CETAPS | UP-FLUP | UNL-FCSH

Number 3 | 2012

e-TEALS

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

ISSN 1647-712X

FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

ISSN 1647-712X

e-TEALS

An **e**-journal of
Teacher **E**ducation and **A**pplied
Language **S**tudies

No. 3 | 2012

e-TEALS

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

This e-journal is sponsored by **CETAPS** (The Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies) with a view to providing a forum for the publication of papers which reflect the wide range of scientific perspectives included within the study of English. Articles of a diverse nature, especially those associated with the research sub-unit denominated **TEALS** (the Teaching of English and Applied Language Studies), will be the mainstay of the journal. The journal is supported by the *Faculdade de Letras, Universidade do Porto* and the *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa*.

e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies (ISSN 1647-712X) is published once a year by the Digital Information Services department of the Central Library at FLUP.

There is a standing **call for papers**, which should be sent to the CETAPS email address: cetaps@letras.up.pt. Contributions to each annual issue should reach the Editorial Board between September 1st and **December 1st**. All articles submitted must conform to the **Guidelines for Authors (MLA style)** (see *OWL: Purdue Online Writing Lab*, 2009 MLA guide, at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/747/).

Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement

It is necessary to agree upon standards of expected ethical behaviour for all parties involved in the act of publishing at *E-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies*: the author, the journal editor, the peer reviewer and the publisher.

Our ethics statements are based on COPE's Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors.

Publication decisions

The editor of the E-TEALS is responsible for deciding which of the articles submitted to the journal should be published.

The editor may be guided by the policies of the journal's editorial board and constrained by such legal requirements as shall then be in force regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism. The editor may confer with other editors or reviewers in making this decision.

Fair play

An editor at any time evaluate manuscripts for their intellectual content without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnic origin, citizenship, or political philosophy of the authors.

Confidentiality

The editor and any editorial staff must not disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in an editor's own research without the express written consent of the author.

DUTIES OF REVIEWERS

Contribution to Editorial Decisions

Peer review assists the editor in making editorial decisions and through the editorial communications with the author may also assist the author in improving the paper.

Promptness

Any selected referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows that its prompt review will be impossible should notify the editor and excuse himself from the review process.

Confidentiality

Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents. They must not be shown to or discussed with others except as authorized by the editor.

Standards of Objectivity

Reviews should be conducted objectively. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate. Referees should express their views clearly with supporting arguments.

Acknowledgement of Sources

Reviewers should identify relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument had been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation. A reviewer should also call to the editor's attention any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper of which they have personal knowledge.

Disclosure and Conflict of Interest

Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage. Reviewers should not consider manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

DUTIES OF AUTHORS

Reporting standards

Authors of reports of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. Underlying data should be represented accurately in the paper. A paper should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable.

Originality and Plagiarism

The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used the work and/or words of others that this has been appropriately cited or quoted.

Multiple, Redundant or Concurrent Publication

An author should not in general publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal or primary publication. Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal concurrently constitutes unethical publishing behaviour and is unacceptable.

Acknowledgement of Sources

Proper acknowledgment of the work of others must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work.

Authorship of the Paper

Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be acknowledged or listed as contributors.

The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors and no inappropriate co-authors are included on the paper, and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication.

Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest

All authors should disclose in their manuscript any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that might be construed to influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript. All sources of financial support for the project should be disclosed.

Fundamental errors in published works

When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in his/her own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal editor or publisher and cooperate with the editor to retract or correct the paper.

e-TEALS no. 3 | 2012

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

Attitudes towards English in Portugal

Carolyn LESLIE
| New University of Lisbon

Introduction

Towards the end of the 16th century, English was spoken by a relatively small number of mother tongue speakers, almost all of whom lived within the British Isles (Crystal 30). Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, English is spoken in almost every country around the world and more speak it as a second or foreign language than as their mother tongue (69). This spread of the language came about initially due to migration and colonization. A first diaspora led to English spreading predominantly to North America, Australia and New Zealand through migration of people from the south of England. A second diaspora involved the colonisation of areas of Asia and Africa which led to the development of second-language varieties, often called world Englishes, which are nativized varieties of English which have arisen due to the intranational use of English in multi-lingual situations such as that found in India. Kachru developed a three circle model to illustrate this spread of English with the Inner Circle representing Britain and the countries involved in the first diaspora, the Outer Circle representing the second diaspora and a third, the Expanding Circle, representing countries where English was spoken as a foreign language and which was dependent on standards set by native speakers in the Inner Circle (356).

However, the spread of English did not stop with the end of the era of colonisation, and continued due to the political, military and economic power of those who spoke the language. Many new technical and scientific terms entered the language during the time of the Industrial Revolution, and to learn about these advances, others had to learn English (Crystal 80). English

Citation: Carolyn Leslie, "Attitudes towards English in Portugal", *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 3 (2012): 1-14. ISSN 1647-712X

continued to go from strength to strength as it was adopted as the language of international relations, science and technology, advertising, the cinema and popular music, to name a few (86-122). Crystal regards this post-colonial spread of the language to be the result of English being in the "right place at the right time" (120), others as proof of a deliberate effort to maintain the "linguistic imperialism" of colonial times through an "inequitable allocation of resources to English" by governments (Phillipson 2301). Whilst this is a matter which divides opinion, it is true to say that English in the Expanding Circle now holds a very different position to that originally proposed by Kachru.

Within Europe and other parts of the Expanding Circle, English now functions as a lingua franca amongst people with different language backgrounds, and the process of globalisation has brought English into many people's everyday lives through cable TV, pop music, advertising, and at work (Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, and Pitzl 3). In countries such as Sweden for example, 89% of those surveyed by the European Commission claimed they could hold a conversation in English (18). Indeed it has been suggested that certain European countries are moving in the direction of the Outer Circle, as English takes on the role of a second rather than a foreign language due to increased intranational use. Graddol includes Belgium, Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland amongst such countries (11) and Berns described the "concentric circles of European Englishes" which features an Expanding/Outer Circle to accommodate such countries (9).

In a process comparable to that in the Outer circle, reports have been made of the nativization process English is undergoing across Europe (Berns; Erling; Jenkins, Modiano, and Seidlhofer) and Graddol suggests that in the future Europeans will desire to express their identities through their own varieties of English, and disregard the norms of Inner Circle English (27). The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) aims to produce a corpus of interactions using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the Expanding Circle. Subsequent description of ELF would then allow it "to gain acceptance alongside English as a native language" (Seidlhofer 340).Some scholars however have argued that English used as a lingua

franca, in an effort to negotiate meaning, is "outside the control of academia" (Saraceni 26) and as such cannot be described or codified.

The ever growing number of English speakers in the Expanding Circle has led to increasing interest in the English spoken there, and calls have been made for more research into the spread, development, acquisition and attitudes toward English in the Expanding Circle. For Kachru the study of attitudes towards the language is of key importance: "What draws an increasing number of people in the remote parts of the world to the study of English is the social attitude toward the language" (355). Dörnyei suggests that attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers may be important at the "preactional stage" where motivation is initially generated (84). It therefore appears that attitudes are important in shaping motivation to learn, which in turn promotes the spread of the language. The aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of attitudes towards English in Portugal, a country about which very little sociolinguistic research has been published.

The Portuguese Situation

Situated within Kachru's Expanding Circle, Portugal is a small country of approximately 10.6 million in South West Europe where English principally functions as a lingua franca for international communication. In 2006, the Eurobarometer survey revealed that 100% of Portuguese questioned considered Portuguese to be their mother tongue and only 26% claimed to speak English, one of the lowest percentages amongst the 30 European countries surveyed. However, there is evidence that this situation may be changing. Its role in education has been reinforced recently. In 2005, English was introduced into years 3 and 4 of primary school education and since 2008 it has been compulsory for primary schools to offer English as an extra-curricular activity in all 4 years of primary education. In years 5 and 6 the study of a foreign language is compulsory with English, French or German being offered, followed by compulsory study of a second foreign language in years 7, 8 and 9. Since Portugal subscribed to the Bologna Process in 1999, English has also assumed a more important position in higher

education, as Portuguese universities, like other European universities, compete in the market for international students (Coleman 1).

In addition to its role in education, English is used in broadcasting, popular music, the cinema, the press and advertising. The majority of cable TV programmes are transmitted in English and in the cinema all English language films are shown with Portuguese subtitles, except those for young children, which are dubbed into Portuguese. On a day picked at random (26 July, 2010), 65% of films being shown in Lisbon cinemas were in English, and 23% in Portuguese. In common with other European countries, English is used in product advertisements in Portugal (Gerritsen et al.). Analysis of code-mixed advertisements in women's glossy magazines (Cosmopolitan, Happy, Maxima and Vogue) for August/September 2010 revealed that an average of 64% of advertisements used English, either in sentential, phrasal or lexical substitutions (Martin 385). 79% of Portuguese parents questioned in the European Commission Eurobarometer 243 survey stated it was important for their children to learn English "to improve their job prospects" (45) and indeed 46% of jobs advertised in *O Expresso*, a quality broadsheet weekly newspaper on 30 July, 2011 either asked specifically for knowledge of English, or were written entirely in English.

Methodology

Respondents

An opportunity sample of 200 Portuguese university students in total was surveyed using a group administered questionnaire. Participants can be divided into 4 groups of 50 students. These were:

- Active learners studying translation in the urban area of Lisbon (Group A).
- Active learners studying tourism in the city of Santarém (Group B).
- Non-learners studying architecture and urban planning in Lisbon (Group C).
- Non-learners studying psychology and management degree courses in the regional cities of Santarém and Leiria (Group D).

University students were chosen as the sample for investigation as this group is likely to become the middle class professionals of the future, a group who are identified as being fundamentally important in the spread of English (Graddol 27). The study focuses on both students in the urban area of Lisbon with a population of approximately 1 million, and those in the smaller, more rural cities of Santarem and Leiria (located approximately 65 km and 130km north of Lisbon respectively) with populations of 28,760 and 42,745 respectively. The study also includes active and non-learners of the language. This decision to compare those who study in an urban environment and those who do not was taken as it is believed that the middle classes in urban areas are more open to new speech habits, whereas more rural areas are thought to be "linguistically conservative" (Graddol 27). The decision to include both those who do and do not study English was taken as students who had chosen to study on courses involving the language could be more positively biased towards it and consequently have more positive attitudes.

Reference has been made previously to the relationship between attitudes, motivation and language spread. Gardener & Lambert suggested that motivation to learn a second language had an instrumental and integrative orientation, henceforth referred to as instrumentality and integrativeness. Instrumentality has been related to "a desire (...) for pragmatic gains" and a desire for "status, achievement, personal success (...)". Integrativeness has been described as "a psychological and emotional identification with the L2 community" (Dörnyei and Csizér 453). An attempt was made in this study to determine to what extent these facets of motivation were predominant amongst the sample. The age profile of respondents in each of the four groups can be seen in Figure 1 below. Results are expressed as the percentage of students with ages between 18-30, 31 and 45 and those older than 45, where the total number of students per group is 50. Group A exhibits the youngest age profile with 96% of respondents being between 18 and 30 years old. This diminishes to 84% for Group B, 65% for Group C and 50% for Group D.

Figure 1. Percentages (%) of students per group classified according to age.

Total Number =200

Group	18-30 age group	31-45 age group	45+ age group
A	96	4	0
B	84	16	0
C	65	30	5
D	50	42	8

Questionnaire Procedure and Analysis

An 18-item questionnaire was designed based on similar questionnaires used in previous studies (Baker; Friedrich; Preisler). The questionnaire was translated into Portuguese, attitude statements ordered randomly to reduce acquiescence bias and a 5 point Likert scale used to analyse attitude statements, with a score of 5 corresponding to strong agreement. A final section asked for information on age, nationality and whether their university course involved the study of English. The questionnaire was administered anonymously in class and students took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete it. Means and standard deviations were then calculated for attitude statements. It should be noted that results obtained are representative of the sample involved and not the population as a whole.

