brazilian teachers using the IWB technology in class; I managed to overcome this limitation by online interviews. I recommend, for future investigations, that a similar study be carried out on a longitudinal basis, where teachers can reflect on their own IWB learning process while participating in a mentoring programme.

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Chapter 6

Corpus linguistics: history, methodology and scope

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Introduction

In this paper I attempt to describe and characterise Corpus Linguistics (hereafter CL); define important terms used in the field; point out different perspectives; show applications; present its limitations and, above all, examine the contribution of CL to linguistic research, particularly for production of educational materials.

1. Historical overview

Since the 60's, electronic corpora have been considered a valuable resource for linguistic studies. This contribution was first felt in the English language due to the pioneering work of English-language corpora such as the Brown Corpus (Francis and Kucera, 1964), which gave rise to much of the work produced using corpora ever since.

The Brown Corpus was the first computerized corpus compiled for purposes of linguistic research. However, its importance is even greater if we take into account the fact that this compilation came at a time when the increasingly dominant paradigm, led by Chomsky, was contrary to the recording and research of linguistic performance. For transformational-generative linguistics, the study of language should not describe what speakers do with language (performance), but what speakers know about language (competence). In other words, it is based on the study of language through introspection which verifies working models of language. For this paradigm, data lie in the mind of the linguist and are accessible through introspection. Theories are verified by examples which are often invented by the researcher. This rationalist paradigm continued to be predominant for a long time, moving away from much of the descriptive linguistic research of performance.

Chomsky, among others, disagreed with the use of corpora and the competing models based on statistical probability, derived from the study of linguistic performance. Kennedy (1998) reports that in 1958, Chomsky allegedly argued about the inadequacy of using corpora for the description of grammatical rules on the grounds that some linguistic items just do not happen because they are too obvious, others for being false, and others still for being impolite. Five years later, Chomsky trivialized the importance of statistical analysis of linguistic items' frequency saying that although "I live in New York" is more frequent than "I live in Dayton, Ohio", this fact is irrelevant to the description of linguistic theories (Kennedy, 1998; Sardinha 2004[1]). It was, then, in such an academic environment, very hostile to the use of corpora, that Francis and Kucera began what must have been the enormous task of compiling a synchronic corpus of about one million words of written English published in the United States in 1961. The work was completed in 1964 with amazing speed, considering the resources available then. The Brown Corpus was then made available on computer tape accompanied by a manual for the user.

Another linguistic dichotomy was born: on the one hand the British neo-Firthian linguists, mostly dealing with corpora as repositories of instances of actual use of language, in which all examples, whether fitting a theory or not, must be selected by the researcher (Gabrielatos and McEnery, 2006). On the other hand, there are the American Chomskian linguists, whom Fillmore (1992) called "armchair linguists," that is, linguists who seek in their own intuition and introspective instances (largely invented by the researchers themselves) their sole source of data. They sit in a comfortable chair waiting for some interesting linguistic insight. Occasionally, the

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[1] Sardinha (2004, p. 132) states that "I live in New York" is only supposed to be more frequent, since it is not known whether speakers of this city actually use this sentence, on which occasions, and in what contexts.

armchair linguists would take note of these insights that led them closer to understanding how language works (Sardinha, 2000). For Fillmore, when both meet, the armchair linguist asks the corpus linguist 'why should I believe what you say is interesting?' While the corpus linguist asks 'why should I believe what you say is true?' However, Fillmore believes that linguists should make use of both paradigms, despite the difficulties, since both theories have much to contribute to the area.

2. Defining corpus linguistics

2.1 Characteristics of Corpus Linguistics

The term 'corpus linguistics' (CL) is understood (McEnery and Wilson, 1996) as the study of language based on examples from real life. CL is not a branch of linguistics, such as syntax, semantics or pragmatics, concentrating on the description or explanation of some aspect of language use (Rayson, 2002). CL is a methodology that can be applied to a wide variety of linguistic studies or the teaching of languages, that is, one of several ways of doing linguistics.

Biber et al (1998: 4) list the essential characteristics of corpus-based linguistics:
- It is empirical, in that it analyzes the actual patterns of use in natural texts;
- It uses a large collection of texts (a corpus, with pre-established principles for collecting data) as a basis for analysis;
- It makes extensive use of computers for analysis and may also use automated and interactive techniques;
- It depends on quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

Corpora are used to generate empirical knowledge about a language, which can often supplement or even supplant information from reference sources and insight (Leech, 1991, 1992). Stubbs (2001) adds that CL sees language as a probabilistic system, that is, although many combinations and linguistic features are possible, they are not all likely to occur. Thus, being a suitable technique for statistical analysis, corpora can provide information about the relative frequency of many aspects of language. Sardinha states that 'the most important point related to differences in frequencies is that they are not random' (2004: 31). If these differences were random, the frequency factor would not be significant and would not add information about the structure of a language. However, groups of linguistic features show a systematic variation in specific texts, variations originating from specific communicative situations. The systematic variation, or the recurrence of linguistic features (collocation, colligation, syntactic pattern, etc.) indicates that the language is patterned and driven by several factors beyond communicative needs. For example, when choosing the article 'the', subsequent words are automatically limited, i.e., adjective, adverb or noun. Other factors influence the selection of words, such as language proficiency of the author, settings, topic and text type. Patterns show systematic variations and regularities in textual varieties, dialects, etc. The verification of these regularities cannot be achieved through the intuition of a native speaker. Only empirical observation of real data in different contexts of use can provide this information. That is to say, that the frequency of occurrence of linguistic features, is not a trivial finding, as Chomsky had previously stated.

