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The Effects of Language Interference in Learning English Syntax for Spanish Native Speakers: A Case Study on a Mexican Context

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Abstract

Language interference is a relevant topic for second language acquisition because most language learners face this phenomenon when learning a new language. This study followed a social constructivist philosophy, focusing on inductive and qualitative methods. This case study was conducted in Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico. In this case study, I explored the experiences of two young-adults language learners from the center of Guanajuato, Mexico. These participants have been taking formal English lessons for more than twelve years. However, these learners are still not able to have fluent conversations in English. The instruments used for this research were questionnaires, interviews, and recorded conversations. After conducting a thematic analysis, the result indicates that the main issue these participants are facing is the use of translation as a strategy and the concern the participants have of committing mistakes.

Keywords: language interference, transfer, syntactic transfer, interlanguage, translation.

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language has its challenges, one of the most common difficulties language learners faces in their learning process is accuracy while speaking. In this case study, I analyzed the situation of two young-adult language learners that have been receiving English lessons for more than twelve years. However, they still have challenges when speaking because of syntax issues. In this paper, I will explore terms such as language interference, language transfer, syntactic transfer, interlanguage, and translation as a strategy for EFL learning. The purpose of this case study is to understand the effects of language interference on young-adults language learners at the center of Guanajuato, Mexico. It is crucial to understand the effects language interference has on Spanish native speakers' learning process because this might be the reason why Mexican people do not reach the expectations after several years of language classes.

2. Research question

How does language interference affect Spanish native speakers in learning syntactic features in English?

3. Literature review

3.1 *Language interference*

When learning a second language, the learner might present language interference. Language interference is defined as “the transference of elements of one language to another at various levels including phonological, grammatical, lexical, and orthographical elements of language” (Vintoni, 2016: 94). For example, it is very common for native Spanish speakers to avoid pronouncing the letter **h** while reading because, in Spanish, the **h** has no sound. This would be an example of phonological interference. When two languages belong to different linguistic systems, there will be a tendency for the transference of the elements from one language to another. This phenomenon is defined as language “interference”, this will lead the learners to difficulties or errors in their learning process (Vintoni, 2016).

3.2 *Language transfer*

Another important concept regarding language interference is language transfer. According to Wang (2017), “transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired” (p. 16). This means that the language repertoire a learner has can influence the learning of the target language, however, this is not always a disadvantage. There could be negative transfers which are interferences that obstacle learning, and positive transfers which can facilitate the learning process (Butler, 2012). For example, finding similarities between the target language and the language previously acquired might help the learner to process the information easier, rather than if the target language was completely different from the previously acquired languages.

3.2.1 *Syntactic transfer*

As part of language transfer, there is another concept that Wang (2017) mentioned, which is syntactic transfer. This concept refers to the L1 influencing at the sentential level of the L2 sentence. One common example of syntactic transfer is the accommodation of nouns and adjectives. In Spanish, the noun is first used and then the adjective (e.g., la manzana roja). On the contrary, in English, it is used first the adjective, and then the noun (e.g., the red apple). Thus, learners might use the form *the apple red* due to the interference they have from Spanish. This type of transfer is the one that will be analyzed during this case study. As well as how syntax transfer and interlanguage are related to this issue.

3.3 *Interlanguage*

Another concept used in this study was interlanguage. “Interlanguage refers to the knowledge of the L2 in the speaker’s mind as the L1 does. But this L2 interlanguage exists in the same mind as the L1 does” (Cook, 1999: 190). A Spanish native speaker has certain grammar forms in their interlanguage. This means that learners already have stored information about one language, and they know how to use it. When they start learning another language, in this case, English, they must incorporate new structures into their interlanguage. This is when the mix of both languages occurs, and the learner might encounter language transfer.

3.4 Translation in EFL learning

One of the most controversial aspects of language teaching is the debate between using or not translation inside the classroom. “In terms of using translation as a learning strategy, translation has often been classified as one of the cognitive learning strategies” (Liao, 2006: 193). In this context, the translation would be defined as “converting the target language expression into the native language (at various levels, from words and phrases all the way up to whole texts); or converting the native language into the target language” (Liao, 2006: 194). As previously mentioned, translation can be used as a strategy in language learning. However, some researchers believe that translation between the L1 and L2 can cause language interference. In this case, the authors recommend using only the L2 and making the acquisition of the language simpler, letting aside the L1 of the learner. For example, using the CLT approach in the classroom would be the best option according to those authors (Liao, 2006). However, these authors are not taking into consideration the interlanguage of each learner. As it was previously explained, interlanguage is the linguistic information each person has stored in their mind, thus, it might be difficult to ignore completely the L1 during the learning of another language.

4. Methodology

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach, “Qualitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods” (Dörnyei, 2007: 24). In this study I addressed the issues Spanish native speakers face while learning syntax features in English, thus the research focused on students' experiences and the theory behind the issues they are facing.

The research also was conducted as a case study, which is an “empirical investigation of contemporary phenomena in a real-life context” (Hood, 2009: 86). In this case, the phenomenon studied was “syntax errors while speaking”. The case study analyzed how this phenomenon affected students' learning and use of the language. The research was conducted with two language learners, which present difficulties in the use of syntax while speaking. These two learners have been learning English since preschool level, now they are young adults. After more than twelve years of taking English lessons, it would be expected to have an advanced proficiency level in English. However, these students are not able to use the language fluently due to syntax mistakes.

4.1 Context and participants

This case study was applied in the center of Guanajuato, Mexico. The participants of the study were two young adults that had English classes as a foreign language since preschool, and they attended English classes for more than twelve years. These classes were either from their schools, or in private language courses. However, both participants expressed that after all those years of lessons, they still do not consider themselves bilinguals, and they struggle with language production. The participants were informed of the purpose of this research, and they signed a consent form to participate in the study and give me permission to use their data. There will be used pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. The questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Spanish, to give the participant the opportunity to express themselves in the best way.

4.2 *Inquiry tools*

This case study used different tools to collect the data. First, the use of questionnaires, to gather the main ideas of the participants. I applied an open-response questionnaire that had five open-ended questions, “open-response items call for the respondents to answer in their own words” (Heigham & Croker, 2009: 202). The purpose of this questionnaire was to know participants’ issues while using the language, and what are the most frequent problems while speaking. This questionnaire was followed by a semi-structured interview in which participants had the chance to expand on their ideas. I used semi-structured interviews, in which I had prepared three questions, but I made follow-up questions for some answers I received during the conversation. The purpose of these interviews was to get more information from their previous answers because some comments were very interesting, and I wanted to get more information from those ideas. In these interviews, the purpose was to explore the experiences the participants have been through in their learning path, and how having issues with oral production have affected their learning. Also, I recorded a short conversation with each participant. Participants were expected to follow this conversation fully in English. In this conversation I asked them to talk about their favorite vacations, thus they were expected to use past tenses. I analyzed the mistakes committed by the participants, to identify the origin of those mistakes, for example, due to language interference.

4.3 *Data analysis procedures*

The data analysis was done through thematic analysis. “Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns” (Kiger & Varpio, 2020: 2). I gathered all the relevant data in a table, and coded the data by type of instrument, the number of participants, and theme. Using thematic analysis, I was able to identify patterns and key concepts that were recurrent in my participants’ answers. Once I identified these repeated concepts or ideas, I organized them into themes.

5. Results

5.1 *Translation and language interference*

It was observed that the main issue the participants had with speaking is language interference. The participants explained that when having a conversation in English, they always try to translate the sentences from the L1 to the L2. Here is where they face several issues regarding the syntactic transfer, because the participants want to say the sentences word-by-word as they would say them in Spanish. Although they already have the syntactic knowledge, they still cannot do this process automatically while speaking. Spanish and English have different syntactic features and translating a sentence word-by-word from Spanish to English would lead to a grammatically incorrect sentence. As extracted from the conversation with Participant 1:

I: What did you do in your last vacation?

P1: I went to a place in San Luis Potosí... I swim with my family and eat, ate, Carne asada.

I: Could you describe the place?

P1: mmm yes, it was big and hot. This place had mmm... cascadas, big and beautiful.

In this conversation, Participant 1 translated the sentence in Spanish “Casacadas grandes y hermosas”, which would be grammatically correct in Spanish. However, when translating it literally into English, the order of the adjectives is incorrect. The correct syntactic

form would be “beautiful, big waterfall”. Here the participant was facing syntactic language transfer, as he took the word order he would usually use in the L1 and applied it in the L2.

5.2 Language interference and syntax

Also, from this same extract of the conversation, I observed that the participant struggles with using the correct conjugation of the verbs in the past form. However, the participant demonstrated that he has grammatical knowledge, because he was able to self-correct in one verb (eat - ate). This shows that the participant has awareness of the grammar forms he should use depending on the context. In this example, he was talking about the past, thus, he must conjugate the verbs in the past. This same participant expressed that for him it was difficult to remember the correct use of irregular verbs while speaking.