Results and Discussion

Results for attitude statements expressed as mean and standard deviation can be seen in Figure 2. All groups strongly agree that English is a language worth learning, that they would like to speak English fluently and accurately, that they would like their children to speak English, that English is important for higher education and that they feel they have a better chance of getting a good job, and making themselves understood abroad if they speak English. In addition all groups agreed that they liked speaking and hearing English. All agreed that the presence of English is a natural consequence of globalisation and low scores for questions m, n, and o, revealed that they do not agree that their Portuguese identity, language or culture are threatened by the presence of English. Most groups strongly agreed with the practice of using

Figure 2. Attitudes towards English by group, with the mean (m), the standard deviation (s.d.), and the number of students on which the means are based (N).

Total sample= 200	**A (N=50)**		**B (N=50)**		**C (N= 50)**		**D (N= 50)**	
Attitudes	**m**	**s.d.**	**m**	**s.d.**	**m**	**s.d.**	**m**	**s.d.**
a) English is a language worth learning.	4.9	0.2	4.9	0.3	4.9	0.3	4.9	0.3
b) I like speaking English.	4.9	0.4	4.3	0.9	4.4	0.9	4.3	0.8
c) With English, I can make myself better understood abroad.	4.6	0.5	4.5	0.6	4.7	0.4	4.6	0.6
d) The presence of English in Portugal is a natural consequence of globalization.	4.3	0.8	4.2	0.6	4.2	0.7	3.9	0.9
e) I like hearing the English language.	4.8	0.5	4.5	0.7	4.4	0.8	4.5	0.6
f) I would like to speak English fluently and accurately.	4.8	0.4	4.9	0.4	4.8	0.4	4.8	0.4
g) It is not important for me to sound like a native speaker when I speak English.	4.1	1.2	3.3	1.1	3.6	1.0	3.3	1.0
h) I would like my children to speak English.	4.7	0.4	4.8	0.4	4.8	0.5	4.7	0.5
i) I think all English films in the cinema in Portugal should be dubbed into Portuguese.	1.3	0.6	1.9	1.3	1.6	1.0	2.1	1.3
j) I would prefer to watch English language TV programmes which were dubbed into Portuguese.	1.3	0.6	1.7	1.1	1.6	1.1	2.1	1.2
k) English is important for higher education	4.7	0.6	4.5	0.6	4.4	0.8	4.5	0.7
l) I have a better chance of getting a good job if I speak English.	4.6	0.6	4.6	0.5	4.5	0.7	4.5	0.7
m) When using English I do not feel Portuguese any more.	1.5	0.7	1.6	0.8	1.7	0.7	1.8	0.7
n) The presence of English in Portugal is a threat to the Portuguese language.	1.9	0.8	1.7	0.7	1.6	0.7	1.8	0.8
o) The presence of English in Portugal is a threat to Portuguese culture.	1.9	0.9	1.6	0.8	1.4	0.5	1.7	0.7
p) Being able to speak English is a symbol of an educated person.	2.7	1.0	3.2	1.1	2.9	1.1	2.9	1.0
q) Not being able to speak English symbolises a lower class person.	1.9	0.8	1.9	0.7	2.1	1.5	2.1	0.7
r) It is not necessary to speak English well to have a high status in Portuguese society.	3.6	1.0	3.5	0.9	3.5	1.0	3.5	0.9

subtitles in the cinema and on TV, although non-learners in non-urban areas (Group D) were less enthusiastic, perhaps because this is a topic which affects their everyday lives to a greater extent than the other points raised. Most students agreed that it wasn't important to sound like a native speaker and replies to questions p and q revealed that students disagreed that English symbolised an educated individual, or one of a higher class. An important point to note is that, in general, attitudes were very similar amongst all groups, irrespective of whether the students were learners or non-learners, urban or non-urban dweller.

Attitude statements were then clustered according to instrumentality or integrativeness in an attempt to determine which of these was predominant amongst the sample. The 18 attitudes items were initially divided into three clusters, these being Integrativeness/Likeability, Instrumentality/Usefulness, and Attitudes in relation to the Portuguese language and culture. Statements included in the integrativeness cluster were those which seemed to mostly closely reflect an emotional identification with the language and its speakers, and the instrumentality cluster included statements which reflected a desire for pragmatic gains and status. However, analysis of results brought about a further sub-division of the Instrumentality/Usefulness cluster into Instrumentality/Usefulness considering Economic Advantage, and Instrumentality/ Usefulness considering Social Recognition and StatusResults were then analysed by comparing means and standard deviations amongst groups for these clusters, and can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Results for Attitude Clusters in groups, expressed as mean and standard deviation

	A		B		C		D	
Attitudes	**m**	**s.d**	**m**	**s.d**	**m**	**s.d**	**m**	**s.d**
Integrativeness/Likeability (Items b, d , e & f)	4.7	0.3	4.5	0.3	4.4	0.3	4.4	0.4
Instrumentality/Usefulness considering economic advantage (Items a, c, h, k & l)	4.7	0.1	4.7	0.2	4.7	0.2	4.6	0.2
Instrumentality/Usefulness considering social recognition and status (Items p, q, & r)	2.7	0.8	2.9	0.8	2.8	0.7	2.8	0.7
In relation to Portuguese language and culture (Items g, i, j, m, n, & o)	1.8	0.6	1.9	0.6	1.9	0.8	2.1	0.6

Figure 3 makes even more obvious the similarity of results across groups, and shows how positive attitudes are towards the language (Integrativeness/Likeability), and the economic advantages it can bring (Instrumentality/Usefulness considering economic advantage). All groups were united in thinking that English in general did not confer social recognition or status on speakers. One possible reason for this could be that the presence of English is now so routine amongst university students that at least some command of the language is seen as being the norm, and this would confirm Grin's claim that English is "on the way to becoming an unremarkable skill" (Erling, "Local Identities" 121). Low scores for attitudes in relation to Portuguese language and culture signify that all groups were united in their belief that English was not a threat to the Portuguese identity, language or culture, and indeed preferred English over Portuguese on TV and in the cinema.

When comparing results of this study with results from previous studies it can be seen that although attitudes seem particularly positive here, similar trends have been reported in other countries in the Expanding Circle. Preisler on a study of attitudes towards English amongst a random sample of the Danish adult population found that Danes similarly perceived English to be a natural consequence of globalisation and that it posed little threat to Danish language and culture (247). Freidrich on studies on the attitudes of students in Brazil found that these respondents were much more likely to associate speaking English with increased job opportunities than with status or intelligence (220) and in an unpublished study on Portugal, Cavalheiro found that 90% of university students questioned found the presence of English useful because it improved English proficiency and was culturally enriching (92). Truchot considers that attitudes towards the spread of English vary according to the size of the country, with smaller countries considering English more positively due to the 'limited reach of the national language', which may well be the case in Portugal (149).

Conclusion

Attitudes towards the various aspects of English investigated in this study are generally positive amongst all groups, with non-learners attitudes being as positive as those of active learners, a

finding in direct contrast with previous studies (El-Dash and Busnardo; Dörnyei and Csizér). There was also little difference between those in an urban and those in a non-urban setting. Students here expressed positive integrativeness to learn English, while feeling no cultural or linguistic threat. This would contradict the idea of English as a killer language (Phillipson) eliminating linguistic diversity. These results support the situation described by Berns, de Bot, and Hasebrink who suggest that local languages continue to represent local identities and cultures, with English adding other identities which complement those in the first language (118). Although it is true that English is present in the day to day lives of many Portuguese through music, television and the internet, skills employed are mostly receptive, that is listening and reading, rather than the productive skills of speaking or writing. This somewhat passive exposure to the language could also result in such positive attitudes, as the language is less intrusive that in other countries where speaking and writing skills are employed more frequently. The fact that all groups disagreed with the idea that knowledge of English was a symbol of class, status or education supports the idea that English is spreading and becoming more commonplace.

Although it may be true that certain countries in the Expanding Circle are moving in the direction of the Outer circle, it would appear that Portugal, for the moment, remains within the Expanding Circle, with English being regarded as a foreign language and speakers largely looking towards Inner Circle countries to set the norms although this may not be true for pronunciation, as those surveyed here were largely ambiguous when asked if they wanted to sound like a native speaker. Results suggest that the spread of English in Portugal will accelerate in the future. Positive attitudes, plus the recent introduction of English into primary school education leading to greater learning opportunities, will result in further spread of the language. Increased opportunities for contact through media products could lead to the functionality of the language expanding, with more and more Portuguese using English in their professional and private lives, which in turn could lead to more positive attitudes to cultural values, promote integrativeness, motivation to learn and subsequent spread. To better

understand this phenomenon it is suggested that a full sociolinguistic profile be undertaken, examining the range and depth of functional uses of the language throughout the country.

Works Cited

Baker, Colin. *Attitudes and Language.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1992.

Berns, Margie. "English in the European Union." *English Today* 11 (1995): 3-11.

Berns, Margie, Kees de Bot, and Uwe Hasebrink, eds. *In the Presence of English: Media and European Youth.* New York: Springer, 2007.

Cavalheiro, Lili. "English as a European Lingua Franca: A Sociolinguistic Profile of Students and Teachers of English at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon." Diss. U of Lisbon, 2008.

Coleman, James A. "English-medium Teaching in European Higher Education." *Language Teaching* 39 (2006):1-14.

Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Dörnyei, Zoltan. *Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005.

Dörnyei, Zoltan, and Kata Csizér. "Some Dynamics of Language Attitudes and Motivation: Results of a Longitudinal Nationwide Survey". *Applied Linguistics* 23.4 (2002): 421-62.

El-Dash, Linda G., and JoAnn Busnardo. "Brazilian Attitudes toward English: Dimensions of Status and Solidarity". *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11.1 (2001): 57-74.

Erling, Elizabeth J. "'I learn English since ten years': The Global English Debate and the German University Classroom." *English Today* 18.2 (2002): 8-13.

---. "Local Identities, Global Connections: Affinities to English among Students at the Freie Universität Berlin." *World Englishes* 26.2 (2007): 111-130.

European Commission, "Special Eurobarometer 243/Wave 64.3. Europeans and their Languages." *European Union*, Feb. 2006. Web. 25 July 2009. <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_243_en.pdf>

Friedrich, Patricia. "English in Brazil: Functions and Attitudes." *World Englishes* 19.2 (2000): 215-23.

Gardener, Robert C., and E. Wallace Lambert. *Attitudes and Motivation in Second-language Learning.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1972.

Gerritsen, Martinel, Catherine Nickerson, Andreu van Hooft, Frank van Meurs, Ulrike Negerstigt, Marianne Starren, and Rogier Crijns. "English in Product Advertisements in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain." *World Englishes* 20.3 (2007): 291-315.

Graddol, David. *The Future of English?*. The British Council, 1997. Web. 30 July 2009. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-elt-future.pdf>

Grin, François. "Market Forces, Language Spread and Linguistic Diversity." *Language: A Right and a Resource*. Ed. Miklós Kontra, Robert Phillipson, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, and Tibor Várady. Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999. 169-87.

Jenkins, Jennifer, Mark Modiano, and Barbara Seidlhofer. "Euro-English." *English Today* 17.4 (2001): 13-19.

Kachru, Braz B. "Teaching World Englishes." *The Other Tongue. English across Cultures.* Ed. Braz B. Kachru. Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992. 355-65.

Martin, Elizabeth. "Mixing English in French Advertising." *World Englishes* 21.3 (2002): 375-402.

Phillipson, Robert. "Language Spread." *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society.* Volume 3. Ed. U. Ammon, N. Dittmar, K. J. Mattheier, and P. Trudgill. 2nd ed. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006. 2299-2306. Handbook for Linguistics and Sociolinguists and Communication Science 3.3.

Preisler, Bent. "Functions and Forms of English in a European EFL Country." *Standard English: The Widening Debate.* Ed. Tony Bex and Richard J. Watts. London: Routledge, 1999. 239-70.