2.2 Types of Corpora

A corpus can be defined as a 'collection of natural language examples, consisting of anything from a few sentences to sets of written or oral registering texts that were collected to be used as a basis for linguistic research' (Hunston, 2002: 2). More recently, the word 'corpus' (the term most commonly accepted for the plural is "corpora") has been used to refer to collections of texts (or parts of texts) that are stored and can be accessed electronically. Written texts can be taken from newspapers or magazines (scanned), from a CD or the Internet. Oral texts, such as conversations are registered and later transcribed, that is, are copied word for word so that the texts of those talks could be fed into a computer. It is then possible to analyze the language contained in the corpus through software specific for linguistic study, for example, the Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1996).

'Natural examples of language' (as quoted earlier) are understood as those examples which were not produced or created to be used in a corpus. Sardinha (2004) adds that the idea of naturalness also includes the fact that the language is to be produced by humans, thus precluding text generation programs. However, although the texts are natural, a corpus is an artificial object, since it was created with the specific purpose of research.

There is no specification of the type of content that a corpus should contain. A corpus may contain anything from the complete works of Shakespeare, to instructions on the boxes of soap powder, or newspaper articles on *Porto Alegre Football Club* in the year it was the Brazilian football champion. Regarding size, there is no consensus on the minimum or maximum size accepted for a corpus. According to Hoffmann (1998 [2007]), the interpretations on the minimum size required for corpora in linguistic research vary widely. In specialized language research, there have been useful results with samples of 35,000 words, but he suggests 200,000 words as a minimum. The author argues that size will depend on the research objectives and the type of corpus. Thus, 'there is no widely accepted mathematical formula to report the amount or distribution of words or texts that a corpus must have to be representative' (Sardinha, 2000: 104). However, most of the words have very low frequency of occurrence, so for these words to appear in a corpus, it must have a large number of words. The same can be stated regarding different senses or meanings of a single word: there are senses which are more or less frequent. The rarer senses will be more likely to appear in a larger corpus.

The issue of representation also involves knowing the 'whole', which, in the case of a language, cannot be known. Researchers should try to divide this whole in estimated parts. For example, a corpus of "newspaper language" should include different types of newspapers, tabloid and broadsheet, for example. It should also include texts from different sections, such as varieties, sports, editorials, business, among others. To be representative and balanced, such a corpus should include a similar number of words in each category: business in tabloids, business in broadsheet, sports in tabloid, sports in broadsheet, etc.

According to Hunston (2002), also related to the size of a corpus is the speed and efficiency of the software to access this corpus, as well as the computer's capability to access it. If, for example, obtaining a list of the present and past forms of the verb "to be" takes more than a few minutes, the researcher may prefer a smaller corpus, whose results can be considered as reliable as that of the larger corpus.

The purpose of the research also influences the size that a corpus needs to have. Carter and McCarthy (1995: 143) argue that to study grammar in spoken language, a relatively small corpus can be sufficient as grammatical words tend to be very frequent. Moreover, low frequency items require a much larger corpus.

Corpora are usually collected based with a specific research project in mind, such as providing information on frequencies for dictionary entries, or producing educational materials for teaching foreign language. Sometimes, however, corpora are collected without a specific purpose and are made available as a resource of general language for linguists, language teachers, lexicographers, and others.

There are several types of corpora depending on the size, purpose and how they were compiled. Sinclair (1995) suggests the following list of types of corpora:

- **General language:** a corpus containing many types of texts. It may include written language, spoken or both; texts produced in one country or several. Because of its general scope, this type of corpus will most likely not be representative of any 'whole', but will include the largest possible number of types of texts. A corpus of general language needs to be much larger than a specific corpus. It is often used as a contrast to the more specialized corpora. For this reason, they are sometimes called Reference Corpora. One of the most famous English corpora is the British National Corpus (BNC).
- **Monitor:** designed to check current changes in a language. This type of corpus is fed yearly, monthly or even daily, increasing rapidly in size. However, the proportion of types of text must remain constant, so that each time period can be compared with the previous one. An example is the Bank of English, which has around 400 million words currently.
- **Comparable:** two (or more) corpora in different languages (English and Portuguese, for example) or different varieties of a language (Portuguese from Brazil and Portugal, for example). They must be compiled following the same guidelines, i.e., containing the same mix of genres, such as newspaper articles, novels, informal conversations, etc. They can be used by translators or by learners to identify differences and equivalences in each language. The most cited example of this type of corpus is the ICE (International Corpus of English), which contains more than one million words of different varieties of English.
- **Parallel:** two (or more) different languages containing texts that were translated from one language to another (e.g., a novel translated from English into Portuguese), or texts that were produced simultaneously in two or more languages (for example, documents of the European Union).