Q3: What is the most challenging aspect for you while speaking in English?

P1: I think that in the conjugation of the verbs, I always get confused between the past, present, and future. Because I know a lot of vocabulary, but I feel I can't use it because I do not know how to apply it to a sentence.

This participant clearly received explicit instruction regarding language structures during his language classes because he is aware of the structures and the labels for each form. The disadvantage of Spanish native speakers that want to learn English, is that the structures are very different. Thus, learners might face language transfer and syntax transfer often.

Also, Participant 2 explained that in his school, his teacher always wrote the “formulas” to explain grammar structures. These formulas helped him understand and pass the exams. In this case, the participant processed the formulas and made them part of his interlanguage. However, this participant expressed that he does not feel confident in his knowledge, thus he always tries to be accurate and careful with the sentences he says. However, during the conversation, he did not have any syntax mistakes. The issue with Participant 2 was the time he took to answer the questions and follow up on the conversation. He seemed to be too worried about the accuracy, that he took a long time to process the sentences in his head to produce the language. He said that he uses translation most of the time, but always keeps in mind the modifications he needs to do in order to have the sentence correct. This might be effective for writing, but in speaking, it is necessary to do all these processes more automatized.

Explicit grammar instruction has several benefits for language learners, According to Nazari (2013), “if learners receive communicative exposure to grammar points that have already been introduced explicitly, they will have a longer-lasting awareness of form and their accuracy will improve” (p. 157). Thus, for these participants, it would be beneficial to put into practice the knowledge they already have. As seen in the conversations, they have the knowledge, it is just necessary for them to put into practice that knowledge to develop their speaking skill.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this case study was to understand the effect language interference has on young-adults Spanish native speakers' learning process. After collecting the data through questionnaires, interviews, and recorded conversations, I analyzed the information with thematic analysis. The results show that using translation as a strategy for learning English could be beneficial, however, there can be some language transfer when trying to have a conversation. However, this issue does not limit communication skills. Also, the syntactic differences between Spanish and English can lead to syntactic transfer because the learner already has in his interlanguage all the structures from his L1, thus it is normal to present some mixtures between both systems. As seen in the conversations and questionnaires, the participants have plenty of

vocabulary knowledge, and also about grammar structures, thus they might need to practice and use the language so they can improve their speaking skills.

Some limitations I have encountered so far in this study were the data collection and the lack of participants. First, as my participants are adults, they were always busy, and it was challenging to find time in our schedule to do the interviews and conversations. Also, I would have liked to have more participants, to understand the experience of more language learners in the same context.

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Cavafy's Places – Mapping of Literary Routes

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Abstract

This study deals with the places, where Constantine Cavafy lived and created. Its purpose is to promote his work, through the creation of mapped cultural literary paths, in the footsteps of the Alexandrian poet and writer. Cavafy's poetry has withstood the test of time, as it is always relevant, because it can always be read, in such a way, as to force the reader to reflect on the problems of his time. His work attempts to capture, but mainly to interpret, historically, this key time, in order to make everybody understand the endurance of Cavafy's poetry over time. This article, recognizing the author as a timeless tourist product, attempts to promote the cultural heritage around his name, in order to promote the tourist exploitation of the places that marked his course.

Keywords: literary routes, route mapping, Cavafy Museum, Onassis Foundation.

1. Literary tourism – Literary routes

Literary tourism is an important and growing branch of the tourism industry. This kind of tourism is inextricably linked to sites and places that became known because of their literary depiction or due to their connection with important figures of literature (Busby & Klug, 2001). It arises mainly due to the great influence of the author and by extension of his literary works, which lead readers to visit the places he mentions or describes and are, therefore, related to his work (Manola, 2020). Literary experiential journeys are an extension of literary tourism. Many psychologists claim that they stem from the inner need of an individual, as a spiritual and emotional entity, to feel and unite the real world with that of his/her imagination (Manola, 2019). Thus, the literary work, or even its creator, can act as a motivator, for many, to visit the place associated with the respective literary work (Tsirakidis, 2018).

2. Cavafy literary routes – Mapping

Cavafy, as the heir of 19th century aesthetics, treats life itself as a work of art. He listens to his time, experiences the atmosphere of its decline and is drawn to it, while, simultaneously, maintaining his dignity, without suffering from any illusions or delusions (Pesketzi, 2018). The timelessness and originality of his work was a motivation for many fans, who follow his "route", in order to experience his work, as well as the places, where he lived and were a source of inspiration for the Alexandrian poet.

The journey of his life begins on Sheriff Street in Alexandria, where the poet was born in 1863. Together with his family they go to England and, specifically, to Liverpool and London

until 1876, when they return to Alexandria (Figure 1) and “Lyceum of Hermes”, where he begins to attract the attention of his fans, by writing entries for a historical dictionary (Boukalas, 2014). In 1882 Cavafy fled to Istanbul, where he kept a diary of his travels and composed “Leaving Therapia” (Figure 1).



Figure 1.

Then his journey continues in Alexandria in 1885 and, inspired by the Athenian romanticism movement regarding the Greek language, he writes “When, my friends, I loved” and “To Nichori”. Recognition and interest in his work draw his attention and interest in visiting and staying in Germany for a short time. The magazine *Esperos* of Leipzig hosts his first published poem entitled “the Bacchic”. His journey continues with his brother John in the spring of 1897 in Marseille, Paris and London. Returning to Alexandria, he continued to write and publish new poems (Tsirkas, 1971) (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

For the first time his journey brings him to Athens in 1901, with an intermediate short visit to the city of Patras, while at that time he writes the diary of his trip in English. In 1905 he returns to Athens, due to the illness of his brother Alexander, who, a few days later, dies and he records his last days.



Figure 3.

With his work “The end of Antonios” he leads the readers to his new residence at 10 Lepsios Street. His artistic journey in 1920 reaches Egypt and its culture again. He composes folk songs for the educational group of Egypt. Cavafy’s artistic career focuses on Alexandria, as well as other cities in the Eastern Mediterranean that have been a source of inspiration for his works. His works are a source of inspiration for travel and tour to the places, where he lived and was inspired by. Particularly well-known and important is his poem “Ithaca”, which speaks directly to the reader. It played a great symbolic role as it transforms Ithaca as the destination that every reader would use as an excuse to make a trip, but also enjoy a unique life experience (Koukoulomatis, 1988).

The literary journey of this great poet begins and ends in Alexandria. The years before his death he lived at 4 Sharm El Sheikh Street, which was later renamed Constantine Cavafy Street. The apartment has been turned into a museum and features original manuscripts, as well as many photographs and portraits.

3. The impact of Cavafy’s work

The impact of Cavafy’s work can be characterized through a phrase that reveals the timelessness of the poet and specifically “The Cavafy Archive, archive of the future”, according to Stergioulas (2018), which was widely used by fans of his works. This phrase was dictated with the awareness that a time would come, when the works of the poet would have a great impact, both in Greece and around the world. There are many books that have dealt with the analysis of Cavafy’s poetry. There are many writers, who have influenced and incorporated in their work, the poetry and thoughts of the poet. It is important that his poems and his work, in general, have a great impact in universities outside Greece, since special studies are done on them (Kurbana, 2013).

According to the Vassilis Lambropoulos (Kapetanis, 2013), “Cavafy is a global and constantly expanding field. Cavafy has become a diva, stock, capital, product, brand, and copyright. It is not for sale, it sells. It is produced, consumed, performed”. Today, the impact of

Cavafy's poetry, both in our country and abroad, has acquired a huge dimension, if we consider that he is a poet of previous generations, read as a poet who is rediscovered. The study of the poet's literature seems to be appreciated, since the glamor and charm of his work, from his death until today, shows an upward trend. The same applies to the impact of poetry on foreigners, which attracts interest, but there are also many readers, as well as scholars, who are influenced in their creations by elements of Cavafy's poetry.

Cavafy's influence internationally is a very important phenomenon. This can easily be explained, if we consider the impact that the poet experienced from the wider readership, which has been helped by the translations of his poems. More specifically, it is worth mentioning the influence of many of his foreign language colleagues, which is extremely large. Proofs of this are the findings of a study conducted by the Greek Language Center (Vagenas, 2000). This study aimed to record the influence of works by foreign poets had on Cavafy, as well as the collection of poems and works that have been influenced or even imitate the works of the multi-translated Constantine Cavafy. The research was conducted on a sample of 20 countries and confirmed that Cavafy is still read today, and considered a modern poet. It clearly proves that he and his work have, not only the characteristics, but also the prestige of a world poet. Through research he showed that the charm of his work has led to the creation of a large number of foreign poems, which, as being influenced by Cavafy's works, have been, along with some influenced Greek poems, a special kind of poems, the so-called "Cavafogenic".

