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IMPROVING TEXTBOOK ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT EVALUATION THROUGH SCHEMATA BUILDING

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BUILDING**



UNIVERSIDAD DE PIURA

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

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MENCIÓN EN ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

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2013

Dedicated to Alicia, Gianlucas and Isabella

APPROVAL

The thesis, titled **Improving Textbook Activities and Student Evaluation through Schemata Building** presented by Jason Munro Sherrill in accordance with the requirements of being awarded the Degree of Master's in Education with Mention in **Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language**, was approved by the thesis director Maria Esther Linares and defended on before a Jury with the following members:

President

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Introduction

Many students in today's English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms are often inaccurately evaluated because they do not have enough previous knowledge of some of the topics presented in certain international textbooks. This implies that students can follow the stream of activities found in a textbook series in terms of studying grammar and vocabulary, but in some cases, the speaking/writing activities designed to let students use their new grammar and vocabulary skills often contain topic material that is not commonly known in certain cultural arenas.

The profound accusation in this segment suggests that students may or may not have grasped the vocabulary depth and grammar usage skills that the ELT teacher was aiming for. Tragically, this can lead to the misevaluation of certain students who cannot write and or speak about certain topic material not because of their English skills but rather their knowledge of the topics on which the teacher expects them to elaborate. In addition, one common tendency for teachers in today's classroom is to avoid the use of Spanish in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom as well as in the English as a Second Language classroom (ESL). The term ESL generally refers to foreign students studying English as a second language in a country where English is the first language such as The United States or England. These ESL classes tends to have a variety of students from many different countries; therefore, it is not the intention of this research to focus on such classes but rather on the EFL classrooms that tend to have students that share the same first language. The EFL classroom refers to students who study English as a foreign language in their home country where English is not the first language or the official second language.

Teachers in ELT specialty institutes often feel pressured to avoid the use of the students' native language (L1) which is Spanish in this case. This has been the unwritten rule for many decades now and seems like it is stronger than ever. This research recognizes that Spanish use does exist and that it is not necessarily something to deny or run away from while teaching a group of EFL students. Most academic directors feel that if they expect that the use of Spanish is not allowed in the classroom, reality shows that they will achieve about 80% compliance because students automatically default to using it. It is this precise reason why Spanish use in English as a Second Language classrooms (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language classrooms (EFL) has been either ignored or prohibited in most institutions. As a matter of fact, some teachers feel so proud of the fact that they do not allow students to use their L1 in the classroom that they tend to punish those who do.

From this point forward, we will look at only EFL classrooms because, as mentioned, they have a much higher tendency to have one common L1 in the classroom than do ESL classrooms which most likely have students from many different countries.

The stereotypical definition of Spanish use in an EFL classroom is translation. It is not the intention of this hypothesis to generate a debate about the use of translation in the classroom, but rather to talk about another unusual use of Spanish in the classroom which, as you will see, can be better defined as a learning strategy for the EFL student. This use of Spanish will have a direct correlation with the teaching of culture in the classroom by giving the students a base or foundation to build their oral speaking abilities. Before labeling this strategy with a name, it is important to look at the burdens that EFL students carry with them in the classroom. Furthermore, if you really want to lower the "Affective Filter" in the classroom as prescribed by Krashen (1988), you must provide the students with enough information to be able to use the structures that you expect them to learn.

Further exemplification of students' (especially beginners) burdens shows that they generally do not understand the teacher, they generally do not know each other, they are generally nervous, they are generally lacking expectations as to what to expect in the classrooms, they generally do not understand - in English - information about the course regarding evaluation procedures and syllabus content and finally and

most importantly, they do not know about some of the topics presented in some international textbooks. With all of these factors added together plus the notion that they simply do not know English; it is no wonder why some, if not many, of the students have nothing to say about many topics or, rather they simply lack the schemata necessary to adequately participate in the classroom.

Now that the foundation has been laid, it is possible to name this strategy simply “Building students’ worldly knowledge allows them to adapt to different textbook activities for a more accurate evaluation of their English level.” which also carries the implications of the use of L1 in the classroom; however, this use of L1 is by no means a simple translation. As a matter of fact, many ELT professionals may argue that this is not teaching English at all, and that is precisely why this strategy can be used before official ELT begins or simultaneously with the teaching process. This can be better defined as the pre-teaching of much of the subject matter in the students’ L1 so that they can develop opinions about the different topics that appear in the different textbooks found around the world and, therefore strategies to help produce the English language as intended. In addition, this strategy can be tailored by an institution to pre-teach only the content that the students will find in their actual textbook. Furthermore, the students can be taught autonomy which implies that they learn how to research information on the web about new topics that they encounter in their textbooks. This would spark an automatic increase in written/oral performance and an increase in student autonomy.

The Implications of this research are profound in terms of the evaluation process. It must be noted that many students are unfairly evaluated low as far as their speaking and content based written grades are concerned. It hardly seems fair that a student be incorrectly labeled as one type of learner, when in fact, he or she is another type all together. This stems from the fact that students oral/written performance is graded by their production in the classroom based on the content of many different textbooks. It is the intention of this research project to show that the students’ grades may also increase by simply allowing them to have more preparatory information to the subject matter presented in their textbook. It is worth mentioning that this is not a criticism towards the textbook itself, but rather a way to make certain textbooks more relevant to the different students of different cultures.

The four principle sections of this research project will detail the provoking factors that initiated the project itself, the principle characters that have seemingly focused their life's research looking in to the way people learn, the investigation procedures and tools as well as the final outcomes along with their implications.

Section one will delve into the statement of purpose and the goals associated with the outcomes of the project which have been clearly identified in the introduction. Some preliminary limitations of the project have been detailed as well to have a better understanding of the intention of the research conducted with the mentioned group of students in addition to what this research project does not imply.

In terms of the second section of the project, the theoretical background covers the traditional tendencies of today's teachers in terms of interacting and intervening with students. Furthermore, the main similarities and differences between the studies of Piaget and Vygotsky are covered to show how they inspired this project and how they support the initial interactions and suspected behaviors of students. This leads us to the heart of the research project which is schemata. Both authors talk about the importance of building student schemata and how to identify whether or not students have actually obtained the final goal of internalizing the new language that they are learning.

As far as the third section is concerned, the research methodology is outlined with a specific mention of action research and its relevance to the project at hand. After covering the research design and hypotheses and important variables to consider, the use of research instrumentation is detailed. The quantitative data is explained from the different points of view that reduce the possible criticism of the research angle and purpose within the English Language Teaching realm outlined in the project.

The last section of the project offers a detailed explanation of the research findings. In addition, the relevance of the findings is detailed along with the impact they can have on English as a Foreign Language classes in Latin America.

Chapter I

Statement of Purpose

The introduction shows the foundation which sparked the interest and follow-through of the research project which is clearly outlined in this section in terms of outlining the goals and the details associated with the students and the background of the research itself.

1.1. Problem Statement

During my career as an English teacher, I have gone through many phases of professional development. As my confidence grew, I began taking a closer look at my students in terms of what types of learners they are and what motivates them not only in academic situations but also in daily life as well.

I then began noticing that the average classroom is dominated by a handful of students. This group generally includes the self-confident students that are not afraid to take risks in the classroom, and it also seems as though that this self-confidence goes hand in hand with type of education that they received which often reflects the economic status which will later prove to be a valuable aspect of how culture influences these students.

Afterward, I shifted my focus to the role of distributing participation throughout the classroom (the teacher asking different students), and after feeling rather confident that I was able to achieve this, I wanted to look at why there seemed to be a secondary group of st

who do not contribute productively in the classroom environment. This second group of students does not seem to participate much, and as often is the case, they will go an entire class period without volunteering and speaking only minimally as directed by the teacher. Later, I narrowed this type of behavior down to two areas that I think are at the core of this issue; first, I think there are common links between their culture and their classroom behavior that might help teachers identify learner types easier. Secondly and most importantly related to this hypothesis, I feel that students do not talk much in the classroom because of their lack of previous knowledge or “schema” and are inadequately evaluated for this reason.

In continuation, I think that this hypothesis deserves research. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to first identify the weaker students in terms of oral productivity and try to determine if there is a common link between their backgrounds. Studies have shown that children who do not receive much oral input from their parents other than basic instructions “what to do” and “what not to do” often start speaking at a much later age. This is a common characteristic in some cultures throughout the world and Peru. This tendency continues throughout adulthood and is often responsible for the in-classroom behavior indicated.

The rationale behind this accusation is simple. One, the parents (especially the father) do not talk to their children much which gives them little life experience (schemata) to explore, ask questions and create their own hypothesis. Secondly, this behavior, as dictated by behaviorists, becomes second nature and prompts the students to simply have no opinion and not get involved with much outside of the family circle. This behavior has been documented in some areas of Peru where manual labor dominates the work environment and people literally go hours without speaking to another person.

Furthermore, the accusation of the “lack of schema” is based on the fact that if a person who lives in a remote area, and reads or writes very little about current events could not possibly elaborate a conversation about certain topics which he or she has never seen, read or been told about.

Other cultural implications are evident through the dogmatic beliefs of English textbook authors; for example, Susan Stempleski, author of the World Link series, asks students to talk about “Animal Heroes” after learning about some specific grammar and vocabulary topics related to acts of heroism by animals. The question then arises “What happens in cultures that do not value animals enough to be considered heroes?” As can be seen quite a bit in Latin America; whereas, in the United States – where many textbook series are from - animals are personified much more often and; therefore, they can have heroic value.

As far as the previous knowledge is concerned, the core of this theory includes enhancing written/oral production of some students by pre-teaching schema or learning content in their native language or in English depending on their level. I feel that simply getting the students to understand more worldly topics in their L1 without the added burden of English grammar structures or vocabulary will allow them to immediately produce more in the target second language when the time comes. Case in point, in one class, some basic level students seemed rather quiet when talking about international icons. After reviewing icons such as the Eiffel Tower, The Statue of Liberty among others, when it came time for the final oral exam, it turned out that 11 students out of 25 did not know what the Eiffel Tower was in English or translated to their native language of Spanish, so how could they be expected to ask/answer a question about it? The worst implication here is that they were graded in way which did not reflect their true English speaking ability.

In conclusion, the need to better identify our student base is apparent. There are many cultural backgrounds that influence the student base at our institute. Afterwards, academic professionals can better understand these students to benefit their learning. In addition, it may be helpful to know which students can benefit from the pre-teaching of schemata so that the students actually have something to contribute about the different topics that arise in the book that is being used in the class in order to be fairly evaluated by the teacher when it comes to speaking and writing.

1.2. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of this study were created because of the constant struggle by the teachers in many institutions to promote or motivate students to speak more in a communicative setting. Furthermore, many students' grades are affected by their lack of ability to elaborate on certain topics found in the different textbooks used in the institution which may not be an accurate evaluation of their abilities.

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective as stated by the title and the hypothesis statement is to generate more oral/written performance on the part of the students in the classroom by giving them information in their native language about certain topics that allows them to elaborate more confidently in the target second language.

1.2.2. Specific Objective

To determine if language institutes can first identify who the weaker students are by analyzing educational background, and then to offer them the pre-teaching of course subject matter that will make them more effective in the classroom and more autonomous outside of the classroom.

1.3. Rationale

This research project has direct positive implications on students who study at the various language institutions in Lima, Peru. Moreover, this research project will likely have a high validity rate in other areas of Peru. In addition, it shows a high potential of being useful in other parts of Latin America as well due to the similarities in not only the native language but also the different cultural bases that exist.

The main area of concern for this project is the enhancement of students' oral and written production in the classroom. The rationale goes on to include the implications of this aspect which include building learner autonomy and confidence outside of the classroom because students will learn how to research different topics in their native language to have more information that can readily be reproduced in the second language.

It is also designed to give teachers and institutions an easy way of identifying their learners and their needs along with an easy way to tailor a schemata teaching program that is directly based on the textbook used by the specific institutions.

In brief, the rationale of this research project is threefold: First, it is designed to get students talking and writing more which has a direct impact on their autonomy and their grades. Secondly, institutions can better place their students in the classroom and to determine what kind of pre-teaching might be helpful. Lastly, Educational professionals can make their textbooks more effective by looking closely at its content in order to decide which items might be introduced more effectively with some pre-teaching in the students' native language.

1.4. Limitations of the research project

This study was not able to track the progress of any given group of students over a long period of time. In the first place, the institution only offers classes in one month periods that include 18 class days. It is virtually impossible for any given teacher to continue with the same group of students because the administrative policy dictates that teachers are rotated throughout their course assignments. In other words, if a teacher has a basic 1 class in January from 7:00 to 8:30am, he or she will have a different group of students ranging from a basic 3 – 12 at the same time slot in February; however, the only thing that is certain is that the teacher will not have the same group of students in the basic 2 class in February (and probably not another basic 1).

1.5. Background of the research

This action research project, like many others, is focused primarily on helping students achieve better oral/written performance in the classroom so that they can be more autonomous outside of the classroom. As many research projects stem from professional development areas, this project will consider the success of the students to be an indirect professional development aspect. However, it is safe to say that this project primarily focuses on a teaching/learning strategy. Teaching precedes learning because it is initially implemented by the teacher, and learning is second because, if used autonomously, it will be a learning strategy for as long as the student studies a second or third language.

It is necessary to put together a brief outline of the research framework that will help conclude this research project. The various categories and techniques will be described in the following outline.

1.5.1. The Subjects

Some students are from Lima, Peru and attend affluent schools while others are adults who have jobs near the location of the institute. The majority, however, are younger learners (High School students) who come from less than privileged backgrounds. Many of these students come from the different regions of Peru called the provinces. This is relevant because many have different cultures and are having trouble adapting to the culture in Lima and, obviously the American culture promoted at the institute. Many of the students are very reserved which stems from the fact that they hardly talk during the day in their native language and, it goes without saying, they almost never read or write in their daily routines. It is safe to say that the majority of these students do not know the analytical ins and outs of the grammatical structures of their native language – in this case Spanish, as is the case with students from many other countries. These students are reluctant to use the newly acquired language in class and are almost guaranteed not to use it outside of class. In terms of translation, unfortunately, there seems to be a dependency on it because of traditional public school teaching methods which become habit forming and are difficult to break, although some argue that breaking such a habit is not necessary. Needless to say, the areas that are most difficult to motivate autonomously outside of the classroom are writing, reading and listening in that order, but inside the classroom, the obvious lack of motivation for oral/written performance is a concern which becomes more notable when the topic choice presented by the book is almost certainly new, and in some cases, culturally irrelevant for many students.

In short, the lack of autonomy outside of the classroom and the lack of oral performance inside the classroom are of grave concern these days as students are faced with more and more communicative approaches sponsored by the many textbooks on the market these days. This thesis will directly attack the problem of oral/written performance in the classroom by providing

additional schemata to the students with the hope that this autonomous learning strategy will promote the use of other language skills outside of the classroom.

1.5.2. The Learning Scenario

Classes run for 18 days with one day dedicated to autonomous learning projects and the last 2 days to formal assessment in the form of a written exam on the 17th day and an oral exam on the 18th day. The age of the students ranges from 14 to 65 with an average age of 18 to 20 years old. Students can enter the institution by starting in the first month of a 30 - 36 month program called basic 1, or they can take what is called a placement exam if they have previous experience with the language and feel that they should begin at a higher level. Theoretically, mixed ability should be at minimal levels because the students are not in their respective classes based on age. In this case, the classifying factor is ability; therefore, as mentioned, you can have a 14 year old student sitting next to a 55 year old businessman.

1.5.3. The Institution

The institute at which this research project is based is a bi-national center which bases its duality on the cross culture teaching between Peru and The United States. It is located in Lima, Peru and has a peak summer monthly attendance of 45,000 students. It is considered one of the largest bi-national centers in South America with a teaching staff of almost 500. Adult classes run Monday to Friday and last one and a half hours each, in other words two academic hours. Classes are held all day from 7am until 10pm. This is important to note because of the difference between the students in one schedule versus another. The 7am classes tend to have more adults, while the 3pm and 5pm classes tend to have more high school students. Perhaps the most apparently affected schedules are the 10am and 12pm schedules which have young adults who tend not to study or work.

1.6. Antecedents

Using Spanish (L1) in English (L2) language teaching classes has been the center of discussion for many years. Several decades ago, there was a push to use only English in the classroom. Many supporters of using L1 in the classroom blame textbook publishers who could more easily market a new textbook internationally if it did not contain many different L1s. Others claim that it was the trend like many other approaches such as the direct method, the silent approach and then later on with the incorporation of the task based approach and, of course, the increasingly popular lexical approach. These authors claim that the trend has faded somewhat and that the use of L1 in the classroom has more and more acceptance in the ELT world.

The research process presented in this project is based somewhat on the use of L1. As the objectives state, it is not the intention of this research project to replace the need for ELT programs and teachers by simply introducing L1 content to students. As a matter of fact, the opposite holds true. Because of the internationalization of ELT textbook series around the world, the use of L1 is of utmost importance to help students grasp the meaning of the different cultural icons used to teach English in a variety of different applications.

The use of L1 for this project has a special twist in comparison to some other uses that are worth analyzing. In this research project, the L1 can be introduced in the classroom and then it can be taken home by the students for its use outside of the ELT classroom. In other words, while trying to teach students about the upcoming content in the book, they can take the information in their L1 home and read it in order to learn more about the culture used in their books to teach English. As stated in the objectives, the students will have more information; therefore, they will have more to say about the different content areas in the book at the time of oral and written evaluations.

There are many other authors who believe in the structured use of L1 in the ELT classroom. These antecedents help set the precedent for this research project which, in turn, helps support its validity.

1.6.1. Atkinson's "The mother tongue in the classroom: A neglected resource?"

Atkinson offers what is called a "careful, limited use of L1" (Atkinson 1987) in the classroom. This limited use of L1 can also be referred to as an administrative use of L1. Some general or procedural uses for L1 under this pretext may be setting up pair and group work and checking comprehension. On a more controversial note, Atkinson offers a use for specific translation in the classroom that presents itself as a teaching technique and not just a procedural use to make sure that all of the students understood the instructions. There were some flaws in Atkinson's theory because many English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms have many L1s. It does, however, seem more feasible in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms where one common L1 seems to be the trend. Here, you can see that teachers, who have the same mother tongue as the students, can offer security to beginner level students by using the L1 for instructions as mentioned. It is also valuable, according to Atkinson, to spot check the comprehension of the students. If you teach present perfect versus simple past, it may be a good idea to ask the students to tell you what was said in their mother tongue. The following list shows some of Atkinson's suggested uses of L1 in the ELT classroom.

1. **Eliciting Language**
"How do you say 'X' in English?"
2. **Checking comprehension**
"How do you say 'I've been waiting for ten minutes in Spanish?'" (Also used for comprehension of a reading or listening text.)
3. **Giving complex instructions to basic levels**
4. **Co-operating in groups**
Learners compare and correct answers to exercises or tasks in the L1. Students at times can explain new points better than the teacher.
5. **Explaining classroom methodology at basic levels**
6. **Using translation to highlight a recently taught language item**
7. **Checking for sense**
If students write or say something in the L2 that does not

make sense, have them try to translate it into the L1 to realize their error.

8. **Testing**

Translation items can be useful in testing mastery of forms and meanings.

9. **Developing circumlocution strategies**

When students do not know how to say something in the L2, have them think of different ways to say the same thing in the L1, which may be easier to translate.