Saraceni, Mario. "English as a Lingua Franca: Between Form and Function." *English Today* 24.2 (2008): 20-26.

Seidlhofer, Barbara. "English as a Lingua Franca." *ELT Journal* 59.4 (2005): 339-341.

Seidlhofer, Barbara, Angelika Breiteneder, and Marie-Luise Pitzl. "English as a Lingua Franca. in Europe: Challenges For Applied Linguistics." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 26 (2006): 3-34.

Truchot, Claude. "The Spread of English in Europe." *Journal of European Studies 24* (1994): 141-51.

e-TEALS no. 3 | 2012

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

Developing Different Skills Using Different Texts

Joana Vaz TEIXEIRA
| New University of Lisbon

Introduction

Reading is a key language skill that has long had a significant place in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. This skill allows students to have access to ideas communicated by people in different locations and eras, giving them the opportunity to broaden their horizons and deepen their knowledge of the world. Reading in a foreign language is essential not only for promoting the students' personal and cognitive development, but also for improving their study and job prospects in a globalized society. Due to the importance of reading, one of the priorities of language teaching should be to provide students with the tools they need to tackle texts in manifold contexts and for manifold purposes more and more autonomously. In this paper, I argue that, in order to adequately prepare students for the challenges they will face outside the classroom, teachers need to develop different reading skills in the classroom by using a wide variety of text types.

Textbooks and Reading

Typically, in foreign language classes, teachers tend to develop reading skills by using texts and activities from textbooks. As my analysis of a small sample of textbooks of English currently used in Portuguese schools reveals,[1] textbooks have various insufficiencies that impoverish the students' reading experience. One of the most common problems found in textbooks is the lack of variety of texts and activities.

Citation: Joana Vaz Teixeira, "Developing Different Skills Using Different Texts", *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 3 (2012): 15-29. ISSN 1647-712X

In fact, the textbooks for elementary levels (i.e. 7th grade) that were analysed mainly use fabricated texts which employ a limited range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The excessive concern over linguistic simplicity makes these texts artificial and little motivating for students. Furthermore, it denies them the opportunity to develop skills they will need to use when reading authentic texts outside the classroom, such as inferring meaning from context. Reflecting the poverty of the texts, the reading activities proposed in these textbooks tend to exclusively focus on the identification of information directly stated in the text.

Like the textbooks for elementary levels, the ones for advanced learners in the 12th grade offer a limited range of texts. The textbooks analyzed include few literary texts and privilege the use of (authentic) non-literary texts from sources that are extremely accessible to students, like the Wikipedia or the BBC. As these texts have an informative function and an objective style, they are what Zarate (25) calls denotative documents. Unlike connotative documents (e.g. literary texts), they explicitly present facts and do not have different layers of meaning, which leaves little room for interpretation and speculation about their meaning. For this reason, it is easy to understand why the reading activities in these textbooks focus on the comprehension of explicit information. Seldom are learners invited to interpret the text or to develop other relevant skills, like inference or prediction.

Thus, the choice of texts and the activities proposed by textbooks neither allow students to become familiar with the characteristics of different text types nor encourage them to develop various reading skills. In order to adequately help students to deal with different texts and make their reading experience richer and possibly more motivating, teachers and materials writers need to devise different reading tasks. They need to bridge the gap that exists between the theory of foreign language reading and the practice in many textbooks.

Reading Skills

In the field of reading research, it has long been established that reading is a process in which the reader actively processes and constructs the meaning of the text and that this complex process involves various skills (cf. Urquhart and Weir; Kapler; Hudson). As Urquhart and Weir

(90-91) and Hudson (84-103) note, although a number of skills taxonomies have been proposed, there is still little consensus concerning the content of the taxonomies and the terminology used to describe them. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that a reading skill is "a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with written texts" (Urquhart and Weir 88) and few would dispute that this concept is useful for structuring the teaching and learning of reading. Therefore, for teaching purposes, it is important to define which skills students have to develop in order to be able to read effectively.

With a view to overcoming the difficulty created by the lack of consensus about skills taxonomies, I consider that teachers should follow the proposals of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL),* the document that serves as a common basis for the elaboration of syllabuses, examinations and textbooks across Europe. According to this document, "to read, the reader must be able to: *perceive* the written text (visual skills); *recognise* the script (orthographic skills); *identify* the message (linguistic skills); *understand* the message (semantic skills)" (Council of Europe 91). In addition to these skills, others are also mentioned, including inferencing, predicting and scanning skills (Council of Europe 92). Based on what is defined in the *CEFRL*, I propose that the core reading skills that have to be developed by foreign language learners are: scanning, skimming,[2] inferencing, predicting, semantic skills (comprehension skills) and cognitive skills (interpretation skills).[3] The other skills mentioned in the *CEFRL* are assumed to be indirectly developed whenever students work on comprehension and interpretation skills.

Both skimming and scanning are skills that involve expeditious reading. While skimming corresponds to the quick reading of a text in order to get the gist of it, scanning refers to the rapid reading of a text to find a specific piece of information (Grellet 4). These skills are often used in the real word, for example, when we read the classifieds in search of a given piece of information or when we quickly go through a text to get a general idea of its meaning and decide if it is worth reading in detail. Working on skimming and scanning skills is a means of helping students break the habit of reading all texts carefully, regardless of their reading

purpose, and gradually become flexible readers, that is, readers who are able to adapt their speed to their reading purpose.

Predicting is also a fundamental skill in the teaching and learning of reading. This skill is defined by Grellet (17) as "the faculty of predicting or guessing what is to come next, making use of grammatical, logical and cultural clues" and, I would add, one's own knowledge of the world. The importance of prediction is best understood in the light of what is known about the process of reading. According to the interactive models, which today are considered the models that best describe the process of reading (Cornaire and Germain; Hudson 39), in this process the reader simultaneously uses bottom-up and top-down processes. In bottom-up processing, the reader constructs the meaning of the text by first decoding its basic units – letters, words and sentences – and then stringing these detailed elements together to build up a whole. In top-down processing, the reader constructs meaning by formulating hypotheses about the text based on his/her knowledge of the world and text type and by continuously refining them throughout the reading process. It is by making use of predicting skills that readers formulate the hypotheses that will help them make sense of the text.

Similarly, inferencing is a skill that helps the reader process and construct meaning. According to Grellet, "inferring means making use of syntactic, logical and cultural clues to discover the meaning of unknown elements" (14). This skill can be used for inferring the meaning of unknown words (Grellet 14), establishing connections between different pieces of information in the text (Urquhart and Weir 202-03) or discovering implicit ideas, based on what is explicit in the text and the reader's knowledge of the world (Nuttall 114). Since this skill serves different purposes, it plays a vital role in helping the reader comprehend and interpret the text.

Even though some authors (cf. Urquhart and Weir; Grabe) treat the terms "comprehension" and "interpretation" as synonyms, the distinction between these two concepts made by *CEFRL* is relevant for teaching purposes, since we empirically know that interpreting a text is a more complex task than comprehending it. According to Hudson, comprehension skill is "the ability to derive meaning from what is read" (79). Comprehension involves a literal reading

of the text. In contrast, interpretation is defined by Quinn as "the process of constructing meaning in a text" (212) and, as Abrams and Harpham (158) note, the readers mainly make use of this skill when they read texts with different layers of meaning. In other words, interpretation skill is the reader's ability to actively construct the meaning of the text, by going beyond its literal meaning and filling the gaps of the text in the light of his/her knowledge and experience. This skill involves a more profound and subjective reading of the text than the comprehension skill.

Text Selection

In order to develop the various skills mentioned above, students must be given the opportunity of working with varied texts, since each text type requires the reader to use different reading skills. For example, whereas classified ads require readers to primarily employ scanning skills, a poem invites them to use interpretation skills. Thus, offering students a variety of texts is fundamental for preparing them to employ appropriate skills for reading texts with different characteristics and functions. This variety can simultaneously make the students' reading experience more motivating.

As the ultimate aim of teaching reading is to prepare students for effectively reading texts outside the classroom, authentic texts need to be used in reading tasks so as to allow the students to become familiar with their characteristics and develop strategies for dealing with the difficulties they pose. Contrary to belief, even beginners can work with authentic texts. As Sanderson points out, "in practice, very low-level students can work with difficult texts, provided the task we set is suited to their level and demands less-than-complete reading of the text in order to be completed successfully" (15). In other words, it is not the intrinsic level of difficulty of a text but rather the appropriateness of the task to the learners' level that constitutes the deciding factor. Hence the well-known maxim in language teaching – "grade exercises rather than texts" (Grellet 8).

When choosing a text for a group of students, teachers need to bear in mind that students are able to understand language at a level far higher than they are able to produce

and that linguistic complexity is not the only factor that determines the degree of difficulty of a text. According to the *CEFRL*, a number of factors influence the difficulty of a text. These include: discourse structure, length of the text and relevance to the reader (Council of Europe 65). In addition to these, Ellis identifies other important factors that have to be taken into account in the process of selecting a text, including: cognitive complexity, familiarity of the information and contextual clues (222). Evidently, long texts with a high linguistic and cognitive complexity and no contextual clues are the most demanding texts for students.

Activity Design

If teachers use different types of text and intend to develop various reading skills, they need to construct varied activities. In the process of constructing reading activities, instead of artificially imposing an activity on the text, teachers should analyse its characteristics, identify why one would normally read it and how it would be read to decide what activities are the most appropriate for the text.

Direct questions, multiple-choice questions and true or false questions can be very useful reading activities, provided they are used to bring about understanding rather than just measuring it. To be true learning opportunities, questions must draw students' attention to difficult and important parts of the text, make them think about its meaning and help them develop different skills. As Nuttall explains, "the questions that help are those that make you work at the text. Well planned questions make you realize what you do not understand, and focus attention on the difficult bits of the text" (181).

If a text is to be explored in depth, students need to be asked various types of questions, including: questions of global comprehension, which require the students to grasp the overall message of the text; questions of detailed comprehension, whose answers are explicitly expressed in the text; questions involving reorganization of information scattered in the text; questions of prediction; questions of inference, which oblige students to consider what is implied but not explicitly stated; questions of interpretation; questions about the writing style and questions of personal response, which invite the students to express their reactions to the text.

Devising questions for which there is no single straightforward answer will lead to greater discussion and reflection on the text.

As an alternative to the traditional questions, other less conventional reading activities of varying degrees of difficulty can be constructed. The easiest and most motivating unconventional activities are the ones that involve little or no linguistic response. In this type of activity, students can be asked to match the text to an illustration, order the frames of comic strips or label a diagram according to the text. In addition to these, there are many motivating activities involving language production that can be useful for teaching and learning reading, especially at more advanced levels. These include, for example, writing a summary of the text, writing a letter to a newspaper in response to an article, discussing responses to a text in groups or doing a jigsaw reading task (i.e. a task in which students read different texts and then share the information they have gathered in order to piece together the whole story). In short, all activities that help students think about the text and discuss its meaning constitute appropriate reading activities.

Cultural Dimension

In order to help students fully explore the meaning of an authentic text, reading activities must invite them to reflect on the cultural dimension of the text. Since an authentic text expresses and alludes to values, behaviours, products and meanings shared by the members of the culture to which it belongs, to comprehend a text, the reader needs to understand not only its words, but also its cultural references. As Byram explains, "an individual coming across a document . . . from another country can interpret it with the help of specific information and general frames of knowledge which allow them to discover the allusions and connotations present in the document" (37). Thus, reading authentic texts requires students to make use of their prior knowledge and at the same time allows them to acquire new knowledge. Reading in a foreign language can be a space of cultural encounter between the reader, who is a member of a culture, and the text, which belongs and refers to a foreign culture.