The above survey was conducted in 21 countries (Egypt, Argentina, Bulgaria, France, Romania, Germany, Albania, Ecuador, Spain, Italy, Catalonia, Colombia, Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Australia, Russia, Serbia, Chile) resulted in the creation of a volume entitled "Conversing with Cavafy-Anthology of foreign Cavafy poems." This anthology contains 153 poems by 135 different poets, which have been translated and written in nineteen languages, having been influenced by works of Cavafy or even "conversing" with them (Vagenas, 2000).

The highlighting of the value of travel as an experience and life goal is analyzed in "Ithaca" as a cyclical reunion of the start and arrival at the destination and as the realization of an expectation (Carbonetto, 2007). Ithaca as a destination can be compared to the centripetal call to home, where the reassuring circle is represented by Penelope's faith. The statements in Cavafy poetry have a timeless force, in combination with situations and concerns regarding the issue of adolescents' sexual identity, and are a topic of discussion and reflection in schools (Nikolovieni, 2019).

Cavafy's resonance around the world is very great and, consequently, the continuity of his literary course, both by fans and by his colleagues, is worthy of admiration, despite a possible controversy surrounding the name and value of the poet.

4. Cavafy Museum – Alexandria

The Cavafy Museum has been a reference point for the literary tourist in Alexandria, Egypt since 16 November 1992.

"In the house where Cavafy grew up, he had a French teacher, an English governess, an Italian carriage, an Egyptian horseman and 4-5 Greek servants! His furniture, cars, silverware, glassware were of rare luxury. His father, however, died in 1870, leaving a very small fortune to his family, as he spent most of the property he earned from trade, to look 'great and important'" (Kordatos, 1983). The Alexandrian poet lived the last years of his life on the now renamed Cavafy Street. This apartment is a museum with objects related to the life and work of the poet. With the help of the poet's friends, the museum now gives out a sense of the poet's life and work.

The library containing many of the poet's bibliographic works, as well as translations of his poetry into various languages, along with articles and reviews written about his poetry, has been saved. In the museum there is a room especially dedicated to the writer Stratis Tsirkas, who had engaged in and was influenced by the work of the Alexandrian poet. The Attarin region, which the poet called the "capital of memories" and where he lived for some time, is also a favorite destination for visitors, who follow in the footsteps of the Alexandrian poet's life.

The museum owes its creation, to a large extent, to the educational advisor of the Greek embassy in Egypt, Kostis Moskof, as he was the first to support the idea. Although his heirs had already sold the personal belongings and furniture of the poet, thanks to the valuable help of friends, who remembered quite well the details of the house, but also the photographs that were found and collected, furniture was made, the same as those he owned. Responsible for the rescue of the only library and archive staff, was George Panou Savvidis. His house on Lepsius Street was visited by the cultured people of Alexandria and his Greek guests. According to the people who came in frequent contact with him, his unusual publishing method, his character whims and his targeted and caustic comments about writers and books, are the elements that began to create the image of a legend around his name.

The statements of popular writers and poets, who had visited Cavafy, such as the ecumenical writer Nikos Kazantzakis, Costas Ouranis and many others, contributed to the formation of his public image. Some broadcasts of personal conversations and interviews between Cavafy and Palamas are evidence of personal disagreement and controversy, as well as competition (Garantoudis, 2005). At the beginning of the 20th century in Cairo and Alexandria, there were publications of books and publications of ironic diaries and literary issues as expressions of the philosophical and artistic tendency that had developed around Cavafy (Tsirkas, 1971). All issues and magazines included Cavafy poems, as well as analysis and commentary on his work, which were not always pleasant. His special character, who always remained lonely and isolated in his house on Lepsius Street, in the heart of Alexandria, without electricity and telephone, is a proof of the poet's uniqueness that was the subject of commentary and irony. His poetry had a continuous and upward course, thus gaining loyal fans and followers, as well as chronic opponents (Tsirkas, 1971).

The house-museum is today a reference point for many tourists-admirers, who try to connect and learn more about his life and work, combining travel with experiential knowledge for the poet.

5. Cavafy tour from the Onassis Foundation

The Cavafy archive contains manuscript poems, printed publications, literary texts, articles, analyzes and personal notes. It also includes correspondence, texts and photographs of the poet. In 2012, the Onassis Foundation began managing the archive, in order to secure its stay in Greece and to discourage the idea of a possible fragmentation. In addition to securing the archive, the Foundation tried and succeeded in digitizing it and making it public, so that his work could be easily accessed worldwide. This achievement was the result of painstaking and long-term teamwork of experts and scientists, who were able to convert more than two thousand files into digital form. The archives contain all the works and a lot of his unpublished material, as it results from the continuous research in his archive. In addition, it contains, not only basic information about the poet, but also some specific information about the influence of Cavafy's poetry around the world. The digital version of the archive is the work of the school and is owned by the Onassis Foundation (onassis.org.).

The aim of creating the archive was and still is to remain open and accessible to the general public and researchers, as well as the dissemination of the valuable work of the

Alexandrian poet and the global character of his poetry. The Onassis Foundation also worked on the creation of a scholarship program for the study and research of Cavafy studies for Greeks and foreigners, while, at the same time, it created relevant laboratories. It also mapped Cavafy elements in different collections in our country and internationally. On the 87th anniversary of Cavafy's death, in 2021, the Onassis Foundation invited people to multiple events serving to get them acquainted with its programs and activities, in order to highlight the important events of his life and to explore the digital collection of his archive (Onassis.org.)

6. The concept of “journey” in Cavafy's poetry.

The cultural dimensions of Cavafy's work have, from time to time, been the core of the work of many scholars. The poet's contact with topics such as Arabic literature, cosmopolitanism and his life in an international urban center such as Alexandria, are some of the features he mentions in his works.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, he grew up in London and lived in Liverpool, Istanbul and Greece. He is inspired by the places he lived and traveled, thus, bringing a cosmopolitan dimension to his poetry. Other places come to life through his works, i.e., Syria, Sparta, Thermopylae and Troy.

During his stay in Istanbul, he wrote the diary of “Constantinopoliad-an epic”. At the same time, he wrote his first works in Greek and English, as well as short poems of encyclopedic character.

Together with one of his brothers he travels to Paris and London. In 1901 he traveled for the first time in Greece, visited Piraeus, Athens, Neo Faliro and, on his return, he went to Patra and Corfu. During this journey, the poet keeps a diary entitled “Walking in Athens with Constantine Cavafy.” He describes his daily life in Athens, the hotels, the monuments, the museums he visits, the cafes, the meals in the restaurants, the people he meets and the impressions they leave on the whole.

From 1908 until the end of his life, he lived in Alexandria, Egypt in the apartment of the then 10 Lepsius Street, which was later renamed Sharm el Sheikh and then renamed Cavafy Street.

The main references that a Cavafy's scholar encounters, as far as places are concerned, are made to Alexandria, Syria, Rome, Sparta, Thessaly and the Peloponnese. Particularly well known is the poem “Ithaca”, where Ithaca is rendered as a metaphysical and psychological search of the reader, for life experiences, while Lehonitis (1942) argues that the same poem does not refer to Ithaca, but is an excuse for readers to dare make a life journey to gain experience, knowledge and goods beyond the original purpose of the traveler. The poem entitled “The Ship” refers to the poet's return from Athens to Alexandria (Savvidis, 2019). For the poet, Alexandria is a city that satisfies, above all, the “eyes of the mind”, while in the poem “God is missing Antonio”, Alexandria becomes a symbol that has the power to inspire the “worthy” (Keeley, 1995). The poet's life has been a long journey and through his work he motivates readers to travel to the places, that he lived in and captured in his work. His worldwide fame can be traced to film tourism with small and large screen movies, such as Spinalonga's example with Hislop's *The Island* (Manola & Gioka, 2021) and Levi's book *The Mother of Italy* (Manola & Tsatambassoglou, 2021). Literary and cinematic tourism like any other type of tourism, contributes to the improvement of both domestic and international tourism.

It includes mystery, curiosity, search, emotion, emotional bonding, diversity, while also promoting the exchange of ideas and culture through literature.

7. Conclusions

The places that Cavafy visited and inspired through the mapping we did, can be tourist attractions for the literary tourist. In addition to recording his journey and how the author has contributed to tourism, this study could also be a suggestion for the reader to get to know the author better and to enter the process of traveling and experiencing the world through his own literary look. Literature has always been an occasion for travel and in recent years it has been rapidly growing.

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Book Review on Language, Literacy and Learning in STEM Education

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Abstract

Language, Literacy, and Learning in STEM Education is a comprehensive examination of the role of language and literacy in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. The book provides an in-depth look at the ways in which language and literacy skills impact student learning and achievement in STEM subjects, and offers practical strategies for addressing the linguistic and literate demands of STEM education. Through a combination of research, case studies, and practical examples, the book offers a valuable resource for educators looking to support the linguistic and literate development of their STEM students.