In addition to the types of corpora mentioned above, Hunston (2002: 14) also adds the following corpora:

Learner: a collection of essays/texts produced by learners of a language. The purpose of such a corpus is to identify ways in which learners differ from native speakers (compared to a corpus of native speakers[2]). Probably the best known is the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), which consists of essays written in English by speakers of different native languages (Portuguese, French, German, etc.).

- **Pedagogical:** corpora which contain the language a learner is exposed to. It may consist of books and recordings. This type of corpus may, for example, be compared to a corpus of authentic language (produced without pedagogical purposes) to see if the learner is being exposed to natural and useful language.
- **Historical or Diachronic:** a corpus of texts from different periods of time. It is used to investigate the development of certain aspects of a language throughout periods of time.
- **Specialised[2]:** a corpus containing a specific type of text e.g. summaries (abstracts), scholarly articles on a particular subject, telephone conversations, etc. This type of corpus is intended to be representative of a certain type of text, or language.

3. Terms and concepts in corpus linguistics

I shall now define some terms which are important for the understanding of corpus-based research.

- **Type, token and hapax:** to explain these terms, I will take the following paragraph about rotorcrafts[3] as an example:

If there is provision for a second pilot, the rotorcraft must be controllable with equal safety from either pilot position. Flight and powerplant controls must be designed to prevent confusion or inadvertent operation when the rotorcraft is piloted from either position. Inflight leakage of rain or snow that could distract the crew or harm the structure must be prevented.

Word	No. of occurrences
The	4
Must	3
Be	3
Or	3
It	2
Pilot	2
All the other 42 words	1

Figure 6.1: Tokens

There are 59 words, or 59 sequences of letters separated by space or punctuation. That is, there are 59 *tokens*. However, many of these words occur more than once. Counting each of the above repeated items only once so that only different words are counted, there is a total of 48 words, or *types*. Words that occur only once are called *hapax*.

The paragraph on rotorcraft, therefore, comprises a corpus of 59 tokens, 48 types, including 42 hapax. In a very small corpus, as the paragraph above, the type / token ratio will be high. In a larger corpus, there will be relatively more tokens (items) for each type, since there is more repetition of individual words in longer texts.

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[2] In this study I refer repeatedly to the dichotomy "native speaker" vs. "non-native speaker, since several authors in the area of CL refer to this aspect. Although it is beyond the scope of work, I consider it important to mark my position and understanding about this dichotomy. Traditionally, this dichotomy has served the purpose of promoting and including only the linguistic variants of native speakers. Likewise, this dichotomy has also favored and privileged the native speaker foreign language teacher, whereas, the non-native teacher has been considered as inferior. That is, according to these views, the native speaker is the default, the "correct" model and the non-native should strive their best to achieve this native standard, which is usually unattainable (and undesirable). There is, however, a new understanding about this issue (the dichotomy between "native speaker" and "non-native speaker), not focusing on the flaws and weaknesses of non-native speakers, but on the success of the interactions between speakers who communicate in a particular language regardless of their native language (Schlatter et al., 2004). This new understanding (discussed in Interactional Sociolinguistics) disregards in the same way, the supposedly superiority of the native teacher, on the grounds that the non-native teacher knows the culture and mother tongue of students better, and can, therefore, cater for students' needs, thereby facilitating learning. In this sense, research conducted contrasting corpora of learners and native speakers, before pointing out errors, or deviations from the native speech, should verify to what extent these "deviations", or differences, actually interfere with the success of communications.

[3] A kind of aircraft.

- **Lemmas and word forms:** to define *lemma*, I refer again to the paragraph on rotorcraft. Some researchers, for example, consider *be* and *is* to be the same word since *is* is just a declination of *be*. Therefore, one can say that *is* and *be* belong to the same lemma: *be*. However, some researchers say that two words do not belong to the same lemma when they belong to different classes, such as the noun *pilot* and verb *piloted*. For CL, the notion of lemma is convenient when you want to observe only nouns, excluding the adjectives or verbs, for example. Lemmatization is only possible when a corpus is annotated.
- **Annotation:** this refers to procedures performed to add information to the words in a corpus. This information can be added automatically (only by a computer program) or manually (by someone working in the computer program). There are different forms of annotation, such as the morphosyntactic tagging, syntactic annotation, among others. Morphosyntactic tagging (Part-of-speech tagging, or POS tagging) is the addition of a code to each word in a corpus, indicating the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).
- **Syntactic annotation** (parser) is the analysis of text components, namely the identification of syntactic structure (noun phrase, verb, etc.) of each sentence. This type of annotation, such as the morphosyntactic tagging, can also be performed automatically or manually. However, a good level of accuracy is difficult to be obtained automatically. Other types of elements can still be registered, such as intonation, in corpora of spoken language, anaphora, which identifies the items of cohesion and their referents; semantics, which is the categorization of words and phrases into semantic fields (plane = transport, driver = profession).
- **Collocation:** it refers to the way in which two or more words are typically used together. For example, it is common to hear *heavy rain*, but not *heavy sun*. In this context, *heavy* collocates with *rain*, or that *heavy* and *rain* are collocates.
- **Colligation:** it refers to the association between lexical and grammatical items. For example, *start* is more frequent with -ing and noun phrases, while *begin* is more used with a complement *to* (Sardinha, 2004: 40).
- **Semantic prosody:** it is the term used to refer to the word or expression used in a specific context so that the word/phrase acquires certain connotation in that context. An example would be to *sit through* (Hunston, 2002: 141), which is generally used with expressions that indicate something long and tiring, i.e., with a connotation of something boring.