Given that the students' cultural baggage does not always allow them to comprehend the allusions and connotations of the texts, it is important to construct activities focusing on the text's cultural dimension in order to avoid comprehension problems resulting from a mismatch between the reader's and the text's references. For example, before reading, teachers should activate the students' prior knowledge by promoting a discussion of the theme of the text. During the reading process, they might ask students to identify the cultural references of the text and, if necessary, they could also give them a matching activity with short informative texts about the people, products and events mentioned in the text.

With a view to raising awareness of cultural difference and promoting reflection on culture, teachers need to encourage students to compare the aspects of the foreign culture present in the text to their own culture and experience. According to Byram and Morgan, the comparative method is a useful means of helping students to analyse culture from an intercultural perspective (42). By comparing, students identify and analyse the characteristics of the foreign culture and their own culture. As a result of this comparison, they might realize that their culture is a social construction and that their values, beliefs and behaviours are not the only possible and naturally correct ones. Therefore, this comparison stimulates students to interiorise attitudes of decentring and become open to Otherness. Students with these attitudes will be in a better position to enjoy and learn from the cultural encounter promoted by reading, without renouncing to their foreign perspective.

Reading Stages

The different types of activities mentioned above constitute the bricks with which reading tasks are built. As various authors suggest (cf. Philips; Cuq and Gruca; Nuttall), reading tasks must be divided into three stages: pre-reading, reading and post-reading.[4]

The aims of the pre-reading stage are twofold: to facilitate the students' entry in the text and to engage them in the reading process. Based on the premise that what the reader brings to the text is of primary importance in comprehending it, in this stage, teachers need to activate the students' prior knowledge about the theme of the text by doing a brainstorming or

discussing the theme orally, for example. In addition to this, they must encourage students to make predictions about the text, using such elements as the title, the images or the first lines as a basis for formulating their hypotheses. These activities allow students to activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary and to build expectations, providing them with an adequate conceptual framework for understanding and interpreting the text.

Although teachers have to make sure students possess the necessary knowledge to understand the text, they must not arm them with too much prior information. Excess of information would deny students the opportunity of individually discovering and interacting with the text. This opportunity is particularly important in the case of literary texts. As Dantanus underlines, "the first response to the text must be as open-minded and unprejudiced as it can possibly be. . . . If you put a label . . . on the text you are studying, you will inevitably be influenced by this label and take a less active part in the explorative process". Therefore, as suggested by Matos, an aesthetic reading should be privileged. This mode of reading allows the reader to establish an individual relationship with the text and appreciate its aesthetic qualities. It contrasts with efferent reading, which is a mode of reading that "situates the text in a web of concepts supplied by teachers, critics and the norms of the text" (Matos 155). Thus, if we intend to promote an aesthetic reading of texts, pre-reading activities must not disclose too much information about the text. They should reveal no more than what is strictly necessary to arouse the students' interest in the text and prepare them for reading.

In the reading phase, students should use the hypotheses formulated before reading as a starting point to explore the text and gradually move from a global understanding towards a detailed understanding of the text. To begin the study of the text, it is a good strategy to set a task requiring students to skim through the text in order to check their hypotheses and/or answer simple global questions. For example, in this stage, students could be asked to choose a title for the text, to identify its theme or to select the sentence that best sums up the text. The students can carry out these activities without understanding all the words. Therefore, as Wright and Brown suggest, "initial skimming of the text is a semantic strategy which, even though readers acquire no specific details during the exercise, does contribute to their confidence about

tackling the text" (23). Furthermore, this initial skimming gives students an overview of the text that will help them arrive at a more detailed understanding. The skimming phase must be followed by a second reading of the text. This second reading should be guided by activities that make students explore details of the text and develop different reading skills (eg. inference, interpretation and scanning). This is also the appropriate moment to introduce activities about the vocabulary and the cultural references of the text.

To conclude the study of a text, in the post-reading stage, teachers need to encourage students to react to the text, question it, relate it to their experience and establish comparisons between the cultural aspects present in the text and their own culture. This emphasis on the student's response is informed by the Reader-Response Criticism. According to this theory, the text does not have an intrinsic meaning, but rather a meaning that the reader constructs by using his/her skills and knowledge to give shape to the potential meanings of the text (Schultz). As Gallas and Smagorinsky explain, "readers have vast knowledge about the world, cultural practices, themselves, social dynamics, and other factors that they use to infuse coded texts with meaning" (58). Consequently, the same text can be read differently by different readers and can evoke varied images, feelings, associations and interpretations. Thus, it becomes clear that reading has not only a cognitive dimension, but also affective and subjective dimensions.

These different dimensions cannot be absent from foreign language classes. For this reason, in reading tasks, students need to be encouraged to give voice to their reactions and perspectives. This is also important, because it is via emotional and affective responses that individuals develop positive attitudes towards reading in general. As Harmer underlines, "one of the most important questions we can ever get students to answer is *Do you like the text?* . . . By letting them give voice (if they wish) to their feelings about what they have read, we are far more likely to provoke the 'cuddle factor' . . . than if we just work through a series of exercises" (288).

If teachers want reading tasks to be true learning opportunities, rather than mere tests of comprehension, they need to use the tasks to promote active discussion of the text and reflection on the process of meaning construction. The interaction between the teacher and the

students plays a key role in favouring the comprehension of the text, since, as Scott and Huntington emphasize, comprehension is not just an individual cognitive process; it also involves the construction of meaning through interpersonal interaction. These authors explain that "comprehension occurs not only during the reading process, in the interaction between the reader and the text, but also after the reading process ends" (Scott and Huntington 4). That is, the interaction that takes place in the classroom can illuminate the meaning of the text.

Consequently, during the correction of reading activities, instead of accepting the first correct answer and moving on to another question, teachers must ask students to explain how they arrived at the answer, encourage them to express alternative answers and analyse why a certain answer is acceptable or inappropriate. Through this discussion, students explore the meaning of the text, develop reading strategies and learn the processes of critical thinking that good readers use. Teacher-led discussions are particularly important when students read texts with several layers of meaning. By discussing the text with the teacher and his/her peers, the student has the opportunity to go beyond his/her initial interpretation and actively discover and construct new meanings and interpretations of the text (Gavelek and Raphael 184). Thus, the key ingredients of the teaching and learning of reading are: initial individual study of the text guided by a reading task and subsequent active participation in discussion.

Conclusion

To sum up, in reading lessons, students must be given an active role and they need to have opportunities to read authentic texts of different types, develop the different reading skills, discuss the text and explore the cultural, cognitive and affective dimensions of the text in an integrated way. By using this approach to teach reading, we are giving students the tools they need to read autonomously and effectively, while promoting positive attitudes towards reading. In brief, we are helping our students become good readers ▪

Notes

---

[1] I analyzed the following textbooks: *Link Up* (12th grade); *Screen 3* (12th grade); *Cool Zone* (7th grade) and *New Getting On* (7th grade).

[2] Although it is not mentioned in the *CEFRL*, skimming is consensually considered an important reading skill by the experts in reading (see Nuttall; Grellet; Cornaire and Germain).

[3] For a matter of clarity, I will use the terms "comprehension" and "interpretation" to refer to the concepts of "semantic skills" and "cognitive skills", respectively, since those terms are more commonly used in the literature.

[4] For practical examples of reading tasks, see Teixeira or Grellet.

Works Cited

Abrams, Meyer, and Geoffrey Harpham. "Interpretation and Hermeneutics." *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009. 158.

Barros, Virginia, Luísa Barros, and Paula Correia. *Screen 3 – 12.º ano*. Porto: Porto Editora, 2009 [2005].

Byram, Michael, and Carol Morgan. "Methodology and Methods." *Teaching and Learning Language and Culture.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1994. 41-60.

Byram, Michael. "A Model for Intercultural Communicative Competence." *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1997. 31-38.

Cornaire, Claudette, and Claude Germain. *Le point sur la lecture*. Paris: CLE International, 1999.

Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Cuq, Jean-Pierre, and Isabelle Gruca. *Cours de didactique du français langue étrangère et seconde.* Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2009 [2005].

Dantanus, Ulf. "Text before Context: Teaching Literature Anonymously." *IATEFL: Literature and Cultural Studies SIG Newsletter 13* (1996): n. pag. Web. 25 Oct. 2010. <http://www.wilstapley.com/LCS/index.html>

Ellis, Rod. *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Gallas, Karen, and Peter Smagorinsky. "Approaching Texts in School." *The Reading Teacher* 56 (2002): 54-61.

Gavelek, James, and Taffy Raphael. "Changing Talk about Text: New Roles for Teachers and Students." *Language Arts* 73 (1996): 182-192.

Grabe, William. *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Grellet, Françoise. *Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1981].

Gonçalves, Maria Emilia, and Angelina Torres. *New Getting On 7*. Lisboa: Aereal Editores, 2011 [2006].

Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching.* Harlow: Pearson, Longman, 2007 [1988].

Hudson, Thom. *Teaching Second Language Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Klapper, John. "Reading in a Foreign Language: Theoretical Issues." *Language Learning Journal* 5.1 (1992): 27-30.

Martins, Carlota Santos, and Noémia Rodrigues. *Link Up – 12.º ano de Inglês*. Lisboa: Texto Editores, 2009.

Matos, Ana Gonçalves (2009): "Modes of Reading Literary Texts in a Foreign Language in Intercultural Perspective." *Letras & Ciências As Duas Culturas de Filipe Furtado*. Ed. Carlos Ceia, Miguel Alarcão and Iolanda Ramos. Lisboa: Caleidoscópio, 2009. 153-158.

Menezes, Isabel, and Isabel Teixeira. *Cool Zone – 7.º ano*. Lisboa: Texto Editores, 2009.

Nikolajeva, Maria. "Literacy, Competence and Meaning-making: A Human Sciences Approach." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 40.2 (2010): 145-159.

Nuttall, Christine. *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Oxford: Macmillan, 2005 [1982].

Phillips, June K. "Practical Implications of Recent Research in Reading." *Foreign Language Annals* 17 (1984): 285-296.

Quinn, Edward. "Interpretation." *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms.* New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006. 212.

Sanderson, Paul. *Using Newspapers in the Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Schultz, Jean Marie. "The Gordian Knot: Language, Literature, and Critical Thinking." *SLA and the Literature Classroom: Fostering Dialogues.* Ed. Virginia M. Scott and Holly Tucker. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, 2002. 3-31.

Scott, Virginia, and Julie Huntington. "Literature, the Interpretive Mode, and Novice Learners." *The Modern Language Journal* 91 (2007): 3-14.

Teixeira, Joana. "O Desenvolvimento de Capacidades de Leitura a partir de Diferentes Tipos de Texto." Diss. Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2011.

Urquhart, Sandy, and Cyril Weir. *Reading in a Second Language: Process, Product and Practice.* London and New York: Longman, 1998.

Wright, Margaret, and Pamela Brown. "Reading in a Modern Foreign Language: Exploring Potential Benefits of Reading Strategy Instruction." *Language Learning Journal* 33. 1 (2006): 22-23.

Zarate, Geneviève. "Cultural Awareness and the Classification of Documents for the Description of Foreign Culture." *Language Learning Journal* 11 (1995): 24-25.

e-TEALS no. 3 | 2012

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

Approaching Images from a Cultural Perspective in the Foreign Language Classroom

Nuno Samuel Calado de OLIVEIRA
| New University of Lisbon

It is because pictures say nothing in words that so much can be said in words about them. (Maley, Duff and Grellet qtd. in Goldstein 13)

The following paper is based on research work undertaken during my supervised teaching practice, in 2010 and 2011, as a component of the Master's Course in Teaching English and German in the 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and in Secondary Education of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the New University of Lisbon. This research aimed at exploring how visual material can be applied towards stimulating the learning of foreign languages and cultures, and its results were presented in greater detail in an academic report entitled *A Imagem na Aprendizagem da Língua e da Cultura Estrangeiras*, in 2011. Here, in a more succinct fashion, I will look specifically at how images can become a privileged source of cultural information for foreign language learners. Topics addressed include the definition of the term "image" and the relevance of visuals in the foreign language classroom throughout time as well as suggestions on how language teachers can promote visual literacy and approach images from a cultural perspective.