Keywords: STEM Education, mathematics, language, literacy, learning, interdisciplinary.

1. Introduction

Language, literacy, and learning in STEM Education is a collection of essays on the relationship among applied linguistics and the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (math). The book is the first in a series that was started “to distribute tasks at the interplay of language education and STEM” (p. xv). The book’s seeds are the numerous projects that have been evolved over the period of several years all over linguistic theory and STEM, and the book’s plant is the eventually results tree of (interdisciplinary) expertise. Mary Jane Curry and David I. Hanauer (Eds.) wrote the book, which was released in 2014 by John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.

In order to create new multidisciplinary approach, this book series aims to gather combined experts from the domains of language studies and science/engineering education. This book series is based on the idea that science is crucial to the twenty first century and that

linguistically inspired studies may improve how science and engineering are described, understood, taught, and practiced. Through multidisciplinary collaboration among language scholars, science and engineering education professionals, and scientists, this series aims to improve both professional and educational procedures in the sciences and engineering.

The book is primarily targeted towards STEM and language professionals, although it is equally understandable to readers with a broader range of interests. A source of motivation for everyone interested in the educational process, the book does contain some portions that readers may find a little too technical and tiresome. The authors have compiled research studies from the disciplines of math, engineering, microbiology, and chemistry. Although technology is not included, the term STEM has been utilized for simplicity (p. 2n). The connection between discipline-specific language and literacy and a sociocultural theory of learning—which maintains a balance between theoretical analysis and real-world examples—is the central theme of the entire book. Ten chapters make up the book; the first is an introduction in general, and the remaining nine are separated into four primary categories: science, engineering, mathematics, and future prospects.

2. Summary of content

The collection of books called Language Studies, Science and Engineering includes the book *Language, Literacy, and Learning in STEM Education*. According to the introduction, the main objective of this book series is to offer practical and multidisciplinary information developed through interaction between applied linguists and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) specialists (pp. xv-xvi).

There are ten chapters in all in this book. The first chapter offers some underlying theoretical orientations, while the next nine chapters are divided into the following four sections to match to the ideas described in the main objective:

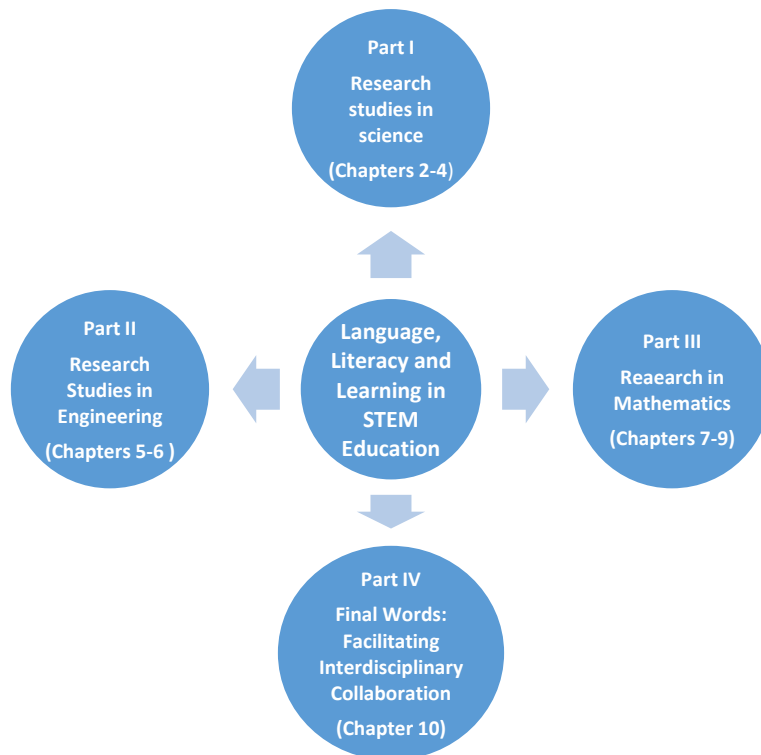


Figure 1. Summary of the book's contents

Because literacy development is frequently overlooked throughout college years, Part One's Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the challenges STEM learners may face in their academic careers, particularly when preparing a dissertation. Enhancing writing abilities (research articles, abstracts, reports, etc., properly investigated with regard to colloquial expressions, verb sentence structures, vocabulary frequency, and more), as well as ESP instruction, are some solutions. The findings are unquestionably intriguing. For instance, "considering the widespread perception that scientific language does not use first-person pronouns (e.g., I, us), we investigated historical changes in the use of the first-person plural 'we' in three chemical journals throughout three time periods" (p. 16).

In addition to the studies on applied linguistics and chemistry, investigations and multidisciplinary operations are also described. These include a case study on freshmen and how they learn to speak in CI (Communication Intensive) programs, as well as a paper on lab notebooks. David Hanauer's Chapter 3 is particularly helpful since it demonstrates how teachers instruct students to describe their experiments in depth and step by step so that they may be easily repeated by others.

Moreover, there are two chapters (5 and 6) in Part 2 which focus on engineering. The first chapter (5) of part two is research on "the link between interdisciplinary epistemology, ideology, and writing in engineering" which was compiled by Julio Gimenez (p. 68). Analytical hypotheses, data coding, writing as a social activity, and "the key significance that flow sheets and visuals play in describing the outcomes of the study carried out" are all topics covered in this chapter (p. 79). The preceding chapter which is about graphics and invention was also compiled by Mary Jane Curry, and is linked from flow charts and graphics as a reference for scholarly engineering publications. Under this chapter, she describes the interpretative role of graphics "in contrast to possessing just auxiliary and illustrative roles" (p. 102) against the backdrop of ethnographic study.

One of the collection's most entertaining chapters overall is this one. Readers may be reminded of Abbott's Flatland or Swift's island of Laputa, where the people extol the beauty of a woman by using parallelograms, circles, and rhombs since their language lacks vocabulary for imagination and flair.

"Research studies in mathematics" is the title of Part Three, which encompasses Chapters 7, 8, and 9. It is generally about the interaction between students and instructors in the classroom, including how to teach math in a multicultural environment, what it's like to learn about students' reasoning while teaching, and how to get high school girls interested in a subject that many of them find boring. The first chapter provides a variety of materials. For instance, writing about the students' original language and cultural background highlights the need to deal with false friends, which is usually a productive exercise when teaching a second language.

The authors, Moreira and Latas, mention the terms "root" and "operation" (p. 112); I would also add "figure," which a French speaker might mistake for "face, countenance," or "addition," which a Portuguese or French speaker might mistake for a "restaurant bill," although, of course, this is not often the case with math classes. The two authors emphasize the value of relating mathematics to experience while discussing methodology, attempting to "understand 'reality' from the standpoint of research participants" (p. 114). They discuss the results of a study they completed in a coastal community, connecting the investigation of wind data and surfing which is a common hobby among students. Surprisingly, one of the class assignments called for presenting "the aforesaid circumstance in a manner that everybody could comprehend" (p. 117).

When Galileo wrote *Il Saggiatore* in 1623, he asserted that the book of nature is written in the language of mathematics. What would he say now? The language should definitely be reintroduced. This brings up linguistic features in the classroom that are "related as far as how

teachers listen” (p. 127), “the persistent problem of gender inequalities in students’ acquisition of mathematics” (pp. 143-144), and the overall issue of STEM education.

Finally, the book is concluded by a concluding chapter written by Cynthia Bauerle, Graham Hatfull, and David Hanauer that calls for cooperation between the scientific and applied linguistics sectors. It is astonishing the variety of tasks completed by STEM practitioners and displayed in this volume. The quantity of disseminated academic knowledge is also acknowledged but there are undoubtedly other approaches to learning besides a social perspective.

This, in turn, would not account for neuroscience and its relationship to linguistics, STEM practice, and literacy, that would also explain, among other things, why finger counting differs across the globe and why every individual being is born with grammatical and syntactic understanding. However, David Hanauer believes that *Language, Literacy, and Learning in STEM Education* will be the first in a series that includes more works by “applied linguists and STEM professionals, multidisciplinary collaborations, and research projects” (p. xvi). Because of this, we might also be able to perceive “the force that through the green fuse powers the flower,” to continue with the horticulture metaphor.

3. Analysis and evaluation of the book

This book exemplifies attempts to highlight the importance of applied linguistics in the quest to enhance interdisciplinary education. Our students will gain from being knowledgeable of the interdisciplinary interactions among linguistic scholars, science and engineering educators, and scientists since they will be better able to meet the requirements of their courses, institutional policies, as well as the discourse community. In order to improve their learning, applied linguistics and STEM fields should be combined. Reading *Language, Literacy, and Learning in STEM Education* would be beneficial for any language instructor or scientist who wants to involve their pupils in the learning process.