4. Analysis of corpora

A corpus, as stated previously, is a repository of digital texts. To access its content, there must be resources or tools to do so. A large corpora such as BNC, usually has its own resources or access tools. Other corpora need to be stored and accessed through specific programs for linguistic description, such as the WordSmith Tools (Scott, 1996). In any case, concordances, frequency lists and lists of collocates, are usually the most accessed resources.

4.1. Concordances

The 'concordancer' is probably the most widely used computational tool to process information in a corpus. A concordancer is a program that searches a corpus, a selected word or a phrase, with all occurrences of that word or phrase in the center of the computer screen with the words that precede or follow to the left and to the right, i.e., the co-text. The selected word that appears in the center of the screen is called node or node-word. The material is arranged to facilitate the visualization of patterns of the node-word. Thus, observations of patterns and collocation, colligation and semantic prosody are optimized. In the example below we used the Brown corpus, the node-word is the modal verb "must", and I carried out a random search:

```
1 ce, one of two alternative courses must be  taken: _1._    Five
2 cent of the voters in each county must  sign petitions requestin
3 llot, or _2._    The Republicans must hold a primary under the
4 sertion,  and  ADC dependency".  #"MUST SOLVE PROBLEM"#  The mont
5 Co&, committee  chairman.    "We must solve the problems which
6 negative side of the balance sheet must be  set some disappointme
7 entirely different  societies, and must be treated as such without
```

The same search can be performed with the words sorted alphabetically to the right of the node-word (sort right):

```
1 inue in his  chosen profession, he must abandon his own code and
2 and to which even law enforcement must accommodate  itself. One
3 union members under contract, it must accomplish its  payroll b
4 of  time, a method of preservation must accomplish the  destructi
5 ating the antennae and receivers,  must account for much of the d
6 ades  across Berlin the free world must acquiesce in dismemberme
7 turning point in history, and  we must act decisively and wisely
```

Or with the words sorted left (sort left):

```
1 es cleaning and drying equipment a must for modern  gin operat
2 ry style in  fine fashion and is a must for those who want to col
3 education (read "reading") was "a must". He moved in  a "highly
4 ques.  The platform accelerometers must be slightly modified  for
5 erials and library  accommodations must be planned. In the secon
6 was modern, large, on five acres. Must have cost  plenty. The St
7 firm that Christian love-in-action must  first justify and then d
```

4.2 Frequency Lists

A frequency list is simply a list of all the forms, or words (types) in a corpus with the number of occurrences of each form / word (tokens). The list can be sorted in order of frequency, with the most frequent forms coming first, or even alphabetically. This list can also be lemmatized or not. A comparison of frequency lists can provide interesting information about the different types of texts, since for CL, texts are influenced by earlier texts, through repetition or through routines and conventions. 'Texts are historically inherited' (Stubbs, 1996: 34).

This comparison is especially important among specialized corpora. Kennedy (1998: 102) points out that the "more specialized" a corpus is (academic English compared to general English or English for economy, compared to general academic English), the greater the number of lexical words (or content words) among the most frequent. In this sense, the author mentions that in a corpus of economics, 18, among the 50 most frequent words are lexical, while on a corpus of general academic English, only three among the 50 most frequent are lexical; in the Birmingham corpus, for example, only "said" (considered lexical) is among the 50 most frequent words, the other 49 are considered grammatical words.

4.3 Key Words

Finally "key words" can be identified as words which appear with statistically unusual frequency in a text or a corpus of texts; as such they are identified by software by comparing a word-list of the text in question with a word-list based on a larger reference corpus. A suitable term for the phenomenon is 'keyness'. The procedure used for example by WordSmith in order to list key words/phrases and plot where they appear in texts. These items are very often of interest, particularly interesting are those which human readers would be unlikely to notice such as prepositions, time adverbs and pronouns.