Citation: Nuno Samuel Calado de Oliveira, "Approaching Images from a Cultural Perspective in the Foreign Language Classroom", *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 3 (2012): 30-40. ISSN 1647-712X

Images as Language-learning Materials

Martine Joly, a renowned expert in the field of image analysis, has stressed how difficult it is to define the concept of image, due to the myriad of ways in which this term is used and, consequently, understood (13). In fact, in her seminal work *Introduction à l'analyse de l'image*, instead of offering the reader a monolithic definition, the author opts for investigating the meaning of the term in each of the areas in which it is used, making the reader aware of its domain-specific nature. In the field of foreign language learning, Hecke and Surkamp give us a pertinent definition of the term, before enumerating the different kinds of images that can be used in the language classroom (a very broad array of items such as paintings, drawings, sculptures, cartoons, digital images, films, photos, illustrations, "logische Bilder", visual analogies and even performance pieces). For them, images fall under a category Reinfried calls "visuelle Medien" or, in other words, visual materials to be used in the classroom, which convey information and are comprehensible through the sense of sight (10). Many authors also tend to make a distinction between two types of images in the foreign language classroom: still images and moving images. Gangwer is a clear example of this, when he states that teachers can work with "still images, such as documentary or advertising photography, and moving images, such as commercials, newscasts, and dramatic or comic television programs and films" (5).

Images and language learning have, in fact, gone hand in hand across the educational landscape for centuries. Marcus Reinfried tells us that the benefits of using images in the language learning process have been praised since at least the 15th century (25). Two centuries later, in 1658, Czech pedagogue Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) wrote the first language-teaching compendium with xylographs, titled *Orbis Sensualium Pictus,* where he acknowledged the importance of the senses and particularly the sense of sight in the language-learning process, giving a new meaning to the peripatetic axiom, "nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu" ("nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses") (Corder ix). From there on, images became a permanent fixture in the foreign language classroom, and the zenith of their use is said to have taken place with the communicative approach (Macaire and Hosch 12). More recently, there has been a rise in the number of publications dealing with the use of

images in the language classroom, which we assume is a result, on the one hand, of the advent of the Digital Era (tools such as Google Images™ and Photoshop™ have, as we know, become household names and have given the teachers endless possibilities in terms of how they can collect and manipulate images for pedagogic purposes) and, on the other hand, the need to respond to the tastes and needs of a new kind of public which has been dubbed by some the "visual generation". In 1982, UNESCO had already called for particular attention to be given to the need of preparing students to deal with new communicational phenomena, in the *Grunwald Declaration on Media Education:*

> Rather than condemn or endorse the undoubted power of the media, we need to accept their significant impact and penetration throughout the world as an established fact, and also appreciate their importance as an element of culture in today's world. The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen's active participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication.

The responsible organisations around the world were urged to respond and they did, some more promptly than others. In Portugal, for instance, it was not until 2007 that the Ministry of Education published a work to support teachers and students in this task, in the form of a CD-ROM called *Vamos Ler Imagens* (Torres).

Despite this renewed interest in using images for language learning, it has been noted by experts that many teachers still don't quite know how to take full advantage of them (Macaire and Hosch 6) and that they are generally used for a very limited number of purposes, mostly related to language (Corbett 140). If we turn the spotlight on cultural aspects of language teaching, images are in most cases given a mere illustrative function, and, as a result, their informative richness is ignored. In order to reverse this trend, some authors are coming up with new and eclectic approaches, based on the teachings of such subjects as image analysis, semiotics, history and art history, inter alia. These approaches, on the one hand, aim at helping

students to investigate cultural meanings of images and, on the other hand, prepare them for a new reality in terms of communicational practices which, due to the profound technological advances of recent times, have made visual literacy an indispensable skill. According to Kress and Leeuwen:

> . . . most texts now involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic or sound elements . . . . But the skill of producing multimodal texts of this kind, however central its role in contemporary society, is not taught in schools. . . . In terms of this essential new communication ability, this new 'visual literacy', institutional education . . . produces illiterates. (17)

Approaching Images from a Cultural Point of View

On the basis of the foregone considerations, we will now look at some of the ways in which the culturally-oriented teacher can use images in the language classroom. It is needless to say that, when applying the following suggestions, one must always take into account not only the syllabus, but also the profile of those students with whom one is working.

It has already been said that still and moving images can be used to stimulate the development of the four basic language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) and it is on this practice that many of the available publications on this topic focus (Wright or Goldstein, for instance). Corbett states that, within the foreign language classroom, images are mostly used for language-focused purposes and offers the reader some examples: images can aim at bringing vocabulary to life, act as input into information-transfer activities, work as prompts for language production and contextualise and clarify language (140). The author states that:

> There is, of course, a long-established history of using images, or 'visual aids', in the ELT classroom. . . . Visual aids, then, are widely acknowledged as a rich resource in ELT, but what all the activities . . . share is a primary focus on *content* in order to promote language learning. Images tend to be exploited in diverse ways for their language-learning potential, but their cultural significance is comparatively neglected. (140)

So how can teachers start to redress the balance? Obviously, when they use images, they must go beyond language-related matters and explore their underlying cultural significance. To achieve this goal, teachers must first help students acquire basic knowledge about image interpretation and analysis, in order for them to become capable of, initially in a guided manner and later on autonomously, identifying and processing the cultural information conveyed by images and multimodal texts (that is, texts that are made up of both words and images), built according to culturally-specific conventions. By implementing this practice, the teacher will be contributing towards the development of the visual literacy of students, which, as we have seen, is crucial for their understanding of and adaption to the current global communication patterns. Furthermore, by exploring the assortment of cultural aspects conveyed by images (which does not need to happen in an isolated manner, but can be done apropos a language-focused activity, such as using a picture as the object of a pre-reading discussion), the teacher will enrich the students' knowledge of different realities that pertain to the culture of a foreign country and, simultaneously, contribute towards the development of their intercultural competence (especially if the student is invited to contrast newly learned data with data from his own reality through pictures selected by the teacher for that effect), thereby stimulating their cultural awareness and demystifying stereotypes and prejudices about the cultural realities involved.

Yet another question arises. How do teachers give students the aforementioned means to access the information contained in the images they wish to explore from a cultural standpoint? It is, after all, a complex subject, and the idea of teaching it, especially to younger students, might seem intimidating, especially because, even though there are many publications devoted to semiotics in general and image analysis in particular, such as Kress and Leeuwen's *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design* (which should be read by all those who truly wish to develop their visual literacy and ability to interpret images), there aren't many works which specifically cater to the language teacher's needs. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, one realises that some authors have begun to cover this topic, making it easier for both the teacher and the student to approach it, through publications that can work as a good starting

point for the investigative work a topic like this requires. Now we will move on to brief selection of these publications and explain how they can aid the work of teachers.

As far as still images are concerned, we consider Corbett's cited work to be indispensable. Apart from clarifying the importance of images for culturally-oriented lessons and some of the materials the teacher can turn to, it gives us, most importantly, clear and concise information on which aspects of images we should focus, namely composition — looking at aspects like positioning, framing and salience — and visual grammar and vocabulary — which direct our attention to the portrayal of people (with their gaze, the perspective and distance, fashion and style) — as well as objects and settings, among other equally important topics, all the while presenting examples from several cultural sources. An 18th-century tobacco ad featuring a Highland soldier and a slave, for instance, is used to show us a number of possible interpretations: in this case, the absence of eye contact between the two reveals a separation (they are only linked by the use of the tobacco), their states of dress and undress, respectively, are meant to represent the "exotic", particularly well-liked at the time (the author explains that, then, due to the destruction of the clan system in the middle of the century, the kilt worn by the soldier had become a symbol of "romance and the fashionable concept of the 'noble savage'") and that their out-of-frame gaze, staring blankly at middle distance induces a feeling of empathy in the viewer and suggests that they are mentally withdrawn from their surroundings, "presumably under the influence of the narcotic" (Corbett 149-150). It is this kind of interpretation work that we wish to promote, making learners become aware that the positioning of a figure, the way he/she looks at us, the way they are dressed or the setting in which they are in, amongst many other visual conventions, interfere with the message conveyed and denote cultural specifics. Thinking about the work of teachers, the author also includes a highly recommendable checklist of questions designed to help learners probe the cultural meaning of visual texts (it can be reformulated according to one's public and learning objectives). Also useful is Macaire and Hosch's *Bilder in der Landeskunde*, in that it gives us a comprehensive view on the use of images (in language-oriented lessons in general and culturally-oriented lessons in particular) and features a selection of useful activity models designed to help

implement the interpretation of images. In general, we believe it is important to guide students in the beginning (with closed-ended questions, to be used in questionnaires or tables) and gradually progress from there, until they eventually start to feel the confidence to do it more freely.

Before I close, attention must still be paid to moving images, as they are considered to be as culturally revealing as still images, if not more, for some experts. Therefore, they should also become a valued material for the culturally-oriented language teacher. Altman states:

> The amount of cultural information carried by a video makes it an especially rich cultural vehicle. . . . The inhabitant of the culture takes these for granted, but for the foreign language learner, video's images and sounds become an open book made up of chapter upon chapter of cultural information. Even the videos themselves — their construction, scripting and cinematography — provide special insight into a nation's cultural specificity. (19)

We think it is safe to say that it is easier for language teachers to find suggestions on how to work with video, as the amount of publications dealing with the use of video in the foreign language classroom is quite large. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of suggestions on how to make use of it with cultural topics in mind. To promote this, we believe one must follow the same kind of approach we suggested for still images, that is to provide students with basic knowledge about the stylistic and narrative devices used by filmmakers, so as to understand how these help them to convey messages and, simultaneously, denote cultural details, and progressively train them in this practice. To this end, Leeuwen's *Moving English: The Visual Language of Film* can be very useful from a theoretical standpoint, as it covers some of the aspects that the language of still and moving images have in common and presents some distinct features of the latter. Specifically for language-teaching contexts, we consider Marie-Louise Brandi's work *Video im Deutschunterricht* to be extremely useful, as it presents the reader with sharp definitions of important filmmaking strategies (easy for the students to grasp) and offers suggestions of interesting activities to do before, during and after the viewing of a video. Some interesting examples of how some narrative techniques and cinematic devices can

be explained to students in a simple manner are presented by Biechele, in *Genial: Videotrainer A1*, in the form of matching or brainstorming activities, inter alia. It is through these practices that students begin to intellectualise filmmaking and dissect the effect that certain procedures related to camera operations (dealing with aspects like field size, camera movement, size and angle) and editing (which relies on techniques like "fade-in/fade-out", "cross-cutting" or parallel action, etc.) have in the filmic storytelling process and, from there on, develop their ability to decode cultural meanings and details present in moving images. For instance, in terms of the distance between the camera and an object, the learner must be made aware that a close-up is intended to draw the viewer's attention to something important, namely someone's emotions, if it focuses on somebody's face, or that the body language of characters can also function as a narrative technique (the act of patting one's hair might denote vanity or disinterest, whereas stroking one's chin might be seen as a sign of indecisiveness or insecurity, for instance), as this plays an important part in the message(s) conveyed by the film being scrutinised.

Closing Remarks

In the light of the aforementioned, it becomes obvious that the amount of cultural information that can be obtained from pictures should not be ignored. Our personal experience with using images from a cultural point of view has showed us that, if students learn about visual conventions and are progressively assisted in using this knowledge to decode cultural messages underlying images, at first through oriented practices (using questionnaires, checklists and tables, inter alia), they will soon begin to gain autonomy in their interpretations and, more interestingly, contribute with their own ideas, many of which based on knowledge informally acquired, which then becomes useful in the classroom, as suggested by Corbett (141), all the while learning about different aspects of the culture associated with the language they are studying. But this is not all: in the process, students will also become more prepared to deal with the reality outside the classroom, since teachers will be promoting their visual literacy. It is no surprise, then, to see that working with images is an especially motivating experience for the younger generation, whose reality is dominated by visual forms of communication (let us not

forget, after all, that it is widely called the "visual generation"). In short, using images brings the classroom and the realities outside closer together, mitigates the problem of language barriers (as the adage tells us, an image is worth a thousand words) and ultimately increases the amount of engagement and agency not only towards the exploring of foreign cultures, but also of the learner's own cultural reality. It is, therefore, extremely advantageous that images — hand in hand with language and culture — become an integral part of our lessons .