A deeper analysis and evaluation of the book was centered on the part III which discusses mathematical scientific studies. Three chapters (7, 8 & 9) make up this part. The authors of Chapter 7 are Darlinda Moreira and Joana Latas, which is titled “Mathematics Education, Cultural Practices, and Communication.” Chapter 8 of Part III, written by Jeffrey Choppin, is titled “Learning while Teaching: How Classroom Discourse Practices Mediate Mathematics Teachers’ Learning about Student Thinking.” The final chapter of this part is titled “Improving Girls’ Interest in Mathematics via Writing: Findings from a Mixed-Methods Study” is Edel M. Reilly’s third chapter, which corresponds to Chapter 9 of this part. In order to enhance better understanding of the component of this part, the figure below summarizes the various chapters of the third part of this book.

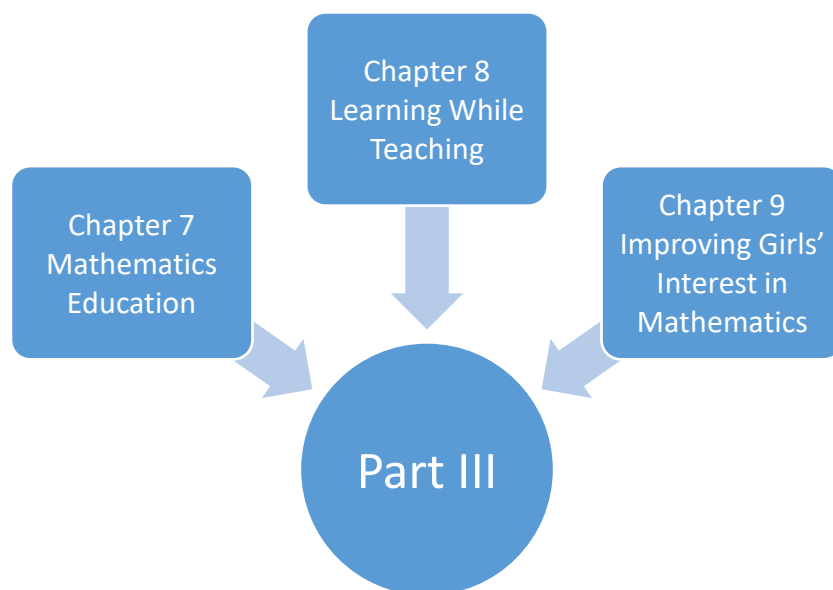


Figure 2. Summary of the chapters in part III of this book

In order to improve conversation and communication in multicultural classes, The authors explored various ways of improving learning of mathematics and making it more real than abstract. The Chapter 7 discusses the role of students' cultural practices in mathematical problems. It begins by outlining the characteristics of mathematical discourse and demonstrating how they relate to the students' home languages and cultures. Mathematics teachers must create strategies to help all students' mathematical learning, irrespective of their cultural, language, and social backgrounds, in light of the multicultural realities of today's classrooms. The idea of cultural practices is then spoken about and framed in relation to mathematical instruction. Barton (2008: 125) made a profound statement that "Mathematics is not a world of triangles, symbols, and rules of reasoning; it is a world of networks of people conversing about ideas." This emphasize on the fact that the construction of mathematical knowledge through the exchange of ideas, using both students' native languages and progressive discipline narratives, or modalities of linguistic is essential in students' learning of mathematics.

I strongly support the authors' assertion that language and culture play a significance role in students learning of mathematics. For instance, in the *Handbook of Test Development* by Dr Jamal el Abedi (2015) titled Language Issues and Item Development, the researcher investigated the linguistic elements that might make it more difficult for students to grasp test items, or language that interferes with the assessment of content. His recommendations were taken by Mrs. Weiss, who made language simplification adjustments in her class. Additionally, she discovered a piece on transanguaging techniques, and she made the decision to use them in her math lesson. Mrs. Weiss noticed an improvement in math test results, self-esteem, curiosity, and motivation after putting the linguistic test item adjustments and transanguaging assessment procedures into practice (Mahoney, 2017: 117). According the Mahoney (2017), "Transanguaging assessment techniques give teachers a means to work with multilingual students to access and evaluate challenging subject." The aforementioned practical example makes it quite evident how important language is to all forms of learning, including mathematics.

Moreover, Chapter 7 depicts an ethnographic investigation done in Portugal that concentrated on math students from low-income families. The use of activities created from the pupils' local surfing culture gives frameworks for resolving mathematical issues. Under this, the author made it very obvious that choosing and using a specific context for a mathematical assignment is essential to establishing a productive learning environment and making the activity

relevant and important for all students. We must therefore stress on how crucial it is for teachers to decide on the type and diversity of contexts to utilize in classroom activities and how pertinent these activities are to students' backgrounds (Alrø et al., 2009; Skovsmose, 2002; Vithal & Skovsmose, 1997).

The authors did an excellent job of supporting their claim that Learning mathematics can be done well by making it more practical to the daily life activities of learners. They supported this claim with an illustration where students considered their favorite sports which is surfing and being assigned to the task of measuring the direction of the wind in page 116. This example demonstrates how students understand how mathematics plays a part in the world around them, even though they are aware that they are not familiar with the mathematical concepts that were used to develop the information about how mathematics can be applied to how surfers perform. This is because the mathematical concepts act at the level of the students' cultural foregrounds. Students' comment that "in meteorological stations they use a lot of math". This confirms that they are aware that mathematics is used in relevant advanced technology, but they were unable to demonstrate how to use this knowledge in practice, i.e., by learning to identify the wind direction, a skill required in a sport like surfing.

In order for students to communicate mathematically and subsequently understand mathematics, the author suggests that sharing cultural experiences in the classroom, creating a common vocabulary for the explanation of mathematical ideas, and creating linkages with mathematical themes all play a role.

The authors did a good job of addressing all the relevant angles and providing relevant, reliable information to back up their claims. I am convinced that if math teachers follow this advice, teaching students how to communicate in mathematics and how it applies to everyday activities, students would gain a deeper comprehension of the subject and develop a greater enthusiasm in learning it. The author draws the conclusion that mathematical activities that link mathematics to the students' real-world experiences help them to grasp and communicate mathematics better.

"Learning while Teaching: How Classroom Discourse Practices Mediate Mathematics Teachers' Learning about Student Thinking" is the title of Chapter 8, the second chapter of Part III, and it was written by Jeffrey Choppin. In order to investigate the relevant claims that teachers' opportunities for listening are related to the linguistic features they use in their classrooms and that what educators learn in the perspective of their teaching is connected to their listening styles, the author focused on building this chapter on Davis's (1997) description of listening practices.

After that, the author used instances from classroom conversations to highlight diverse listening and language patterns and how they affect teacher learning. From evaluative listening and teacher-centric linguistic features to more interpretive listening and interactive discourse practices, the episodes of classroom discourse show a continuum of instructors' listening techniques and accompanying linguistic features. The author also emphasized how the social settings in which these activities are placed affect the objectives and reasons of education and, as a result, how individuals communicate and represent their expertise (Gee, 1999). These viewpoints cast doubt on the idea that information is transmitted, in part because they emphasize the importance of language in education and the idea that knowledge is contextually dependent. For instance, Sfard (2007: 565) claims that participating in discourse activities is equivalent to learning something new and expanding individual's communication.

In the chapter the author employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze and understand how discourse practices influence what teachers are aware of regarding how students learn mathematics in classroom settings. The author did a fantastic job by adopting one of the modern research approaches for the study. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2021), graduate students employ mixed method approach since they want to master the most recent

research approach in research (p. 545). Using a mixed methods approach gives researchers a better understanding of a study topic than either quantitative or qualitative data alone. Mixed methods designs are ways for collecting, investigating, and integrating (i.e., mixing) both quantitative and qualitative data when performing a single study or a multistage series of researches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). According to Miles et al. (2014), “we have a really powerful combination” when one mixes quantitative and qualitative data.

In order to enhance better understanding of the mixed methodology used by the author in the study, I present a notational scheme and visual representations for the design. Visualizing processes and using a Morse-designed notation system has been essential to this way of thinking about various models or designs Morse (1991).

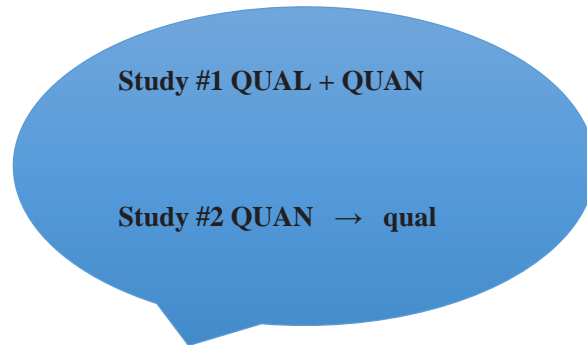


Figure 3. Notation system for a mixed methods study

Notation used:

+ indicates the simultaneous or concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

→ shows the sequential collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

- Uppercase letters indicate a priority or increased weight for either the quantitative or qualitative data.
- Lowercase letters indicate a lower priority or weight for either the quantitative or qualitative data.

