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About the Journal

The *Westcliff International Journal of Applied Research (WIJAR)* is a multi-disciplinary, open access journal, pioneered by the faculty at Westcliff University. Westcliff University is an accredited institution focused on educating, inspiring, and empowering students from around the world through innovative, high-quality distance and campus programs.

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Anthony M. Lee, Ed.D.

President & CEO

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Research in Writing Instruction and Assessment:

Current and needed research to improve student writing

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Abstract

Discussions among educators at almost any level will invariably result in one point of agreement: students at all levels are under-prepared in writing skills. Unfortunately, this is a conclusion that also predominates much of the research literature on the improvement of student writing as well. Despite the importance attached to high-stakes academic writing skills, research has contributed little insight about the challenges students face with academic writing tasks. Llosa, Beck, and Zhao (2011) point out that the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges found that this lack of understanding of the writing process was so significant that they identified writing as, the "Neglected 'R' (National Commission on Writing, 2003; Llosa, Beck and Zhao, 2011). In the following paper, authors Caldwell and Outcault Hill present a broad review of the areas of research into the writing process and assessment of writing and suggest areas where further research is needed. Their discussion focuses on 1) Research related to the influence of Cognitive function on the writing process, 2) Research into teaching various genres such as exposition, argument, narrative, analysis, and creative writing, 3) Research on the assessment of writing, and finally, 4) Research on alternative teaching methods.

Introduction

Educators widely accept the notion that there is inherent value in providing detailed corrective feedback to learners to improve their composition skills. As a result, they invest an inordinate amount of time error-checking student compositions and writing sometimes extensive comments to help students improve their writing. In fact, many instructors have based a large portion of their teaching/learning model on an elaborate system of detailed, sometimes immediate and personalized feedback to students that they believe will facilitate the improvement of writing (Becker, 2014). In addition, many schools and universities provide extensive online and faculty resources to students such as spell checkers, grammar checks, online tutorials, and even faculty tutoring to assist students in improving writing skills. Many students, unfortunately, fail to take full advantage of these resources, particularly instructor feedback, simply because they do not have command of the skills to effectively review and evaluate corrected assignments and study the instructor's heavily time-invested feedback (Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003).

Another issue prevalent in the discussion of writing improvement is the validity of the undue emphasis on a grammar and mechanics correction approach in feedback. Researchers such as Truscott (1996) have been heavily critical that the reliance on the correction of grammar and mechanics as a sole means of feedback to improve writing is both ineffective and even harmful; and should therefore be abandoned for other more meaningful methods.

In response to this type of criticism, an extensive research base currently exists that has looked at every aspect of feedback to students, e.g. direct, explicit written feedback; peer feedback, and even no feedback at all. What many of these research studies find, however, is that feedback of any type will not be effective if it is not used effectively by learners to improve their construction of language, stimulate the formation of ideas, improve analysis and evaluation skills, and provide opportunities for the expansion of ideas (Outcault Hill, 2014).

Contributing to this research base, researchers such as Ferris (2004) have investigated the effects of various types of feedback models: 1) direct, explicit written feedback; 2) student-researcher 5-minute individual conferences; 3) direct, explicit written feedback only; or 4) no corrective feedback at all. Ferris (1999) also experimented with 53 adult migrant students on

three types of errors (prepositions, the past simple tense, and the definite article) which resulted in improved accuracy in new pieces of writing over a 12-week period. The study found significant positive effects for the combination of written and conference feedback on accuracy levels in the use of the past simple tense and the definite article in new pieces of writing, but no overall effect on accuracy improvement for feedback types when the three error categories were considered as a single group.

A growing body of empirical research studies are now investigating the agenda proposed by Ferris (1999). Significant variations in accuracy across four pieces of writing support earlier Second Language Acquisition (SLA) discoveries that second language learners, in the process of acquiring new linguistic forms, may perform them with accuracy on one occasion but fail to do so on other similar occasions.

One significant research question addressed in this paper, therefore, is which methods of instruction and types of assessments have researchers discovered, or are proposing for further research, to be most effective in improving writing instruction and evaluation? A preliminary review of this research indicates that there are many dimensions to this broad question that involve complex processes. For example, when researchers search for the answer to the question, “Which methods seem to improve writing?”, they are faced with the equally complex issue of what types of writing are educators seeking to improve: expository writing, argumentative writing, narrative, factual, analytical, or creative writing? To date, most research seems to focus on generic approaches without recognizing that varied genres have their own unique characteristics which might need to be addressed in the instructional process and have research done on them in isolated cases (Outcalt Hill, 2014).

For the purposes of this article, research studies related to improving writing instruction and assessment are organized into five general areas: 1) Research related to the influence of process on the writing process, 2) Research specific to how to teach various writing genres such as exposition, argument, narrative, analytical, and creative writing, 3) Research on the assessment of writing, 4) Research on alternative instructional methods.

Discussion

1) Research related to the influence of process on the writing process

A question which has been given extensive treatment in current research is the long-ignored recognition of the role cognitive process plays in the writing process. In research conducted by Llosa, Beck, and Zhao (2011), for example, the authors write, "...to construct effective arguments, students must be able to analyze relationships and choose among reasons in support of a position, interpret information, or initiate action. Doing so requires learners to transform knowledge from a source text or from a live experience to suit an argumentative structure." (p. 258). Similar studies from Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) indicate that such transformations require attention to stimulating the learners' cognitive processes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation rather just attention to the knowledge and comprehension levels; and, as a result, have been found to distinguish novice writers from experienced and expert writers.

While many studies on how to improve writing, instruction fail to consider the role played by the cognitive aspects of writing, other studies have considered how writers go about constructing their work through observation of how other writers address the background of their readers as well as transform their own experiences into the written page. Notable among these studies, as noted above, is the work of Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia (1987) whose research on cognitive process has clearly shown differences between beginning and expert writer's characteristics. Additionally, research by Flowers and Hayes (1981), Cumming (1989), and Sasaki's (2000) consider writers in their cognitive planning of verbal practice and written words on paper to demonstrate that certain types of learners "self-regulate" through a verbal to written process.

2) Research specific to how to teach various writing genres such as exposition, argument, narrative, analytical, and creative writing

A second area of research interest to those seeking to find ways to improve writing, is directing the focus of writing on genres rather just general composition. The research of Llosa, Beck, and Zhao (2011) looks at frameworks for understanding the challenges students face in writing at the secondary level. In studying writing genres rather than a holistic approach in writing, the researchers use the selection of genres as the basic premise for their investigation. Writing genres are classified into three phases: "personal, informational, and analytical". Llosa *et. al.* (2011) builds on the work of Schleppegrell (2004 who found that personal categories are

divided into narrative and recounting an experience. Informational categories are divided to be explanation, exposition, and historical account. Llosa *et. al.* (2011) also chose to address “attention to both macrostructure and sentence-level features of writing”. Categorization of writing is a feature of the Llosa *et. al.* (2011) study which reports on methods of writer’s classification of the writing process.