Works cited

Altman, R. *The Video Connection: Integrating Video into Language Teaching*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1989.

Biechele, B. *Genial: Videotrainer A1*. Berlin/München: Langenscheidt, 2006.

Brandi, M.-L. *Video im Deutschunterricht*. Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1996.

Corbett, J. "Developing Visual Literacy." *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003. 139-165.

Corder, S. P. *The Visual Element in Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman, 1996.

Gangwer, T. *Visual Impact, Visual Teaching: Using Images to Strengthen Learning*. 2nd ed. California: Corwin Press, 2009.

Goldstein, B. *Working with Images: A Resource Book for the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.

Grunwald Declaration on Media Education. UNESCO. 22 Jan. 1982. Web. 10 Nov. 2010. <http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/MEDIA_E.PDF>

Hecke, C., and C. Surkamp. "Einleitung: zur Theorie und Geschichte des Bildeinsatzes im Fremdsprachenunterricht." *Bilder im Fremdsprachenunterricht: Neue Ansätze, Methoden und Kompetenzen*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2010. 9-24.

Joly, M. *Introdução à Análise da Imagem*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1999.

Kress, G., and T. Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Leeuwen, T. "Moving English: The Visual Language of Film." *Redesigning English: New Texts, New Identities*. Ed. S. Goodman and D. Graddol. London and New York: The Open University/Routledge, 1996. 81-105.

Macaire, D., and W. Hosch. *Bilder in der Landeskunde*. Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1996.

Oliveira, N. S. C. "A Imagem na Aprendizagem da Língua e da Cultura Estrangeiras". P.E.S. Report. New University of Lisbon, 2011.

Reinfried, M. *Das Bild im Fremdsprachenunterricht: eine Geschichte der visuellen Medien am Beispiel des Französischenunterrichts*. Tübingen: Gunterr Narr Verlag, 1992.

Torres, E. C. *Vamos Ler Imagens* [CD-ROM]. Lisboa: Ministério da Educação, [2007].

Wright, A. *Pictures for Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.

e-TEALS no. 3 | 2012

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

Creative Writing: Audiovisual Resources as Promoters of Creativity in Writing

Joana MAGALHÃES
| University of Porto

Finding a Question: Short Introduction

The following article focuses on the theme: *Creative Writing – audiovisual resources as promoters of creativity in writing.* This action research project and its inherent theoretical reflection are based on work carried out in the Secondary School António Sérgio, by the author while a student teacher.

Pedagogically speaking, 'communication' has become the main actor inside the foreign language teaching classroom, prioritizing the foreign language's (FLT) functional character so learners may use it in different contexts and for different purposes. Harmer supports the view that learners have to be constantly exposed to language and must be given opportunities to use it to develop their knowledge and skill (85). Indeed, there has been a major shift in the teaching and learning paradigm, nowadays underlining the importance of oral activities such as role-plays and simulations (Thornbury 96).

Taking this into account, besides the conclusions gathered during the pre-observation phase, it seemed relevant to focus this investigation on the other side of the spectrum: *the writing*. Indeed, writing appears to be the path to reveal the multiple subtleties and complexities of language (Gomes 27). Notwithstanding, writing may be seen as something mechanical, reductive and demotivating even for learners, given that motivation has the purpose of converting teaching and learning into an immeasurably easier, more pleasant and productive experience (Ur 274).

Citation: Joana Magalhães, "Creative Writing: Audiovisual Resources as Promoters of Creativity in Writing", *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 3 (2012): 41-56. ISSN 1647-712X

As teachers of a foreign language, we must constantly reflect upon our practice in order to be aware of the fundamental principles that command our work. Thus, I realized that learning a language is not an act of imitation but an act of creativity in its own right, and that learners are creative beings. Indeed, learning a language "is not adding information to information already stored, but constructing new knowledge. In a way every learning process can be seen as a creative process" (Marsh and Hill 13). Education itself has its purpose to stimulate creativity, opening learners to an amalgam of possibilities (Lima 62).

Nowadays, researchers (Knobel and Lankshear, 2003; Larson and Marsh, 2005; Livingstone and Bovill, 1999) are aware that learners encounter a series of experiences and visual activities *outside* the classroom, such as television, DVDs, computers, videogames, etc. (Baratta and Jones 16). Furthermore, Horn (1998) underlies the importance of including the visual language *within* the classroom context given that it will promote more complex schemes of thinking in our learners (qtd. in Baratta and Jones 16). According to Averignou and Ericson (1997), "the way we learn, and subsequently remember, bears a strong relationship to the way our senses operate. This means that we, as educators, cannot afford to ignore the fact that a very high proportion of all sensory learning is visual" (qtd. in Baratta and Jones 16).

In order to move learners away from a mechanical and reductive style of writing, it seemed that the use of certain audiovisual resources (videos and pictures) could function as important vehicles, not only for motivation (being this their primary purpose inside the classroom) but also as valid forms of input. Clearly, learners responded positively to these resources when used as sources of motivation and, therefore, their use for other purposes could bring many other benefits to the foreign language learning process.

Through constant questioning and reflection, I came up with the question that grounded this action research: *"May audiovisual resources promote creativity in writing?".* Generally speaking, this project intended to test the following premises: a) videos and pictures, as sources of motivation and input, facilitate the concretion of writing activities; b) the use of visual

resources promotes creativity in writing and, lastly; c) the type of activity and material influences the written output.

Furthermore, due to the existing connection between *reading* and *writing*, the written text as a form of input is part of this study and it was used as a way of enabling the comparison between the visual text and the written text.

Defining the Path: The Circle of Input and Output

In order to undertake this task the use of a model that could, to some extent, facilitate and structure the activities done with learners within the classroom was required. It was fundamental to use an *input/output model* that, on one hand, included audiovisual resources as a form of input and, on the other hand, writing activities as a form of output. Therefore, the model structured by Harmer (2001) adapted itself to the needs of this project.

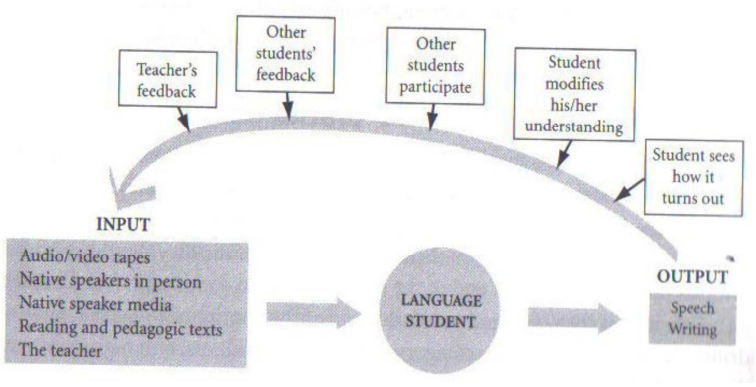

Image 1: The circle of input and output (Harmer 250)

Then, it became necessary to reinterpret this model and, thus, instead of using tapes, one would use videos from *YouTube, PowerPoints*, images downloaded from the web, etc. Certainly, it would focus on the feedback process, i.e. in the post-writing stage. Hence, the adaption of this stage was essential.

According to Harmer, when a learner produces a piece of language and sees how it turns out, that information is fed back into the acquisition process and, thus output becomes input (250). So that the feedback could occur *during* the writing process, it was fundamental for the learners to complete the activities not as individual but rather as pairs or group activities, promoting interaction. Brown enumerates some reasons why teachers should develop group activities, such as: a) it generates interaction, as mentioned; b) it promotes autonomy and

responsibility; c) it provides an affective environment and, lastly; d) it promotes personalized instruction (178). Harmer tells us that "writing in groups, whether as part of a long process or as part of a short game-like communicative activity, can be greatly motivating for students, including as it does, not only writing, but research, discussion, peer evaluation, and group pride in a group accomplishment" (260).

Taking into account this framework, all the activities developed would have an *input* stage, through pictures or videos, using these resources to complete a repertoire of writing activities in an *output* stage. In general, these activities wouldn't be product but rather process-centred, in its restricted meaning. Therefore, this *process* wouldn't always follow the hierarchical structure presented by these authors (White and Ardnt 3). In fact, the process would focus on *brainstorming* and on the exchange of ideas between the different work groups and, on their subsequent transference to the written text. It became fundamental to undertake a deeper theoretical research in order to be able to reinterpret fixed and moving images and discover the hidden potential of images: the *quality*, the *creativity*, the *purposefulness* and also the *motivation* and *intention* behind their creation.

Bearing this in mind, I had to decide in which groups to undertake the action research project given that it was the kind of topic that could be developed with all the different groups. I chose to focus my research on a smaller sample, applying my data collection instruments in two distinct groups – 12.º A for English and 12.º F for Spanish. Due to the fact I focus my study on an abstract concept and on one of the most complex human behaviours, known as *creativity*, it was crucial to select two quite distinct groups, in *competence* and in *performance,* in order to keep to some extent the validity of this study. In general terms, Chomsky (1965) separates *competence*, an inner ability, from the language's oral production, that is, *performance*. Moreover, *competence*, being an ideal, is considered to be a mental or psychological function or property (Lyon, 1996) as *performance* happens to be an actual event (qtd. in Brown et al. 11). Indeed, "linguistic competence is the knowledge of particular languages, by virtue of which knowledge those who have it are able to produce and understand utterances in those languages" (Brown et al. 11). It became clear that, at the level of performance and competence,

including Hymes' communicative competence, the English group possessed a higher level than the Spanish group.

In a nutshell, the design and structuring of this project and the definition of the groups' profiles (based on their learning styles and on the multiple intelligences theory) allowed me to harvest the motivational and facilitator power of audiovisual resources to promote learners' creativity in their written output in a foreign language through the use of interesting and creative activities.

Building a Bridge: From the Visual Text to the Written Text

Firstly, *creativity* is considered to be by many authors a rather difficult concept to define given its high degree of inherent complexity, as mentioned, and also it manifests itself in many distinct fields: literature, science, art, etc., in which it constructs its own epistemological *corpus*. Therefore, scholars focus on many different aspects, such as the creative subject, the creative ideas, the creative processes and the creative environment, among others. As Goethe stated "I did not make my songs, my songs made me" (qtd. in Isaksen xvi). Having in mind all its complexities, *creativity* is an expression of the human spirit itself, so it stands as something to be studied, cherished and cultivated (Isaksen 2). Secondly, Freud, the founder of psychological analysis, defined the *creative subject* as someone who tries to give life to his fantasies rather than eliminate them. He provides us with a revealing comparison between a child and a creative writer: both create their own world which they organize and rearrange according to their wishes. So, one can view the creative writer within these lines given that he too creates a fantastic world in which he invests emotionally as he separates it from reality (Gardner 24). Thirdly, through the existence of several other theories, Mayers (1998) designs a theory that defines some interesting and fresh aspects that can easily be intertwined with the classroom context (Johnson 2). Not only does he define creativity as the ability to produce new and valuable ideas but he also establishes five components that, indirectly, affect pedagogical practice (Johnson 2). The five components are: a) *competence,* which means the more learners encounter images and sentences in their learning, more opportunities they have to combine those mental pieces in

new ways; b) *imaginative thinking,* which allows them to see things in different ways, recognise models and establish connections; c) *audacious personality*, which helps them to tolerate ambiguity and risk, overcome obstacles and search for new experiences; d) *intrinsic motivation*, which means they focus on the pleasure and the inner challenge of the assignment and, finally; e) *creative environment*, which provides them with the necessary setting to come up with new and creative ideas.