The notation system illustrated above explains the powerful combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection used in the mixed method. It depicts two examples of designs. Researchers can emphasize on both quantitative and qualitative data and integrates or combines the data in the study, as demonstrated in Study #1. In Investigation #2, the researcher places a greater emphasis on quantitative data in the first stage of the study, and a smaller emphasis on qualitative data in the second stage.

The chapter emphasizes the importance of discourse analysis in understanding the practices used in mathematics classrooms for both teaching and learning. The author provided proof for his assertion using three episodes that showed a range of listening techniques and related linguistic trends, ranging evaluative and direct to more interpretative and collaborative forms. Depending on her educational objectives and what she may have intended to learn about her students, the teacher in each situation can be considered to be “productive” in some way.

Learning While Teaching		
<p>Episode 1</p> <p>Determining the Equivalence of Algebraic Expression</p>	<p>Episode 2</p> <p>Adding a number could be written as subtracting the opposite of that number</p>	<p>Episode 3</p> <p>“Half” referred to a part to part comparison</p>

Figure 4. Episodes of learning while teaching

Rudin established a method for figuring out how algebraic expressions are equivalent in the first episode; Browne established that subtracting one number from another can be written as adding that number; and Andrews established that the “half” referred to a part-to-part comparison of cups of concentrate to cups of water in the third episode. The author explained that the finding for the study indicate that the chances for students to justify their decisions, and subsequently for educators to comprehend how students were understanding the mathematics, varied depending on the situation.

The chapter accomplish its purpose on the topic by emphasizing how important discourse analysis is for comprehending how mathematics is taught and learned in classrooms. One of the most important lessons in this chapter is that educators must actually care about students’ opinions in order to encourage greater active engagement from them. If STEM educators merely want to get preset answers to their questions, emphasizing interactions and encouraging student thought is a useless exercise. The examples given above demonstrate how the teachers’ intellectual involvement with the ideas of the students was reflected in the linguistic elements of the classroom discourse, which acted as cues to encourage more active and significant students’ engagement.

It deals with the topic of using writing exercises to help middle school children especially girls to understand mathematics. The author argued that data shows the issue of female low performance in mathematics is still not fully resolved (Beecher & Sweeney, 2008; Hyde et al., 2008; Neuville & Croizet, 2007). In contrast to the CEP findings, Van de gaer et al. (2008) indicate that female students were unable to perform better on standardized tests as their male colleagues. The author therefore conducted a mixed method study with three teachers and their students from Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics (PCTM) conference and used evidence from studies conducted by Ntenza (2006) in South African schools, and 22 teachers from schools in Maryland.

The results of the survey used in this research indicated that there is a positive gender difference in attitudes about writing in mathematics classes, with females responding more positively than males. In general, considerably larger proportions of female students perceived writing in their mathematics classrooms as useful to their learning when compared to the male responses to the open-ended questionnaires. The author made the following claim: “Teachers must bridge disciplinary barriers in order to link writing and mathematics.” Despite NCTM’s demand for work in this field, as Wilcox and Monroe (2011) point out, there is still little study on the integration of writing and mathematics.

The author made a significant declaration at the end of the chapter that “This chapter makes the case that one answer math teachers have been looking for in regards to the issue of assisting female students in succeeding in mathematics classes is writing. Or, to put it more succinctly: Learning + Writing + Mathematics.”

4. Conclusion

The authors of the book accomplished the task of making learning of mathematics more practical and drawing math teachers’ attention of bringing the daily activities of students to the classroom of which I perfectly agree to that in the sense that we do mathematics every day in our lives, from calculating the distance to travel in driving or walking to shopping at the supermarkets. The illustration of teachers in Portugal teaching students whose favorite sports is surfing to calculate the speed of the wind and waves adds great value to the book since it will remind STEM teachers to make the lessons more practical and link it to the students’ daily life activities.

When it comes to ways of improving female students’ interest in mathematics made an argument and provided evidence that writing can be utilized to motivate female students to study mathematics. This finding is crucial because finding measures to raise female students’ academic performance has historically been a preoccupation of math professors. Even though there has been some improvement in the gender achievement gap, more has to be done to encourage female students to enroll in advanced mathematics courses and seek careers in the field.

This book also offers in-depth knowledge and insight into how applied linguistics and STEM fields interact. The book is also effective at demonstrating the strength and possibility of applying language methods to STEM problems. The publication of cooperative projects as described in this book is beneficial for STEM education, applied linguists, and other language experts. STEM Educators and other language educators can benefit a lot from reading this book and improve on their teaching skills in the classroom.

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Language Teacher's Experience When Teaching in International Contexts

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Abstract

This qualitative research explores the experience of four language teachers working in international settings in order to learn how this practice can contribute to their teaching perspective and competence. Teachers from countries such as Canada, Mexico and Italy who have taught English, Portuguese and Italian in different countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia participated in this study. For this purpose, the study inquiries into the beneficial aspects and challenges they have faced and how this has become a factor of progress in their professional trajectory. Aspects related to the motivation to teach in international contexts, the language barrier and culture shock are also approached. The results suggest that language teaching in international contexts is an enriching experience that has contributed to broadening their knowledge, abilities and viewpoints, and becoming aware of the multicultural and linguistic diversity of our world.

Keywords: International education, language teaching in international settings, language barrier, culture, teacher experiences.

1. Introduction

Language teaching in international contexts can be an enriching and interesting experience that can lead language teachers to learn from and interact with students of different nationalities and cultures. Through international teaching, teachers can also learn about different educational systems, strategies and methodologies that can be useful and innovative in their teaching practice. According to Potts (2015), both studying and working abroad offer exploration beyond the standard classroom experience. This type of experience involves not only practice but the person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Through international experiences, teachers acquire new skills and knowledge that can contribute to their teaching vision and practice, as King (2004, cited in Hamza, 2010) states, such experiences can lead to the reconfirmation of their current perspectives or to the development of new ways of understanding leading to transformative learning. That is, these experiences abroad can have a positive impact on their practice by applying what they have learned in a different context from the one in which they were developed, thus implementing new strategies, and activities or seeing everything from a different perspective.

2. Literature review

The following section will present the main concept of the research which involves subthemes linked to culture, advantages, limitations, and issues that will be throughout the study.

2.1 *Internationalization in education*

According to Jibeen and Khan (2015), the definition of internationalization in education refers to the process of integrating an international or intercultural aspect into teaching and research. Some activities linked to internationalization range from overseas programmes, online courses with other universities or institutions, international partnerships or courses that emphasize the advancement of international students and international faculty perspectives and competencies, such as the promotion of foreign language programmes and access to international education and access to intercultural understanding.

Cook (2007, cited in Frederiksen, 2014) found that internationalization in teachers permitted them to acquire wider cultural awareness, learn new teaching strategies, acquire more international connections and furthermore, learn to appreciate other cultures as well as gain a greater appreciation of their own culture. By working in a different context, teachers would develop greater adaptability, as well as openness to other practices, customs and ideologies, which would benefit them not only professionally, but also personally. Allen (2010) agrees that by gaining international experience, teachers’ confidence in their command of the language and enthusiasm for teaching it increases. They also become more aware of the diversity in their classrooms and communities. As Byker and Putman (2019) point out, studying abroad has helped teacher candidates develop an awareness of different perspectives, as they can provide an enriching experience when participating in the teaching and learning process in another country.

Internationalization in education also facilitates and benefits the international characteristics that are sought to be fostered in citizens and that are desirable in the global economy, such as international-mindedness and open-mindedness, second language competence, the flexibility of thought, tolerance and respect for others (Jibeen & Khan, 2015).

2.2 *Culture shock in teaching abroad*

The term culture shock is often used to describe how a person feels when moving to a new country. It applies to people who move abroad for any reason, be it for work or study. Cooper (2023) mentions that culture shock is a kind of adjustment one may feel when subjected to a new way of life and unfamiliar surroundings around them. To some extent, it is a normal process as it is a process of adaptation of the individual to the new society to which he or she has moved. *When one is suddenly immersed in a foreign culture, one may tend not to recognize the idea of what is actually considered quite normal in that culture. One could not be familiar with the cues used in that society* (Miller, 1993: 4). In the educational setting, when a teacher moves to a new country, culture shock may be reflected in the new teaching methods and work modality, students’ behaviours, traditions or customs, and even language differences within the classroom.