3) *Research in the Assessment of Writing*

Another area that Llosa *et. al.* (2011) have studied is the role of assessments in the evaluation of writing. Their research concludes that existing writing assessment tools are not sufficiently diagnostic in nature; the researchers state, “Simply evaluating writing using holistic measures or an analytical scale as a rating will only measure certain aspects of writing such as mechanics and the use of only a few genres”.

A final dimension of the Llosa *et. al.* (2011) studies was that they questioned students about their difficulty in writing. English Language learners (85%) particularly, found translating to be the most challenging, followed by 48% finding generating language to be the most difficult followed by 1) memory, 2) interpreting task demands, 3) addressing audience needs, and 4) revising.

4) *Research on Alternative Instructional Methods*

Research literature abounds with suggestions and experiments with alternative teaching methods. The following are only a small representative sampling of the type of methods being used in American schools. One method developed by Townsend, Nail, Cheveallier, and Browning (2013) used a strategy entitled the Online Writing Partnership. The authors refer to research conducted by Applebee and Langer (n.d.) in reviewing the kind of writing that middle and high school students might need. In their research, the authors selected 20 students and found that the students’ writing was mainly for the purposes of practice for standardized tests; and, therefore, lacked in quality as good writing. Townsend *et. al.* (2013), on the other hand, noted that writing corrections and support from teachers must be present, and must be rich in detail and examples if the quality of writing was going to improve. They also concluded that standardized testing practice has replaced opportunities for writing and feedback as an interactive student and teacher experience in the classroom.

Another alternative method of writing instruction is reported by Townsend et. al. (2013) whose research focused on secondary level/local community college dual enrollment programs where essay feedback was based on grammar and mechanics alone. A qualitative research study performed by Browning (2013) conducted interviews of high school students enrolled in the dual programs and found that the students were often confused about instructions, did not find the topics engaging, and the feedback the students received was filled with difficult and confusing language.

In response to the issue of high school students' difficulties in navigating through weak writing feedback, Browning (Townsend, Nail, Cheveallier and Browning, 2013) instituted a project using graduate-level students attending teaching methods classes who got involved in the correction of the high school student writing. The project evolved to emailed papers using the comment feature on Microsoft Word. The element lacking in the project, however, was personal social interaction since the written responses were often open to misinterpretation and possibly "hurt feelings" among the high school students. As a result, the college students began an interactive online community using Moodle, described as "...a free, open-source management system that includes a variety of tools for distance education". Those tools are further described as chat rooms, discussion boards, personal profiles, blogs and wikis. These types of internet learning tools developed an interactive partnership between writing evaluation and the writer that gave strong indications of positive results.

The Online Writing Partnership involved the development of student teachers engaging in their college teaching programs as well as high school student writers that work together at the process of teaching/learning writing, High school students evaluated their student teacher mentors, offering feedback on the scaffolding of writing offered by the students in the college education program.

Townsend *et. al.* (2013) recommend, based on their informal research results, that writers need the following for improved writing success: 1) knowledge of a clear audience and purpose for writing, 2) opportunities to learn how to choose and develop writing topics of personal interest, 3) emphasis on quality on early drafts, including praise and encouragement, questions,

and suggestions; and, finally, 4) many opportunities for revision in response to feedback from evaluators who are truly interested and engaged in the writing they are evaluating.

Another method that resulted in improved writing was a project conducted by Mansilla, Duraisingh, Wolfe, and Haynes (2009). In their study, the researchers offer what they call the “Targeted Assessment Rubric”. The authors propose a rubric that addresses the assessment of multi-disciplinary programs of study. The rubric had four areas: purposefulness, disciplinary grounding, integration, and critical awareness. The qualitative levels are: naïve, novice, apprentice, and master. The rubric also describes clearly an interdisciplinary work, a related assessment framework, and recent scholarship on disciplinary writing.

Mansilla *et. al.* (2009) define *rubric* use by noting first the reason for assessment, which is tracking “quality of student learning.” Their research leads them to the conclusion that rubrics are fairer and more consistent than holistic methods because the assessment criteria are made explicit and instructors clearly describe different levels of performance. They also suggest that the use of a well-defined rubric provides value for student self-assessment for reflection and clarity in writing.

The authors quote Goodrich-Andrade (2006) and Hubba & Freed (2000) stating in defense of rubric criticism that there is misinterpretation with the use of rubrics’ use include interpreting rubrics to be “tools for grading rather than supports for understanding”. And furthermore, the rubric captures the aspects of writing that denote quality, and determining what to assess is a challenge in the educator, as well as focusing on core objectives for learning, particularly on an interdisciplinary level.

Mansilla *et. al.* (2009) define “interdisciplinary” to mean addressing the work of the individual bridging of work of two or more domains or areas arising from several disciplines addressed at their crossing of work. Furthermore, the authors describe a teacher’s analysis of the student work as a support for further growth in subject understanding. Their research questions examine what is meant by understanding a problem in interdisciplinary fashion, what are the aspects of interdisciplinary work, what qualities can be to students as interdisciplinary work that is of quality. The framework is a system for planning various interdisciplinary student work including presentations and papers.

Mansilla (2009) and his team describe their framework in steps. First, the framework denotes quality interdisciplinary knowledge as building, extending, and updating information with commonly accepted and validated standards. The authors suggest a careful reading of student work to note first, levels of interdisciplinary intuition and views as integrated and leading the work. Second, assessing integrated qualities of the work should identify points where disciplines intersect and intuitive knowledge emerges. Third, a clear purpose is demonstrated by the student regarding engaged inquiry into the process of evaluation and criticism when he states that “the framework as applied exposes necessity of student explicit purpose as well as self-evaluation” (Mansilla, 2009).

The approach proposed by Mansilla *et. al.* (2009) has been tested on papers and findings were that the papers grew longer from freshman to senior and that the rubric could be used to score a range of essay topics, and discern evolutionary differences in writers. The authors suggest sharing the rubric with students, and utilizing the assessment tool as an approach to grading interdisciplinary papers. The result of the study was less than enlightening beyond the key points of validating the rubric for its intended purpose.

Conclusion

The results of the foregoing discussion indicate hope for improving both writing instruction and in the accurate assessment of student writing. However, in the words of Llosa, Beck, and Zhao (2011), “...despite the high stakes currently attached to students’ performance on assessments of academic writing, we still know little about the challenges students face with academic writing tasks”. To further compound the situation that learners in America’s schools suffer from a significant need for improvement in writing performance at all levels, researchers at The Education Alliance (Devaney, 2005), a department at Brown University, indicate that English Language Learners (ELL’s), face even more significant challenges from state-mandated writing assessments. Data collected from extensive research indicate that these learners do not fare well. The Alliance’s reasons for this are that most research has focused largely on postsecondary and international student populations, with little focus on U.S. resident and immigrant middle and high school students. In short, several significant factors make writing instruction for ELL’s a potent and pressing issue for policy makers, teacher educators,

professional development specialists, researchers, funders of writing and literacy research, and practitioners.

While the answers to questions that the Alliance's research found are complex and extensive, they cannot be summarized in this short article; their report, however, is readily available and should be carefully studied by those interested in the education of ELL's in writing instruction.