Perhaps the most valid aspect of Atkinson's work as far as this research project is concerned, is the research in L1 presented in L2. This is a very close interpretation of the use of L1 in the ELT classroom as stated by the main objective of this project. Atkinson suggests that students should research people from their home country, which obviously implies using L1, and then talk/write about them in the target language (L2). My theory suggests that students along with teachers should present some aspects of the content of the textbook in L1 so that the students can understand them and have more to say about them at upcoming evaluations. This means that students should use L1 to talk about people and other cultural icons that are not from their countries. This does not mean that I suggest for them to do the research in L2 because the subjects are foreigners, but rather investigate foreigners in their L1 to gain profound knowledge of the subject matter so that at evaluation time, the language samples are deep enough and lengthy enough to show the students' true ability in English (or the lack of).

1.6.2. C. William Schweers's "Using L1 in the L2 Classroom"

C. William Schweers, Jr. is an English teacher in Puerto Rico. He has published his insights on the use of L1 in the classroom stating the following:

Among a number of professionals in the field of second language acquisition, there appears to be an increasing conviction that the first language (L1) has a necessary and facilitating role in the second and foreign language (L2) classroom. In my case, this conviction comes from personal experience, recent literature I have read, and presentations I have attended. This position may seem heretical in light of

what most of us were taught when trained as ESL/EFL professionals, but I believe it is worthy of serious consideration. (Schweers 1999)

One of the articles that Schweers used for his paper came from author Elsa Auerbach where she states a controversial sociopolitical position on the use of L1 in the classroom. In her article, she states that "everyday classroom practices, far from being neutral and natural, have ideological origins and consequences for relations of power both inside and outside the classroom." (1993: 19) Auerbach goes on to conclude the following: "Starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English."

Schweers also cited Piasecka (1988) in her publication who seconds Auerbach's position by saying, "One's sense of identity as an individual is inextricably bound up within one's native language.... If the learner of a second language is encouraged to ignore his/her native language, he/she might well feel his/her identity threatened" (in Hopkins 1988: 18).

Schweers shows Auerbach's list of suggested uses of L1 in the classroom. Some of them include the following: record keeping, classroom management, scene setting, language analysis, presentation of rules governing grammar/phonology/morphology/spelling, discussion of cross-cultural issues, instructions or prompts, explanation of errors, and assessment of comprehension. According to this list, Auerbach's theory coincides with mine mainly in two areas. First, she mentions scene setting. Many cases, while students attempt to investigate some book content, they lack the sense of the scene. In other words, they lack the true cultural value of the content, which explains how a native speaker thinks and feels when encountered with these cultural icons or famous people as suggested by Auerbach (1993).

Schweers includes statistics in his publication that suggest the Spanish speaking students in Puerto Rico really do want limited use of Spanish in their classrooms.

A high percentage (88.7%) of the student participants in this study felt that Spanish should be used in their English classes. All of the teachers reported using Spanish to some degree. Approximately 99 percent of the students responded that they like their teachers to use only English in the classroom. Very noticeable is the 86 percent of students who would like Spanish used to explain difficult concepts. Only 22 percent of teachers saw this as an appropriate use. Students also responded notably higher than teachers on the following uses for Spanish: to help students feel more comfortable and confident, to check comprehension, and to define new vocabulary items. Neither students nor teachers saw a use for the L1 in testing. (Schweers 1999)

To sum up, Schweers's report shows that a significant number of students would like Spanish to be used in class at 10 to 39 percent of the time. A large group of students likes the use of Spanish because it helps them when they feel lost. In addition, around 87 percent of students feel Spanish helps their English learning between "a little" and "a lot," and 57 percent think it helps from "fairly much" to "a lot."

1.6.3. Jinlan Tang's "Using L1 in the English Classroom"

Another case study that is worth looking at is that of Jinlan Tang. She states that her personal experience as a learner and teacher of English as a foreign language has shown her that moderate use of the L1 can help the learning and teaching of the target language. However, the value of using L1 in the classroom is a neglected topic in ELT methodology literature. This along with the popular principle that says that the native language should not be used in the classroom makes most teachers feel uneasy about using L1 or permitting its use in the classroom even if there is a recognized need to do so. Her thoughts are brought to light in her publication *Using L1 in the English Language Classroom*:

During the past 15 years, however, monolingual orthodoxy has lost its appeal. Medgyes considers this orthodoxy “untenable on any grounds, be they psychological, linguistic or pedagogical” (1994: 66). It has been argued that exclusion of the mother tongue is a criticism of the mother tongue and renders it a second-class language. This degradation of the mother tongue has harmful psychological effects on learners. (Nation 1990)

Tang’s study aimed to answer the following questions: Is Chinese as the L1 used in English classrooms in China? If yes, how often is it used and why? What are the students and teachers’ attitudes toward using Chinese in the EFL classroom? She found the following:

1. Should Chinese be used in the classroom?

Students: yes 70% no 30%

Teachers: yes 72% no 28%

**2. Do you like your teacher to use Chinese in the class?
(Students only)**

Not at all 3% a little 45%

Sometimes 50% a lot 2%

3. When do you think it is necessary to use Chinese in the English Classroom?

Students Teachers

A. to explain complex grammar points 72% 39%

B. to help define some new vocabulary items 69% 39%

C. to explain difficult concepts or ideas 48% 44%

D. to practice the use of some phrases and expressions 45% 56%

E. to give instructions 6% 6%

F. to give suggestions on how to learn more effectively 4% 11%

4. If you think the use of Chinese is necessary in the classroom, why?

Students

A. It helps me to understand the difficult concepts better. 69%

B. It helps me to understand the new vocabulary items better. 42%

C. It makes me feel at ease, comfortable and less stressed. 8%

D. I feel less lost. 6%

Teachers

- A. It aids comprehension greatly. 39%
- B. It is more effective. 44%
- C. It is less time-consuming. 28%

5. Do you think the use of Chinese in the classroom helps you learn this language? (Students only)

- No 3% a little 69%
- Fairly much 22% a lot 6%

6. How often do you think Chinese should be used in the classroom?

(Students only)

- Never 0% very rarely 38%
- Sometimes 60% fairly frequently 2%

7. What percentage of time do you think Chinese should be used in the class? (Students only)

Time Response

- 5% 38%
- 10% 25%
- 20% 20%
- 30% 10% (No students answered higher than 30%)

In Conclusion, Tang shows that a cautious use of Chinese in the English classroom does not reduce students' exposure to English, but rather assists in the teaching and learning processes. This is not intended to overvalue the role of the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. It is, however, designed to clarify some misconceptions that have existed for years. For example, should teachers use the mother tongue in the classroom when there is an obvious need for it? In addition, is the blanket rule "no native language" in the classroom justifiable? Ms. Tang's findings help people acknowledge the role of the L1 in the English language classroom and stimulate further study in this area.

1.6.4. Meghan Morahan's "The Use of Students' First Language (L1) in the Second Language (L2) Classroom"

Meghan Morahan has shared her ideas towards the use of L1 in the classroom with her publication "The Use of Students' First Language (L1) in the Second Language (L2) Classroom" (Morahan 2011). She offers similar insight to that of Tang with the following:

The issue of the use of students' first language (L1) in the second language (L2) classroom has been debated for many years. Steven Krashen, with his Natural Approach to language acquisition, proposed that students learn their second language much in the same way that they learn their first, and that L2 is best learned through massive amounts of exposure to the language with limited time spent using L1 (Tang, 2002). However, in recent years, focus has been shifting towards inclusion of L1 in the language classroom. Research has shown that the occasional use of L1 by both students and teachers increases both comprehension and learning of L2. (Cook 2001; Tang 2002; Wells 1999)

Morahan claims that many teachers find that the limited use of L1 allows for more time to practice L2. She states that students understand much more quickly. Furthermore, teacher use of L1 should have limited use like clarification purposes only after an attempt has been made to communicate ideas in L2 and students still appear to be confused. She says that L1 is a "supportive and facilitating role in the classroom" (Tang 2002), and should not be the primary language used during class time. There is a distinct similarity between Morahan's work and the research project at hand when she says "L1 use also allows students to become more aware of the similarities and differences between cultures and linguistic structures, and thus may improve the accuracy of translations. Finding cognates and similarities between languages builds up "interlinked L1 and L2 knowledge in the students' minds" (Cook 2001)". It is precisely the similarities and differences between cultures that should be mentioned in greater detail. In this research project, L1 is used outside of class so that students can show their true level of English without the simple lack of

knowledge about international textbook topics becoming a hindrance and ultimately affecting students evaluations negatively.

In terms of writing task are concerned, Morahan states that L1 use in written tasks is especially valuable because it helps to clarify and build meaning. It allows learners to repeatedly evaluate and clarify communication with regard to choice of content and register appropriate to the task (Wells 1999). This re-evaluation is often done orally, in conversation with a peer or teacher or in private talk. Collaborative dialogue allows learners to build linguistic understanding concerning a number of language tasks. As Cook stated in her article called “Using the First Language in the Classroom” (2001), “L1 provides scaffolding for the students to help each other.”

1.6.5. Relevance of Antecedents

As you can see, some published cases show the use of L1 proves that it is helpful for students and it eases the difficulty for many who struggle in the early levels of ELT. With control and moderation, using the students’ L1 in the classroom has many benefits. Teaching them the value of international icons can allow the students to truly understand them and, therefore, focus on their English as opposed to worrying about the meaning of certain textbook content.

The abovementioned examples of L1 use in the classroom help pave the way for future examples of L1 use. It has been a long standing unwritten rule, in many cases, that L1 should be avoided at all times. This research projects focuses on the use of L1 outside of the classroom to help teachers execute difficult topics given in the various textbooks used around the world to teach English as a second or foreign language.

It is important to note, as previously mentioned, that the intention of this particular use of L1 outside of the classroom is in no way intended to replace traditional teaching methods, and of course, the teachers themselves.

In conclusion, this section has laid the foundation for the theoretical background found in section two. The student background, the institution and the general and specific objectives given allow us to proceed in detailing the rationale of the project.

Chapter II

Theoretical Background

The second chapter of this research project ties the perceived need outlined in the introduction with the problem statement, general and specific objectives to the theoretical background which is what makes this entire project possible. It should be mentioned that my studying the works of Piaget and Vygotsky was the driving factor to test a solution to the stated problem.

2.1. Theoretical Background and Rationale

The first motivating factor behind this research project was my curiosity as a teacher why some students had little to say in the classroom and often received very low grades after extensive efforts by the teacher to help students in their quest for learning. Despite being told that participation is a key factor in the evaluation system, some students still seemed less than motivated when it came to writing or speaking in the classroom. This led me to investigate how teachers would handle the situation which made me begin criticizing the traditional teaching and evaluation methods that I observed. During my studies in the university, I became really intrigued with the way people learn which led to the second motivating factor for this project - educational psychology. The exposure and interest came during the General Psychology course where constructivism and schemata building were presented. I believe that both the individual and social aspects of constructivism offer similar desired outcomes in the learning process. In addition, both theories offer arguable uses for the ESL/EFL classrooms. The works of psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky are of utmost importance for this p

I believe that there is a tremendous possibility that this research project could be extended into other areas of learning/teaching where students tend to struggle with new concepts that may indeed be extensions or combinations of things that they have already learned. In continuation, we will look at a brief snapshot of the background of traditional teaching and of both authors mentioned and how that has impacted their different viewpoints on schemata building leading to a possible use in the classroom that may directly affect the way we teach and evaluate students.

2.2. Traditional Teaching

The traditional teaching as found in the profiled institution suggests that teachers use objectives based teaching with the textbook as a great tool to accomplish this task. The question arises about the effectiveness of the pattern when teachers seem to identify objectives which are based on the intentions of the textbook author and then proceed to teach all of the activities in order to make a final evaluation of the level of obtainment of the proposed objective. In the case of the textbook in question, some or many of the proposed tasks used for evaluation are beyond the level of the students' previous knowledge on the subject.

2.2.1. A Historical Framework - Teaching

Traditional teaching to date - at least in the documented cases at the mentioned institution - shows that more often than not these textbook activities, which are tried true and tested for measuring the specific learning objective at hand, are skipped and/or modified by the teacher in the context of the students sampled for this project. The implication is that the students do not have the necessary knowledge of the activity to be able to elaborate their English language skills. Piaget, Vygotsky, among others, have suggested that constructivism allows the individual to learn the necessary information base in order to actively express their ideas in the new language that they are studying.

2.3. Traditional Evaluation

The traditional evaluation suggests that teachers, through great preparation and effort, guide students through the suggested textbook

activities in order to acquire the intended learning objective. After such teaching activities are complete, the teacher needs some communicative activity that can allow the students to show their newly acquired skills. In the textbook being analyzed, the accusation is that the prescribed activities designed for testing the students require previous knowledge that many cultures take for granted, but not those who live and study in some of the remote regions of Peru.

2.3.1. A Historical Framework - Evaluation

The historical framework for activity evaluation is rather accusative in nature. The fact that students cannot handle the communicative activities in the textbook that are designed specifically for evaluation leads many teachers to assign rather low grades assuming that the students have not learned the objective of the specific textbook unit in question. Whether or not the student has learned the objective has not been determined. The true fact is that the students did not show a high level of output because the content of the activities was too difficult for them based on their foundation of previous knowledge structures (or lack thereof).

2.4. Parallel Paths to constructivism Piaget and Vygotsky

The following documentation is a report on some of the similarities and differences that helped shape Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky along with their theories about individual and social constructivism.

2.4.1. Similarities and Differences

Both Piaget and Vygotsky were the oldest sons in their families which helps show where their leadership potential stems from. Both were born in 1896 and were exposed to influential authors at an early age. Ironically, both men wrote their first works at the age of 10. Furthermore, both Piaget and Vygotsky started schooling and went through their respective religious rites of passage around the same time. Coincidentally, both authors demonstrated similar behaviors throughout their school years in terms of the extra-academic activities that would later on be considered the foundation of their theories. Both men endured personal crisis in 1911. Vygotsky suffered several home invasions

during different attempts to purge the Jewish community from Russia. Piaget, on the other hand, went through a personal crisis questioning his faith around the same time as Vygotsky was facing a Czarist pogrom in his community. You can see from this base the social influence that affected Vygotsky and the personal, internal struggle that faced Piaget. Of course, we can relate this immediately to the internal view of constructivism that is the focus point of Piaget's work along with socialistic viewpoint that defines Vygotsky's writings.

Vygotsky and Piaget were well known for their desire to learn. Piaget was deeply interested in natural science and Vygotsky was more into literary analysis. At the age of 10, without disclosing his age, Piaget was the assistant to the curator of a local museum. Similarly, at the age of 10, Vygotsky had helped his father defend his family and neighbors from a pogrom which led him to write two essays and one other article that would become the foundation of his doctoral dissertation "The Psychology of Art". At 16, Piaget

Knew enough about this field to begin publishing without help (specialists in this field are rare) a series of articles on the Mollusks of Switzerland we afforded me some amusing experiences. The director of the Musee d'histoire naturelle of Geneva, Mr. Bedot, who was publishing several of my articles in the 'Revue Suisse de Zoologie', offered me a position as curator of mollusk collection. (Piaget 1963: 108 – from *Parallel Paths to Constructivism* by Susan Pass 2004)

Vygotsky, on the other hand, demonstrated his intellectual prowess by organizing plays, lectures and debates throughout his hometown. By the time he was 17, he was known as the little professor.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky were born in small towns. Their families were very perseverant and faced different challenges based on their social environment. Both authors had very free-thinking fathers who supported their sons in their educational endeavors. Each youth was introduced to the ideas of Hegel and Kant. The latter's idea that one can perceive truth through use of the will influenced both authors' works which would play an important role in the development of their respective theories. Both men, as

mentioned, suffered early on in their childhoods due to different physical and mental capacities. Piaget, on one hand, was considered a weak youth who was susceptible to nervous conditions. At two different points in his early career he suffered mental breakdowns that would end up inspiring his work in a very ironic way. Vygotsky, in turn, suffered more from physical ailments and eventually would suffer dramatically from tuberculosis.

As far as some notable differences are concerned, Vygotsky and Piaget had quite different mothers. Vygotsky's mother was a quiet loving woman who left her teaching field to marry Lev's father. Jean Piaget, though, had a mother who would be kindly considered energetic whose slight lack of compassion would cause a troubled environment in the Piaget household. Some say that Piaget had a "silent hostility" towards his mother. In his 1953 book, Piaget would go on to say that family conditions and his intellectual curiosity would lead to a mental crossroads in his life that eventually led to his instability. In terms of education, we can see that formal education failed Piaget, allowing him to question its very essence while Vygotsky enjoyed many benefits from his formal education. Both men benefitted tremendously from informal education. As a matter of fact, this informal education was a much higher and more challenging level than he faced in school. This eventually would be the basis of his "Optimal Mismatch" theory.

Vygotsky never seemed to face the deficit of in classroom instruction that plagued Piaget. It seemed that Vygotsky's classroom experience was sufficiently challenging for his young mind. In his latter days of formal education, Vygotsky experienced the effects of what he would call his "social others" and; therefore, a remote connection to what would end up being his social learning theory. Piaget also had a close circle of "friends" that would influence his thinking. The difference, however, is that they were always older than he was which meant that they provoked his internal motivation to "need" to learn as described by the perpetual intellectual unbalance that motivates learning. This was the beginning of the distinction between the two men's works. Both Piaget and Vygotsky studied at the best Gymnasiums (college level

studies) of their times. The problem for both led to crisis within each of their respective institutions. The outcome for Piaget was how to personally overcome such challenges. As for Vygotsky, the challenges led him to find a better way to create a social network that would prevent him from succumbing to the crisis. The university years were crucial for Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. With the influence of Arnold Reymond, Piaget was able to weed out what he called the irrational from traditional philosophical thinking which allowed him to make a better connection between Biology and Philosophy. His notes on the subject would lead him to write what he called a “philosophical novel” in 1917 that was never officially published. The tremendous outcome of this work was the creation of his theory of equilibration and his spiritual claim that the only God in the world was the one that existed inside of each and every person.

Finally, after what some would call a spiritual crisis, Piaget would reject the teachings of the youth group “Mission of the Idea” in favor of a more scientific approach to human thinking and learning. This led Piaget to write and publish his work titled *Recherches (sur la Contradiction)* in 1918. In his search for the truth, Piaget compensated his life’s struggles through work. The hero in the story rejects God for science which was not far from Piaget’s true spiritual feelings of the times.

Vygotsky started studying medicine, but he made an abrupt change in his studies to a Law degree. In those days, Jews were not allowed to live in unrestricted areas unless they were lawyers. In addition, Vygotsky claimed that law was “more suited to his interests in the humanities”. His true interests of the time were philosophy and history, but he, as a Jew, was not allowed to be a public employee (teacher) which was about the only option after studying such a career. Vygotsky started studying simultaneously at two different universities. At Shanyavsky University, he found a relatively new degree program which allowed him to indulge himself in history and philosophy courses. This led to his studying about psychological and pedagogical problems. Although the degree from this university was “unofficial”, Vygotsky continued to study and eventually he would be influenced by Professor Dr. Gustav Shpet. The course named “internal form of the word” gave

Vygotsky insight into the internal psychological aspects of language.

After a notable liking of the works of James and Freud, Vygotsky started investigating the extreme layers of the mind which led him to consider language as a tool of learning. As arts, science, philosophy and history started to emerge on the scene in Moscow, Vygotsky began to study literature which remained his true passion.

2.4.2. Postgraduate Work

The postgraduate phase is considered the most important in relation to both Piaget and Vygotsky's work. After Piaget finished his doctoral work at the University of Neuchatel in 1918, he wound up at the University of Zurich where he started a new path in studying psychology. It was here that he rejected psychoanalysis. After a brief lapse, Piaget traveled to Paris where he would meet his true mentor Pierre Janet. Under Janet, Piaget studied the genetic approach to the psychology of behavior. This is the precise moment when Piaget conceived the idea of studying the stages of cognitive development. Dr. Janet started an idea that Piaget would adapt and later call equilibration. The whole of Piaget's research was based on Janet's genetic approach to the psychology of behavior which ironically would inspire Vygotsky to determine that intrapersonal processes could indeed transform into interpersonal ones.