Within the FLT context, one has to define creativity in a rather restricted way and so one can state that it is nothing but the ability to assimilate and use the acquired linguistic material (Hoz 255). In fact, Goffic and Besse stated learners should be taught how to use language not as separate and individual units but as a combined whole (Hoz 255). But for teachers, learners' creativity goes beyond these limitations as it is seen as their ability to imagine, create, unravel and express their own thoughts and perceptions of the world. Welsch provides us with a definition that can be easily applied to different creative activities, "Creativity is the process of generating unique products. These products, tangible and intangible, must be unique only to the creator, . . ." (qtd. in Isaksen 9).

Despite the subjectivity of this concept, one must define it operationally in order to understand its intervention in this project. So, within the pedagogy of writing, it has to be structured within two dimensions – *form* and *content* –, that are undeniably connected. On one hand, *form,* given that the more learners explore and know a language, the more they will be able to use it. On the other, *content*, given that it translates itself in the construction of reality and imaginary worlds, in problem solving and, consequently, in the creation of an innovative product (the written text) for its creator (the learner/writer).

According to Lennerberg, "human beings universally learn to walk and to talk, but that swimming and writing are culturally specific, learned behaviours. . . . We learn to write . . . usually only if someone teaches us" (qtd. in Brown 334). Bearing in mind that writing is a creative process, *creative writing* promotes the variation of the same topic as the learners produce their texts, exploring all the linguistic restraints associated to the act of writing (Leitão 31). As teachers, we must guide our learners and understand the shift in the writing paradigm,

and see it not as a *product* but as a *process*, and see learners as creators of language, allowing them to focus on content, message and their own individual intrinsic motives (Brown 335). After all, creative writing is "a journey of self-discovery, and self-discovery promotes effective learning" (Gaffield-Vile qtd. in Harmer 258). As *images* appear to be a way of reinterpreting reality, so does the *written text* given that language is a powerful tool to rearrange our experience in the world and not a mere way of describing the world through language (Leitão 33). Indeed, the evocation of *images*, mental images, allows learners to think of non-existing or absent things and convert them into linguistic expression. Whether we consider *fixed* or *moving images*, we teachers must be aware that there are multiple possibilities of interpretation of what we see, acting as a kaleidoscope of reality itself. "We predict, deduce and infer, not only from what we hear and read but from what we see around us and from what we remember having seen" (Wright 2).

Therefore, we must make use of an extensive amount of different *visual aids* within the classroom context and not simply consider them as something extra or a thrill, but as central to the learning process. Indeed, they can be used "to explain language meaning and construction, engage students in a topic, or as the basis of a whole activity" (Harmer 314). In this particular case, they act as a prelude for creative writing activities. Following the perspective of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2000), *images*, or the *visual text*, communicate with the spectator as the *written text* communicates with the reader, in a sort of symbiotic relation (Costa and Costa 195).

Though teachers are forced to develop logic, analysis and memory, learners have constant access to intuition, imagination and emotion through these audiovisual resources, such as pictures and videos. Indeed, the figure of the teacher is no longer the primary or unique source of knowledge. Hence, videos – music videos, sketches, etc. – have become a relevant source of knowledge in the classroom given that they offer infinite possibilities in their use and not a simple "listening with pictures" (Harmer 282).

In a nutshell, these *fixed or moving images* function as a visual stimulus that evoke sensations and reactions and, consequently, stimulate the learners' curiosity, imagination and

expressive ability, whether in speaking or *writing*. In the words of Sartre, "Is the image not a synthesis of affectivity and knowledge?" (72).

Into Action: English Classes

On the assumption that the human mind is flexible and adaptable, the brain is also capable of growing through practice (Marsh and Hill 8). The brain functions like a computer as each hemisphere processes the information in a different way. On one hand, the left hemisphere "thinks" in numbers and words, being responsible for skills such as mathematics, reading and writing. On the other hand, the right hemisphere "thinks" through images and feelings, being responsible for new and numerous creative ideas. Thus, learners must have access to different types of tasks that stimulate both sides of the brain such as working with music, poetry, images, writing and so on.

In the first English class of the first cycle of the research project, learners focused on the topic of *Human Rights.* This class in particular had a typical pedagogical framework – *pre*, *while* and *post-viewing* –, the main focus being a high impact video related to the topic at hand: *The S word – Ten facts about slavery.* All the activities before the production stage worked as preparation for the final writing activity, culminating with a group activity in which students had to come up with suggestions to resolve this problem. The activity itself followed the process-focused structure: *brainstorming*, *drafting*, *evaluating* and *reviewing*. In this activity, my observation focused more on the brainstorming and evaluation by peers. The evaluation didn't focus on the linguistic errors but rather on the content, as Harmer states: "when we give feedback on more creative or communicative writing, . . . we will approach the task with circumspection and clear demonstrate our interest in the content of the students' work" (109). Through the observation of their writing, I came to the conclusion that it was quite challenging and learners included their own personal views and experiences in their output. Objectively speaking, through the analysis of certain criteria to evaluate the learners' writing creativity in both form and content, I concluded that not only their language but their knowledge schemata were activated during this activity. Furthermore, the video worked as a positive stimulus for their

creativity, due to its appealing and emotional connotations. Due to the one-on-one work developed with each work group, they were able to select and use correctly different lexical items and structures appropriate to the situation but external to that particular lesson.

On the second class of this cycle, the main theme was *The 1950's and Cinema*, which prompted the use of videos, in this case, scenes from Alfred Hitchcock's movies such as *Dial M for murder*, *Birds* and a satirical video of the latter. The final activity was divided into two distinct sections: firstly, they had to re-write a scene of *Birds* according to a different genre (humour, drama, etc.) as if they were the director of the movie and, secondly, they had to envision a satirical video for that particular viewed scene. I could observe that learners opted to include a comical element in their writing, creating amusing storylines. In the *feedback* stage, learners had to comment on each other's work and vote for their favourite. Regarding the *brainstorming* stage, it was quite productive given that each element presented ideas and suggestions and the final product showed an autonomous revaluation of their work. The visual text used proved to be motivating as I could observe from students' reactions and comments. Thus, learners interpreted the input provided by both scenes and came up with two distinct texts. Taking into account that they had to assume a different character, this appealed more to their creative thinking. Overall, their writing followed the established criteria of form and content given that they adapted the genre of the scene, using different techniques of writing, vocabulary and structures.

On the first class of the second cycle of the research project, which introduced new variables (the use of the fixed images and the written text), the main theme was *The 1950's and Literature*, using an excerpt of Jack Kerouac's *On the road* as a guide for the lesson given that it was lexically rich. In the final activity, learners looked at an image of an open road and where asked some questions about possible destinations, where they would go in the Cadillac, etc. Then, they had to look again at the final sentence of the text "*Where are we going, man? I don't know but we gotta go."* and continue the story of this journey. There was an interactive dimension to this activity given that each group had a time limit and they had to complete the other groups' stories, leading to many variations within the same story. Through the observation

of their recurring work, I realized that they were capable of coming up with imaginative ideas but they weren't able to use and maintain the nuances of the language such as the slang and colloquial expressions. Indeed, there was a clear shift in their writing, mainly in the content of the text. They came up with interesting ideas for destinations, feelings and situations but their final product didn't completely reflect the ideas brainstormed as a group, leaving out some of the most interesting or creative ones. Generally speaking, the output was creative but certain external variables could have affected the results: the changing of the groups' dynamic and the establishment of a time limit.

In a nutshell, the use of the moving images led to creative writing, maximizing the learning process and working as a cognitive stimulus and, thus, activating their language knowledge.

Into Action: Spanish Classes

Regarding the Spanish classes, they presented a bigger challenge and, thus, the writing activities followed grammatical consolidation activities and required good models of language. After this process the learners could be challenged to engage on more creative activities.

In the first class of the first cycle, around the theme of *Mundo del Trabajo,* I chose to use an authentic video *Cómo buscar trabajo*. Firstly, this class followed a typical pedagogical framework – *pre, while and post-viewing* –, culminating with a final writing activity in groups, in which learners had to write a short script to add to the video. As they worked in groups, they needed help to come with topics and ideas for their scripts due to the lack of language knowledge. Notwithstanding, the group was capable of brainstorming interesting suggestions and composing a coherent and creative text, though they didn't truly believe in their own expressive abilities as they hesitated to share their ideas, at first. Overall, they proved to be able to interpret the visual input and come up with a different product from the original. Related to the structure, they showed difficulties in using appropriate lexical items and grammatical structures but, with some teacher guidance, they completed the activity successfully. After all,

as teachers, we must act as *resources* and *prompters* for our learners in order to provide them with a safe environment for their knowledge to prosper.

When it comes to the class led in the second cycle, I chose to use as a model of language a modern version of *La Cenicienta* (Cinderella) given that the group was working with children. The art of storytelling is quite appreciated by children and extremely important for their social growth. Moreover, they too create fantastic worlds, considered by the rest to be simple imagination, but, by them, reality. Bearing in mind the lack of knowledge of the group at hand, the process required a good consolidation of the learned structures that could prepare them for the creative writing activity. In general, the written text was used as a model of language for the final activity given that it provided learners with the necessary language (lexical and grammatical structures) required to compose a coherent and creative tale. Furthermore, the image provided, a fat Cinderella, provided learners with a visual input and a different kind of model for their work. Indeed, it motivated them to write a variation of the original that didn't follow the standard vision of the tale and, thus, much more current and applicable to our reality. It also functioned as a prompt for the discussion of women's role in society and how we are perceived. Each group had access to an envelope with different words to use in their tales, functioning as a guide for their writing. As I observed their ongoing work, they seemed quite motivated for the activity and, surprisingly, I noticed clear improvements in their writing skills. Structurally, they still made some mistakes but they were capable of constructing a coherent and cohesive text and, content wise, they were capable of interpreting the input and creating their own product: a fairytale.

Finally, according to Byrne, *visual aids* should be defined in a wider way as "anything which can be seen while the language is being spoken may be visual aid" (194). Thus, it is remarkable to observe the impact and effects of videos, images, texts, and so on, over the human mind and how they influence the way learners interact and write. Overall, both groups were capable of being creative writers but, each visual input had a distinct impact on their work. Indeed, each group was capable of reinterpreting reality itself and producing something else, a

different outcome of something pre-existing and, thus, language took a different form, not simply a reflection of knowledge but rather of their own mind and expression.

Conclusion

Taking into account current trends in teaching methodologies, this study focused on *writing* rather than on speaking. The written text has an interactional dimension too, just as the visual text, given that when the learner/writer writes, it does so for an audience/reader. Therefore, as readers, we visualize the writer as if he was speaking to us and, as writers, we visualize the reader as if we were speaking to him (Thames 201). In spite of the limitations of this action research project, I can state that audiovisual resources can facilitate the completion of writing activities of a creative nature. In the end, it turned out to be a powerful motivator but also an important vehicle of input given that it presented its own interpretation of reality, allowing learners to come up with a creative output. Indeed, these learners were capable of interpreting the information and message conveyed by the fixed or moving images, reinterpreting them according to their own views of the world. Thus, writing became a pure reflexion of the learner himself.

Within the pedagogy of image, a clear understanding of the ways of thought and, also, the learning styles of the subjects allowed me to understand the *schema* that they visualise and create in order to clarify how they complete the activities and even learn (Baratta and Jones 16). According to Kantor, there were some flaws in the studies related to writing, namely "the conditions under which students write; the methods and styles of teachers; the personalities, attitudes, and learning processes of students and the many interactions among these variables (qtd. in Zamel 701). Therefore, this project tried, in a superficial manner, to capitalize the understanding of the learning styles/information processing to select meaningful and creative writing activities.