A conclusion is that far more research needs to be done on how writing is assessed and how the data from the assessment can be used to improve the writing process. Such research is being proposed by researchers Outcalt Hill and Caldwell regarding several significant factors that make writing instruction effective for English Language Learners (ELL's) for the benefit of policy makers, teacher educators, professional development specialists, researchers, funders of writing and literacy research, and practitioners. The need for analysis into International Writing Instruction Methods for ELL Student would shed light on the challenges facing the above-mentioned stakeholders in the teaching and assessing of writing in the higher education field.

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The examination of the test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL):

Evident disparities between world englishes and standard English

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Abstract

While many English Language Learners (ELLs) embark on a path towards higher education in universities centered around Standardized English, they must undergo rigorous training to prepare for these demanding TOEFL exams. Students that have been exposed to World Englishes, or lingua francas, for communicative purposes are now asked to abandon these English varieties to assume the elevated importance of the Standardized form of English implemented across universities around the world. This paper analyzes the juxtaposition and negotiation of these languages as learners are often encumbered with not only linguistic barriers but cultural hindrances that contribute to identity displacement. As language is deeply entrenched in one's cultural background, it is necessary to reflect on how these English proficiency exams negate the learner's L1 along with the unique qualities that they strongly identify with.

Introduction

The Test for English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam has been commonly ranked among the top methods of assessing the English proficiency of non-English language learners in all respective areas of linguistic acquisition. Originating from California, the TOEFL exam predominantly employs the use of American-English as its testing material mirrors the Standard English linguistic conventions. Currently, there are more than “10,000 colleges, agencies, and other institutions [such as immigration departments, medical and licensing agencies] in over 130 countries that accept TOEFL scores” (Who Accepts TOEFL, 2017). Despite its worldwide reach of over 18 million test takers and preferred style of integrated linguistic components “to help learners build the skills and confidence needed to communicate effectively in academic environments” (ETS, 2005), the TOEFL exam advocates for the uniform assessment of Standardized English by neglecting World Englishes into its exams.

Discussion

Contrary to the positive stance that World Englishes have on the ever-evolving English language, the TOEFL exams reflect a dominating monolingual approach with a focus on errors rather than features (Bolton, 2008). For instance, the integrated skilled test is tailored to favor students that have undergone the “immersive” process of residing in an English-speaking country, more particularly the United States, and have acquired the extensive vocabulary needed to succeed. Although the speaking and listening component of the test regularly utilizes native-American English speakers, it does incorporate a handful of other accents from the U.K., New Zealand, and Australia (ETS, 2005), which reflects the prominent language standards spoken in these more monolingual societies. However, the reality addressed by Cheung and Braine (Ulate, 2011) is that the English language as a “foreign language [is used] by about 750 million speakers; [and] subsequently, most English teachers are non-native speakers.” Therefore, the misconception that Standardized English triumphs other varieties of the English language due to the number of individuals who speak it as a first language is false. As illuminated by Medgyes (Ulate, 2011), the English language is “no longer the privilege of native speakers [...] Nevertheless, people who speak English as their native language continue to have a distinct advantage over those for whom it is a foreign tongue.” For instance, when examining the favored population of

native-speaker English instructors abroad, Mossou and Llorca (Ulate, 2011) has deconstructed the myth that native speakers represent the “ideal teacher” because this idea has been grounded in insubstantial evidence and the wrongful propagation of deception. Therefore, it is a falsified preconception that native-speakers are more reliable resources for the obtainment of language acquisition; and we must consider the ripple effect of how the administrative favorability of native-speakers negatively affects the ways in which English learners are introduced to these biased standards. Although the speaking portion of the TOEFL exam is designed to implement an unbiased approach of assessing speaking proficiencies by having test takers communicate and record their responses via computers rather than conducting in-person interviews (Dodigovic, 2015), it adopts a mechanical approach to language and neglects the multidimensional facets that add volume to sociocultural awareness. As the learners’ responses are scrutinized under a vetted process where “three to six trained raters review” (ETS, 2005) those responses to ensure that students meet the requirements of what is expected in a traditional academic or professional setting in an English-spoken country (Brown, Hudson, & Clark, 2004). Therefore, international students are being pigeon-holed into adopting a singular approach to learning English to conform to these set standards and are essentially forced to abandon the cultural influences that shape their identities. Students are not only expected to be familiar with the extensive range of Standard English vocabulary associated with American academia, but they also must be well-versed and knowledgeable about how to maneuver through the design of the conventionally structured of the exam. From the perspective of the test creators, the integrated written component is “stable...[because] it is the goal and it is the product of institutionalized learning both for the L1 and L2 learners” (Davies, 2009). By abiding the set of requirements employed by institutionalized English universities and professional standards, the TOEFL’s systematic approach to examining and ranking students according to their proficiency skill levels do not allow for much room to deviate from the standard norm of the Standard English language.

In preparation for the exam, ELLs are encouraged to take on a holistic approach in educating themselves about the unique structure of the multi-skilled and integrated test along with the various components that distinguishes a well-rounded English learner. Although there is no explicit mention in the ETS’ “TOEFL Test Prep Planner” (2012) about the utilization or

preference of Standard English in its study guide, if students desire to succeed, they will need to employ not only the linguistic skills associated with Standard English but also be knowledgeable about the culture and expectations for taking these exams. For instance, the various scenarios introduced in the speaking and listening component of the exam imitate real-life contexts and scenarios any American student may encounter, such as classroom lectures and conversations between students encompassing a wide spectrum of subjects. As language is deeply entwined with one's cultural history, it is imperative to analyze the controversial issues of how English varieties may conflict with the testing standards implemented by English speaking universities around the world. Students that are accustomed to World Englishes may perform poorly on the rigorous TESOL exams due to the nature of the "intricate English used... [and the] students' lack of comprehension" (Arucino, 2013). Therefore, ELLs need to exercise caution when preparing for the exam as they are expected to tailor their studies and habits to accommodate the demands of the institutions that promote Standard English norms. In efforts of alleviating the pressures of measuring up to these standards and excelling on the TOEFL exam, learners need repeated exposure and practice to familiarize themselves with organizational patterns and structured presentation of the timed exam.

When considering the various skillsets needed to succeed in the TOEFL exam, we must consider the ethical encroachments of how promoting Standardized English across university standards negates the sociocultural values embedded in the learner's identity. As foreign born students typically "identify with their first language and culture, ... their home background provides them with positive self-esteem" (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2004). The standardized tests often "encourage [learners] to replace their home language and culture with their new [targeted] language and culture" (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2004). Rather than promoting a one-dimension application of the English language, we need to adapt to the ever-evolving utilization of English and the multitude of needs it serves on various communicative levels. As Jenkins (2000) highlights:

Human nature, on this evidence at least, seems to have a strong tendency to favour conformity to standards, uniformity, and conservatism, and to disfavor non-conformity, diversity, and change. Because language is so closely bound up with human identity and

attitudes, it is inevitable that we should commonly encounter among speakers of standard English(es) strongly held and deeply entrenched convictions as to the superiority of languages which adheres to established linguistic norms and the inferiority of language which departs from them.