Another important influence was that of Dr. Simon who invited Piaget to work in Dr. Binet's laboratory after his death. This allowed Piaget to follow up on Binet's working with mental age versus chronological age. Piaget became more and more interested in the children who demonstrated problematic results and less and less interested in the predictable outcome of normal children. Again, we can see the direct influence to what motivated Piaget and his interest in mapping out the learning process. At the end of his work with Simon, Piaget decided to end his theoretical period and enter into the experimental era that was intriguing and swaying Piaget to publish his own results on how logic was not

inborn, but develops consistently with his idea of equilibration. Piaget would go on to say:

I analyzed the data, psychologically as well as logically, applying the principle of logical-psychological parallelism to my method of analysis: Psychology explains the facts in terms of causality, while logic when concerned with true reasoning described the corresponding forms in terms of an ideal equilibrium. (Evans 1981: 120 in Pass 2004: 48)

Piaget consolidated his ideas at the Rousseau Institute which allowed him to develop different learning situations/environments freely. It was at the Rousseau Institute where he confirmed his earlier theories. He then set out to find/prove the psychological mechanism of logical operations and causal reasoning. After graduating from both Moscow and Shanyavsky Universities in 1917, Vygotsky returned to Gomel where he started teaching and created a psychological laboratory. His techniques were criticized which would later motivate him even more to go on with the development of his theory. It was a feverish pace for Vygotsky at this point. His brother had just died and Vygotsky himself discovered that he had Tuberculosis. It was this fatalism and a disturbing revolution that would motivate Vygotsky to bury himself in his work.

He developed his famous address in front of the Second Psycho-neurological Congress and wrote his first major book, *Pedagogical Psychology*. In his book, Vygotsky sides with Marx's dialectical with language as a tool of learning and put both in a cultural-historical context. It was after these seven years that Vygotsky became a Soviet and was committed even deeper than ever to his socialistic theory. After many contributions to local Gomel society, Vygotsky finally published his theory *The Psychology of Art*. His tuberculosis made it impossible for him to defend his thesis publically, so the dissertation was waived and his title was awarded. It was at a conference where Vygotsky presented his paper *Methods of Reflexology and Psychological Investigations*. This was the turning point for him because the Experimental Psychological Institute (Kornilov Institute) was looking for a way to prove Marxism correct. It was Vygotsky's

idea that met the need. During the Gomel period of his life is when the minister and deputy minister of education invited Vygotsky to Moscow to which he immediately agreed. This was his official turn to psychology. Most prominent authors of the time agree that it was precisely Vygotsky's lack of formal training as a psychologist that made him great.

2.4.3. Origin of Ideas

Both Piaget and Vygotsky were susceptible to the six main factors that influence all human decision making. Using Harold Quigley's curve, we can see that both authors were influenced by the following factors:

1. Political/Military
2. Religion
3. Science
4. Social/ Economic
5. Philosophy
6. Art/Education

With Quigley's curve, we can also see what is called the "germinal image" which predicts the origin of creative ideas. As we know their theories arose based on the "Optimal Mismatch" that both men faced in their lives. For Piaget, it was his dysfunctional family that caused this indirect motivation. In Vygotsky's case, it was his dysfunctional country that motivated him. We can see evidence that Piaget's genetic epistemology was traced through the inclusion of the following:

1. Equilibration
2. Chronological Stages of Development
3. Role of Language
4. Teacher as Diagnostician
5. Error
6. Independence of the Learner
7. Optimal Mismatch
8. Play

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory was traced to include the following:

1. The Zone of Proximal Development
2. Internalization
3. Stages of Development
4. The Social Other
5. Role of Communication
6. Error
7. Socio-historical Context
8. Scaffolding
9. Play

For the sake of this research project, the emphasis will be placed on the following areas of both men's research:

- A. Piaget
 - a. Equilibration
 - b. Language (Communication)
 - c. Teacher as Diagnostician
 - d. Error
 - e. Independence of Learner
 - f. Optimal Mismatch

- B. Vygotsky
 - a. Zone of Proximal Development
 - b. Internalization
 - c. The Social Other
 - d. Role of Communication
 - e. Error
 - f. Scaffolding

2.4.3.1. Origin of Ideas – The Parallel Paths of Piaget and Vygotsky

Although many argue that Piaget focuses on the individual in his genetic epistemology, and Vygotsky focuses on the role of social order in his cultural-historical theory, the similarities of the two authors' ideas of constructivism are overwhelming. The following terms will be analyzed together based on their proven similarities.

1. Equilibration/Internalization
2. Role of Communication/Language
3. Optimal Mismatch/Scaffolding.

As far as Piaget's Equilibration and Vygotsky's Internalization concepts are concerned, the similarity is striking. Piaget claims that Equilibration is a set of processes that coordinate cognitive development in the individual's innate search for true equilibrium. Vygotsky also mentions that Internalization is the cognitive process that someone goes through in order to understand something.

In terms of the Role of Communication (Language), both authors believed that language played an important role in cognitive development, although Piaget did not place as much emphasis on it as the Marx Dialect. Piaget acknowledged the role of social interaction, but describes "inner speech" as much more important. Piaget insists that a child is hindered by too much "forced" language from an influencing adult. This idea most likely stems back to his strong connection to the Rousseau Institute where absolute freedom was the key to learning. For this reason, Piaget would likely have, to some degree, rejected Vygotsky's claim that language was somewhat responsible for building the learner's schemata. He wrote that egocentric speech is very content orientated, and it is crucial to the development of the child's constructs which as accepted in 1962 by Piaget who initially feared that babbling would lead to mental disorder.

Afterwards, it is important to mention the similarities between Vygotsky's scaffolding concept and Piaget's idea of the "Optimal Mismatch". Piaget suggests that the learning environment has to be set at the highest possible level according to the child's chronological stage of development. In this way the child, who is innately inclined towards the challenge of learning, can maximize his or her knowledge and move on to the next stage of learning. In other words, if the child successfully internalizes the problem through equilibration, the child will build his or her schemata and dominate that knowledge which includes being to explain it in words (depending on which chronological/mental age we are investigating). Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, a term he did not use, describes the cognitive transition of a child from the entry level to the top of his or her chronological

stage of development. This transition is only possible through a “caring social other” through the use of communication.

Vygotsky’s social-historical context of learning spirals endlessly upward as one generation constructs new information on the old. The important factor for Vygotsky is that the society is also spiraling upward. As far as error is concerned, Piaget, through a scientific approach, believed that error was a necessary part of the learning process that allows subjects to determine if their interpretation of the concept in question is acceptable.

Error, according to Piaget, is responsible for molding the schemata based on tried results. Vygotsky, on the other hand, sees error as something to be avoided. Through the analysis of Vygotsky’s social order, it can be concluded that the caring social other is there to help guide the subject down the right path so that error can be avoided. Moreover, Vygotsky says that error could be a direct reflection on the performance of the social other.

2.5. Teaching Schemata

2.5.1. Piaget

2.5.1.1. Learning - Piaget

Learning is motivated internally by the desire to find “equilibrium”. The notion that the human living in society will constantly struggle with disequilibrium causes the constant need for knowledge which brings the person back to balance or “equilibrium” temporarily. This information is stored and organized through a hierarchical system that is constantly revised through the outcomes of new experiences that change the previous value of said knowledge.

2.5.1.2. Knowledge – Piaget

Knowledge is described by Piaget as the result of the operations of the intelligence in learning. Piaget mentions the characteristics of the intelligence as functions that operate on reality and the eventual domination of that reality. It is also vital to mention that Piaget's theory is relative to the level of maturity and the type of operations performed by the intelligence in the learning process. This result of learning forms what Piaget calls structures of knowledge that are accessed by the intelligence throughout the learning/living process to form the answers or reactions to the needs presented by the persons inner disequilibrium.

2.5.1.3. Structures - Piaget

A cognitive structure, according to Piaget, is an organized system of mental actions that are relatively consistent based on the fact that triggered it in the first place. The basic element of a cognitive structure is the schemata. The variety of "stored" or learned answers to the various stimuli presented in day to day life are called schemata that make up mental structures.

Piaget mentions 3 main types of schemata:

1. Conduct
2. Cognitive
3. Verbal

The first type of schemata known as conduct refers to mechanical (physical) movements that have been learned over time. For example, walking, climbing, eating etc. The next type of schemata, cognitive, refers to images, thought and reason. This allows you to make a judgment and give definitions for different things. There is a necessary correlation to the Gestalt school and its theories on perception. This network of cognitive schemata allows you to understand your environment without having to relearn what a door is, for example, every time you see a different

color door or one that is open at different angles. Another example of this factor is that if you see a piece of paper with the corner torn off, you still know that the original shape was a complete rectangle. The last type mentioned by Piaget is the verbal ability to denote words and, along with communication technique, explain them to others. The direct attempt of this thesis is to affect the cognitive schemata in a way that allows a person to receive, understand and then explain – in words – a concept that he or she has little to no experience with. As Piaget mentions, the schemata and structures are constantly evolving as the maturity level and direct experience through contact grow.

2.5.1.4. Functions - Piaget

Functions describe the way a person interacts with the environment. Through the maturity mentioned in the previous section, we can see that the functions are developed by the intelligence and they are permanent and invariable, although they are susceptible to perfection as the learning process never ends. The functions are based on the content stored in the structures of the person's schemata. This means that the functions dictate the action based on the information given by the structures. Piaget says that organization and adaptation are the two principle operations of the intelligence.

1. Organization refers to establishing order and relation between the different structures. This allows the schemata to be useful as one structure is placed in hierarchical order to another. In language learning it is obvious when someone memorizes language chunks because, without fully understanding the information, the information has no relation to other language samples that cannot be related to form coherent language samples. It is important to mention that this process is constantly reorganizing and prioritizing new information based on the new perception of the intelligence.

2. Adaptation is the function that allows the structures to confront day to day life. Adaptation refers to the ability of the person to reach equilibrium that is the basis of all internal

motivation. This characteristic is strictly human and it explains how humans strive for new information in their structures based on the need to navigate through a life of unknown. It has been said that the day a human stops learning is when he or she is deceased. To fully understand Adaptation as prescribed by Piaget, it is necessary to define the following terms: Assimilation, Accommodation, Maturation, Stimulation, Preparation and Inclination.

a. Assimilation is when the intelligence proposes a schema to reality. This means that assimilation occurs when the schemata is confronting a similar or known experience. That is why language comparison is important so that known comparisons can be made both in a positive and a negative way. In other words, when language is the same and when it is not the same.

b. Accommodation refers to when the situation or experience is completely new and the schemata have to be modified to fit the new reality that faces the subject.

c. Maturation indicates the biological level that the subject possesses that indicates the level of difficulty that the person is able to confront in his or her environment. Under the maturity level we can see the term preparation which indicates, based on chronological age, the ability of the subject to process new information. It may be helpful in this area study Piaget's theory of development and the different levels that he describes. The word inclination is used to describe the interest within the subject towards the topic at hand.

d. Stimulation indicates the social or external influence that the person receives which directly affects his or her quest for equilibrium. Piaget still insists that the search for equilibrium starts from within the person and is enhanced through perception and stimulation.

This research project intends to show that you can give some information to students in their L1 or L2 so that can better understand the material in the textbooks which directly affect the evaluation of their English language level. Through the work of Piaget, we can see that it is possible to create new structures within students' knowledge or, at least, reorganize their existing structures to the point where they can speak more coherently about the topics issued in their textbook.

2.5.2. Vygotsky

2.5.2.1. Learning – Vygotsky

Vygotsky's learning theory essentially is based on the fact that learning occurs from the outside in. In other words, motivation comes from society and true learning occurs because the learner is surrounded by people and influences that have more knowledge of the issues that face him or her. It is this socialistic base that makes this theory relevant as the classroom teacher, through the additional information given to students, acts as an external social influence that allows students to understand the content of the activities much better. The behaviorists claim that humans react mechanically to certain stimuli from the environment. Vygotsky agrees that we face the stimuli, but he would rather think that the human being can react on those stimuli. Here lies the principle difference between the behaviorist theory and the theory of social constructivism.

The passive role of the subject, according to behaviorism, does not explain Man's ability to create structures or concepts as Vygotsky calls them that help people cognitively create automatic reactions based on previous successful learning and the storage of that information. The cognitive role is very much a part of Vygotsky's theory as he mentions the use of the sign in the creation of concepts. The sign is the result of confronting a stimulus and, through the social expectation, creating a personal importance for that sign.

2.5.2.2. Knowledge – Vygotsky

Knowledge, defined by Vygotsky, is all that surrounds you. Knowledge is everything that a person could potentially act upon and therefore learn from. This learning is complete when there is some kind of guide available to help consolidate the new information. Typically we look at the mediation factor that allows humans to use what some might call as higher order thinking in order to organize information as knowledge. This process starts and consolidates with the social influence that has marked the work of Vygotsky. It is necessary to look at what Vygotsky calls tools and signs and how they help transform learning into development.

2.5.2.3. Concepts (Structures) – Vygotsky

The social interaction theory is the basis of forming concepts according to Vygotsky. Having said that, it is important to note that no concepts can be formed without the acquisition of the sign because it is not enough to simply have contact with the external stimuli, but you must also internalize the information as a concept. The social requirement is prevalent because it is what finally allows the subject to internalize information and therefore dominate it by use of the word. This includes language learning where memorizing phrases is simply not enough to actually dominate (use) the language appropriately. The student in a SL classroom should be expected to learn and dominate a certain learning objective, but also to be able to explain its use in other words. The following terms can be useful when looking at Vygotsky's theory: Assimilation, The law of double formation, Effective development, Potential development, The Proximal Zone of Development, Spontaneous Concepts and Scientific Concepts.

1. Assimilation is the process of internalization that includes two phases better known as the Law of Double Formation.

2. The Law of Double Formation indicates the two phases that are involved in the learning process. The first phase is where society acts as a mediator that thrusts information towards the subject's inner self. The second phase is the internalization and domination of the new information that requires an inter-psychological and intra-psychological point. The "inter" phase suggests the necessity of the social influence and the "intra" phase suggests the role of cognitive development.

3. Effective Development refers to the matter that was simply exposed to the subject and internalized through contact with the external environment and a social mediator who helped the subject create his or her own version of the importance of the material. It is effectively the second part of the Law of Double Formation.

4. Potential Development indicates the new matter that has been exposed to the person in question. It has not been formally internalized yet, but the subject can manipulate the matter to some extent with the help of other people.

5. The Proximal Zone of Development is defined as the matter that has contact and is ready for the social intervention to be internalized. It is precisely the difference between the Potential Development and the Effective Development.

6. Spontaneous Concepts are the different levels of internalization as probably defined by chronological age. The three types are: Unorganized Accumulations of raw information, Complex Information and Concepts. Accumulated information that is unorganized generally is visible in children. This is information that is unclassifiable and not able to be used to construct any kind of organized reaction to an external stimulus. It is simply randomly stored

information that requires child maturity to be internalized. The complex accumulations of information are a transitional phase from the unorganized to the concept stage. The child's maturing intellect allows him or her to classify items that were previously unclassifiable: however, the child still has not completely internalized the information as a concept which means that he or she may not offer reasonable response to certain stimuli. Lastly, the concept occurs mainly in adults who have been exposed and mediated to form their own concept which allows them to make a reasonable response to an external stimulus.

The final implications, according to Vygotsky's work, is that a teacher in a second language classroom can offer certain information to students to help them have a better idea about the content that they are expected to talk about. This has direct implications on the evaluation of the students because with the social influence of the classroom teacher which leads to better understanding of content and more ability to elaborate in the second language, the students can show their true level of English language acquisition and earn the grade that they deserve.

2.6. Construct Definitions

1. Schema (pl. Schemata): The underlying structure which accounts for the organization of a text or discourse. Different kinds of texts and discourse (e.g. stories, descriptions, letters, reports, poems etc.) are distinguished by the ways in which the topic, propositions and other information are linked together to form a unit. (Richards, Platt and Platt 1994: 323)

This definition of Schema is used in this thesis in terms of the language samples produced by students. This definition differs slightly from that of Piaget who mentions that Schemata are the sections of knowledge that students have internalized and, therefore, dominate in their daily lives. The relevance here refers to the language which

students “automatically use” without thinking about accomplishing certain tasks using the English language.

2. Evaluation: ...the systemic gathering of information for purposes of decision making...In language planning, evaluation frequently involves gathering information on patterns of language use, language ability, and attitude towards language. (Richards, Platt and Platt 1994: 323)

For all intents and purposes, the term evaluation in this thesis refers to the process of gathering language samples for the sole purpose of giving a progress grade. In this way, the reference to decision making outlines the process that determines whether or not students will advance to the next course in the English program.

3. Democratic Validity: This criterion relates to the extent which the researcher is truly collaborative and allows for the inclusion of multiple voices. Key questions include: Are all parties who have a stake in the research (teachers, administrators, students, parents) able to offer perspectives? Do solutions benefit all stakeholders? Are solutions locally valid, in that they have relevance or applicability to the context? (Anne Burns 1999: 161)

The democratic validity refers to the input offered from three different evaluators. Furthermore, the outcomes have proven to be locally valid with a high probability of validity in other contexts.

4. Outcome Validity: This criterion relates to the notion of actions leading to outcomes that are “successful” within the research context. Anderson et al. argue that the most effective outcomes would involve not only a resolution of the problem but also the reframing of the problem in such a way that it would lead to new questions. Outcome validity also depends on the validity of the process of conducting the research, which is the next criterion considered. (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

The outcome validity shows that the results were successful within the context of the research framework provided. In addition, we can see that other questions do arise which will allow this action research to be used throughout the ongoing revolution of the use of L1 in and out of the classroom.

5. Process Validity: This criterion raises questions about the “dependability” and “competency” of the research. Key questions here are: Is it possible to determine how adequate the process of conducting the research is? For example, are the research participants able to go on learning from the process? Are events or behaviors viewed from different perspectives and through different data sources in order to guard against simplistic or biased interpretations? (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

As far as process validity is concerned, the gathering of the research data has to be considered adequate based on the fact that the exact same procedures were used to gather the evaluation data that is used by the same English teachers in the same institution on a daily basis. As far as the ability for the participants to go on learning from this process, it can be clearly determined that the secondary participants, the teachers in this case, can directly benefit from the process and results of the project. The primary candidates, the students, benefit indirectly from the results as their teachers modify the way they teach in the L2 classroom.

6. Catalytic Validity: This criterion relates to the extent to which the research allows participants to deepen their understanding of the social realities of the context and how they can make changes within it. This may be addressed by recounting changes in the teacher and learners’ understanding of their role and the actions taken as a result of these changes, or by monitoring other participant perceptions of problems in the research setting. (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

The catalytic validity is an extremely important outcome from this research project. In this particular case, we can see the direct modification of behaviors by both teachers and students as a result of what has been determined by the study. Teachers no longer simply skip activities in their syllabus and students can embrace the use of their native language to enhance the learning process. In other words, this is a win-win situation for all involved.

7. Dialogic Validity: This criterion parallels the processes of peer review which are commonly used in academic research. Typically, the value or “goodness” of the research is monitored by peer review for publication in academic journals. Similarly, peer review in action research would mean dialogue with practitioner peers, either through collaborative enquiry or reflective dialogue with “critical

friends” or other practitioner researchers, who can act as “devil’s advocates”. (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

Dialogic validity exists from the initial perspective of the research project where three English teachers help gather information for the sake of the project. There is limited dialogic validity in terms of published data is concerned. The results and outcomes were discussed, but peer involvement in the design and execution of the project is nonexistent.