2.3 *Language barrier*

The language barrier can be described as the difficulty in communicating due to the different mother tongues and contexts of the speakers. Ahmad (2019) explains that language barriers are elements that prevent people from understanding each other. They are a common challenge for individuals, groups, international companies, governments, nations and the world as a whole. While language barriers are present in normal educational contexts, they become more

common in international environments where the relocating teacher must adapt not only to the culture and society but also to the language in order to function in activities both inside and outside the classroom. Within the classroom, the language teacher may face problems in explaining to his or her students if they have a very different mother tongue. Language barriers can create miscommunication problems such as misunderstanding, misinterpretation of messages, distorted messages, misinformation, confusion, mistrust, uncertainty, frustration, weak and misleading feedback, etc. (Ahmad, 2019: 3). In the international academic area, Watkins, Razee and Richerts (2012) state that “the language barrier is the biggest challenge.”

3. Methodology

As main objectives, the present work aims to inquire into the experiences of teachers who have taught different languages in international settings to explore these *experiences* in order to learn their personal stories and to understand the benefits and possible challenges they face and how this contributes to their teaching competence. From there, this project aims to answer the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the experiences of language teachers working in international settings?

Research question 2: How can teaching in an international context benefit the teacher’s teaching practice?

3.1 Paradigm and method

Since the focus area in this project is individuals and their experiences, the research paradigm is qualitative. According to Farrugia (2019), the qualitative paradigm allows the exploration of the detail and richness of the data collected. That is, focused on exploring, investigating, and inquiring into personal aspects.

In order to delve into the anecdotes and stories related to the objectives of the project, the method used was narrative inquiry. The interweaving of narrative views of phenomena and narrative inquiry marks the emerging field that draws attention to the need for careful uses and distinctions of terms (Clandinin, 2006).

3.2 Context and participants

The participants of this research were four teachers from three different countries who have worked teaching foreign languages in various countries on three continents, America, Europe and Asia.

Teacher name	Country of origin	Countries where work or have worked	Language teaching	Teachings context
Grayson	Canada	Canada, Vietnam, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Peru	English	10 years of teaching experience. He teaches young adults in the Highschool and University level.
Vanesa	Mexico	Mexico and China	English	9 yrs. teaching experience, She taught young learners at a Kindergarten in China.
Isaiah	Mexico	Austria	Portuguese	Teaching Portuguese to young adults from at the University of Salzburg.

Luca	Italy	Mexico and Italy	Italian	10 years of teaching experience. He teaches Italian to Mexican students at the University of Guanajuato.
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3.3 Data collection techniques and Tools

A semi-structured interview method was used in this study to collect information and experiences from the teachers. The interviews were conducted virtually. Prior to the interviews, a Google form was created to collect general data from the teachers. The information collected in the form was useful for the interviews, as the context of the teachers, the languages they taught, the countries they had worked in, and their years of experience were already known. Nine open-ended questions were asked for the interviews, covering topics such as the reasons for teaching in international settings, the positive aspects they have benefited from and the challenges they have faced. In addition, cultural issues such as culture shock and language barrier were included.

Both the interview and the form were revised and corrected before being used. Teachers were contacted via email and WhatsApp.

The interviews and the forms were addressed to the 4 participants, who gave their consent to be recorded. Before the start of each interview, the participant was informed about the aim of the present study, how the interview would be conducted and the importance and significance of the recordings. The languages used for the questions and during the interviews were English and Spanish. The average duration of each interview was 45 minutes per participant via the Zoom platform.

3.4 Data analysis

The recordings of each interview were transcribed and these in turn were examined by coding the information. In the next step, the most relevant information related to the research questions was filtered out. Afterwards, an attempt was made to assign codes and keywords that would help the next step of finding patterns among the participants' replies. The patterns were grouped for better organization and information processing. Finally, from the extracted excerpts of participants' experiences and narratives, the study was studied and analyzed.

4. Findings and results

In the next section, the results of the study will be presented with the objective of answering the research question: What are the experiences of language teachers teaching in international contexts? Four themes were identified: motivations, benefits, challenges, and finally, teachers' recommendations regarding their experience abroad.

4.1 Motivations to move abroad

Participants stated that they made the decision to teach in intercultural contexts as a result of curiosity and exploration of other places, a desire to travel, personal growth, to get out of their comfort zone, etc. For one of the teachers, it was a personal challenge to face such a radical change in order to improve his own language skills:

“I wanted to test myself with the language in a country where Spanish was spoken.”
(Luca, Int., 4)

For Luca, moving abroad started as a personal objective to improve his Spanish skills; his main motivation was intrinsic and led him to live in a Spanish native speaker country. Later on, he found his passion in teaching and since then, he lives in Mexico not only learning the language but also teaching his native language which is Italian.

A pattern was also found among the two other teachers, related to the desire to travel:

"I wanted to travel, I thought it was going to be exciting to live somewhere else."
(Grayson, Int. 1)

Grayson always had the goal of travelling, for that reason, he quit his old job as a journalist and decided to start exploring new horizons. Later on, he realized that as a native English speaker, he was able to teach English as a foreign language in the countries he wanted to visit. In addition, he also found he enjoyed teaching and learning.

Similar to Grayson's dreams, Vanesa also demonstrated a desire to move abroad to explore other countries and places:

"The truth is that I always had the desire to go abroad. That was my main motivation, to go abroad, to leave Mexico, to get to know somewhere else." (Vanesa, Int. 3).

In the beginning, Vanesa had plans to move to an English-speaking country to improve her language skills and be able to teach it. She could not find opportunities to go to the US or the UK; however, she found an offer to go to Asia, and her motivation to go somewhere else led her to move to the other side of the world and teach at a Chinese kindergarten for two years.

For Isaiah, however, it was very different. He started his journey as a musician looking for opportunities in his field; however, over time, he started getting interested in language learning and then, language teaching too.

"I'm a musician. My dream has always been the Big School that is Germany, especially for classical music. That was my main motivation, the music." (Isaiah, Int. 2)

Although his motivation to go to Germany started as part of his career as a musician, Isaiah also discovered he liked learning languages, and his progress in learning three more languages took him to inquire into teaching as well.

As Baker (2000) stated, teaching abroad provides teachers with the opportunity to acquire a more global perspective not only in the academic field but also by travelling, living, and participating professionally in another country. As can be analyzed from the previous experiences, they become not only teachers abroad but also got involved in a new society and culture. Moreover, it can be perceived interest in internationalization. According to Byker and Putman (2019), internationalization involves initiatives to foster a deeper sense of global awareness, i.e., issues such as cultural understanding, and language learning and teaching are involved.

4.2 Benefits of teaching internationally

International environments can offer great advantages to teachers, from the opportunity to learn about other educational systems and adapt to new methodologies to developing strategies that are in concordance with students from around the world and improving their practice. However, the teachers interviewed also highlighted the impact of this international practice on a personal level. Through teaching in other systems and environments, teachers stated that they learned, improved, and were constantly inquiring about other cultures, people, traditions, and practices. Isaiah explained that:

“The positives are relative to measuring up; however, confronting people with different ideas can offer a lot academically, but also personally. Meeting people in an international environment is a very big growth factor. It is a positive influence to grow not only teaching the language but also spreading knowledge, culture and lifestyles.” (Isaiah, Int. 2)

Being a teacher means not only sharing knowledge with students but also learning from them day-to-day. As Isaiah stated, he had the opportunity to learn about his learners’ cultures, mainly German and Austrian, which made him improve professionally as well as personally by getting to know other perspectives and mindsets.

For Vanesa, working abroad was also beneficial not only for her teaching practice but also on an individual level, as she stated:

“I always felt welcomed and valued, which is not always the case in Mexico. I also felt valued personally and financially. A salary in Mexico is not the same as in China. There (in China), a teacher is respected, well paid, loved and welcomed.” (Vanesa, Int. 3)

Vanesa was able to contrast the two academic environments where she has worked and could reflect on big differences such as pay and treatment. For her, those aspects made her feel valued and motivated her to adapt to the new international setting.

Cook (2007, cited in Frederiksen 2014) found that by working in international settings, teachers gained broader cultural awareness, learned new teaching strategies, gained more international connections, and learned to appreciate other cultures. Grayson, for his part, explained that one cannot know every place in the world, but travelling gives you the opportunity to meet people from other places and, at the same time, that gives you the feeling of knowing a small part of every place in the world, as he expressed:

“It’s impossible to know a place until a person from that part tells you about it. I feel like I get to know more about a country with the people. For me, the biggest advantage as a teacher is that I learn things.” (Grayson, Int. 1)

By working in a different context, teachers must develop a greater ability to adapt, as well as an openness to other practices, customs and ideologies, which will benefit them not only professionally, but also personally. Allen (2010), states that by acquiring international experiences, the teacher's confidence in their command of the language and their enthusiasm for teaching it increases. In addition, they become more aware of the diversity in their classrooms and communities.