Therefore, if Standard English continues to be upheld as a prestigious representation of one's intellectual and social background, it will diminish the cultural values in other English varieties, which may have a consequential negative effect of encumbering the learning experience. Promoting and cherishing the distinct cultural differences that inspire the evolution of the English language is necessary in validating each student's unique cultural blueprint, or identity, as well as encouraging a heterogeneous community rather than a conforming homogeneous society.

In promoting the holistic approach to learning the Standard English language, the TOEFL exam appropriately allocates 30 possible points to each of the speaking, listening, reading, and writing categories. After reviewing the TOEFL test results collected from January to December of 2016, it is noted that the three major groups of ELLs that took the exam were acquiring immigration statuses, employment, or admission to higher educational institutions. In a global poll of non-native English speakers taking the exam, the average roughly ranged from 20 to just below 22 for each of the reading, writing, speaking, and listening sections (Test and Score Data, 2016). Upon deeper analysis, the data gathered was broken down into the native spoken languages and home countries of the test takers. Africa, one of the world's most densely populated continents that embodies nearly 2,000 languages, scored on the lower tier of global polls and roughly scored between 65 to 78 on the TOEFL exam (Nationsonline, 2017). Conversely, in the Americas, Asia, and Europe, the scores were consistently higher which highlighted the disparity of the surmounting number of languages and dialects that Africans must negotiate upon. In efforts of reconciling these differences, several African communities have adopted an English lingua franca to communicate among communities without the burden of acquiring each language painstakingly; therefore, it is more likely that Africans are not formally introduced to Standardized English but rather are well-versed with World Englishes. Although this data may not be as pertinent to the ESL communities in Southern California, due to the major influx of Asian immigrants who predominantly enroll into these American English schools, the statistical

breakdown of each nation and country may provide an ESL instructor insight as to anticipate what areas students of different cultural backgrounds may require extra assistance in (Test and Score Data, 2016). For example, taken from the “Test and Score Data” poll of Chinese TOEFL test takers, the students scored strongly in their reading and writing sections; however, there was an evident deficit in the speaking and listening proficiencies.

Conclusion

Conscientious that most of my students are preparing to take the TOEFL exam soon, I would cross-examine their needs with the statistical overview of their home country’s test scores to get a general overview of what areas they may require extra assistance with. Although this is a loose projection, it is a great starting point in gradual tailoring various activities to meet my students’ individual needs.

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Osterwalder's business model canvas: *Its genesis, features, comparison, benefits and limitations*

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Abstract

This essay is a brief exploration of Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas. The author discusses the genesis of the Business Model Canvas, the unique features of the approach of the Business Model Canvas, and then compares the Business Model Generation to other business model approaches. Finally, the benefits and/or limitations of using Osterwalder's business model canvas in the context of the author's organization – a higher education organization, are examined.

Keywords: Building Blocks, Business Model Canvas, Customer Relationship, Partner Network, Revenue Stream, Value Proposition

Introduction

Business models are becoming increasingly popular in both theory and practice. However, despite their increasing popularity, the concept of business model is relatively new (Leschke, 2013), and even many MBA graduates today lack understanding of the term and/or have never been introduced to the term. This author was introduced to the concept of a business model back in 2005 while pursuing an MBA at the Huizenga College, Nova Southeastern University, and while reading Dr. Art Weinstein's book on superior customer value. Weinstein (2012) defines a business model as the way a company captures, creates, and delivers value to its customers. This introduction to the concept of business models was rather intensive compared to Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas.

Discussion

Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas as it exists today is over a decade in the works with its initial conception and introduction in the designer's 2004 PhD Thesis at the University of Lausanne and further developed in 2008 (Leschke, 2013). According to Osterwalder (2004), the purpose of a business model is to describe and present the rationale of how organizations create, deliver and capture value. An extensive review of business models in preparation for the creation of the Business Model Canvas was undertaken by Osterwalder, Pigneur and Tucci (2005). This definition and the conception of an approach to capturing, creating, and delivering value is not new as there were business models presented prior to the Business Model Canvas that include simple categorizations such as brick-and-mortar, brick-and-click, Internet pure play, etc. (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Leschke, 2013; Weinstein, 2012). In 2010, Osterwalder and Pigneur further clarified and refined the business model by looking at its nine (9) building blocks: value propositions, key activities, key resources, partner network, customer segments, channels, customer relationship, cost structure and revenue streams (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010).

Unique Features of the Business Model Canvas

Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas has several important components called "building blocks" as described above, and further elaborated on by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010). These building blocks are not unique in the realm of business jargons and processes. However, Osterwalder presents these in a chart that can better help companies to plan in the value creation

and value delivery process. Furthermore, Osterwalder's model presents key components that are missing from many business model considerations. Here, the creator of the Business Model Canvas designs and presents a dashboard-like map of important components of value creating and value-adding activities in firms. While the individual components of the model are not unique features, integrating them into a value-map is a good feature of Osterwalder's work.

Business Model Generation vs Other Business Model Approaches

The Business Model Generation is like other business model approaches. For example, where Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) generate their business model from key functional business focus such as customer segments, value propositions, channels, customer relations, revenue streams, key resources, key activities, key partnerships, and cost structure. Hamel (2000) also includes key resources, customer interface and value network as important in generating business model. Hedman and Kalling (2003), and Rasmussen (2007) also use similar components to generate their business model approaches. For example, Hedman and Kalling (2003) look at customers and organizational resources and activities, and Rasmussen (2007) also emphasize value proposition, market segment, cost structure, and value network. There are other business model approaches that differ significantly from Osterwalder's Business Model Generation. For example, Gordijn and Akkermans (2001) identify the following aspects of business as the keys in generating business models: value in, value port, actor, value activity, value exchange, value object, and profitability calculation. Osterwalder's model also differ from Amit and Zott (2010), who propose generating business model on structure and efficiency.

Benefits and Limitations of Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas

While Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas is not a new idea in the realms of conceptualization of value creation and delivery process models in business, it is a useful model that allows organizational leaders and managers to map their organization along vital value-creating functions and activities. In a higher education organization, similar to one where this author works, Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas can be used to effectively identify important components of value creation and value delivery, and in doing so, it provides a better platform for the organization to develop and implement strategy around core activities, resources, and processes. For example, universities and colleges can examine the building blocks of business

model to identify opportunities, deficiencies, and to improve and add value to services for students. The business model canvas can also be used to identify and foster inclusiveness (Michelini & Fiorentino, 2011) factors in the educational process.

Conclusion

While Osterwalder (2004) enlarged and further developed and expanded our understanding and conception of business models, business and management literature was already aware of and operationalizing the concept across diverse industries, as well as across manufacturing and service-oriented firms. Nevertheless, Osterwalder popularized the concept and broadened it outside of the simplistic conceptions of business models, and demonstrated how companies could use the Business Model Canvas in answering the important questions of capturing, creating, and delivering value in a more complex and highly integrated competitive global environment and market.