8. Incidental learning: Any improvement in knowledge that is based on pure repetition or the chance that the second evaluation is higher than the first based on the difference in the strange variables and not on the hypothesis’s intended output. (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

Incidental learning was kept to a minimum as different control and experimental groups were intentionally used. In addition, the students were not given the same L2 articles, so the possibility of incidental learning from the research project point of view is eliminated.

9. Null Hypothesis: A type of hypothesis used in statistics that proposes that no statistical significance exists in a set of given observations. The null hypothesis attempts to show that no variation exists between variables, or that a single variable is no different than zero. It is presumed to be true until statistical evidence nullifies it for the alternate hypothesis. (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

The use of the null hypothesis in this research project is of utmost importance. The research project intentionally used a group of beginner students to show that people cannot learn English by simply reading about topics in their native language and then talking about them in English. The null hypothesis was intentionally used to show that this research project does not intend to prove that teachers are no longer necessary for English Language Teaching.

10. Alternative Hypothesis: The hypothesis which is accepted when the null hypothesis has been rejected is called the alternative hypothesis. It is denoted by H_1 or H_A . Whatever we are expecting from the sample data is taken as the alternate hypothesis. (Anne Burns 1999: 162)

The alternative hypothesis was proven in both the objective based grading system and the holistic based grading system. Both systems were tested independently from one another. The null hypothesis was rejected when the students achieved notable improvements in their grades using both systems mentioned.

11. Egocentric Speech. This is babbling. Piaget thought it would lead to mental illness and should be avoided as soon as possible. Vygotsky thought that it was part of the learning process. (Susan Pass 2004: xvi)

Egocentric speech in this research project can be referred to the language that the students have not internalized and do not dominate. The students tend to make many mistakes and this type of speech can lead to fossilized errors if the student lacks formal instruction as prescribed by both Piaget and Vygotsky.

12. Equilibration and Internalization: Piaget believed that equilibration is a set of processes that coordinate cognitive development in the individual's search for "true" equilibrium. "Equilibration is similar to Vygotsky's idea of internalization". Vygotsky termed internalization to describe the processes of cognitive development that a person goes through to understand something. (Susan Pass 2004: xvi)

For the sake of the project at hand, the term internalization is used to refer to the language that students dominate and can use throughout their daily lives. Equilibration refers more to the process that one goes through in order to internalize information. In other words, we can say that internalization, to some degree, is the result of equilibration.

13. External Speech: This is talking and both Piaget and Vygotsky endorsed it; although, Vygotsky said it was a tool of learning and Piaget would not agree to endorse that perspective until after Vygotsky died. (Susan Pass 2004: xvi)

External speech is the language samples collected by the three researchers in this project, although it is worth mentioning that it includes, in this case, the writing samples and many consider writing to be an extension of speaking.

14. Internal Speech: This is talking to oneself. Originally, Piaget was against it. Later, he read Vygotsky and agreed with him that it was part of the reasoning process and should be allowed. (Susan Pass 2004: xvi)

Internal speech was not tested in this theoretical presentation. It is, however, considered a valid part of the process of equilibration as students were instructed to research different topics in their native language. The assumption is that there is a certain degree of internal speech as students transpose what they know in their native language to the second language, in this case English.

15. Optimal Mismatch and Scaffolding: Scaffolding is very similar to Piaget's idea of the optimal mismatch. In Piaget's idea of the optimal mismatch, a classroom environment is set at the highest challenging point for a student's chronological stage of development so that, with effort, a child can move, if the child successfully internalizes the problem through equilibration to the top of that child's stage of development. Scaffolding is a term that was not used by Vygotsky, even though Vygotsky conceptualized the idea. It was first used by Jerome Bruner (1967) to describe a student being brought from the bottom of his stage of development to the top by a caring "social other" through the use of communication. (Susan Pass 2004: xvi)

Scaffolding seems to be the basis of this entire project. Here the reference is made to building process that students go through as new information transforms to internalized information. That is precisely why the L1 is introduced so that the learning of the topic is not impeded by the handicaps that exist based on L2 difficulties.

16. Zone of Proximal Development: The difference between the knowledge a child can obtain on her/his own and the knowledge that a child can obtain with help of a "social other". (Susan Pass 2004: xvi)

The zone of proximal development determines what you will be able to learn based on input from your surroundings. This implication says that students in Peru do not have access to the same surroundings that other adolescents have in other regions of the world. For this reason, students need to influence of the teacher to affect their personal zones of proximal development. In this research project, the main teacher

influence comes into play through the use of L1 to learn about other sources of input. For example, the child who lives in a mountainous region or Peru might need some other form of input to understand and internalize information about the ocean.

In Conclusion, the schemata building described essentially by both Piaget and Vygotsky not only allowed me to search for a solution to the immediate issues faced in the classrooms outlined in section, but it also allowed me to put together some basic research instruments in order to collect data that is quantifiable as is described in chapter three.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

In pursuit of quantifying the results of the students' schemata building process, it is necessary to outline the procedures, instrumentation and certain important variables that affect the results of the research methods outlined in chapter three.

3.1. Type of Research

3.1.1. Action Research

It is necessary to establish the basic foundation of what action research is, and what it is designed to do. There are many definitions of action research which are cited by Anne Burns in her book *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers* (1999).

Action research ... is a direct and logical outcome of the progressive position. After showing children how to work together to solve their problems, the next step was for teachers to adopt the methods they had been teaching their children, and learn to solve their own problems co-operatively. (Hodgkinson 1957 – cited in Burns 1999: 29)

Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within mutually acceptable ethical framework. (Rapoport 1970 – cited in Burns 1999: 29)

Action research is a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention. (Halsey 1972 – Cited in Burns 1999: 30)

Action research is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change. (Bogdan and Biklen 1982 - Cited in Burns 1999: 30)

Action research is the application of fact finding to practical problem solving in a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it, involving the collaboration and co-operation of researchers, practitioners and laymen. (R.B. Burns 1994 - Cited in Burns 1999: 30)

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (Carr and Kemmis 1986 – Cited in Burns 1999: 30)

It is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be. This process is essentially what I mean by the term **action research**. (Wallace 1998 - Cited in Burns 1999: 30)

If we look at, in detail, the definitions provided by Anne Burns, we can see a common thread between them which is precisely the social factor. I tend to agree with most of the researchers cited by Burns in terms of the problem solving aspect and offering a systematic solution to some of the small day to day problems that English teachers face in their classrooms, such as the lack of oral/written production. Of course, as researchers such as David Nunan would state, the last step of action research should be to share your information with your colleagues to try and help the social matter on a larger scale.

3.1.1.1. Action Research Framework

The framework involved and subsequently described is designed to give a structured layout to the procedures of the research project. Generally speaking, most research projects are concerned with two guiding principles that, according to Michael Wallace (2000), are reliability and validity.

In the first place, we can consider research reliability as we do with testing reliability. That is, “If the research procedures used by researcher A are exactly followed by researcher B, will the findings be the same each time?” Wallace (ibid: 36) uses a term called “replicability” or repeatability. This research project and its methods of investigation will aim for a high level of reliability because, according to David Nunan, one of the last steps to accurate research is to be able to share your findings with the rest of your colleagues in the same given field of instruction. Although this research project will be carried out with Spanish speaking students in Lima, Peru, it is highly expected that the results will be very repeatable throughout the rest of the world including (if not especially for) students in remote areas of both Africa and Asia because of the common tendency for students to possess little to no schemata when it comes to common international textbook subject matter.

The second guiding principal for this research project is validity. This has a special concern for this hypothesis because, as you can see in Appendix 1 questionnaire 1, teachers at the institute in question often grade students’ oral performance with a low level of validity. This means that they are looking for some language structure (objective) to be used in the classroom and then subsequently outside of the classroom, but instead they end up testing the students’ schemata (previous knowledge). In other words, if a student is asked to talk about a cultural icon such as the Taj Mahal in India using prepositions of place, is the teacher really evaluating the use of the preposition or is he or she evaluating the student’s knowledge of India? This question may remain unanswered in some cases where the teacher simply writes

off the student as unable to achieve the learning objective because he or she does not know about the Taj Mahal nor does the student possess the ability to tell the teacher (in English) that he or she does not understand “Taj Mahal”. This is where many educational professionals, in my opinion, follow the wrong path by prohibiting the use of L1 in the classroom; therefore, they raise the affective filter, as prescribed by Krashen, to a very high level which often creates silence in the classroom; hence, a low grade is given to the student.

The term validity will also apply to this research project because it will focus on one aspect which is the students’ ability to orally respond to some questions regarding well known (or considered to be well known by many textbook authors) cultural icons. As you will see, the data collected will be as authentic as possible inside of the classroom. These questions will be display questions on the part of the teacher because he or she considers this information to be popular and widespread and is not asking something he or she does not know; however, on the part of the student you will see that these questions are true questions that require the negotiation of information which they may or may not be able to manage. The data collection section of this hypothesis will include a detailed explanation of the methods used, but it is important to mention, under the heading “validity”, that there will be an attempt to limit the intervention of the other language skills. In other words, the students will be asked questions either orally or in written form and their responses will be given the same way as well and then later transcribed without the intervention or responsibility of the student.

The last aspect of the research framework can be described by Seliger and Shohamy (1989). According to these specialists in the area of second language research (SLR), we look at four avenues or approaches to any given research project which focus on the problem or issue that sparked the research project. Then the objectives of the study are clearly stated which are then followed by the level of control used during the research project which has direct

implications on validity and other issues as well. Finally, we are concerned with the data collection and analysis and their level of explicitness.

Parameter 1:	Approach	Synthetic or analytic
Parameter 2:	Purpose	Heuristic or deductive
Parameter 3:	Control	Degree of control/manipulation
Parameter 4:	Data	Data collection/analysis

Figure 1: Implicational relationships between the different parameters. (Seliger and Shohamy 1989)

Parameter 1: As described by Seliger and Shohamy, this aspect questions whether the research project takes an analytical approach or a synthetic approach to the origin of the research topic. In this case you will see a very analytical approach because the ability of the student to elaborate about international cultural icons is very easily observed. They either can elaborate an answer that then deserves evaluation or they struggle with the mere premise of the question which means they have no answer and, generally speaking, do not know how to express the fact – in English – that they lack previous experience with the topic; therefore, their language samples do not deserve to be criticized or evaluated for their lack of schemata.

Parameter 2: References the purpose of this project. Given the fact that this project carries a secondary objective of professional development, we can consider that it is the deductive approach because it intends to prove or disprove a hypothesis.

Parameter 3: Talks about the level of manipulation. For this particular hypothesis we can see a very high level of control for two reasons. The first has to do with the learners' part and the second has to do with the hypothesis itself. As you can very well see, the learners are subjects in an investigation. They are knowingly participating and/or being recorded in a normal classroom setting, and from the

teachers' point of view, you can see that a typical deductive based testing method is being used.

Parameter 4: This area focuses on the data collection and its level of explicitness. As you can see, according to Seliger and Shohamy, the data stream is very narrow. As a matter of fact, there is little physical data involved. This deductive testing procedure looks at the students' ability to produce logical answers or the lack of ability what so ever to do so. This means that we can make a determination based on the intention of the students' answers and not the actual content of them. In this thesis, we will not go as far as evaluating the responses as indicated by some sort of methodology such as task based learning. We will simply state whether the answer deserves to be evaluated or not based on the schemata level of the student. Whether he or she uses the correct language objective in his or her answer is irrelevant in this project. We just want to know if providing pre-information in their L1 can alleviate the burden that schemata implies.

3.1.2. Research design

Michael Wallace, in his book *Action Research for Language Teachers* (2000), provides us with a detailed chart regarding research design. Wallace best describes this empirical research project by contrasting it to the case study approach (ibid: 160). Wallace argues that a typical case study focuses on individual students, groups, classes etc. In this case we know that the results are not expected to be reproducible; therefore, they are not used in cases like this hypothesis which expects to lend itself to ELT throughout the world. This means that this hypothesis meets the standard criteria to be considered an empirical approach.

Next, we can appreciate the different categories of data and the respective techniques related to them. The following chart by Wallace (2000: 37) is particularly useful in understanding the relationship between them:

Categories	Quantitative/ Qualitative	Introspective/ Empirical	Individual/ Collaboration	Intrusive/Co- mplementary	Illuminative + Heuristic/ Conclusive
Verbal Reports	qualitative	Introspective	Individual	Complementary	Both
Observation	Either	Either	Collaborative	Intrusive	Both
interviews	qualitative	Introspective	Either	Either	Both
Questionnaire	Either	Introspective	Either	Either	Both
Case studies	qualitative	Either	Individual	Either	Both
Evaluation	quantitative	Empirical	Either	Either	Either
Trialling	quantitative	Empirical	Either	Either	Either

Figure 2: Some common research techniques related to categories (Wallace 2000)

Quantitative or Qualitative

The terms quantitative and qualitative are used quite often in research studies. Objective research which is easily measured or counted is referred to as quantitative, while qualitative refers to research that is subjective because it is not easily measurable. For the sake of this research project, we will be aiming for more quantitative research because we are going to conduct a different kind of evaluation that allows us to measure students' preparedness or readiness to answer typical questions used by textbooks and/or teachers during a typical lesson. As mentioned, schemata alleviate the added pressure of knowing the content of the lesson or not. It will be used to help students formulate answers in a reasonable amount of time, yet it will not focus on the actual language content

of the students' answers; for example, if the students use the preposition correctly or not as illustrated earlier.

To sum up, this research project is aimed at finding out if the students know about the subject matter used in many different textbooks. I consider this very easily measured without getting concerned about other subjective matter during this evaluation. Then the teacher can focus on the teaching of any specific language objective such as a grammatical structure relying on a much more focused audience that is not concerned with knowing what the Eiffel Tower is but rather how to describe it. This will then lend itself to the hypothesizing of language structures freeing the students' minds to then think about describing other iconic items that they have been pre-taught.

Introspective or Empirical

Introspective data is generated from within the subject being evaluated. This type of data is very difficult to prove or disprove because we cannot tell what someone is thinking or not; therefore, the entire outcome of such data refers to the person's word. On the other hand, empirical data is very measurable because it focuses on what surrounds the subject and the evaluator. It is considered very measurable. This particular thesis is taking a different approach which will be considered empirical because instead of focusing on the feelings of the students we will look at their ability to respond. As mentioned before, it will focus less on the content of the answers and more on the empirical idea that the student can answer or not. As will be shown in greater detail at a later point in time, this thesis will primarily focus on observation, interviews, questionnaires and evaluation. According to Wallace, interviews are usually considered introspective as are questionnaires, but again I think it is important that to mention that this thesis will focus on the empirical factors of both of those because it will look at the outward reaction of the students in both cases to determine if the ability to answer exists or not based on the students' schemata.

Individual or Collaborative

Wallace sustains that individual research is based on the researcher alone. As this thesis contains many other contributors ranging from other teachers to many students, it will be considered collaborative in all aspects of the word.

Intrusive or Complementary

Following the guidelines put forth by Wallace, the research collected for this report would be considered complementary. Under normal classroom conditions, students have to study activities (Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading and Writing) and different language objectives using a textbook. Very often, classroom or objectives evaluation is based on activities from the book such as role play conversations, teacher to student questions, student to student questions and so forth. Asking a student to write a short composition before and after reading some information about the topic is right in line with normal classroom activities. As a matter of fact, the teacher could choose not to inform the students of the research data being collected in order not to provoke different student behavior. In other words, the research is so similar to day to day classroom activities that it would not be considered intrusive. This complementary type of activity/data collecting system, where students are asked to write a response, can often go undetected by students. Another example of a complementary research activity would be using an error correction technique, almost always used in a classroom from one extent to another, and recording these errors for research purposes. In other words, the error correction is not intrusive based on its use in the classroom, and the collection of such data does not have to interrupt daily classroom operations. On the other hand, audio recording may be considered intrusive if it is done one on one where the student is asked to respond to certain questions in front of a microphone. In terms of classroom recording goes, it is safe to say that it would also be considered intrusive if there is a video recorded set up near the students when normally there is no such device present in the classroom.

Illuminative/Heuristic or Conclusive

The research presented in the project is highly illuminative, somewhat heuristic and very generally conclusive. In the first place, the intention of this project is to offer new insight for teachers and students in terms of making the everyday tasks and activities more appropriate for students of a particular context. What this implies in great detail, is the fact that students struggle with some textbook activities in some cultural contexts; therefore, this research type will shed light on this problem and make students as well as teachers aware of it while offering some insight on how to improve it. The secondary implication is that reading will be promoted and students will become more autonomous when confronting content areas of textbooks that are unfamiliar to them. This follows the insight of Wallace (2000: 43) that provokes the following reflection for this type of research:

Do we want to conclusively prove that something is the case, or do we want to simply throw some new light on a topic/problem (illuminative research) or discover something about that topic/problem that we were not aware of before (heuristic research)? Most scientific research relates to the first (conclusive) approach... (Michael Wallace 1998)

As mentioned we can claim some conclusiveness with this project because the research results seem very reliable across a wide spectrum of student background/diversity as well as student English language level. The claim as generally conclusive stems from the fact that this research project will not delve into the background or ethnic diversity that causes different student reactions or lack of schemata in general for that given student population. We will show, however, in a systematic way, that providing students with some type of pre-activity information will allow them to respond with more depth and richness in their answer; therefore, they will get better evaluations on their language samples used to measure their English language learning progress.

3.2. Assumptions

The research methodology used for this project is based on a series of studies which stem from the original research question and goal of

giving students the adequate knowledge about certain subject material so that they can be accurately evaluated in terms of their English language level and not in terms of what they know about the mentioned subject material. The goal of this research project is to show a relevant connection between the theoretical information presented in chapter, the hypothesis which founded this research and the need for English language teachers to more accurately evaluate their students. On a personal note, the foundation which led me to pursue this research project is based solely on the desire to see students treated more consistently as far as evaluation is concerned. In addition, it has always been a goal of mine to reduce barriers that often prevent students from feeling comfortable with speaking in the classroom in front of their peers.

The following assumptions are based on my personal beliefs that have been outlined in this research project. The basis of these assumptions and accusations come from my teaching experience in the classroom based on the cultural and teaching context mentioned in chapter 1.

- a) Students are often judged, categorized and ultimately evaluated on the basis of the knowledge they have about certain textbook questions and not necessarily their English Language level obtained during the teaching process.
- b) The implications that stem from this factor have grave consequences on students' behavior and language production in the classroom. In some cases, it may be a determining factor in the completion of such course work and/or programs.
- c) The value of the textbook series may be reduced in some teaching/learning contexts where there is not much knowledge of the subject material presented traditionally in schools and homes.
- d) The so called bi-national centers do not really teach culture outside of the simple fact that they are teaching English. In other words, do students really grasp how an American feels and behaves after using famous American cultural icons to teach English? For example, presenting pictures of the Statue of Liberty in New York and teaching students how to use passive voice structures by saying "the Statue of Liberty was given to the US by France" does not

really teach culture. The implication is that some students may not be able to use their English that they have learned in class simply because they do not know about the Statue of Liberty. This means that they are often labeled as quiet students who lack participation in the classroom.

3.3. Research Questions

Do learners who attempt to understand the basis of the material and content presented in any given English Language Teaching textbook series receive a more accurate evaluation of their true English Language level? In other words, can learners who know about the cultural icons presented in a textbook write more about them than other students who do not know anything about the related icons?

Can these same learners extend the range and depth of their work based on the extended knowledge provided to them by their teacher?

3.3.1. Other related questions

Can teachers identify these students who need to reinforce their knowledge of certain subject areas in order to better help them through the evaluation period?

Is there a related connection to the speaking ability of a student who has benefited from this help in terms of his or her writing skills?

Can teachers accurately determine what material requires reinforcing through the introduction of material in the students' L1 and/or in English?