5. Collocation and patterns

Firth, with his famous sentence 'You shall know a word by the company it keeps' showed the world the importance of descriptive studies of language, especially the importance of the co-text of a word in order to really know its meaning. In this sense, the usual collocations of the words are simply the "companies" of this word. Related to collocation, there are the concepts of phraseology and patterns. While these concepts are not necessarily exclusive of CL, I present them in more details so as to try to define them specifically in this field.

As previously mentioned, collocation refers to the tendency with which words co-occur with others. The word 'toy', for example, co-occurs with 'children' more often than 'men' and 'women' (Hunston, 2002: 68). Hunston

considers this to be a motivated collocation as there is a logical explanation for it. Other collocations however, such as 'strong tea' and 'powerful car', have no apparent motivation.

One of the important uses of information stemming from knowing the collocations of a word is to highlight its different meanings. Hunston (2002: 76) lists the collocates of the verb *leak*. Some of the associations are related to the physical meaning of leak: oil, water, gas, roof, while others are associated with the metaphor: information, report, memo, confidential. In other words, the list of collocates provides a kind of semantic profile of words involved.

Related to the meaning of collocation, is the one of *pattern*. As Sardinha (2004) states, 'In general, *pattern* is the regularity expressed in the systematic recurrence of co-occurring units of various orders (lexical, grammatical, syntactic, etc.).' (Ibid, p. 47). That is, for the patterns of a word to be defined, it is necessary to determine the words and structures often associated with it that somehow reflect on its meaning. For Sardinha (2004), 'pattern' and 'phraseology' are often used as synonyms. Thus, there is sometimes the use of expressions like 'the phraseology of the word *X*' referring to observable patterns of the word at stake. Whatever the term used for this description, it is considered very important for the teaching of foreign language, because issues such as naturalness and fluency are demonstrated by means of patterns.

If a word has several meanings, each meaning tends to be associated with a different set of patterns. For example, when mobile is an adjective used to describe things, meaning 'that can be moved', it usually precedes the noun, e.g. mobile phone. When the same adjective is used to describe people, meaning 'not prevented from moving by disability or lack of resources', it usually follows the linking verb, e.g., 'I'm still very mobile' (Hunston, 2002: 139). Sinclair (1991) believes that this notion of phraseology may substitute single words as the unit for teaching vocabulary, simplifying thus the task of the learner, since each lexical item would contain more information about its use.

Moreover, words with the same pattern tend to share common aspects of meaning. Hunston (2002, p. 140) cites the case of the sequence: 'verb followed by noun followed by *as* followed by noun.' In such cases, the association between pattern and meaning is so strong that the meaning seems to belong to the entire sentence, rather than to each individual word. Verbs with this pattern seem to mean 'making someone or something be or seem to be something.' For example:

- he described it as a Legalized theft;
- he revealed himself as a man of deep culture;
- I would like to appoint you as managing director.

Similarly, semantic prosody can only be known through the observation of a large number of occurrences of a specific word, it is based on the typical use of the word / expression. As the semantic prosody is not always part of the conscious knowledge of a speaker (whether native or not) it cannot be taught, but can often be an important aspect of a language. The teaching of vocabulary should take it into account. However, this can only happen if the approach is phraseological and not based on the individual word.

6. A practical application of CL - material development

Textbooks have generally been based on the 'native intuition' of their authors, who, as mentioned in this essay, have only a partial and personal view of a language. Moreover, the textbooks still tend to be based on prescriptive grammar. More recently, there appears to be an emerging recognition that CL can be a valuable resource for authors of textbooks and other learning materials since it provides a detailed account of how a language is actually used. CL can provide information related to vocabulary, grammar, formality and informality, the differences between written and spoken language, how people begin and end a conversation, among other things. Thus, studies based on corpora may suggest the linguistic items and processes that will most probably be found by users of a language (or sub-language) and therefore deserve more investment in terms of time (Hoffmann, 1998 [2007]).

To use a corpus in the development of pedagogical materials, it is first necessary to decide on the type and variety of English that will serve as the basis for the material, since different corpora will present different words, and often different uses and functions of words to be taught. The word *nice*, for example, is one of the fifteen most frequent words in spoken English (McCarten, 2007). However, it is quite rare in academic written

English, always occurring in quotations from literature or interviews. Therefore, the choice (or compilation) of a corpus can affect the words to be included in teaching materials, as well as their meanings and uses.

Still on what to teach, both the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the teaching of General English cover a wide variety of specific purposes. What probably distinguishes them is that ESP courses tend to have a smaller number of varieties, types of text and communicative situations. According to Gavioli (2005: 23), to know the basic items to be taught in a course of ESP is a major problem for teachers and directly associated with each learning environment. In the case of academic English, for example, there is a variety of teaching situations as well as students' needs. That is, while reading books and papers in English is a great need for medical students who live in non-English-speaking countries, foreign medical students living in England, or in any other country where English is the language of education, will also need to work on oral English.

Regarding ways to classify ESPs, some authors, such as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), use very broad categories to classify the types of ESP: English for Doctors, Business English, etc. However, specialized corpora tend to represent a much smaller portion of specialized texts, such as teaching materials for chemistry (Azeredo, 2007; Finatto et al., 2003), or aviation English (Sarmento, 2008).