Teaching abroad not only provides teachers with new strategies and methodologies but also offered them the opportunity to reflect on aspects such as valuing their people and their jobs, culture and different ways of life, making this practice a meaningful experience in their career.

4.3 Challenges of the international teaching practice

4.3.1 *The language barrier*

One of the main challenges highlighted in the teachers’ anecdotes was the language barrier, which can be described as the difficulty to communicate due to speakers’ different languages. Walkins, Razez and Richters (2012) addressed the language barrier as the biggest challenge when moving and working abroad. In Luca’s experience:

“One of the challenges was being surrounded by people who don’t speak my native language, having to explain cultural things that are difficult to understand in contexts.” (Luca, Int. 4)

Vanessa also expressed that:

“At first, it was difficult and frustrating, it took me a while to learn Chinese phrases.”

At the very beginning, none of the teachers were conversationally fluent in the language of the countries they had moved to, and although they taught languages such as English, Italian and Portuguese, they recognized that the official language was always necessary for the rest of their activities. Isaiah shared how his international experience made him develop switching skills:

“I now have the ability to change language fast and all the languages I know, were because of these human connections, I left Mexico without knowing English and only an A1 in German.” (Isaiah, Int. 4)

Inside the classroom, the use of the language they taught predominated, although as expected questions arose and sometimes students did not understand, without having a common language to communicate, patience, empathy and kindness became necessary. Watkins, Raze, and Richters (2012) suggest that education programs need to provide greater access to bilingual assistants in classes where teachers do not speak their students' native language since it can be hard and frustrating for teachers trying to communicate with their students without having a common language to express themselves. From her experience in Asia, Vanesa said:

“In China, teachers are never left alone, and having an assistant was a great support. The assistant translated the more complicated things so that they could follow me, but what mattered a lot was your body expression and the activities. You needed to be supported by everything external. The three keys for me were body language, facial gestures and the assistant.” (Vanesa, Int. 3)

Grayson who has worked in countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia with students whose native language is different from English also shared what is his key to the language barrier:

“Patience, that's the key. Be super patient and super friendly. If you can be patient all the time, you can overcome those problems. That's the way to success.” (Grayson, Int. 1)

Grayson responded from the perspective of the learner in the classroom to communicate with his or her teacher who speaks a different language; therefore, he points to patience and kindness as strategies for teachers to communicate with their students by being empathetic and kind.

4.3.2 Culture shock

Culture shock is a form of emotional moves created by stimulating of a new culture to someone's own culture having no sense and considered as a new experience (Sulaiman & Saputri, 2019). On their way through teaching in international environments, each teacher faced certain culture shocks that in some way led them to learn more about the cultures that surrounded them, their students and even themselves. From small differences in how students address teachers in the classroom such as Grayson's experience:

“In Vietnam, students do this (shows his arm up) and say emoe, emoe... and that's it for you to come over. And the first time someone do that I was like... don't call me over like that... cause in Canada I will never do that, it's so rude.” (Grayson, Int. 1)

For Grayson, it was a culture shock since in his country, it would be considered disrespectful to talk like that to a teacher; however, he was in another country where students were able to do it to ask their teachers for help. Thus, he needed to get used to it and accept these differences within the classroom.

Culture shock can be seen also in terms of personality, adaptation and spontaneity. Isaiah, who has lived in countries like Germany and Austria for over 6 years now, commented:

“I think that something very different is his way of structuring things. And you can see, I think, from their language, German, which is something very structured. It is that degree of structuring, there are very complex shocks to adapt, the adaptation, the little spontaneity that in Latin America there is.” (Isaiah, Int. 2)

Isaiah links the German language, which tends to follow a complex and strict structure, to the way German people are, that is, very structured when talking about plans and ideas. For him, it was a significant culture shock and also a challenge to adapt, coming from a country like Mexico whose culture is more spontaneous and spur-of-the-moment.

For her part, Vanesa spoke of the adjustments she had to make not only in her teaching practice but also in her personality in order to adapt to the Chinese preschool education system:

“The discipline is different, the approach... the parents always wanted to take photos of you, it took me a bit of work to adjust to this. In China there is a lot of closeness with the children, the parents are happy if they see you hug the children, so what I adjusted the most was my personality. In the beginning, they told me, “the parents say that sometimes you are not so close to the children”... there they always wanted to see you happy. After two classes, I had already given everything. It was using a lot of energy. And well, in the end, I realized that I don't like teaching children, because it is very draining.” (Vanesa, Int. 3)

Victoria was surprised when she realizes that in China, parents ask the teachers to be very close to their children; it indicates that young learners feel comfortable and happy at school. In addition, in Chinese education, it is essential that teachers demonstrate energy and happiness. For Victoria, it was a big challenge in the beginning since she was asked to be energetic and active the whole day; thus, she needed to adapt her personality to fit the Chinese requirements.

Luca also shared the cultural differences he found with his Mexican students and how at first it was a shock to find certain attitudes:

“It is common for students to give gifts to teachers, whether it is for Teachers’ Day, birthdays or friendship days, and it is rude not to accept them. In Italy, this practice is not common and it is not impolite not to accept a gift, once here (in Mexico) I was forced to accept a gift that was honestly of no use to me because otherwise, the person who was going to give it to me would have been offended.” (Luca, Int. 4)

According to Hornby (2010, cited in Sulaiman and Saputri, 2019), the process of acculturation can be defined as the act of learning to live successfully in a different culture. Despite the differences encountered at the beginning, the teachers were able to adapt and understand these cultural contrasts. Grayson concluded that:

“I do think everyone is kind of the same, it just takes different methods to unlock them. Mexican students, for example, respond to like kindness very fast. And maybe some other cultures are more reserved. Every country and every place has its own people that are going to be different.” (Grayson, Int. 1)

His international experience of travelling and working in different countries has led Grayson to understand and appreciate the cultural differences within his classrooms. It has also led him to learn about people’s different ways of being and thus better adapt to his students. As he calls it, “unlocking people” in terms of their cultural background, something he has learned from long experience interacting with students from many different places.

4.4 Discussion, results, and recommendations

According to the participants, teaching in multicultural environments is not only related to teaching a language abroad. It is a constant learning experience and, therefore, a process in which the teacher can be enriched by new techniques, methodologies and strategies while learning about your students and their cultures.

“It is an opportunity to do good. You can teach people to respect each other and learn. And yes, if they feel like travelling, travelling is a little bit of work, right? conditions can be harder, but overall if someone wants to do so, I say yes, go for it.” (Grayson, Int. 1)

“It’s very beautiful, it’s very interesting, it’s a very intense experience. Maybe it’s not for everyone, but I would recommend it. There are many aspects, it can be in other contexts, not necessarily with children, but I highly recommend it. It is very satisfying to see how the children are learning, and how the parents thank you. Whenever you leave your country, you feel more appreciated in other places, I don’t know, it’s strange, but that’s how it happens.” (Vanesa, Int. 3)

The teachers expressed that this experience has been of great value in their career and that it could be beneficial for future language teachers as an experience to improve and master their language skills in different settings.

“Obviously for a language learner it is essential to go out, isn’t it? And going out to a country of the language you are learning, is unquestionably vital. You have to be alive to these changes, and by that I mean to keep learning and practicing every day. That’s why an experience abroad would be very good, but I think we also have to rely on the language teaching of our countries.” (Isaiah, Int. 3)

“I would recommend it to all people who are willing to accept that there are different cultures and views of the world and life different from their own, it is an enriching experience that adds up and from which you can take and see aspects of life that you would not have been able to grasp being in your home country.” (Luca, Int. 4)

As it was analyzed through teachers’ experiences, there are great advantages and opportunities to teach internationally. According to Byker and Putman (2019), teaching has been described as a “global profession”; thus, it seems a natural extension to integrate international teaching experiences into the teaching practice. However, it is also important to consider that it might not be an experience for everyone, since it requires an open mind, the ability to adapt to a new culture, break stereotypes and prejudices and, above all, the will to get out of the comfort zone.

5. Conclusion

The research questions have been answered with insights into the different experiences of teachers who have worked in different countries and cultures. Through their experiences, patterns were found that indicate that teaching in international environments can bring both positive and challenging aspects. However, the positive aspects were greater. The advantages highlighted were the opportunity to explore, broaden one’s perspective and vision, acquire new skills, enrich one’s knowledge and test oneself. It was also possible to analyze that teaching abroad requires more than just adapting to new educational systems. It is a process that requires a great deal of commitment and willingness to fit into a new place, work with students from other cultures, overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and develop awareness and empathy for global issues. Finally, it can be concluded that language teaching in international settings is a process of constant exchange between teachers and learners which brings great academic and personal benefits.

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AIMS AND SCOPE

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