How many activities in any given ELT textbook series do teachers either skip or alter because their students cannot handle the cultural content included in each?

3.4. Hypothesis

Learners who build their previous knowledge of certain subject material can demonstrate their true level of English as opposed to

students who have not received any additional information about textbook content that they do not understand. It is the intention of the hypothesis to eliminate this eminent factor that many students face during evaluations as presented by textbook authors who are writing well outside of their cultural context.

3.4.1. Formulation of Hypothesis

The hypothesis was designed to compensate for the effects of cultural background and the lack of a schemata base, which in turn, affects students' ability to elaborate certain subject matter not only in the second language but also in their native language.

3.4.2. General Hypothesis

I want to increase the results of my EFL students' speaking/writing efforts. In addition, I want to identify which students need additional support and a convenient way to give them such support.

3.4.3. Specific Hypothesis

Learners who are identified as lacking in oral performance can greatly enhance their oral output by the pre-teaching of schemata that covers issues likely to be seen in ELT textbooks.

3.4.4. Secondary Hypothesis

Educational institutions will be able to identify subject matter in their textbooks of choice that students will not likely be able to elaborate on and, in turn, create their own pre-teaching of schemata plan that is tailored made for their programs.

3.4.5. Interpretation of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis in question, dictates that students will be able to more accurately show their English Language skills obtained during their English Language studies. The research will also show – explained in greater detail under variables - that this hypothesis is in no way intended to replace the need for ELT classrooms and, of

course, English Language teachers. The data will show that students who have no English Language training will not be able to improve their English level by simply reading articles in their L1. In addition, students who have had extensive training can utilize the claims in the hypothesis using supplemental materials in L2. This means that learners with a very basic or elementary level of English will not benefit greatly at the moment; however, the students in this category will use their newly found knowledge to help demonstrate their level of English in the future. As the research will show, the students who fall into this elementary category claimed that the knowledge was not the problem, but simply they did not possess enough vocabulary to benefit from this style of teaching. It is, however, important to note that if the students in higher levels who showed an increase in their English output and evaluations due to the introduction of schemata may not have needed the additional information if they had been exposed at a much earlier level. This claim, however, would need to be followed up by a long term studied.

3.5. Alternate Hypothesis

The alternate hypothesis in this research project suggests that teachers encounter many activities in a textbook series where the students simply cannot elaborate about the subject matter. The implication here is that the teacher either skips the activity, or he or she simply alters it to fit the schemata level of his or her students. For example, many teachers surveyed mentioned that their students did not have much previous knowledge about manmade wonders. In that particular case, students studied vocabulary related to manmade structures, such as architectural, feats, engineering, skyscrapers etc. The particular grammar structure to be studied in this unit is the passive voice with various tenses. After a logical flow of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, speaking and writing activities, students are asked to write (talk) about manmade feats either in Peru or around the world. The students generally speaking, based on the profile of the average student in the institute, have little to say about engineering feats around the world that are not mentioned in the book. The problem arises when this communicative activity is designed to be used for evaluative purposes and the students receive a falsely low grade. The teacher being aware of this problem simply ignores or changes the activity to better suite his or her students.

3.5.1. Interpretation of the Alternate Hypothesis

The implied solution simply states that if students have read information about manmade feats around the world in anticipation to the upcoming evaluation, the teacher will be able to accurately evaluate his or her students without having to deviate from the activity planned in the book. Another situation that often occurs is that the activities that the teachers use to avoid this lack of schemata problem mentioned are often “off topic” which means that the final evaluations of the unit in question does not include either the target grammar structure and/or the target vocabulary structure. This means that the evaluation is not valid, and the cause of the validity issue could have been avoided by providing students with enough information, either in L1 or L2, to help them cope with the activity which in the end provokes the correct usage of the target structures mentioned.

3.6. Variables

The following variables were considered during the project:

3.6.1. Independent Variable

The following independent variable indicates the manipulation factor to achieve or disprove the original hypothesis. In this case the primary independent variable is the [introduction of] information given to the students to give them the necessary knowledge to answer the textbook questions more completely and proudly than before in order to be more accurately evaluated on their level of English.

3.6.2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this case is the improvement of the profoundness and completeness of the students answers which directly allow them to be evaluated on their English level and not on their level of worldly or the lack of knowledge.

3.6.3. Intervening Variable

The intervening variable in this research study stems from the fact that some people would argue that students overall completeness and profoundness of their answers can improve simply based on the fact that they are repeating an exercise for the second time; therefore, they can improve with or without reading any information about the specific topic. This research case will include a control group that proves or disproves that this is indeed the case.

3.6.4. Unique Variables

The strange variables that must be considered are:

1. The background learning style of the student – This indicates whether or not the student is likely to be an avid reader. History shows that the Peruvian culture is an oral/aural culture where information is passed on from one to another through verbal communication. This has a profound effect on the desire to read to get information or to simply let someone else tell you about it.
2. The economic status of the learner – This factor is important to consider because a lot of students' previous knowledge comes from hands on experience. Many students from the higher social/economic classes have taken trips to countries like France, Italy, Germany and the United States, for example. In these cases, it is much more likely that the student in question may already have (and be able to elaborate) some information about the topics mentioned in different textbook series.
3. The age of the learner – Obviously the age of the learner reflects on his or her ability to have traveled or read about different places around the world. This is relevant in this research study because, as mentioned in the student/institution profile, it is possible to have a 55 year-old student sitting next to a 14 year-old adolescent. This implication is profound not only in terms of age difference

(and the possibilities mentioned), but also the difference in the desire to read.

4. How many and how long are the intervals or breaks, if any, during students' study period. This implies that students may study for months and then take a break for 3 months and return again to the next class in their course work. As classification examiners will attest, students who study and then take breaks between their classes will often lose some of their English level which legitimately affects their performance in combination with the lack of schemata that we are trying to prove.

3.7. Sample

The following sample shows a great many of the variables mentioned in the previous section taken from the main control group as opposed to the secondary control group:

Sample:

- Type of students: Students who have studied English for 16 months or a total of 608 academic hours. Students in the same ranking have time and time again placed in the B1 Common European Framework.
- Age: The average age of the test control group is 18.
- Nationality: Peruvian
- Background: 72% of the group studied in public high schools in Peru.
- Number of students in control group: 14 students participated in both phases of the control group.
- Native language: Spanish
- Sex: The control group used for this sample consisted of 8 girls and 6 boys.

- Frequency of instruction: As mentioned in the student/institution profile, the students in this group studied English 2 academic hours per day with a total of 10 hours per week. It is important to note that all of the additional schemata building information were given to the students as homework and is not included in their total English study time.
- Socio-economic status not known for this group. An independent study can be performed to determine the average income of the public school family, which 72% of the students are from.
- Criteria for selecting group: The teachers' answers to the survey questions indicated that this level in their textbook offered particularly challenging questions for students. There is one writing/speaking evaluation that asks them to write7talk about man-made engineering feats.

3.8. Instruments

The following describes briefly the instruments used for this research project. The use of such instruments will be described in more detail in the procedure section of chapter 3.

3.8.1. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used for 2 purposes in this research project. The first purpose was to get information from teachers to establish the grounds for the activities to be used during the research period. The second was to obtain information from students to confirm or disprove the hypothesis and suggested solution for the problem statement.

3.8.2. Writing Templates

The worksheets presented in this research project were used to standardize the writing template for each student. They were labeled writing task 1 and 2 for the control group and writing task 1

and 2 for the experimental group. A third set was used as a second control group as well.

3.8.3. Teacher Rubrics

The set of teachers rubrics were used to standardize the traditional objective based grading system normally used by teachers. This is the current system used in the institution profiled. This area is directly affected by the students' lack of previous knowledge. The accusation stated in the hypothesis claims that students are unfairly graded low in terms of their English level, but in fact, the real problem is that they have little to say about the topics presented in the textbook series.

3.8.4. Researcher Rubrics

A second set of researcher rubrics were developed so that the activities presented by the students could be evaluated holistically. This holistic approach to the task evaluation allows the researcher to judge students' improvement based on topic development and vocabulary depth as stated in the hypothesis.

3.8.5. Teacher Log

The teacher log allows the teacher in each classroom to look at the students' reactions, expressions, motivation, delays and other qualitative type data that students often express when they are either sure or not sure of an activity.

3.8.6. Question Log

A second teacher log allows for the recording of the number and type of questions that students pose during an activity. This question log was maintained separately from the general teacher log because of its quantitative data nature. Teachers can easily use the questions to determine whether or not the students are affected by the apparent lack of previous knowledge.

3.8.7. Information Sheets

The information sheets or knowledge builders were used to supplement the students' lack of previous knowledge about certain topics. Generally speaking, these information sheets were given in Spanish at early levels, but they were also introduced in English if the students' level warranted it.

3.9. Reliability

Reliability is a very important part of the research and data collection aspects of the research project. The following are examples of some of the attempts made at maintaining the integrity of the project's reliability:

- Student groups were selected at 2 different locations that represent the extremes in terms of student diversity. Groups were selected equally in Downtown Lima (Lima Centro) and Miraflores.
- Student groups were selected at different schedules to better represent all types of students that study at the institute. Sample groups were used at 7:00am and at 6:45pm, which represent the working aged student, as well as at 3:15pm and at 5:00pm, which tend to consist of mainly high school aged students.
- 2 different types of control groups were used:
 - Group type A: 2 control groups were used from within the same sample group in order to directly prove or disprove the intention of the thesis. This means that within the same location, time slot and English language level some students received an external influence to check the impact it had on their English level and other students in the same group did not receive any external influence, while both of the groups were given the same assignments. This type of control gave a before and after snapshot of the students' performance.

- Group type B: This control group was given 2 assignments without any external influence in order to disprove the critics who might think that the first group of students showed an improvement simply because they were writing an article for the second time. In other words, in this group, both the first and the second writing samples were expected to be similar in terms of both the holistic based grading system and the objectives based grading system. It was necessary to disprove any coincidental learning on the part of the students.

- The last control group consisted of mainly very basic, first or second month students who were given the external influence but not expected to show any difference. This control was designed to prove that despite the original hypothesis, it is still necessary to have traditional English classes. In other words, the hypothesis does not claim that simply by reading in your native language, it is possible to learn a second language.

3.10. Validity

Validity was another factor considered in order to authenticate the research process. Validity is the most essential aspect to any research project where quantitative data is being collected, and it is also very important for action research projects as well. A high validity level establishes the credibility of the outcome and the results that are to be shared within the action research community. Two aspects of validity were considered for this project: Internal and External.

3.10.1. Internal Validity

Internal Validity asks the question: “How trustworthy are the claims that the outcomes are related to the experimental treatment? In other words, do the interventions that the researchers make in the research context result in the outcomes that can be inferred from

the data?”(Burns: 160). In this case, the research presents a reasonably high level of internal validity because the interventions made by the researcher directly affected the results of the students’ output (or not). These results were measured on a holistic scale which interprets the depth of student vocabulary and topic development. Furthermore, the results were measured based on the current objectives based grading system used at the institute. These measures help prove one of the secondary claims of the hypothesis that students are unfairly graded low because of their lack of knowledge of certain subjects and not necessarily for their level of English.

The results were proven with different classes in different locations trying to include a wide variety of student base that offers different age groups and educational backgrounds. The results differed based on those variables, but they did not vary from location to location or from group to group. In other words, an older student who has traveled and studied considerably more than others may already possess the background knowledge needed for certain activities and it is possible to have this type of student at any location. The other valid result that can be concluded from this research document is that the teacher could be better prepared by knowing when he or she is more likely to encounter students that could benefit from the pre-teaching of certain academic materials.

3.10.2. External Validity

External validity refers to the possibility of extending the solution to other contexts. This probability would be limited to language teaching in general where the textbook series used for instruction tends to use international/cultural icons in order to present students with the opportunity to practice the new language by talking about them in the new L2. This, of course, would need to be put to the test using the theory in teaching contexts which present the same type of issue(s) stated in the hypothesis.

3.10.3. Other Validity

Other claims of validity can be considered for this research project based on Burns's Validity and Action Research (Burns 1999: 161/162).

- **Democratic Validity:** This research project is generally considered to be democratically valid because it allows most of the participants to offer a point of view. In fact, the students and the teachers are asked for their input in order to establish the basis of the hypothesis. Additionally, this project is democratically valid because both parties, the teachers and the students, can benefit from the results. Teachers can better prepare their lessons by giving students some cultural input before they are expected to talk about cultural items for evaluative purposes. On the other hand, students show their true level of English without their worrying about not having much knowledge the items presented in the book.
- **Outcome Validity:** The research outcomes in this research project are considered valid because of the ratio of positive outcomes versus no change and/or negative outcomes which were almost nonexistent.
- **Process Validity:** The process validity in this particular case registers very high because it follows a certain pattern that does not change during the process. For example, the students are evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively speaking. For more information see the following section 3.11 – Procedure.
- **Catalytic Validity:** This project presents one level of catalytic validity simply because the hope is that the students will become more autonomous after engaging in such type of knowledge building which allows them to speak more freely about certain topics that are presented to them. This can be considered a social change if we consider that the students in question may

reconsider their role in the learner process and go against what seems to be a deep rooted social norm that suggests that people do not read much for pleasure.

- **Dialogic Validity:** The dialogic value of the research project is a very important element. The entire project is based on the fact that teachers, through dialog, can predict students' needs and, therefore, help them with known troublesome activities and teach them to become autonomous learners. Sharing the results of this project is imperative, at least in theory, for all second language teachers and even more so for those who use the textbook in question.

3.11. Procedure

In order to better understand the relevance of the materials and their impact on the project, it is necessary to explain the procedure used for each one.

3.11.1. Student Questionnaire

Student Questionnaires were used to ask students about particular difficulties they might have had and why they think they occurred. The exact point to introduce this set of questionnaires is after they have attempted the first writing activity without knowing that they would later receive some information to help them with their basic knowledge of the topic. The questionnaire offers many possible choices as to why the activity was difficult. The students can choose one of the alternatives or they can write their own answer in the "other" column.

3.11.2. Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher questionnaires were used to kick off the whole project. Teachers were asked to write down some activities that they have traditionally skipped or modified because students do not have enough previous knowledge to talk about them. The most common answers were logged and, in some cases, used for this research project. Through this effort, it seems evident that the

textbook series being used for these students is quite out of context in relation to the traditional information taught in schools.

3.11.3. Writing Templates

Writing templates were created to offer consistency in the format that the students were expected to use. At the top of each writing template you can see the group number and task number. Group 1 task 1 was used for the control as well as group 1 task 2. There was no additional help provided to this group which means that in this group, task 1 and 2 rely solely on the knowledge that the student had previous to the task. This control was used to prove that there was no significant increase in student performance simply because they were doing a task for the second time. This is referred to as incidental learning. The second set of templates was labeled “group 2 task 1” and “group 2 task 2” accordingly. The first task was given to the students with no additional help as in group 1. The second activity, however, varied from that of group 1 because it was here that the students received an information sheet that helped improve their knowledge of the subject in question. The last set of templates was given to students who were entry level learners. The intention here was to prove that with or without information sheets, students would not improve that English level simply by reading. This, of course, reinforces the need for teachers and textbooks. As mentioned in the hypothesis, the theory here suggests that once students have reached a consolidated A2 level, they possess the language skills to elaborate their ideas, but, as suggested here, some of them simply lack enough information to talk about the subjects at hand.

3.11.4. Grading System (Teacher Rubrics)

The grading system used by teachers in the institution profiled was necessary to understand how students are evaluated. This then leads us to the secondary intention of the hypothesis which says that students are unfairly graded low in some cases. Each writing activity profiled uses a 2 point grading system. The first point represents the communication of the activity and the second point indicates the accuracy of the grammar range used in the article. There is an additional consideration in terms of the

number of attempts at the target structure that the person used in his or her work. This system is referred to from here on as the objective based grading system. The writing samples used for this project were graded independently by teachers involved so that we could see if they were grading the

3.11.5. Researcher Rubrics (Holistic Grading)

The holistic grading system directly deals with the hypothesis and its implications. This grading system suggests that it is possible to measure the difference in the students' writings in terms of topic development and vocabulary depth along with its correct usage. The writings were not graded by teachers and the students did not see these results.

3.11.6. Teacher Log

The teachers involved in this project were told to log when they noticed that students seemed to struggle with an activity. The log was used to keep track of and confirm the activities that teachers suspected caused problems for the students.

3.11.7. Question Log

The question log, which is closely tied to the teacher log, was also used to keep track of student questions that might indicate whether they understood or did not understand an activity. These questions were often related to instructions. It seems plausible that students who had a good grasp on the task and possessed the knowledge to properly address the task seemed to have fewer questions about how to execute the task.

3.11.8. Information Sheets

The information sheets were used to give the intended group extra information about certain topics to measure whether or not it was the precise lack of information that prevented the students from carry out their activities accurately and with ease while having fewer questions about instructions along with fewer delays in

executing the activity. Specifically, these sheets were used for the second activity in group two and group 3.

3.12. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this project was based on the type of data collected. Another factor that influenced the data analysis procedure was the differing characteristics of the data collected.

3.12.1. Quantitative Data - Objectives Based

Data Type 1: Quantitative

The writing samples collected from the students were considered, based on the final grade given, quantitative because they were collected and evaluated using the actual objective based system that measures students' compliance with the grammatical and or vocabulary objective given to students. As the hypothesis mentions, students were able to increase the number of grammatical structure intents presented in their writing samples because the additional content allowed them to write more using the structures mentioned. The quantitative data collected showed that the average grade increased in the experimental group. It was also possible to measure the increase in the number of sentences produced on average by the students in the experimental group. It is important to note that the objective grading system does not necessarily consider the depth of knowledge of the topic. This improvement shown in the chart generally comes from the fact that students who received additional information prior to their second writing attempt were graded higher because they simply wrote more sentences that contained either the target grammatical structure or the vocabulary structure.

The following chart represents the data samples graded by evaluator 1. Objective Grading System.							
Experimental Group		W1	W2	Control Group		W1	W2
S1	Naysha	1	2	S1	Giancarlo	2	2
S2	Melanie	2	2	S2	Valeria	1	1
S3	Dayana	1	2	S3	Jimena	1	1
S4	Jimena	1	2	S4	Brenda	1	1
S5	Ivanni	1	2	S5	Ximena	2	1
S6	Moises	2	2	S6	Luciano	1	2
S7	Alessandra	1	1	S7	Bruno	2	2
S8	Christian	1	2	S8	Maria Eugenia	2	2
S9	Cesar	1	2	S9	Tomas	1	1
S10	Viannet	1	1	S10	Stephanie	1	1
S11	Christian	2	1	S11	Jorge	1	1
S12	Marnny	1	2	S12	Brenda M.	1	1
S13	Camila	2	1	S13	Christian	2	2
S14	Neira	1	2	S14	Rodrigo	2	2
S15	Stephanie	1	2	S15	Mario Andre	1	1
S16	Maria	1	2	S16	Nicolas	1	1
S17	Karim	1	1	S17	Mario A.	2	2
S18	Ximena	1	2	S18	Daniela	1	2
S19	Melissa	1	1	S19	Almendra	2	1
S20	Rony	2	2	S20	Carlos	1	2
S21	Patricia	1	2	S21	Andrea	1	1
S22	Carla	2	2	S22	Fabrizio	1	1
S23	Nestor	1	1	S23	Alessandra	2	1
S24	Mayra	1	2	S24	Ricardo A.	1	2
S25	Sarai	1	2	S25	Alana	1	1

Figure 3: Evaluator 1 data collected from experimental group and control group 1- objective grading system.