A specialized corpus thus means a corpus designed to represent a sample of a sub-language. Depending on the research or teaching purposes, the corpora may vary in the degree of specialization. Biber (1993, p. 245) suggests the following features to characterize different types of corpora:

Channel	Written/ Spoken
Format	Published/ Unpublished
Scenary	Institutional / Public/ Private-personal/ Other
Receptor	How many / Other / Self / Present / Absent / Degrees of Interactiveness/ Degree of shared knowledge
Producer	Gender/ Age/ Occupation/ Acknowledged Person/ Institution
Factuality	Factual Information/ Imaginative / etc.
Purpose	Convincing / Entertaining / Informing / Instructing / Explaining / Narrating / Describing / Recording / Reviling / Expressing Attitudes / Opining / Expressing Emotions / Relating / Ohers

Figure 6.2: Types of corpora

Gavioli (2005) illustrates the different degrees of specialization a corpus can have citing a corpus of Hepatitis C and a corpus of English for medical academic purposes. For the author, the corpus of hepatitis C should contain a number of papers that deal with the topic, written by authors of acknowledged importance to the area and, if possible, of both genders. The corpus of English for medical academic purposes should contain a variety of texts with the following characteristics: written and oral, published, institutional, with present and absent interlocutors, in interactive and non-interactive scenarios, and with different degrees of shared knowledge. In addition, the producers of the texts should represent both genders and the topics should cover several areas of medicine. Although the two corpora are specialized, the first may be considered much more specialized and restricted.

A corpus of specialized texts can be used to quickly generate a series of items that can characterize the specialized texts at stake. The frequency lists (both of words and collocates) can assist in making decisions as to what to teach and in what order (Kennedy, 1998; Gavioli, 2005). Rare expressions in a given context can be taught at a later time. However, it is not always possible to start by teaching the most frequent words of a language (or sub-language) for several reasons. Some may be culturally inappropriate, or unsuitable for the classroom context. Additionally, some words/expressions can impose a difficulty to learners until students have a wider knowledge of the language. Also, students may need other words/ expressions in addition to the more frequent words in the corpus of general English. The word "homework", for example, is not among the thousand most frequent words of spoken English, but it is very important and frequent in the classroom context. For these reasons, the frequency test should be used only as a guide in these cases.

Despite the importance of quantitative data in the teaching of General English, the relevance of such information seems to be even more important in the teaching of ESP. The quantitative nature of certain characteristic features of ESP has traditionally been recognized in several ways, such as the recurrence of

specific lexical items or grammatical structures, such as noun phrases in the language of medicine (Gotti, 1991). Halliday (1988) and Hoffman (1988 [2004], 1991, 1998 [2007]) define a specialized language, or sub-language, as a functional language, or a register, and describe the registers in quantitative terms. According to Halliday (1988: 162), 'a register is a cluster of associated features that have a greater tendency than chance co-occur.'

Hoffmann (1998 [2007]) mentions that quantitative and statistical results should be 'widely considered in the teaching of foreign languages' as a whole, but 'mainly in the teaching of specialized languages' (ibid, p. 74). For the author, it is important to choose and define the material so that students can learn, in less time, the maximum possible amount of knowledge, practices and skills. A 'minimum' should contain the most useful lexical and grammatical instances. The amount of linguistic units necessary to solve certain communicative tasks is 'the heart of foreign language teaching.' To Hoffmann (1998 [2007]), this minimum must undergo a thorough and rigorous selection process.

Gavioli (2005: 55) cites the work Barber (1962) performed on a corpus of approximately 23,000 words consisting of three academic papers in three different areas (engineering, chemistry and astronomy). Barber (due to technological limitations of the time) manually calculated data as the average length of a sentence, the occurrence of modal verbs and more frequent occurrence of different verb tenses. Swales (1988, in Gavioli, 2005) suggests that this work was used as an argument against the education of present and past continuous academic English courses, since the use of tenses were extremely low.

Specialized corpora usually have more occurrences of specialized words than general corpora. For example, the word *transaminase* occurs 61 times in a small corpus on Hepatitis C (Gavioli, 2005), but only 17 times in the full BNC (100 million words). However, even though specialized corpora provide more technical terms than general English corpora, specialized corpora alone cannot prove whether those units actually characterize the language represented in the corpus. This is because a specific genre and general language are not distinct categories. Frequent features that emerge from analysis of a specific corpus may not be only a feature of that genre, but of a macro-genre (Gavioli, 2005; Azeredo, 2007). To find out the aspects which effectively characterize a corpus that represents a genre or register, it is necessary to compare the corpus of study, with a corpus of a similar genre and, finally, with a corpus of general language. In this sense, Biber et al. (1998: 36) state that 'The analysis of a register requires a comparative approach: we need to have a reference to know the extent to which a linguistic feature in a register is rare or common.' The researchers suggest that the linguistic features co-occur in texts because they work in similar ways. In other words, taking a corpus of spoken English as an example, contractions (e.g. 'll, 's), false starts (e.g., OK, so... we need to put) and the use of general content words (e.g. thing) are all related to the pressures of real-time production. Thus, their co-occurrences are indicative of speech produced in real time (Biber et al., 1999: 10-11).