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Family businesses and management information systems (MIS): Seven wise steps to become more electronically intelligent

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Abstract

Turning a brick-and-mortar family business into an E-business, would greatly pay off, and bring every manager's dream come true, since it has the potential of creating a sustainable growth (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). This paper will introduce the step by step guidelines for managers.

Introduction

Proper implementation of MIS, and information technology systems in any company would be like Schumpeter's creative destruction idea (1942), where the new systems would replace the old ones, promoting sustainability, growth, and profitability. Most incumbents with their obsolete technologies are left vulnerable to the attacks that may occur from the startups equipped with the latest hardware, software, and technology (Bergek, Berggren, Magnusson, & Hobday, 2013). The battle will continue incrementally to the point where incumbents' experience with older technology only could gain small wins, and the startups' fresh technology with lesser experience but more innovative thinking will take over (Hölttä-Otto, Otto, & Luo, 2013). Therefore, thinking of acquiring MIS and information systems is a must, and would be explained here as seven wise steps that every manager should take for sustainable growth.

Discussion

The first step before installing any new devices or technologies would be defining the competitive advantage of the company. Competitive advantage is the combination of proper strategies in a company leading to superior performance comparing to the rivalry in the same industry (Rothaermel, 2015). The four tools that managers use for that purpose are SWOT analysis, the five forces model, the three generic strategies, and value chain analysis. Later, when the competitive advantage was identified, it could be used for providing a feature in the product or service that the company offers and the competition cannot. In doing so recognizing critical success factors (CSF) and key performance indicators (KPI) and improving them, would determine how the strategy would be adjusted to gain the competitive advantage (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). For instance, when Apple recognized the need of listening to the music in the customers, there were only some illegal websites answering the need. iTunes and iPods were the outcome of recognition and the understanding of their abilities in software and hardware technologies which significantly moved them ahead of their competition. The innovation created a huge competitive advantage for the company, pushing services like Napster almost out of the market, increasing Apple's profits and market share at that time (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Finding the competitive intelligence is the process of acquiring information about the "competitors' plans, activities, and products" to adjust the strategic plans and better hone, sustain, and adjust the competitive

advantage (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Competitive advantage won't last forever and the rivals will try to achieve it, or take the idea from you. They will try it by copying the business' operations, acquiring the new technologies, and hiring away key employees (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015).

The second step would be the selection of the size and type of the MIS and information systems. Since the family businesses are usually small at least at the beginning, finding smaller MIS solutions by Microsoft, Oracle, SAS or other companies would be a proper decision. Moreover, there should be an understanding of where the company would be in two years (or 18 months as some researchers suggest) incrementally from now, since based on Moore's law computers and information systems' abilities would be doubled, within this time, while their costs would fall in half, therefore updates would be required for scalabilities, and availabilities (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). It has been also suggested that MIS and information systems' type and size to be based on CEO's understanding of the systems, since if the systems installed are so sophisticated and above and beyond the CEO's knowledge of the matter, their effectiveness and efficiency could be seriously reduced while the huge costs of implementation, maintenance, and running of that sophisticated system might lead company's scarce resources to the depletion (Thong, 1999). Also learning the capabilities of more available and inexpensive software such as Microsoft Excel would help the company to increase both its effectiveness and efficiencies. Effectiveness would be increased since the software is strong enough to capture, accurately process, and analyze the initial small amount of information. It can also increase efficiency, since the software is very inexpensive, available, and scalable. For instance, pivoting tables in Microsoft Excel can solve lots of problems for the managers as decision makers of the big data, where they can simulate dashboards in a more inexpensive way giving a quick, easy to understand, and detailed visibility to the raw data and information (smartsheet.com).

The third step would be the recognition of the E-business values, and to act accordingly to implement and exploit its offerings. Web 2.0 as a catalyst offers advantages of content sharing, collaborating, and user contributing technologies that can be capitalized on open-source software. Abilities such as email, collaborative webpage, VOIP, instant messaging, videoconferencing, and podcasting all work on Web 2.0 (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Therefore, exploiting these abilities that are much more powerful today would be a no-brainer. Proper use

of social media marketing also can boost the business' growth. Techniques such as viral marketing, using of hashtags, network marketing, and folksonomy taggings can enhance the marketing message we are sending to the specific receiver (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). For instance, in folksonomy technique, websites that use weighted list (tag-cloud) such as Flickr and Delicious, will help their users to find their information "based on a user-generated system of organizing online content", which is a form of taxonomy (Sinclair, & Cardew-Hall, 2008). Although Kelly, Kerr, and Drennan (2010) have suggested not to advertise on social media websites, there is a possibility of consumer skepticism about the advertiser and the message. For instance, if your Facebook page is open to public, the ad receivers that are not listed as known friends would not trust the message. Matching the title and subject of the social media page that you own and its relevance to advertising will reduce this effect (2010). Professional names, commercial use, and positive consumer and celebrity review endorsements (OCR) by credible users, will gain the trust of online users (Lee, Park, & Han, 2011).

Step four is, defining ethical guidelines and e-policies for the employees and managers in the work place. Topics such as information secrecy (computer security and protection of data), information property (who owns the information), information management (manages the flow of information in the organization for efficiency), and information governance (processes necessary for supporting risk, regulatory, and operational requirements) need to be addressed in detail, and are a must for any company (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). For instance, in legal proceedings finding the necessary documents from the databases as the evidence to win the cases would be crucial, and therefore the employees need to know how to manage, secure, and organize them. Other policies such as ethical computer use, information privacy, acceptable use, email privacy, social media, and workplace monitoring need to be defined by the management and, explained to the employees. Prohibiting the employees from using the company's computers for gaming would be an ethical computer use policy. Or, if employees can bring their own devices to the workplace (BYOD policy), the details need to be explicitly explained in written form for all members of the organization (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Also, in BOYD policies, the levels of granted accesses should be clear (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Another sensitive issue is privacy policies. Fair information practice, is one of the protective plans against the use of private

information of the users, where the company defines the general terms and conditions of collecting data from the users and the ways they share it with the third parties. Since these practices have been regulated differently in any country, expansive companies should be prudent (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Moreover, protecting the intellectual assets of the company would be another crucial responsibility for the managers. Information security will fall into this category, a broad term that includes the necessary protections against accidental and intentional misuse of intellectual properties and information belonging to the organization, both from inside and outside of the company protecting against threats such as viruses, hackers, worms, adware, spyware, or ransomware to name some. The cost of cybercrime has been increasing every year globally as it has been shown in Figure 1. The statistics of seven countries, from the years 2013 to 2015 have been compared. There have been two lines of defense identified so far against these online threats, people and the employees at the first line (insiders)