The following chart represents the data samples graded by evaluator 2. Objective Grading System.							
Experimental Group		W	W	Control Group		W	W
S1	Jose Julian	2	2	S1	Maria Fernand	2	2
S2	Dodin	1	2	S2	Celeste	2	2
S3	Pamela	1	2	S3	Marcela	1	1
S4	Ana Sofia	1	1	S4	Claudia	1	1
S5	Claudia	2	2	S5	Diego	1	1
S6	Gladys	1	2	S6	Martin	1	2
S7	Adriana	1	1	S7	Macarena	2	2
S8	Ursa	1	2	S8	Silvana	2	1
S9	Angie	1	2	S9	Alvaro	1	2
S10	Piero	2	2	S10	Daniela	1	1
S11	Sebastian	2	1	S11	Eduardo	2	2
S12	Alexandra	1	2	S12	Maria Lucia	1	1
S13	Victor	2	1	S13	Beatriz	1	2
S14	Adolfo	2	2	S14	Camila	2	1
S15	Rafael	1	2	S15	Alexandra	1	1
S16	Alonso	1	2	S16	Rosa	2	1
S17	Mathias	2	1	S17	Guillermo	1	2
S18	Benjamin	1	2	S18	Daniel	1	2
S19	Juan Diego	1	2	S19	Angela	2	1
S20	Maria Pia	2	2	S20	Gianmarco	1	2
S21	Franco	1	2	S21	Francesco	1	1
S22	Yuliana	2	2	S22	Carlos	2	1
S23	Luis	1	2	S23	Antonella	1	1
S24	Reiny	2	2	S24	Gabriela	1	1
S25	Fiorella	2	2	S25	Jonathan	2	1

Figure 4: Evaluator 2 data collected from experimental group and control group 2- objective grading system.

3.12.1.1. Quantitative Data - Alternative Hypothesis

These data represent the effect/relationship that exists between the control group and the experimental group because of the independent variable. This proves that the Null Hypothesis does not exist in this case. It is necessary to reiterate that the group tested represents the tendencies for groups that rank from A2 to C2 on the Common European Framework.

The data represent the sample samples being analyzed by two different teachers. The differences show that teacher 2 tends to evaluate ever slightly higher than teacher 1. The following chart shows the comparison between two evaluators who have been trained to use the same evaluation system. The difference represented in the chart exists because of the natural difference between two people and not necessarily between the students. It is important to note that the trend between both teachers remains the same despite the difference in the overall totals. In other words, in all 4 situations, the grades maintained more or less the same ratio as represented in the chart.

	Evaluator 1		Evaluator 1	
	Experimental Group W1	Experimental Group W2	Control Group W1	Control Group W2
Sum	33	42	34	35
Mean	1.3	1.7	1.4	1.4
Median	1.32	1.68	1.36	1.40
Standard Deviation	.4		.04	

Figure 5A: Alternative Hypothesis results Evaluator 1 – experimental and control groups 1 and 2. Objective Grading procedure.

	Evaluator 2		Evaluator 2	
	Experimental Group W1	Experimental Group W2	Control Group W1	Control Group W2
Sum	36	45	36	38
Mean	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.5
Median	1.44	1.80	1.44	1.52
Standard Deviation	.4		.08	

Figure 5B: Alternative Hypothesis results Evaluator 2 – experimental and control groups 1 and 2. Objective Grading procedure.

3.12.1.2. Quantitative Data - Null Hypothesis

The following data represent what is called the Null Hypothesis where there is no effect/relationship. In other words, the results showed no improvement, and in some cases there was negative results reported. These students, as mentioned, were from a very basic level (37 – 70 pedagogical hours). As the thesis statement mentions, these students received the same information as the other experimental group to help them improve their work. As expected, there was little to no improvement based on the fact that the students do not possess a high enough English level to build new schemata. In other words, with the additional information given, the students still cannot elaborate their ideas in English. This is important to note because the intention of this research project is not to eliminate the necessity for English language classes. Furthermore, there is absolutely no intention to diminish the role of the teacher in the classroom. To summarize, the central idea presented in this thesis does not imply that anyone can learn English simply by reading in their native language. It remains absolutely essential that there is a solid, structured plan in place to teach English to the students. The following chart is the summary of the results from the group mentioned.

The following chart represents the data samples for secondary control group – Basic students. Evaluator 1			
Experimental		W1	W2
S1	Genesis	1	1
S2	Michael	1	2
S3	Bryan Daniel	1	1
S4	Dante	1	1
S5	Any	1	1
S6	Sandibel	2	2
S7	Jean Andre Renzo	1	1
S8	Maribel	1	1
S9	Jordy	2	2
S10	Kiara	1	1
S11	Geraldine	1	1
S12	Anthuanet	1	1

The following chart represents the data samples for secondary control group – Basic students. Evaluator 2			
Experimental		W1	W2
S1	Anthony	1	1
S2	Bruno	1	2
S3	Alejandra	2	1
S4	Angelo	1	1
S5	Miriam	1	1
S6	Milagros	2	2
S7	Dary	1	1
S8	Barla	1	1
S9	Oscar	2	2
S10	Carolina	1	1
S11	Geraldine	1	1
S12	Angelina	2	2

Figure 6: Intended Null Hypothesis basic students – Objective grading procedure

	Evaluator 1	
	Experimental Group W1	Experimental Group W2
Sum	14	15
Mean	1.2	1.3
Median	1.16	1.25
Standard Deviation	.09	
	Evaluator 2	
	Experimental Group W1	Experimental Group W2
Sum	16	15
Mean	1.3	1.3
Median	1.33	1.25
Standard Deviation	-.08	

Figure 7: *Intended Null Hypothesis basic students – Objective grading procedure results.*

3.12.2. Quantitative Data Holistic Based

The holistic grading system was also analyzed, but not by the teacher. This holistic evaluation system measured an upper intermediate level (B2 CEFR) to see if the hypothesis in question remains true for a wider range of evaluation that is not necessarily used in the classroom. The holistic system uses a 4 point scale which is mentioned in the appendix. In the following chart, it is apparent that the hypothesis holds true on a more profound evaluation system than is currently being used by the institute in question. This helps extend a certain level of validity for the theory as this can be used in a wider range of evaluation systems and, perhaps, with other subject material.

The following chart represents the data samples for secondary experimental group – Upper Intermediate students. Researcher 1			
Experimental		W1	W2
S1	Erika	2	4
S2	Carla	2	3
S3	Laura	2	3
S4	Ana Lorena	2	3
S5	Gustavo	3	4
S6	Eduardo	2	3
S7	Cristina	2	3
S8	Renzo	2	3
S9	Mariano	2	4
S10	Pablo	3	3
S11	Dany	2	4
S12	Ada	3	4
S13	Marisabel	2	3
S14	Miluska	3	3

Figure 8: Secondary experimental group – Upper Intermediate students – Researcher 1

	Researcher 1 - Holistic System	
	Experimental Group W1	Experimental Group W2
Sum	32	47
Mean	2.3	3.4
Median	2.29	3.36
Standard Deviation	1.07	

Figure 9: Secondary experimental group – Upper Intermediate students – Researcher 1 results.

3.12.3. Statistical Procedures

3.12.3.1. Statistical Procedures – Objective Grading

The first, and perhaps the most relevant, form of measure for the experimental groups was the repeated measure design – sign test. This test looks at the total number of participants and then takes into consideration the number of those who demonstrated positive changes, negative changes and participants who showed no change at all. These data are then classified in order to eliminate the null hypothesis along with its probability factor.

N (Exp. Evaluator 1)	+ Change	-Change	No change	Not considered*	R
25	14	3	4	4	2

N (Exp. Evaluator 2)	+ Change	-Change	No change	Not considered*	R
25	12	3	2	7	2.2

Figure 10: Sign Test Analysis of Alternative Hypothesis results Evaluators 1 and 2 – experimental and control groups 1 and 2. Objective grading procedure.

Interpretation: This test is the only valid way to analyze a grading system that has a very limited range (0 – 2 points). It simply shows that the grading system used in the classroom was positively affected by the introduction of the material used to help students increase their knowledge of the topics given in the classroom. The impact on their grades suggests that simply by having more knowledge of the topics that they are expected to write about the students can elaborate more and therefore use more target language structures and vocabulary as prescribed by the activity and the unit of study from the textbook. The statistical interpretation is a simple one that shows that the students who received both 2 points in their first and second attempts were discarded from the N number used for overall calculations. Then the number of positive changes – in this case the students who went from 1 to 2 on their first and second attempts respectively – were

compared with the number of no changes and negative changes to establish the fact that the null hypothesis can be discarded as the number indicates a high difference in the positive results versus the others mentioned. The relationship ends up establishing the ratio between the 12 positive changes and the 5 negative/no changes.

3.12.3.2. Statistical Procedures – Holistic Grading

The Holistic grading has a slightly broader range compared to the objective based system used by teachers at the institution profiled. It seems that the sign test is still very adequate for the holistic system which is still rather restricted as it only offers a score range from 0 – 4.

N (Exp. Researcher 1)	+ Change	-Change	No change	Not considered*	R
14	13	0	1	0	.8

Figure 11: Sign Test Analysis of Alternative Hypothesis results Researcher 1– experimental group 1. Holistic grading procedure.

Interpretation: The holistic system implemented, which strives to prove that B2 students on the CEFR can have significant improvement in terms of topic development, shows an even higher rate of success than the objective based system used for lower level students. This is important to increase the level of validity because it shows similar results using a different evaluation system for the same student base used in the objective based test. Furthermore, there is an increased level of reliability because this test proves that the holistic system of grading can be applied across a variety of English language teaching contexts and not only at the institution profiled in the preface.

3.12.3.3. Statistical Procedures – Ex-Post Facto

The results of this project present a very interesting point of reflection, which may lead teachers to value the design of this project for yet another purpose. In the first

place, the teachers “question log” showed that students seemed to have fewer questions regarding the actual instructions of the assignments. This led to faster reaction times, and may lead us to believe that by providing students with additional information about content, they build their confidence which makes them more apt to start their assignments because they have a better idea of what they want to write. In other words, some of the delay and confusion amongst the students who had not received the additional help mentioned may stem from the fact that they do not know what to write. Of course, this accusation would require further investigation, but the fact remains that the students have fewer questions and react faster to the tasks at hand after receiving the additional content building information. The other inference that can be determined or proven in this case is that students, in general, seemed more content with activities where they had a higher probability for a successful outcome. This goes without saying for most academic activities where success is based on a final grade.

In terms of the impact of this project from a teacher’s point of view, there were many fewer activities that teachers had to modify or skip because students were not able to elaborate on the topics at hand. This creates a balance in the process which does require teachers to understand which activities tend to be troublesome for students and then to find the information necessary to help students overcome the obstacle. In other words, teachers have to spend extra time preparing students for certain activities, but they do not have to spend extra time recreating certain activities. In addition, teachers can avoid that uncomfortable moment of silence in the classroom because students are much more likely to be semi-autonomous in their classroom behavior.

To conclude, the instrumentation and procedures outlined were of utmost importance for collecting the data needed. Chapter four shows how each group of students contributed to confirming the objectives set forth at the outset of this project.

Chapter IV

Research Findings

4.1. Quantitative Research Findings – Objectives Based Grading

Evaluator 1

The findings obtained through the statistical analysis show that the students benefited greatly from the information provided to them in order to allow them to write more about certain topics.

In terms of the objectives based grading system that the teachers use to evaluate students at the institute profiled, the Sign Test allowed for the Null Hypothesis to be rejected because 56% of the students in the first group showed a positive improvement. The final results in the first group showed that the students earned an average of .4 points more after receiving the information sheets specific to each activity tested. On the other hand, to eliminate the idea of incidental learning, the control was tested the same way and the increase was not sufficient to eliminate the Null Hypothesis. In other words, the results for the control group show a negative ratio between the students who got better results and the students who received worse results. The overall grade improvement for the control group was a mere .04 and with only .12% of the students showing improvement. The results fall well within the Null Hypothesis range for the control group.

In general terms, the students in experimental group 1 received an average of .4 points more out of a 2 point grading system. This represents a 20% increase in the way they were graded by the teacher.

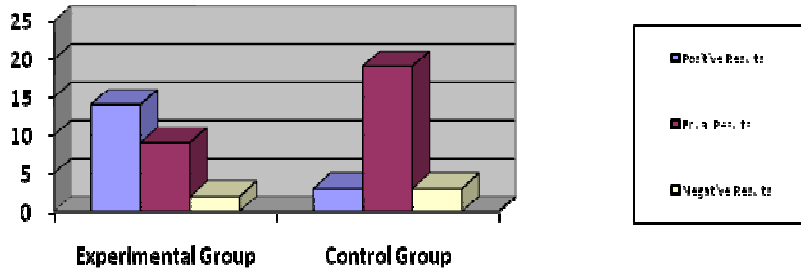


Figure 12: Bar graph showing number of students who had positive, equal or negative results from Evaluator 1 – Experimental Group and Control Group.

Figure 12 shows results for the first experimental group that was given 2 similar tasks to perform. For the first task, the students relied on their own previous knowledge in order to elaborate in English about a certain topic from their textbook. For the second task, information about the content of the upcoming evaluation was given in their native language – Spanish. In addition, it shows the results from the same evaluator for the first control group. This control was given the same tasks but without any information in their native language for either one.

In the experimental group, 14 students improved the scores of their second tasks after learning about the content matter in their native language - L1. Whereas 9 students obtained the same mark and only 2 students received a lower score for the second sample. This data shows a drastic improvement by more than 50% of the students tested after receiving information about the topic in Spanish.

In the control group, the results were obvious that by simply asking students to do a task and then repeat it without any further help had little impact on their results. For example, only 3 students were able to improve their grades after the second sample was collected. The majority of the students – 19 – obtained the same grade on the second sample as they did the first while an additional 3 students worsened their grades.

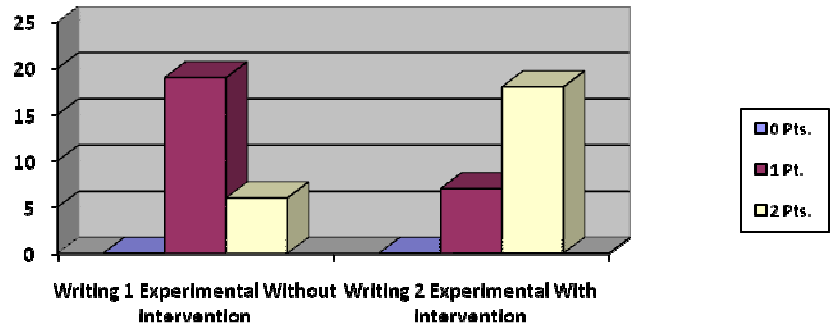


Figure 13: Bar graph showing the number of students who obtained grades of 0 points, 1 point or 2 points in Writing 1 and Writing 2 - Experimental Group (Evaluator 1).

Figure 13 shows the points received by the students for the first experimental and control groups. No students received 0 points in either group. However, in the first group, which is the first task without L1 help, 19 students received only 1 out of 2 points. When given help in their first language about understanding the topic prior to the collection of the language samples, using the same students, the results show that 18 students got 2 out of 2 points on the sample. These results show, without a doubt, that giving the students information about upcoming textbook content in their native language helps them understand the topics better and, therefore, elaborate on the topics much more allowing them to receive better grades in the classroom.

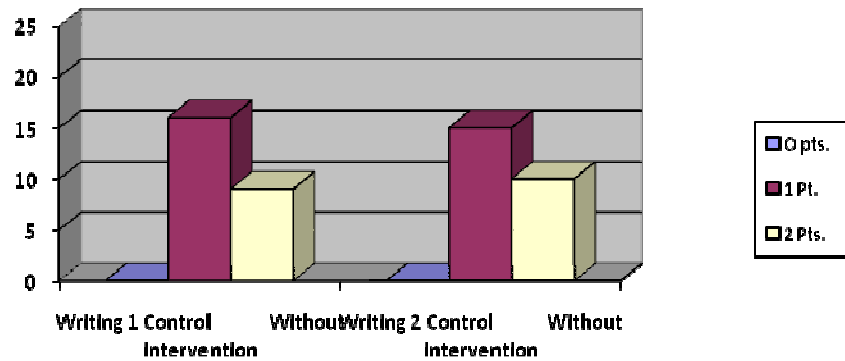


Figure 14: Bar graph showing the number of students who obtained grades of 0 points, 1 point or 2 points in Writing 1 and Writing 2 - Control Group. (Evaluator 1)

Figure 14 shows information about points obtained by the control group for both tasks 1 and 2. The information here suggests that having students simply perform a second task without giving them any additional help does not allow them to improve their scores. In this group, 16 students received 1 out of 2 points for task 1 while 15 students received the same score for task 2. This means that the overall performance was essentially the same between the 2 tasks.

Evaluator 2

The second group in question also represented similar results to group 1, although there were slight differences in the tendencies between the evaluators, the overall grade improvement reached the same average as group 1 at .4. This represents a total of 48% of the students showing an increase in their overall grade. The control group graded by the second evaluator showed a .08 grade improvement and only .16% of students showing improvement. These figures are considered null as in the first control group mentioned.

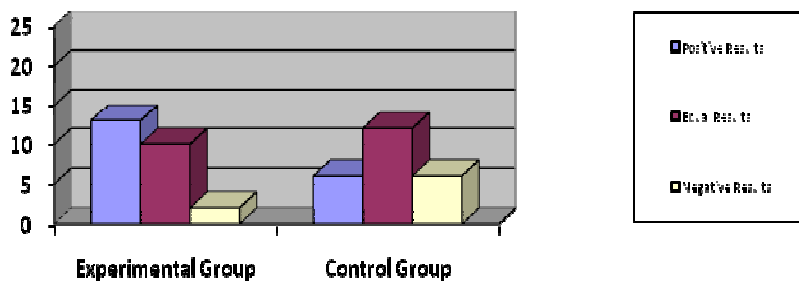


Figure 15: Bar graph showing number of students who had positive, equal or negative results from Evaluator 2 – Experimental Group and Control Group.

Figure 15, which represents the second experimental group, shows almost identical information obtained from evaluator 1. In this group, 13 students increased their score on the second task after receiving help in their L1. This is just slightly off of the numbers presented by Evaluator 1.

The second control group is also quite similar to the first where only 6 students were able to increase their scores on the second task

without any additional intervention from the teacher. Curiously enough, there was an equal number of students who decreased their grades on the second language sample also without any teacher help.

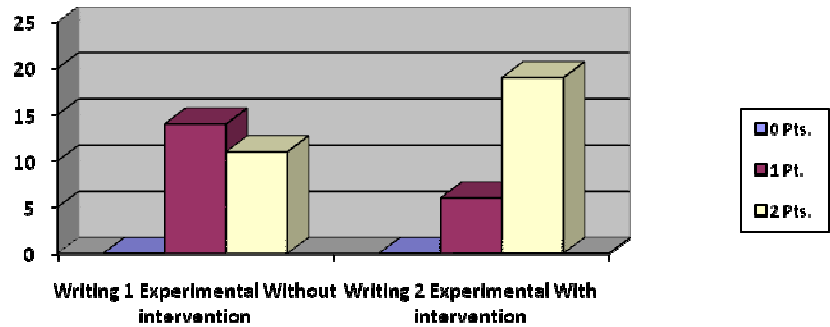
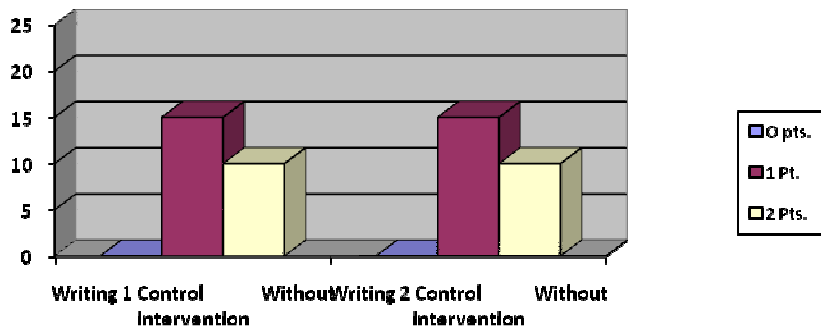


Figure 16: Bar graph showing the number of students who obtained grades of 0 points, 1 point or 2 points in Writing 1 and Writing 2 - Experimental Group. (Evaluator 2)

Figure 16 shows the points obtained by the second experimental group. The results are strikingly similar to the first group where it is apparent that 14 students got 1 out of 2 points on the task without L1 help while 19 students got 2 out of 2 points on the second task with L1 help. These numbers prove that the hypothesis presented is true. Students who read and understand certain topics in their native languages are much more likely to be able to elaborate more about these topics in a second language.