Collocations are also very important in the development of teaching materials. Lists of words, as described above, suggest possible lexical items to be included in a syllabus. The concordance of these words shows how they are used in a corpus, providing additional evidence about their characteristics, specific to the specialized language at stake. The concordance of the most frequent words in a corpus may suggest the typical ways in which these words are used and highlight their frequent collocations. Gavioli (2005) says that the collocations are not only relevant to the nouns, but also for other parts of speech. To McCarten (2007), finding the collocation of non-lexical verbs, as *have*, *get*, *make* and *is* is of particular importance. These verbs do not seem to have a meaning (lexical) on their own. Rather, they acquire meaning from the words with which they collocate. The verb *make*, for example, assumes a different meaning in each of the following expressions: *make a cake*, *make a decision* and *make fun of*. Thus, it is important to teach these verbs along with their collocations, instead of trying to identify and distinguish basic meanings, which, in some cases, may be difficult or even impossible.

Verifying the grammatical patterns of words and/or phrases is (like the collocations and frequency lists) relevant for the production of pedagogical materials to complement the phraseology, or patterns of a given word. The observation of these patterns is particularly important when it comes to verbal complements, i.e., items and structures which generally precede or follow a particular verb, such as objects or verbs in the infinitive. This verification can answer questions about the forms that follow certain verbs, especially when intuition fails. Kennedy (2002) showed that modal verbs can occur in nine different structures. However, the author showed that there are two prevalent grammatical forms in terms of frequency, since the other patterns answer for less than 10% of the occurrences of modal verbs in the BNC.

Through a corpus based study, one can check the vocabulary used in certain grammatical structures. For

example, a corpus can reveal the most frequent verbs used in the past continuous structure (was -*ing*). McCarten (2007) and Kennedy (1998) list the ten most frequent verbs in this framework: *going*, *thinking*, *talking*, *doing*, *saying*, *trying*, *telling*, *wondering*, *looking* and *working*. The authors suggest that vocabulary should be taught in the structure in which they occur in order to maximize learning.

Stubbs (1994) compares features in various types of books with corpora of general language. His studies focused on observing how texts encode their ideological positions through the use of specific features. One of his studies compare two geography books, one general and one with a more specific focus on environmentalism. The focus of the study is the ergative verbs, i.e., verbs that can be used in a transitive, intransitive or passive form. An example is the verb *close* (Stubbs, 1994: 205),

> several firms have closed their factories (transitive)
> factories have been closed (passive)
> factories have closed (intransitive)

As the author, this type of verb can have a major role in the allocation of agency, assigning, or not, responsibility for agents. Ergative verbs are used transitively much more frequently in the book with an environmental focus (52%) than in the general geography (23%). However, this ratio is opposite for the intransitive forms, with 38% in the environmental book and 51% in general geography. These data suggest that the occurrence of transitive ergative verbs may not be at random in the environmentalist book, and that the use of ergative verbs in this form may be serving to assign responsibility to the subjects. Nevertheless, in further research, the author compares their data with the LOB corpus. The author suggests that the use of ergatives in the LOB is indeed similar to the environmentalist book, with 49% used transitively and 31% intransitively. Stubbs reinterprets the difference between the two geography books claiming that, since the use of ergative verbs in the environmentalist book is similar to the use in general English, it is not the environmentalist book which overuses the transitional forms, but the general geography book overuses intransitive forms. The results show that it is only through the triple comparison that the analyst can interpret the events more accurately and define the specificity of each corpus (Biber et al., 1998, Gavioli, 2005; Stubbs, 1994).

Hunston (2002, p. 198) suggests that, for the ESP teacher, the focus on "what to teach" as opposed to "how to teach" can be of special significance. Students who need to learn how to write academic papers should be aware about the salient features of these genres. The author notes that corpus based studies can complement genre studies (Swales, 1991).

7. Limitations of CL

After presenting the features and benefits of using the corpus based methodology, the emphasis is now on the limitations of the studies that follow the CL methodology. A corpus cannot say whether any linguistic phenomenon is possible or not, only if it is frequent or not. On the one hand, linguistic descriptions (especially English) are increasingly focused on what is typical, rather than on notions of accuracy or rightness (rationalist focused research) (Sinclair, 1991: 17). However, the question 'Can you say that?' still needs to be answered and, according to Hunston (2002), the intuition of the native speaker is still the best way to answer this question.