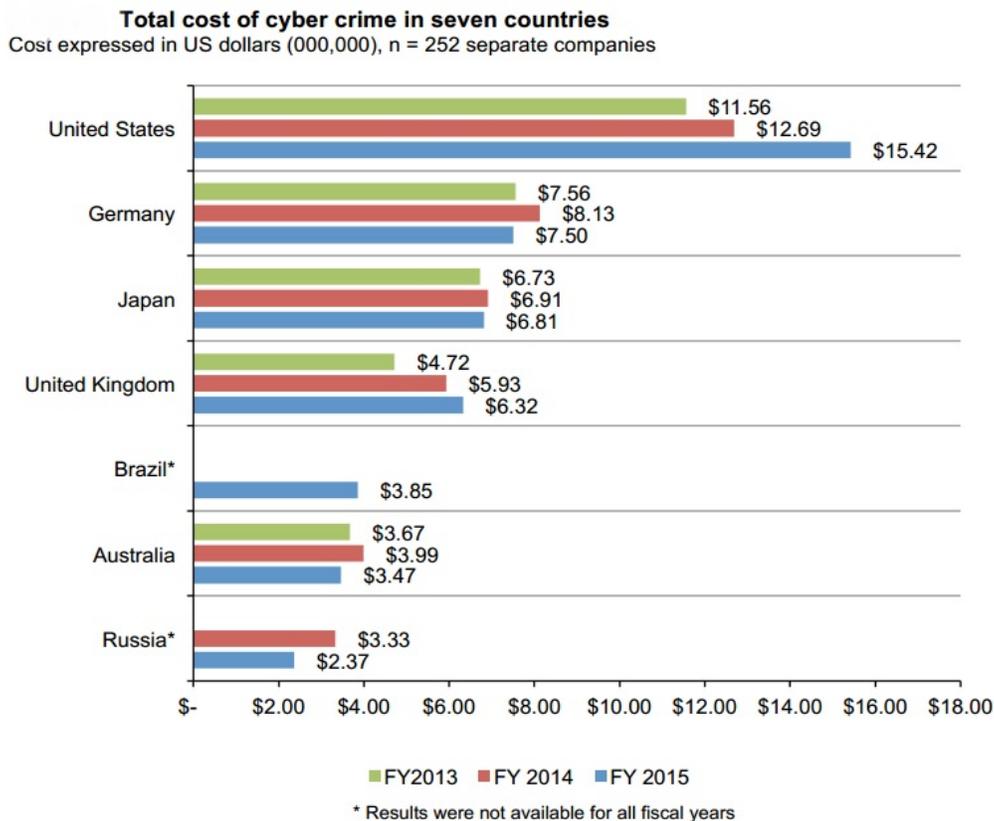


Figure 1: Total cost of the cybercrime in seven countries for years 2013-1015 (software.microfocus.com)

and technology as the second (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). At the first line of defense, employees would be trained to secure passwords, defend against social engineering hackers (they use social skills to get the passwords), defend against dumpster diving (looking through employees' trash), and the like (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). At the second line of defense, authentication and authorization techniques will safeguard the organization's information against threats such as identity theft, phishing, vishing, pharming, and zombie attacks. Protective techniques such as, the use of user IDs and passwords, tokens, smart cards, fingerprints, voice signatures, and other biometrics, or the combination of some or all can be used. Also, other technologies such as data encryption, content filtering, certificate authority, digital certificate, firewalls, and antivirus software can be used. Moreover, installing intrusion detection software (IDS) will protect against the hackers. The software will constantly search the use of patterns in network traffic that might be suspicious for security breaches (Baltzan & Phillips 2015).

Step five would be to incorporate a solid MIS infrastructure that supports the operations. MIS would make information accessible and available for the day-to-day operations. Therefore, backup plans, recovery plans, disaster recovery plans, and business continuity plans should be considered beforehand for the emergencies. For instance, during power outages there should be another source of energy available to function as a backup to bring the power back immediately and support the business continuity. Backups are usually the exact copy of the information stored on the company's databases. Also, disaster recovery plans need to be in place as well to bring back and recover the lost information due to disasters such as fire. These plans could be very costly if the company decides to have a separate facility with all the hardware and software installed up and running (hot site). Other less expensive options are warm sites and cold sites. Warm sites are separate facilities, with ready to install hardware and software. Cold sites are usually just an extra facility without any equipment used to move to in case disasters hit. Additionally, business continuity plans (BCP) will lessen the impact of disruption in the normal flow of information in day-to-day operations. Some business continuity plans can operate parallel to the main system as a replica and immediately replace the disrupted system in case disasters happen (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). For instance, Union Bank of California's business continuity system includes hot sites that can backup and recover the system in just couple of minutes (p.,

179). A solid MIS must be agile. Agility in this case means having accessibility, availability, maintainability, portability, reliability, scalability, and usability in company's MIS and information systems. The classic example of benefits of an agile system, is knowing about the growth rate of the company and changing the MIS systems accordingly. So, if the company is supposed to grow 60% per year, the MIS systems should be still available, reliable and usable to take care of the business functions for the next year according to the growth (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Also, sustainable systems that will reduce E-waste, carbon footprints, and energy consumption make the MIS solid as well. Grid computing, virtualization, and cloud computing technologies have helped the companies to be sustainable. In grid computing the processing power of several computers would be shared and combined to be used for complicated calculations. In virtualization techniques, a single computer can handle the workload of several devices saving on space, costs, and energy consumption in the companies. Cloud computing will let organizations to store, manage, and process the data, therefore the need for preparing extra hardware, software, and security measurements would be redundant, saving on energy consumption, and reducing carbon footprints, E-waste, and overhead costs (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015).

The sixth step would be benefiting from business intelligence technologies that can filter, analyze, and compute billions of bits of everyday data used for strategic decision-making processes. Information needs to be leveled into different granularities for different levels of employees. Detailed information (high granularity) are needed for lower level departments, and high-level managers will get a coarse form (low granularity) of what others would receive and see (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). It is essential for the organizations to be able to handle and distribute high quality information for the employees and the management. There are several characteristics for high quality information such as accuracy, completeness, consistency, timeliness, uniqueness, and relevance. For instance, if the customer's name has been recorded in the phone number section of the information sheet it is considered inaccurate. Since the size of the accumulated data in the companies is enormous, they need to be stored in places where they are manageable, secured, and classified. Relational databases can store different types of data (objects, events, people and places) and database management systems can create, read,

update, and delete them, increasing the flexibility, integrity, security, and scalability of the information while reducing redundancies (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Then business intelligence technologies such as data warehousing, data marts, multidimensional analysis, and information cleansing, will give meaning to the huge amount of meaningless information (poor information), by finding patterns and relationships among the bits of data, increasing its accuracy and completeness. Other strategic technologies such as big data analytics, data mining, and data visualization are adding more and more to the quality of information for the managers (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Infographics, an instance for visualization techniques, can depict the results of lots of analytical processes in few eye-catching graphical formats, making them more appealing and easy to understand for the management for further study and review. Also, business intelligence dashboards can track and analyze critical success factors together with key performance indicators much more precisely, quickly, and effectively, letting the managers manipulate and control the data for advance analysis and better strategic decision making (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). Although acquiring, maintenance, and updating of these technologies can be expensive for the businesses, still the results will pay off. For instance, some BI technologies called “Text Analytics” can go through the text surveys, read them thoroughly and analyze the content, where customers have been asked to leave a comment about a product or service. Without this technology, the company will bear the pressure of spending its human resources to read through the huge amount of texts stored on the databases, to answer the questions on blogs, surveys, and web documents, an expensive and impossible practice. BI systems such as text analysis engines are capable of reading and understanding customers’ texts (Chaudhuri, Dayal, & Narasayya, 2011).