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Figure 17: Bar graph showing the number of students who obtained grades of 0 points, 1 point or 2 points in Writing 1 and Writing 2 - Control Group. (Evaluator 2)

Figure 17 shows that the two control group tasks produced exactly the same outcomes. In both cases, tasks 1 and 2, 15 out of 25 students received 1 out of 2 points on the tasks. This again shows that by simply repeating a task without helping students understand the content does not allow them to fully express themselves in the new L2.

4.2. Quantitative Research Findings - Objectives Based Grading Intended Null Hypothesis

The next group related to the objective grading system was based on students who had very few pedagogical hours studying English in the institute profiled. This group was investigated knowing that the results would fall in the Null Hypothesis category. This means that there was no measurable improvement. The main purpose, that was previously mentioned, is to prove that English classes, textbooks and, of course, English teachers are still necessary for students to improve their English language skills. The foundation of this part of the thesis proves that no matter how much schemata building is attempted, the students' English language performance is limited due to the number of hours studied. In other words, it is still necessary to study in a systematic English language teaching program.

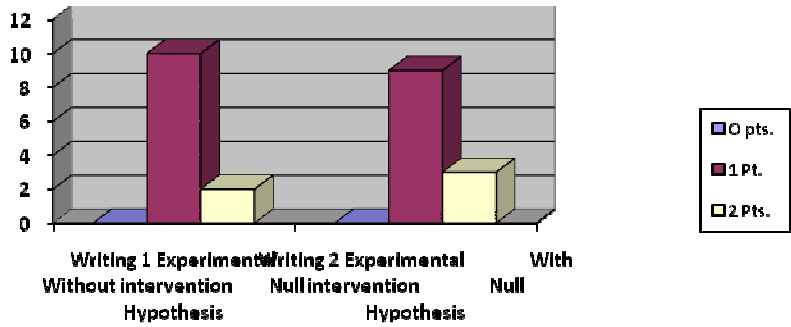
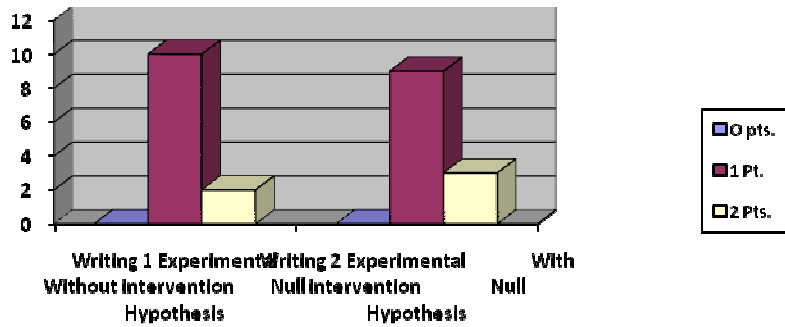


Figure 18: Bar graph showing number of students who obtained 0 points, 1 point or 2 points from Evaluator 1 – Basic level Experimental Group – Intended Null Hypothesis.

Figure 18 proves that it is still completely necessary to have English classes. In other words, by reading in your own L1, you will not learn an L2. This concept seems quite obvious but it was included in this project to prove that the experimental group success was no fluke. In addition, it coincides with the fact that the mission of this research project is not to eliminate the need for English classes. In this figure, we can see that 10 out of 12 students received 1 out of 2 points without reading any previous material in their native language. The second set of figures proves that the same students who did read up on the content of the upcoming evaluation in their L1 had virtually the same result. 9 out of 12 students got 1 out of 2 points on the evaluation. In other words, giving basic students information about the topics in Spanish does not offset the fact that they simply have very limited vocabulary and knowledge of English grammar.



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Figure 19: Bar graph showing number of students who obtained 0 points, 1 point or 2 points from Evaluator 2 – Basic level Experimental Group – Intended Null Hypothesis.

Figure 19 is the final confirmation that testing this hypothesis on very basic students does not increase their scoring which means it does not increase their speaking and writing abilities. In this chart, the data gathered by evaluator 2 simply repeats that of evaluator 1.

4.3. Quantitative Research findings – Holistic Based Grading

As far as the holistic based evaluation is concerned, the overall improvement of the students shows an even more marked improvement than does the objectives based data. Effectively 98% of the students showed an improvement in the depth and the range of their work. This means that only one student stayed the same while all the others showed some degree of improvement. It is worth mentioning that in this test, none of the students showed a negative change. The implication here is that all of the data were considered because none of the students started with a perfect score as was the case with the objectives based system. For this section, the standard positive deviation for the experimental group is 1.08 which represents an overall change of more than 25% based on the 4 point score. This is important for the whole project because the hypothesis has potential uses with other evaluation criteria and areas of study.

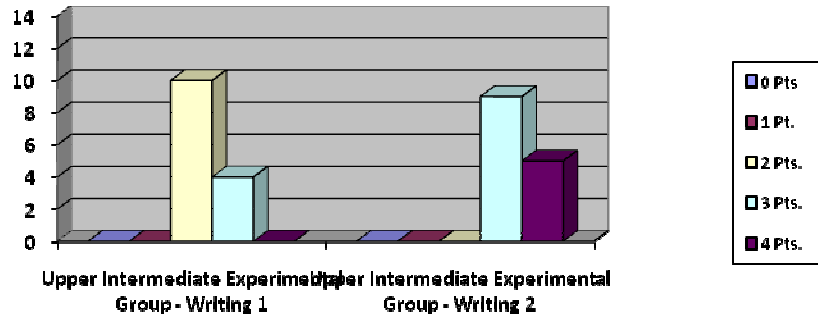


Figure 20: Bar graph showing number of students who improved their grade using the Holistic Grading System.

Figure 20 shows the data results of students who were in an upper intermediate class where the grading procedure is more holistic than simply objectives based. In this case, the point system used is out of 4 points and not 2 like in the objective grading system. This experimental group shows that by asking students to write about certain topics with reading about them beforehand in English increases their grade point average drastically. In this group, the first writing without any L2 help, there are 10 out of 14 students with 2 out of 4 points. By giving students information to read in the L2 before writing about the topic, 9 out of 14 students got 3 out of 4 points. This proves, without a shadow of a doubt, that the hypothesis holds true for both grading systems – objectives based and holistic based using the L2 when students have an advanced enough level of English as a Foreign language..

4.4. Discussion – Research Questions

A.) Do learners who attempt to understand the basis of the material and content presented in any given English Language Teaching textbook series receive a more accurate evaluation of their true English Language level?

The answer to this question is without a doubt yes. The results of the objective based grading system show that more than half of the students averaged between the 2 experimental groups improved their performance by at least 20% which, in terms of the raw score, equals .4 out of a rather limited 2 point system. As presumed in the thesis statement and concluded with the data analysis, the students who are

evaluated at the institution mentioned can simply extend their work by having more knowledge of the topics tested and presumably many other topics. The implication is that by extending their work, the students can offer the teacher more target language structures which allow the teacher to more accurately evaluate the students. It was proven that some of the language samples in the control group and in the first sample of the experimental group show that some students received low grades simply because of the lack of target language structures that the teacher was expecting to see. The simple introduction of information allowed for the students to write more; therefore, receiving, in general, higher grades.

B.) Can these same learners extend the range and depth of their work based on the extended knowledge provided to them by their teacher?

The second question is also answered positively. It is worth mentioning that the results to this answer show a higher level of increase, which means that students can offer more profound answers to the questions posed in the textbook in question. In addition, the topic development is richer simply based on the additional details that students received from the information sheets.

4.5. Implications

The implications are simple for this research study. The teachers using the textbook profiled in this project will allow their students to maximize the activities given to them in the book. The depth of the implications is noted in the fact that their motivation level seems higher because they seem to know what they want to say. This boost in their confidence level also seemed to reduce the number of questions student had before beginning the activity. Their confidence and motivation seem to go hand in hand.

The next implication is based on the fact that teachers will not have to skip or alter as many activities, as the students will be able to perform the given tasks much more efficiently and effectively. The teachers will have to investigate the information needed for each individual activity which means that the teachers will have a certain investment of time. It is highly recommended that the teachers build an information bank which, over time, will reduce the need for extra time to be invested in class preparation. In short, the students will have more confidence. They

will be graded more fairly, and the teachers will face less awkward silence in the classroom during these types of activities.

4.6. Limitations

Some limitations exist with the research project in general. First of all, officially, the results cannot be generalized because all of the sample groups contain less than 30 students. This means that, according to internationally accepted research guidelines, there may be some contextual tendencies that limit the results. Secondly, the research was limited to one textbook series used by the students. The activities were tested amongst different groups that represented a wider range of the student base as they were selected at different schedules to try to cover the student diversity that is represented between the different schedules offered at the institution. However, the groups of students were not randomly chosen. They simply represent the students that registered for the given courses on their own accord.

4.7. Recommendation for Further Study

The Following are suggested topics for research based on this study.

1.) To what extent does the students' place of birth and social customs relate to the need to present schemata as presented by the original hypothesis?

This would be very helpful for institutions to simply survey the incoming students in order to predict certain tendencies that might be inherent in different groups of students from different regions of a country. This would be particularly helpful in managing the difficulties presented by mixed ability groups of students.

2.) To what extent does the student's educational background affect his or her ability to manage textbook tasks? Can a definite distinction be drawn between the performance of public school students and private school students?

Here again, the importance of surveying incoming students is evident. In this case, rather than looking for birthplace, it would be

helpful to look at previous education background. Knowing whether a student comes from a public or private school education may also determine certain language abilities and, again, my help with the issue of mixed ability groups.

3.) Does sex establish a predictable pattern of results as prescribed by this project?

Perhaps the least obvious division based on the preliminary data collected in this research project, would be to determine language ability predictability based on sex. This information, however, might be useful in combination with the other areas of further study profiled in section four.

In conclusion, can an institution create a blanket questionnaire that can help place students together that have similar characteristics? In other words, is it possible to avoid mixed ability in the classroom? Is it possible to create a group of students based on mixed ability? The answers to these questions might be very helpful for institutions as they receive incoming students. Whether similar students are placed together in the same classroom, or if stronger students are placed with weaker ones in equal numbers is another area for further investigation.

Conclusions

1. The results of this research project have proven, without a doubt that the students (A2 on up - CEFR) can better show their true English language level skills by first having more information about the topics that they are expected to use in order to show their language abilities.

This was accomplished by using two different evaluators that work for the same institution but at different locations. In addition, the student selection process consisted of looking at students who study at different schedules in order to see how this research project affected the different type of students that tend to study at different points during the day; for example, the adults who study in the morning versus the teenagers that tend to study more in the afternoon.

The results, as published in section four, show that the students in question on a whole improved their ability to elaborate on the different topics presented in the textbook based on the fact that they have more base knowledge of the topics. This proves that, in many cases, students who do not respond to certain activities given in the textbook series used simply lack the confidence to do so based on their lack of previous knowledge of the subject material. Furthermore, there is a serious concern about how accurate the evaluation process is for these students if their true English ability is not shown.

2. This research project is in no way intended to replace the necessary English class and teacher. The students, who were tested in their second month (A1 – CEFR) of studying English, show no increase after receiving the extra information because they simply do not possess enough English vocabulary and other language information like grammatical structures etc.

These students, called basic two students, had no way of improving their English ability after reading about content material in their native language. This was to be expected as the students profiled in this case simply have very limited experience with English. The results in this case showed that the students will not benefit at this level, but the supposition is that they will develop a strategy for language learning and evaluation preparation that will benefit them as they reach the A2 CEFR level. They will then feel very comfortable researching topics on their own and, therefore, receive more accurate evaluations based on their real English language ability.

3. Upper intermediate (B2 – CEFR) Showed an improvement in the depth and range of their work because they possess knowledge of the vocabulary and grammatical structures necessary to elaborate their work even more when they have extended knowledge of the topics.

This improvement was measured on a holistic based grading system that is employed for students at this upper intermediate level. Again, the idea is simply to allow these more proficient students to elaborate even further on topics that they might not otherwise have much information about. The end result is basically the same as the more basic groups who were tested with an objective based grading system which is to provide students with the previous knowledge of topics presented in their textbooks that allow them to show their English ability and not be hampered by the fact that they simply do not know about the topics.

4. Teachers can avoid skipping these known troublesome activities by simply preparing the students for the content that is to become part of the evaluation process.

Many teachers surveyed for this research project mention that they simply skip these activities that present the distinct challenge of needing previous information in order to fully elaborate their ideas in English and receive a more accurate evaluation of their English level. In fact, it seems easier to assign students with the task of researching basic information about these troublesome topics in their native language outside of class rather than completely reinventing the task. It is certainly better than simply skipping the topic altogether.

5. The teachers at any given institution can share experiences regarding the activities that they think fit these criteria.

Given the fact that the students profiled in this research project represent the vast majority of the student base in Lima and, perhaps all of Peru, it is safe to say that many other institutions that use similar textbook series would be able to benefit from this process as well. It is worth mentioning that the capital city of Peru where the research took place is a fair representation of students from many of the provinces in Peru as Lima is melting pot of different cultures that are present throughout Peru. Although this would require further study, students in other areas of Peru and, perhaps Latin America, could also benefit from these results.

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Appendices

**Appendix A:
Teacher Survey**

Dear Colleague,

I am working on a research Project for my professional development that aims to help increase the depth of students' writing and speaking skills. In order to accomplish this task, it is important to know some topics (communication/writing activities) that your students often struggle with. Please write down some activities that you feel fit these criteria. Please remember that your answer can be based on any teaching context that you have experienced. In addition, these responses can be based on any book as well. It is important to remember that this research is in no way intended to criticize any textbook on the market present or past.

Your Name.

Years teaching.

Appendix B: Teacher Responses

Basic level

Group 1:

- Do you like your name?
- Do you know a famous name changer?
- Do you buy electronics on the internet?

Group 2:

- Do people wear costumes for festivals or holidays in your country?
- Is the internet a good way to meet people?

Group 3:

- Where is a good area for window shopping in your city?
- What do you buy on the internet?
- What are some unusual jobs for men? For Women?
- Is it easy for college students to find a job?

Group 4:

- Do you look like a famous person?
- What gestures are rude in your country?
- Talk about some reality TV shows.
- Imagine you want to have a garage sale?

Group 5:

- Which are the best neighborhoods in your city? The Worst? (they are where the is live)
- What are good reasons to live in a suburb?
- Do you have a passport? Why or Why not?
- How often do you go on vacation (travel)?
- When you travel do you ever leave things in your hotel room or the airport?
- Imagine you found \$850,000.
- Dreamer, Artist, Thinker and partner: think of a famous person for each type.

Group 6:

- Do you make New Year's resolutions? What kind?
- Name a holiday that celebrates a national hero – what do people do on that day?
- Who are your heroes? Name one from the past.
- What stories do you know about animal heroes?
- Do you know Kosovo, Afghanistan and Chechnya?
- Talk about a time when a stranger helped you.
- How do you remember new English vocabulary?
- Do you daydream? What about?
- Do you try to understand the meaning of your dreams?

Group 7:

- Do you think animals can communicate with humans? Do you know of any animals with special talents?
- How often do you compliment others?
- What kind of movies do you rent?
- Do you read movie reviews?
- What is the name of a movie remake?

Group 8:

- Do you have a high school yearbook?
- What are some people nosy about?
- What class awards are given in your high school?
- Talk about a famous detective you know from TV.
- Do you know any other stories about strange lights in the sky?
- Talk about Hoaxes.

Group 9:

- What do you think about being a house husband?
- Would you like to have a makeover?
- What things are old fashioned?
- Why do companies use trend spotters?
- Do you think an errand service is a good idea?

Group 10:

- Would you like to work for a catering company?
- Create a theme party.
- What American festivals do you know?
- Do you know the end of the movie Lion King?
- Talk about dog-walkers.

Group 11:

- Do you like to talk on the phone?
- Talk about rescue robots.
- Would you put your dog in a kennel?
- What cities are good destinations if you are traveling solo?

Intermediate level

Group 1:

- When you go on vacation, do you prefer a luxurious place or a simple place?
- What features do you think are important in a new home?
- Do you prefer to travel by bus or by car?
- How do you get your news?

Group 2:

- Why do people use personal ads? Are they a good way to meet people?
- Have you ever been on a guided tour?
- Have you made a culture capsule?
- What do you know about Starbucks, Nike and Microsoft?
- What famous businessmen/women do you know?

Group 3:

- Do you like your doctor?
- If you were asked to start a neighborhood association what would you do to get members?

Group 4:

- When choosing a hotel, what features do you look for?
- Name a manmade wonder or engineering feat.

Appendix B1

The responses to the questionnaire are divided into Basic and Intermediate levels. The basic level consists of 0-12 months of instruction which is equivalent to 0-456 hours of classroom instruction. The intermediate level is limited to 13-24 months of instruction that range from 457-912 hours of instruction. These numbers represent the educational structure of the students being tested which, as mentioned in the introduction, divides each level into separate months. Each month consists of 38 hours of instruction including formal evaluation.

**Appendix C:
Questionnaire - Student**

Name _____ Group 1 task 1

Dear Student,

Why do you think this activity is difficult for you? (¿Por qué crees tú que la actividad en cuestión es muy difícil para ti?)

- A. I do not understand the English words in the instructions. (No entiendo las palabras en inglés)
- B. I do not have previous knowledge of the subject matter. (No tengo conocimiento previo del tema)
- C. I do not care about the topic. (No me importa el tema)
- D. I do not like to study English. (No me gusta estudiar inglés)
- E. Other: _____

Obejective:

(To be completed by the teacher- Estar completado por el professor)

Signature (firma)

Appendix C1

Some of the responses included in the survey generally were based on activities that asked students to talk about certain issues that they just simply did not understand and, to which they most certainly lacked any previous exposure. For example, one author asked students to talk about animal heroes. The book wanted to present adjectives regarding heroic behavior and such, but the problem here

Appendix D

Appendix D – Student Response chart Secondary Control Group Basic Students – Evaluator 1			
The following chart represents the answers to the survey for the secondary control group – Basic students. Evaluator 1			
Experimental		Answer	Other
S1	Genesis	A	
S2	Michael	A	
S3	Bryan Daniel	C	
S4	Dante	E	Vocabulary
S5	Any	A	
S6	Sandibel	A	
S7	Jean Andre Renzo	E	Vocabulary
S8	Maribel	E	English
S9	Jordy	B	
S10	Kiara	A	
S11	Geraldine	C	
S12	Anthuanet	E	Vocabulary

To sum up the information concluded from the experimental group 2, it is safe to say that the students have difficulty preparing their writing samples because they do not know enough English which is represented with 5 students marking letter A that says they do not understand English. In addition, 4 students marked other. 3 of them claim that they do not have enough vocabulary in English while the 4th wrote English as being the cause of the difficulty. Altogether, 2 students wrote that they do not care about the topic. This may be due to their age and their interest in English or in this research project. Only 1 student wrote that he did not have previous knowledge about the topic. This proves the theory that it is still necessary to have an English teacher along with textbooks and classes. It is impossible to simply give entry level students information in their native language and expect them to learn English on their own.