A corpus cannot display anything beyond its content. Even for corpora which intend to be widely representative of a variety or genre, the generalizations made from the results of a corpus are actually extrapolations. A statement on a corpus is a statement about that corpus, not about language or register which the corpus represents. Thus, conclusions about the language inferred from a corpus should be treated as deductions, not as facts. A corpus can provide evidence, but cannot provide information. For example, what does "*something of*" mean before a noun in expressions like "*something of a surprise*"? It is supposedly a mitigating device, *something of a surprise* is a small surprise. That is, a corpus only provides plenty of examples to the researcher, but only the researcher can interpret them (Hunston, 2002: 23).

Finally, and, according to Hunston (2002), the most serious weakness of a corpus is that it presents the language outside its natural context. For example, software manuals have pictures that, due to limitations of the available technology, have to be discarded. In other words, transcripts of oral data cannot accurately

represent information about intonation, body language and other prosodic features. That points to the need for a corpus to be just one, among others tools, in a linguistic study.

Summary

Despite the limitations of CL, I believe that it is the most suitable available methodology for the investigation of real language when the goal is to generate support for the preparation of teaching materials. The main reasons for the choice of CL are manifold:

- CL is a rigorous methodology for obtaining attested data of language "*in vivo*" in which you can access a set of rich and real data and in the sense that, if the corpus is representative of a certain piece of language, the most and least frequent units of communication will clearly show. In addition, you can access their semantic patterns, or the associations the words have between them, their collocations, variations of lexical units, among other features. As it is scientific, it offers the possibility of data being verified by other scientists.
- Corpora "simplified" linguists' lives. For example, a linguist who wishes to study the use of modal verbs, can easily gather all these modal verbs in one place for observation. The act of gathering evidence is simplified, freeing the efforts of the researcher to the interpretative act (Hunston, 2002).
- Corpus based studies opened a new range of options for the investigation of language, including any kind of quantitative work. These investigations, as seen in this paper, can be used to identify differences between registers or genres.
- Corpora have shown that language is patterned in a much more detailed fashion than previously suggested. Rules taken as general, can usually be applied only in certain contexts. As a result, new ideas about language emerge and old ideas may need reassessment.
- More objective statements can be made in view of observations based on corpora when compared to introspective observations. Native speakers can learn a language perfectly, but do not always know what they say or how. Similarly, there is a discrepancy between the intuitive prioritized sense and the most frequent one.
- Corpora provide the possibility of "total accountability" of linguistic features and not only of individual salience.
- Collocations can help organize the context in main patterns. You can use the knowledge of these patterns to access the behavior of the language or the use of specific words in the text. This may facilitate the differentiation between the meanings of a word or determine the range of its syntactic features.
- Finally, in line with Gavioli (2005: 56), I believe that, while methods based on CL represent a challenge to the description of general English, such methods seem to represent a natural way to describe a more specific variety of the language since the teaching and description of ESP is based almost solely on collections of specialized texts.

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Appendix

Suggestions of freely available corpora

http://www.edict.com.hk/concordance/
- User-friendly interface
- Suggestions for classroom use
- Over 20 different corpora in English, including general English ones (BROWN, LOB), specialized (Bible, Business and Economy), and others (the Times, etc.)
- Parallel English-Chinese corpus.

http://davies-linguistics.byu.edu/personal/
- Webpage maintained by Professor Mark Davies from Brigham Young University
- Access to six different corpora.
- *Four in English: COCA (American English, over 400 million words), COHA (Historical American English, over 400 million words), BNC (British National Corpus, 100 million words), TIME (TIME magazine from 1923 to the present, over 100 million words).
- *One in Spanish: Corpus del Español (over 100 million words in different Spanish varieties from 1200s to 1900s).
- *One in Portuguese: Corpus do Português (45 million words in Brazilian and European Portuguese from 1300s to 1900s).

http://www.linguateca.pt/COMPARA/compara_pt.html
- Parallel corpus including different varieties of English and Portuguese.

Postscript

Chris Lima, Editor

As I write this Postscript, the future of Hornby Scholarships for Brazil and other developing countries is still uncertain. A number of economic and administrative reasons have prevented the British Council from sending a new Brazilian scholar for the 2010-11 period and we still do not know whether future scholarships will be available. Perhaps this fact makes the time of this publication even more appropriate, for it can serve us as a reminder of how fruitful it can be to invest in English language teacher education.

However, this publication is not intended to be a mere display of scholarship. It would mean very little if this were the case. First of all, it does not include the contributions of all the Brazilians who have been awarded a Hornby Scholarship in the last 10 years or so, and it is, therefore, deprived of other important work done in the period. Secondly, these chapters may not contain the latest developments in the field of English language teaching, since some of them were originally written a couple of years ago. Hopefully, though, they still contain ideas and suggestions that might be worth adapting and adopting.

Finally, as with any other piece of writing, it can easily become irrelevant if it fails to trigger discussion among its readers. We hope the ideas advanced here will reach a larger community of English language teachers through the dissemination of this work via Teachers Associations all over Brazil and beyond. Additionally, in order to enable dialogue we would like to invite readers to engage in an online conversation and post comments on the contents of this collection at the *Brazil ELT Group* on the British Council/ BBC Teaching English website at

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/brazil

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