The seventh and the last step, is having mobile and wireless technologies in place. Interconnectedness of all computer systems would be possible by intranet, internet, and local area network (LAN) solutions. Networks between devices inside the company (intranet) will enable them to exchange and share the information in all its different forms. Wireless technologies such as WLAN (Wireless Local Area Network), WWAN (Wireless Wide Area Network), and WMAN (Wireless Metropolitan Area Network) will connect the company to the outside world and to a much bigger market, more efficiently. Additions such as extranet to the

system for authorized outsiders will make the network more accessible for customers, suppliers, and other partners. Satellite communication systems can also send and receive data to mobile devices in no-coverage areas (Baltzan & Phillips, 2015). For instance, in real estate business, global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS), have been used to locate the properties for the customers, giving them an ample amount of information about coordinates and topology if necessary.

Conclusion

All the above technologies would be beneficial for business, in its right form and scale, and fortunately there are many different solutions out there in the market by big companies such as Microsoft, Oracle, SAS, and others that can provide, maintain, and support the right BI solutions with reasonable prices. Companies need to understand that based on their true needs, wants, and growth rate they will require BI systems, not necessarily the most state of the art, but the ones that are robust, agile, and sustainable. For the future growth of a company, enterprise solutions such as customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning systems are crucial (ERP).

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Language awareness and the education of non-native English teachers in South America:

TLA concept review and implications

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Abstract

Reflecting upon language allows teachers, not only to have a greater insight on how English, the language they teach works in the “real world”, but also helps them design activities for their learners to discover language by themselves while, as stated by Bolitho (2003), promoting independent and critical thinking in their classrooms. This paper explores the implications and theoretical foundations of introducing Language Awareness activities as part of the curriculum in teacher education programs in South America. Because of its length, this paper does not intend to recommend a solution to the issue, but analyses the theories that support the inclusion of TLA activities as part of the English Language teacher training and education curriculum. Besides, it forecasts the implications derived from such implementation and changes.

Introduction

Considering my experience as a teacher educator with more than 20 years of expertise in the field, I believe pre-service teachers or teacher trainees require implicit and explicit knowledge not only of the teaching craft, but also of the English language to carry out their job in the most effective possible way. This transition from learner to teacher must be carefully planned and take into consideration many aspects of language and didactic these future teachers might need when facing a real classroom with at least 40 pupils, sometimes reluctant to learn a new language.

McNeill (2016) states that while teacher language awareness (TLA) receives little attention, thus not much research, native and non-native English language teachers are assessed and compared in terms of how versed they are in terms of pedagogical knowledge: strategies, techniques and overall teaching styles, along with how competent they are in the target language.

While having taught for so long, and after dealing myself with the challenges most English language teachers encounter in the classroom, I came to a realisation: Language awareness is a KEY factor to the education of pre-service teachers: the more they know about language and the way it functions in different contexts, the better they will perform as English teachers because this knowledge of the language will provide them with the confidence needed to deal with the different aspects of the English Language taught in their classrooms. That is why if TESOL programs worldwide want to transform their students from dependent to autonomous learners and teachers, we need to introduce Teacher Language Awareness (*TLA*) to their curriculum.

As a language teacher and teacher educator, I know that language awareness is not always an issue in most of the syllabi of the subjects taught as part of the curriculum in most teacher education programs in Latin America. There might be many courses that deal with skills development such as didactics, phonology, culture, EFL and the like, but the objective is not to develop language awareness as a mean to educate better English teachers: The aim is to teach language competence with the assumption that is what is needed: nothing more.

The reality proves something is missing: trainee teachers invest five years of their lives, eight hours a day, five days a week being trained to become English teachers, but they do not have the chance to reflect, analyze and further research on the matter; They go straight to public

schools to teach without having realised of the importance of language awareness, sometimes not even having heard of it or how their identity as language users, analysts and teachers influences their practice inside the classroom.

Bolitho (2003), when answering the question about the relationship between language awareness and existing models of teaching education, declares what is exactly happening at higher education institutions in South America: pre-service teacher's education programs usually include a language system component (grammar, phonology, semantics, etc) and a language improvement course to make sure trainee teachers achieve English proficiency. But according to this author, the two aspects mention before, proficiency and knowledge of the language, are not enough; to be able to plan classes, forecast students' difficulties and possible questions, assess didactic materials, among others, pre-service teachers need to be able to analyse language as it is used in real contexts. The only way to do so is by promoting independence and critical thinking within the curriculum in teacher education.

Following the same theme, Senior (2006) states a priority for trainee teachers is to master as many language teaching techniques and skills as they can during the period of their training. Even at an early stage in their professional careers, significant number of trainee teachers has irritating feelings than there is more to teaching than simply teaching lessons in a fun and effective way. The reasons newly teachers might feel that way can be due to the fact their students expect them to know "everything" about English, how it functions as a system and request teachers to explain it all. This phase, where future teachers struggle to find meaning among knowledge is a stage of awakening arising from within: becoming a language teacher is about far more than mastering a fixed number of classroom strategies and abilities, it is about understanding how English, the language they are learning and teaching (sometimes at the same time) works in real life.

Discussion

Language Awareness

As a starting point, it is crucial to define what language awareness is, what it implies and involves so as making sense of its relevance in the training and education of English language teachers. For that reason, I wanted to know what teacher trainers at one university in Venezuela

thought about Language Awareness, so I emailed some ex-colleagues and asked them to give me their personal explanation of what LA is. Two experienced language teachers / teacher educator were the only ones answering and here I share their enriching insights:

“For me it's the deep and conscious knowledge about any language, which covers its understanding in grammar and grammatical uses, its phonetic and anthropology, and most important of all its use in different contexts and the benefits it can give to the development of any person, their careers or lifestyles”. -- Ann

“Language Awareness: The process of consciously discovering and understanding language features (vocabulary, grammar, sounds, other) received from (non)deliberate reading and listening input. Becoming aware of language is essential to subsequently integrating the features discovered in articulate spoken and written language. This conscious understanding may be take place during language teaching or spontaneous discovery by the student's innate and developed cognitive and learner skills”. --Andrés

The above comments from these two Venezuelan teacher educators I have worked with are a testimony there is a common understanding of what language awareness is and the benefits it has in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Language awareness implies implicit and explicit knowledge of the language, how it works in “real life”, how it is used by native speakers from different contexts, its variations; it is understanding language as a flexible mean to convey meaning taking into consideration internal and external factors, including socio-cultural features.

An array of research papers, books and documents have addressed Language Awareness, and in the last 20 years, this topic has been studied by experts in SLA. This paper shares some of the concepts of LA I find more digestible and easy for teachers to understand.