Appendix E

Appendix E – Student Response chart			
The following chart represents the answers to the survey for the secondary control group – Basic students. Evaluator 2			
Experimental		Answer	Other
S1	Anthony	B	
S2	Bruno	B	
S3	Alejandra	A	
S4	Angelo	A	
S5	Miriam	C	
S6	Milagros	A	
S7	Dary	E	Words
S8	Barla	E	Vocabulary
S9	Oscar	C	
S10	Carolina	E	
S11	Geraldine	A	
S12	Angelina	A	

To conclude the information for the 2nd secondary control group of basic students (evaluator 2), you can see that the answers to the survey were very similar to those in the 1st secondary control group (evaluator 1). 2 students marked answer B and 5 marked answer A. These are exact matches to the 1st group mentioned. 2 students marked letter C with 3 more marking letter E. In terms of the reasons given with the 3 answers E marked, 1 was left blank with yet another writing vocabulary and one more writing “words”.

Appendix F

Appendix F – Student Response chart Secondary Control Group Intermediate Students			
The following chart represents the answers to the survey questions for the secondary experimental group – Upper Intermediate level. Researcher 1			
Experimental		Answer	Other
S1	Erika	A	
S2	Carla	B	
S3	Laura	B	
S4	Ana Lorena	B	
S5	Gustavo	B	
S6	Eduardo	B	
S7	Cristina	E	Topic
S8	Renzo	E	Grammar
S9	Mariano	A	
S10	Pablo	B	
S11	Dany	B	
S12	Ada	B	
S13	Marisabel	A	
S14	Miluska	C	

The results for the experimental group are very impressive and point out that out of 14 upper intermediate students, 8 say that they have trouble developing their activities because they lack previous knowledge of the topic. This is the ultimate target group for this research project because as the research shows, this is the group that benefited the most from the investigation of the theory stated. In addition, we can see that 57% of these students recognize the fact that they have not heard much about the topics that they are expected to write about.

Appendix H: Teacher Rubrics

Categories of Student Performance

Among the most difficult issues in language evaluation and assessment is defining the varying degrees of a student's performance and associating them with specific scores or grades that reflect student achievement in a course. This applies to measuring a student's response to a communicative activity or task, which in turn represents an opportunity for them to demonstrate the ability to meet a specific learning objective, as well as the ability to respond satisfactorily to other forms of oral and written tests. In order to grade student's accurately, most of the responsibility lies with the teacher, especially when student responses to in-class activities and tasks are being evaluated and a good sense of judgment – based on clearly defined criteria – is required. Language samples from students must be classified into degrees of performance and graded accordingly, which makes the teacher's sense of perception indispensable for successful assessment and evaluation.

The fact that teachers can often apply evaluation criteria in accordance with their own perceptions in detriment of uniformity, or inter-rater reliability, represents a challenge that must be overcome. In order to minimize the degree of variance among teachers when assigning grades for similar levels of performance, the system, particularly the evaluation criteria, must be simple and easy to understand, with clearly defined parameters of performance in favor of a higher degree of reliability. In order to create such an instrument, research was done on current approaches to evaluation and assessment, with a study of existing frameworks and exemplars that could be considered for our particular setting.

In order to apply evaluation and assessment correctly in the classroom, it is important for teachers to first understand the difference between these two terms whenever such a distinction is made. Burke (1999) highlights the difference by describing assessment as “an ongoing process of gathering and analyzing evidence of what a student can do”, whereas “evaluation is the process of interpreting the evidence and making judgments and decisions based on the evidence” (Introduction, xviii). In other words, the application of the term “evaluation” in our

setting would result in a grade to support a judgment of the student's performance, or what is commonly called a test in its various forms, whereas assessment implies that a teacher is always gathering data as a result of the endless number of interactions that take place in the classroom, using that data to make decisions to adapt instructional practice accordingly. It is important, however, to point out that both terms are often used interchangeably. Nevertheless, we will adhere to the definitions presented herein for purposes of clarity.

In order to assess student performance in response to activities, tasks, and projects, it is common practice to use rubrics, which are often in the form of grids or charts, since they contain the evaluation criteria used to define the varying degrees of student success in the accomplishment of specific learning objectives and make it easier to assign the respective scores. Analytic and holistic scoring instruments are commonly used, both of which will characterize our new evaluation and assessment system. The actual instruments and nature of their use depends on the type of student output to be evaluated as well as the course level.

The next section will present the actual scoring grids that teachers must use to assess student performance and assign scores using the Class list & Worksheet control. The rubrics that are analytic in nature, which require the use of interdependent categories, focus on two key categories of performance: accuracy and communication. They are used for oral and writing samples obtained from students in Basic (students) through Intermediate (students), with the exception of the extensive writing samples (ex. Essays, compositions, reports, etc.), which are introduced in Upper Intermediate Courses. These will be evaluated through a holistic scoring grid, which is also explained later on.

Speaking:

The evaluation and assessment, particularly the first, of a student's speaking skills can be a very demanding endeavor. A teacher must at least possess a solid understanding of the types of language samples that are to be sought, the activities through which the samples can be obtained, and the rubrics or evaluation criteria to be used. However, as we will soon also see in the section on writing, it is important to differentiate between the different types of language samples, which in

turn can be associated with specific forms of prompts, activities or tasks. Brown (2003, pp.141-142) offers an excellent summary of the oral language sample types that students commonly produce:

- Imitative – The simplest form of utterance, students are expected to reproduce a language sample in the form of a word, phrase, or possibly even a sentence by repeating (imitating) the target model. The main focus is pronunciation.
- Intensive – Interaction is kept to a minimum and students are only expected to produce short samples of language that are directly associated with grammatical form(s) or the ability to demonstrate phrasal, lexical or phonological relationships. The types of activities used for elicitation are directed response tasks, reading aloud, sentence and dialogue completion, picture-cued tasks designed for short responses, and translation up to the single sentence level.
- Responsive – The primary characteristic is the fact that students are allowed more freedom to respond within the context of short conversations, standard greetings and small talk, simple requests, brief summaries, opinions and comments, etc., but the total length of the student's spoken utterances is still very short. The stimulus is basically a spoken prompt on the part of the teacher or another student (much scaffolding through previously prepared material) with only one or two follow-up questions.
- Interactive – The length and complexity of the student's oral production are significantly greater as opposed to what could be expected in a responsive scenario. Multiple exchanges and participants are possible for the purpose of exchanging specific information (transactional language) or maintaining social relationships (interpersonal exchange). These samples can be obtained through role-plays, extended picture prompt activities, pair work and group work activities in the form of discussions and conversations of the I2 type or those focusing primarily on meaning, such as the I3's and I4's.
- Extensive (monologue) - These oral production samples include speeches, oral presentations, and story-telling with much planning

on the part of the speaker. Interaction with other interlocutors is usually minimal or non-existent unless there is a provision for questions and answers during the episode.

In our own setting, we will be dealing primarily with responsive, interactive, and extensive sample types where formal evaluation is concerned although the last is basically reserved for the category of “Autonomous Learning Project” when in-class performance is required, particularly at the upper-intermediate level. However, all speaking types are to be considered valuable for formative assessment purposes.

The following rubrics for Speaking, which have been developed exclusively by (this institution) along Brown’s (2003) framework, provide the criteria to consider when scoring a students’ performance in class in response to a specific learning objective:

AREA	SCORE	
	0	1
Accuracy	The student was mostly unable to use the target form(s) successfully or only did so after receiving assistance.	The student was able to use the target form(s) successfully most of the time without assistance.
Communication	The student's language was incomprehensible at least 50% of the time, not in accordance with a successful completion of the task, or ambiguous because of misused vocabulary.	The student's language was comprehensible most of the time, in accordance with the successful completion of the task, and characterized by a correct use of vocabulary.

Appendix I: Researcher Rubrics (Holistic)

1. Topic is richly, fully and complexly developed. Organization is appropriate and effective, and there is excellent control of connection. Flexible use of a wide range of syntactic (sentence level) structures, and accurate morphological (word form) control. Vocabulary is broad and appropriately used. Spelling and punctuation appear error free.
2. Topic is generally clearly and completely developed, with at least some acknowledgement of its complexity. Organization is controlled and generally appropriate to the material, and there are few problems with connection. Both simple and complex syntactic structures are used with some flexibility; morphological control is generally good. Vocabulary use shows some flexibility, and is appropriate. Spelling and punctuation errors are sometimes distracting.
3. Topic is developed clearly but not completely and without acknowledging its complexity. Organization is generally controlled, while connection is sometimes absent or unsuccessful. Both simple and complex syntactic structures are present, in some essays at this level these are used cautiously and accurately while in others there is more fluency and less accuracy. Morphological control is inconsistent. Vocabulary is adequate, but may sometimes be inappropriately used. Spelling and punctuation errors are sometimes distracting.
4. Topic development is present, though limited by incompleteness, lack of clarity, or lack of focus. The topic may be treated as though it has only one dimension, or only one point of view is possible. Organization is partially controlled, while connection is often absent or unsuccessful. In some essays at this level both simple and complex syntactic structures are present, but with many errors, others have accurate syntax but are very restricted in the range of language attempted. Morphological control is inconsistent. Vocabulary is sometimes inadequate, and sometimes inappropriately used. Spelling and punctuation errors are sometimes distracting.

Appendix J: Information Sheets - Spanish

La **Feria Gastronómica Internacional de Lima** es una feria anual que se realiza en la ciudad de Lima. Esta feria es organizada por la Sociedad Peruana de Gastronomía (APEGA), asociación fundada por el chef Gastón Acurio, y actualmente liderado por su presidente Mariano Valderama.

La primera edición de la feria llevó el nombre de "Perú Mucho Gusto" y se realizó en las antiguas instalaciones del Cuartel San Martín, en el distrito limeño de Miraflores, en septiembre de 2008, congregando a más de 23 mil visitantes.

En su segunda edición, la feria cambió su nombre a "Mistura 2009" y se trasladó al Parque de la Exposición, en el Cercado de Lima. El éxito de Mistura 2009 fue rotundo, con más de 150 mil visitantes en sus cuatro días, lo cual la convierte en una de las ferias gastronómicas más grandes de Latinoamérica.

La tercera Mistura se realizó en 2010, con cinco días de duración y ampliando su área utilizado en el Parque de la Exposición en casi el doble. El tercer evento, Mistura 2010 celebraba, con un enfoque especial los productores agrícolas, incluyendo presentaciones, charlas, y participación de varios productores de la papa nativa. Además, en Mistura 2010 se presentó el tema de "Gastronomía Sostenible" con charlas, lanzamiento de la página web de www.Gastronomiasostenible.pe y "el puente de sostenibilidad" con un enfoque en la anchoveta *Engraulis ringens*.

La cuarta MISTURA, patrocinado por APEGA, sucederá para el tercer año en Parque de la Exposición con un duración de 11 días, abierto al público general entre 9 Setiembre hasta el 18 de Setiembre. En 2011 Las Frutas Amazónicas será protagonista, con el ceviche como plato de estrella. En 2011, MISTURA seguirá exponiendo el tema de sostenibilidad y su importancia en la difusión de la gastronomía Peruana. Según APEGA³, además de docenas de chefs, cocineros y proveedores peruanos, MISTURA 2011 contara con la participación de líderes culinarias internacionales como Ferrán Adrià de España, René Redzepi de Dinamarca, Michel Bras de Francia, Yukio Hattori de Japón, Massimo

Bottura de Italia, Dan Barber de EEUU, Alex Atala de Brasil, y Heston Blumenthal de Reino Unido. La feria está centrada en la gastronomía e inclusión social e incluye concursos, mesas redondas, charlas magistrales, ciclos de cine y presentaciones de libros y música, entre otras actividades.

La **gastronomía del Perú** es de las más diversas del mundo, como lo demuestra el hecho que es el país con mayor número de platos típicos en el mundo, y según varios entendidos alcanza un nivel equivalente al de la comida francesa, china e hindú.

La cocina peruana resulta de la fusión inicial de la tradición culinaria del antiguo Perú —con sus propias técnicas y potajes— con la cocina española en su variante más fuertemente influenciada por la presencia morisca en la Península Ibérica y con importante aporte de las costumbres culinarias traídas de la costa atlántica del África subsahariana por los esclavos. Posteriormente, este mestizaje se vio influenciado por los usos y costumbres culinarios de los chefs franceses que huyeron de la revolución en su país para radicarse, en buen número, en la capital del virreinato del Perú. Igualmente trascendental fue la influencia de las inmigraciones del siglo XIX, que incluyó chinos cantoneses, japoneses e italianos, entre otros orígenes principalmente europeos.

Como particularidad exclusiva de la gastronomía del Perú, *existen comidas y sabores de cuatro continentes en un solo país* y, esto, desde la segunda mitad del siglo XIX.

Las artes culinarias peruanas están en constante evolución y esto, sumado a la variedad de platos tradicionales, hace imposible establecer una lista completa de sus platos representativos. Cabe mencionar que a lo largo de la costa peruana existen más de dos mil quinientos diferentes tipos registrados de sopas, asimismo existen más de 250 postres tradicionales.

Appendix K: Information Sheet – Spanish 2

Una **tienda en línea** (también conocida como **tienda online**, **tienda virtual** o **tienda electrónica**) se refiere a un comercio convencional que usa como medio principal para realizar sus transacciones un sitio web de Internet.

Los vendedores de productos y servicios ponen a disposición de sus clientes un sitio web en el cual pueden observar imágenes de los productos, leer sus especificaciones y finalmente adquirirlos. Este servicio le da al cliente rapidez en la compra, la posibilidad de hacerlo desde cualquier lugar y a cualquier hora. Algunas tiendas en línea incluyen dentro de la propia página del producto los manuales de usuario de manera que el cliente puede darse una idea de antemano de lo que está adquiriendo; igualmente incluyen la facilidad para que compradores previos califiquen y evalúen el producto.

Típicamente estos productos se pagan mediante tarjeta de crédito y se le envían al cliente por correo, aunque según el país y la tienda pueden haber otras opciones, como Paypal.

La inmensa mayoría de tiendas en línea requieren la creación de un usuario en el sitio web a partir de datos como nombre, dirección y correo electrónico. Este último a veces es utilizado como medio de validación.

Debido a las amenazas a la privacidad de los datos en Internet y la amenaza de robo de identidad es muy importante hacer compras en línea solamente en sitios reconocidos y de buena reputación. Igualmente es recomendable no proporcionar datos personales ni de tarjeta de crédito si no se está utilizando una conexión segura.

Para asegurarse que la tienda visita es legítima, se puede comprobar, entre otros, los elementos siguientes:

- Presencia de Condiciones de Uso y Aviso legal
- Datos de contacto completos, incluyendo el nombre y la dirección de la empresa (LOPD)
- Sello de confianza reconocido como el de Confianza Online, o recomendación por la FECEMD

- Presencia en directorios de tiendas online, que compraban estos elementos
- Existencia de una tienda física, aunque no imprescindible
- Aviso de consumidores en sitios externos (comparadores, foros, directorios de tiendas...)
- Ganador de premios de comercio electrónico

Aunque varios vendedores en línea están dispuestos a hacer envíos internacionales, por ejemplo desde Estados Unidos a algún país de América Latina, no pueden garantizar el despacho del envío por la incertidumbre sobre el servicio de correo hacia dichos países. Estos envíos internacionales dificultan también las devoluciones y los reclamos por garantía. Finalmente los servicios de aduana locales en el país de destino pueden exigir el pago de impuestos adicionales a la hora de introducir los productos al país

Appendix L: Information Sheet 3 - English

Animals have a knack for saving other animals, but they've also been known to put themselves in the line of danger for humans -- and we're not just talking about pet dogs that protect their homes from burglars.

From dolphins that rescued a surfer from sharks and a whale that helped a drowning athlete to an elephant that protected a young girl from a tsunami, these amazing, selfless animal heroes remind us once again of the unique species we co-habitat with that we need to protect.

Whale Saves Diver

Athlete Yang Yun was part of an underwater competition that required contestants to remain at the bottom of a 20-foot arctic pool in China's Polar Land when the freezing temperatures caused her legs to cramp, leaving her unable to return to the surface.

That's when one of the tank's residents, a beluga whale named Mila grabbed Yun's leg and guided her up toward the air.

Dolphins Save Surfer

Flipper spent several seasons helping humans out of jams, but his rescues aren't entirely out of the ordinary for the dolphin population.

Stories of dolphins rescuing humans are everywhere, including the one about Todd Endris, a surfer who survived an attack by a great white shark that he said "came out of nowhere" off the coast of California.

After he was bitten, a pod of bottlenose dolphins circled Endris, holding off the shark until he could make it back to shore -- just as they would for one of their own.

Gorilla Saves Boy

When a 3-year-old boy fell into the gorilla exhibit at the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois it wasn't just injuries from the 24-foot-drop that put him in

danger: The exhibit had several adult gorillas on display that were also a threat.

But 7-year-old female gorilla Binti took over, picking up the boy and cradling him before leaving him gently by a door for zookeepers to rescue him. The toddler was transferred to the hospital and recovered.

Dog Saves Boy

Man's best friend isn't the kind to shy away from rescuing an owner, but it's still heartwarming to hear about pups that put themselves in harm's way for their masters.

In this case, it was 18-week-old puppy Pinky who grabbed the attention of a swarm of bees that was headed for her human companion, 9-year-old Richie Bragg: Pinky was stung more than 40 times but survived and most likely saved Richie -- who has a blood condition that prevents proper clotting -- from needing serious medical attention.

Seal Saves Man

When an injured elephant seal pup was rescued in 1994 at the animal center that would become the Aquarium of the Pacific, keepers were simply hoping she'd survive -- she did, and became a favorite of visitors and locals with a reputation for being "a gentle giant," as volunteer Hugh Ryono writes on the Aquarium's blog.

But when Ryono fell while feeding seal pups a year later and found himself unable to get out of the way of the pups' aggression, it was Gimpy that stepped in, protecting Ryono from an attack (and earning a write-up in *Reader's Digest*).

Lions Save Girl

While some sites dispute the truth of this story, *The Guardian* reports that, in 2005, a girl in Ethiopia was kidnapped by seven men and beaten for a week -- until three lions chased the men away and stood guard over the girl until police found her.

Theories for the lions' behavior range from the idea that they mistook her cries for those of a baby lion to the possibility that they were preparing to eat the girl when the police arrived, but *The Guardian* quotes an Ethiopian police sergeant as saying, "If the lions had not come then it could have been much worse."

Watusi Calf Saves Woman

Along with mentioning Gimpy the seal in its "True Stories of Hero Pets" collection, *Reader's Digest* also brought our attention to Lurch, an African Watusi calf that intercepted his owner, Janice Wolf, while she was walking the paths of her Arkansas refuge.

Lurch refused to move out of the way and when Wolf grabbed his horns to guide him, he knocked her off balance -- thereby preventing her from stepping on a coiled copperhead snake she was about to disturb.

Dolphin Saves Drowning Swimmer

It's not just shark attacks that inspire dolphins to swim into action and save humans: One rescuer, Filippo, was a popular resident of the Adriatic Sea off Italy's Manfredonia who became a spur-of-the-moment lifeguard when a 14-year-old boy fell into the ocean -- without knowing how to swim.

Scotland's Daily Record reports that the dolphin pushed the boy to keep him above the water until his parents could pull him to safety.

Elephant Saves Girl

Amber Mason, an eight-year-old girl from Bucks, England, was in Phuket, Thailand when the tsunami struck in 2005 -- riding an elephant named Ningnong.

As the water rose, the elephant ran up the shore, taking the brunt of the impact and keeping Amber above the water.