For Hales (1997) Language Awareness could be glossed as sensitivity to grammatical, analysis lexical, or phonological features, and the effect on meaning brought about using different forms. Language analysis can be viewed as the process of identifying and examining

linguistic features to see how they function, and from this deriving an explanation for their use. (Some might also like to add to both definitions the ability to explain these features.) Awareness is thus seen as a competence, whereas analysis is an activity, but the two are inextricably connected. From one perspective, it is possible to view awareness as considering analysis, as the capacity of awareness presupposes the ability to identify linguistic features as a starting point. Also, the process of analysing language can, if successful, develop awareness.

According to Tomlinson (2003), LA is a mental attribute which is developed through paying motivated attention to language in use which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work. It is also a pedagogic approach that aims to help learners to achieve such insights. Carter (2003) points out that language awareness refers to the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language. The approach has been developed in contexts of both second and foreign language learning, and in mother-tongue language education, where the term 'knowledge about language' has sometimes been preferred.

Accurately, Arndt et al (2000) point out that LA is something that takes language "out of the classroom" and places it in the real world and the way it influences their attitudes; It deals with the way people perceive language They also describe a quite detailed framework for language awareness in use taking into consideration a socio-cultural perspective of language as dynamic, flexible, complex and never context free; For these researchers, all the following features are equally important and not mutually exclusive:

- *Knowledge of the world*: How our vision of the world, culture, prior experiences, etc influence the way we use and understand language.
- *Context*: How language can be different according to the context we deal with. Here, the importance of situation and environment is highlighted.
- *Variety*: the different forms in which language appears: written, oral, source, situation, dialects and the like.
- *Medium*: The means through language is displayed. A written and spoken medium along with style and form play a major role when conveying meaning.

- *Attitude*: People have different attitudes towards language and use language to convey such features.
- *Effectiveness*: how successful the user is when delivering the appropriate message and achieving his/her purpose.
- *Structure*: It deals basically with how language is organized and structured to understand how language works. Not only syntax is included, but also vocabulary and pronunciation are important aspects of structure.
- *Flexibility*: The language is lively and flexible to adapt to any given situation.

To summarize, all the authors above mentioned agree that Language Awareness is a conscious mental characteristic that analyses language as a complex, contextualized and flexible matter. Such awareness needs to be internalized to identify key features and relevant insights with the purpose of shaping our identity as language users, analysts and teachers. Highlighting the importance of language awareness and how teachers can incorporate it not only in the classrooms as core part of the lessons, but also as part of their teaching training, is a crucial aspect that will be discussed below.

Teacher Language Awareness

Having such enriching concepts of *Language Awareness* stated in previous paragraphs, it is now important to establish connections between such conceptions and the training/education of teachers in English as an additional language: the Teacher Language Awareness (*TLA*) concept then arises.

TLA is a complex subject and it affects pedagogical practice since, according to my experience as a teacher at all levels, if teachers know how language really works, they will feel more confident when making decisions in the classroom, and consequently they will engage with any content-related issues that arise while teaching; they will be able to answer what choices they made and why. Currently, most higher education programs in South America are graduating teachers who, based on informal chats held with teacher trainees, do not feel confident enough to face a classroom since they think they do not really know how the English language works: they have a good proficiency level, but the awareness of the language as a whole complex system is missing.

In that matter, Garreth (2013) discussing Language Awareness in teacher education programmes for non-native speakers points out that knowledge about language also makes a powerful psychological contribution to the teacher's work - confidence. This confidence may be fundamental for any teacher but even more so for the non-native speaker who may be held up as a role model and source of information about the language. Very often, demands like those placed on native speakers of English are placed upon non-native-speaker teachers. They are expected to know their language, both as user in the everyday sense and as technician in the didactic sense. Here, the user and the analyst perfectly combine.

In addition, Andrews (2016) defines language awareness as "the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively". According to such a view, TLA is essentially concerned with subject-matter knowledge and its impact upon teaching.

Later, Andrews (2007) understands Thornbury's (1997) definition of Teacher Language Awareness as "the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively", and claims TLA must do with subject-matter knowledge and its impact towards the teaching practice: bottom line: L2 teachers need to function as language analysts to understand how language works in different settings in real life. In that way, they will enhance their teaching practice.

Furthermore, for Wright and Bolitho (1993) the more aware a teacher is of language and how it works, the better. A linguistically-aware teacher will be in a strong and secure position to achieve various tasks such as: preparing lessons, evaluating, adapting, and writing materials; understanding, interpreting, and ultimately designing a syllabus or curriculum; testing and assessing learners' performance; and contributing to English language work across the curriculum.

This applies equally to teachers of native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) origin. It follows that a short or lack of awareness of language often makes itself visible at classroom level - for example when a teacher is not capable to identify and balance for shortcomings in a course book, or is 'caught out' by a learner's question on the language.

To sum up, we have discussed what Language Awareness implies as well as the concept of Teacher Language Awareness and its impact in the classroom practice; these theories support the idea to introducing LA activities into the teacher education curriculum with the aim of training independent, competent, effective and efficient English teachers who can cope with the ongoing and dynamic reality faced inside language classrooms in South America nowadays.

TLA activities and the Curriculum

For designing effective and efficient L2 teacher education courses, it is important to consider the three main roles trainee teachers need to take on according to Edge (1988): those of language user, language analyst and language teacher. These three roles involve very specific competences, but overlap and complement one another. That is what it takes to be a good language teacher: being able to use the language, talk about the language and teach it at the same time.

To welcome TLA activities in any courses taught within the teacher education programs taking place in Latin America, and with the purpose in mind of linking the user, analyst and teacher domain, Wright (2002) describes the stages to follow:

Stage 1: Working on language data. Students work with linguistic data, considering their previous experiences and their current views and discuss them with their classmates.

Stage 2: Looking back – Reviewing. The participants reflect on stage 1 and draw some new linguistic insights. Stages 1 and 2 are also known as “awareness-raising process”.

Stage 3: Making sense. Participants work together to make sense of what happened in stage 1 and 2. They formulate rules that can be helpful in the classroom.

Stage 4: Linking. Analysing the practical side of language to link what was learnt to how to use it in the classroom for teaching purposes.

Stage 5: To the classroom. It is the last stage and it deals with engaging trainees with the planning of language activities, taking the insights discussed as a basis.

The five-stage TLA procedure explained previously can be completed within any course and there is no need for the teacher educator to change the materials they are already working with. It is

all about the way they approach the materials and what they do with it in the language classroom. If time is the limitation, then I would suggest resorting to an online component to help students shape their teacher identity, therefore become better English teachers. If teacher trainers' language awareness is the issue, then training the teachers on TLA is the answer.

Conclusion

Teacher Language Awareness plays a major role of paramount importance in the education of future language teachers: it helps boost teacher confidence in the handling of language features that might arise in the classroom while teaching at any level. Besides, the more I read the more I realise my role as teacher educator must go beyond teaching methodology, it needs to aim at helping trainees understand what makes a good teacher: substantial command of the English language, excellent understanding of its features and considerable management of teaching approaches to face the challenges encountered in the classrooms.

The teaching craft is so complex and enriching at the same time, that having the opportunity to reflect in the different roles we teachers undertake to help our students to enhance their English language skills is an opportunity every educator appreciate.

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