Notwithstanding, it is impossible to generalize these hypothetical premises to the general FLT context in Portugal. An interesting aspect was the sample's confrontation with different genres of visual texts, all marked by their authenticity, which, consequently, led to different

reactions such as surprise, indifference, laughter and disappointment, among others. It underlined the possibility of including learners' own reality as a path to achieve a more meaningful learning of a foreign language.

Regarding the pedagogy of writing, Zamel pointed out some false assumptions taken as granted in the teaching context, such as "faulty assumptions that there was a best method and one just had to find it, that teaching writing was a matter of prescribing a logically ordered set of written tasks and exercises, and that good writing conformed to a predetermined and ideal model" (697). Thus, all the activities took into consideration the group, adapting the materials to the learners' level in order for all of them to be able to produce creative texts.

However, there were certain limitations to this study – the sharing of the group, the interference of external variables, and the reduced number of classes – that could have affected the validity of the results. According to Wallace, "it would be extremely naïve, of course, to imply that all our professional problems are capable of solution. Some can be investigated; some we might have to walk away from; others we might have to live with" (14). Therefore, one must never stop pursuing the improvement of our own action as language teachers.

By way of conclusion, there is a wide range of further research paths that could be taken up, such as: using images (fixed and moving) to develop learners' oral skills and, also, lexical and cultural sub-skills; confronting learners' with different genres of audiovisual texts and studying the advantages/disadvantages in their use; using videos produced by learners and noticing the benefits in that task; further researching of the symbiotic relation between reading and writing; and, lastly, studying writing as a process divided into different stages .

Works Cited

Baratta, Alex, and Steven Jones. "Using Film to Introduce and Develop Academic Writing Skills among UK Undergraduate Students." *Journal of Educational Enquiry* 8.2 (208): 15-37. Web. 31 July 2011. <www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/index.php/EDEQ/article/viewFile/465/345>

Brown, H. Douglas. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy.* 2nd ed. Harlow: Longman, 2001.

Brown, G. et al. *Performance and Competence in Second Language Acquisition.* UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Byrne, Donn. *English Teaching Perspectives.* Harlow: Longman, 1980.

Costa, Carla J., and Marco A. Costa. "O Papel da Imagem no Ensino da Leitura em Língua Inglesa: Uma Perspectiva Discursiva." *Revista Lumen et Virtus* 1.2 (2010): 189-207. Web. 11 June 2001. <www.jackbran.com.br/lumen_et_virtus/numero2/ARTIGOS/PDF/carlaferreira.pdf>

Gardner, H. *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi.* New York: Basic Books. Quality Paperback Book Club, 1993.

Gomes, Luísa C. (2008). "Um Escritor na Sala de Aula." *Noesis*. *Revista Trimestral* 72 (2008): 26-9. Ministério da Educação, Web. 10 May 2011. <www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/data/dgidc/Revista_Noesis/revista/noesis72.pdf>

Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. 3rd ed. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001.

Hoz, Víctor García. *Enseñanza y aprendizaje de las lenguas modernas*. Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1993.

Isaken, Scott G. *Frontiers of Creativity Research: Beyond the Basics.* New York: Bearly Ltd., 1987.

Johnson, Marjorie C. "Creatividad." *Psicología Online*. n. pag. 2006. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <www.psicologia-online.com/articulos/2006/creatividad.shtml>

Leitão, Nuno. "As Palavras também Saem das Mãos." *Noesis. Revista Trimestral* 72 (2008): 30-5. Ministério da Educação, Web. 10 May 2011. <www.dgidc.min-edu.pt/data/dgidc/Revista_Noesis/revista/noesis72.pdf>

Lima, Lauro de O. *A Construção do Homem segundo Piaget: Uma Teoria da Educação.* 3.ª ed. São Paulo: Summus Editorial, 1984.

Marsh, David, and Richard Hill. "Study on the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity: Final Report. Compendium Part One – Multilingualism and Creativity: Towards an Evidence-base." *European Comission*. 16 July 2009. Web. 20 June 2011. <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/studies/documents/study_on_the_contribution_of_multilingualism_to_creativity/final_report_en.pdf>

Thornbury, Scott. *How to Teach Speaking.* England: Longman, 2005.

Sartre, J. P. *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination.* Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004.

Thames, Carlos N. "La conexión lectura-escritura en la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras." *Revista Educación* 29.2 (2005): 197-206. Web. 10 June 2011. <http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/pdf/440/44029212.pdf>

Ur, Penny. *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Wallace, Michael J. *Action Research for Language Teachers.* UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

White, Ron, and Valerie Arndt. *Process Writing*. 6th ed. Harlow: Longman, 1997.

Wright, Andrew. *Pictures for Language Learning.* UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Zamel, Vivian. "Recent Research on Writing Pedagogy." *TESOL Quarterly* 1.4 (1987): 697-715. Web. 27 June 2011.

e-TEALS no. 3 | 2012

An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

Between the Theatre and the Classroom: From *Trifles* to *A Jury of Her Peers* by Susan Glaspell

Elizabete Pinto GOMES
| Esc. Sec. Almeida Garrett, Vila Nova de Gaia

Introduction

The number of studies, papers, articles or books discussing the importance of literature in the foreign language classroom is impossible to count and even though they all include a few downsides they largely agree there are many more favourable arguments. There is a vast collection to choose from. Taking just one example concerning the advantages of studying literature in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom:

- It provides meaningful contexts;
- It involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose;
- It appeals to imagination and enhances creativity;
- It develops cultural awareness;
- It encourages critical thinking;
- It is in line with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles.

(Bagherkazemi and Alemi 3)

Besides facilitating learning due to students' involvement one very important factor is that literature also promotes active and critical thinking. It provides opportunities for student-centred activities and collaborative group work, boosting cognitive maturation and extending intellectual perceptions with learners becoming much more active and autonomous than would normally be the case. Teachers, on the other hand, become facilitators, guides and active planners rather than assuming the role of controllers they frequently play.

Citation: Elizabete Pinto Gomes, "Between the Theatre and the Classroom: From *Trifles* to *A Jury of Her Peers* by Susan Glaspell", *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 3 (2012): 57-75. ISSN 1647-712X

- Learning is facilitated through *involvement and joy*, which can be created by literary style.
- Moreover, reading literature makes for more *active and critical thinking* and learning.
- Learning is facilitated through *authentic communication* and active involvement. As such, literature can be particularly useful as it provides opportunities for student-centered activities and collaborative group work.
- The *role of learners* as active and autonomous participants is emphasized in CLT, and as literature reading creates individual meanings, this goal is achieved.
- The *role of teachers* as facilitators, guides and active planners is embodied in the process of literary work and analysis.

(Bagherkazemi and Alemi 3)

I came across *A Jury of Her Peers* (1917) by Susan Glaspell when attending a Feminist Studies course at Faculdade de Letras (Porto) and I loved the short story. I didn't know at the time that I would choose its comparison with *Trifles*, the play written by the same author a year earlier, as the subject of my MA thesis. Through this process I managed to embrace the areas of Feminist and Literary Studies as well as Language Teaching and Methodologies as I so much wanted to.

Aims

My main goals in the development of this work were:

- debating the issues of gender and stereotype construction: Susan Glaspell gave a voice to women and their problems, condemning patriarchal systems and the rules which discriminated and symbolically castrated the female gender, impeding women from having their own lives and opinions;

- incentivising/developing awareness to the issue of citizenship: this is another issue which runs through the whole text, making it necessary and logical to debate the problematic of domestic violence. It was vital that students became conscious that no one has the right to hurt others whether physically or psychologically. They must also

understand that we all have to take a stand when we learn about victims of this hideous crime, especially when they're not able to protect themselves;

- showing the relevance and contemporaneity of the subject: though both the play and the short story were written in the early twentieth century, in a reality and time so diverse from the one of our students, the topic is real and portrays a situation which is frequent nowadays throughout the world. The Portuguese Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language points out as one of its aims the establishment of connections between the past and the present since that may contribute to one's understanding of present-day. "[T]hough the emphasis is laid on the present time it's always possible, in any area, to establish connections with the past, inserting the subjects in their cultural and historical backgrounds, assuming the past may help understand the present" (Moreira et al. 24).[1]

- developing students' interest for different literary genres: besides being a recognised literary work of art, *A Jury of Her Peers* is also a mystery tale, one of the reasons why it was expected to get the students' attention. The students, aged 16 to 18, are usually great fans of the genre. On the other hand, due to its kinaesthetic component the theatre play, *Trifles*, should lower emotional filters leading to more effective learning, even to those whose knowledge of this subject is rather poor:

> The problem of mixed ability is reduced when drama activities are used. Students who are more fluent can take the main roles which require more oral communication, while the weaker students compensate for their lack of linguistic ability by paralinguistic communication e.g. body language and general acting ability (miming). (Sam 4)

Students were expected to find here the ideal moment to show other abilities thus increasing their self-esteem and motivation;

- exploiting the pluralistic dimension underneath the syllabus for English as a Second Language: in the Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language it is strongly suggested that

teachers favour the development of active methodologies, focusing on research and collaborative work. Through negotiation with their students, teachers are also supposed to organize and develop lesson plans which will facilitate group interaction, conflict management and the development of cooperation skills;[2]

- promoting contact with different types of texts: students worked with the theatre play, the short story and the newspaper articles, contacting with different types of texts, one of the aims specified in the Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language.

- developing the project of *staged reading*,[3] thus leading to greater learners' autonomy and responsibility: doing the *staged reading* of *Trifles* was an extremely valuable project as it involved not only doing research but also the use of new technologies and Moodle Platform, which would promote students' responsibility and autonomous learning. Having to reflect upon their choices, defend them, interact and collaborate with their peers, students were supposed to have a more active role in the learning process.

- exploiting the journalistic perspective: the journalistic dimension of this work had to be addressed as well since Susan Glaspell found out about the whole story, the facts, details and follow-up while working as a journalist for *Des Moines Daily News.* She wrote about twenty articles on the subject which provided her with the basis for the theatre play and the short story. The fact that she was a journalist at a time when women were expected to stay at home and the influence of the press on people's attitudes and opinions were topics to be dealt with too.

- highlighting the importance of Susan Glaspell in the history of North American theatre: talking about the reasons to select these two literary works forcefully meant speaking about the author, Susan Glaspell, one of the founders of The Provincetown Players (1915), and a person of major interest when one discusses the changes in theatre in the USA. She frequently worked with her husband, George Cram Cook, since they aimed at creating the true American culture by using theatre plays written by Americans for Americans, without a commercial purpose whatsoever there, in Princeton.

"[I]t was the expression of a community, the creation of a new theatre that would draw the nation together in a mystical, all-comprehensive 'I'" (Ozieblo 74). It wasn't easy to achieve what they wanted: "Theirs was to be a theatre of ideas and exploration, of commitment and purpose, of challenge" (Gainor 263).

As for Susan Glaspell as a woman writer, Barbara Ozieblo states: "Glaspell had always grasped the didactic possibilities inherent in the theatre; she understood that a skilfully developed idea could excite an audience and lead to public discussion of the evils that plague society" (Ozieblo 241). Sensible and envisioning Glaspell insisted that the present beheld teachings for the future: "Time does not dim what is real . . . The past does not lose its voice, but is there to speak to us" (270). The Pulitzer Prize Committee recognized her ability, awarding her the so deserved award in 1931, for *Alison's House*. Amongst so many achievements, it was Glaspell who introduced American theatre to British audiences with plays like *The Verge*, at the time compared to *Solness, The Builder*, by Henrik Ibsen, though the writer spread the scope of her drama to the whole human race.[4]

- improving students' knowledge of English as well as fomenting their interest in the subject. They're supposed to understand how valuable knowing other languages, namely English, will be throughout their lives. These ideas and many others are also defended in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages:*

> **B. Specific measures aimed at policy making, curriculum and textbook development, teacher training, and assessment**
>
> 4. The CEFR is a reference tool for the development and implementation of coherent and transparent language education policies; when national, regional and local education authorities decide to use it, they are invited to:
>
> 4.2. encourage language policy makers and education administrators at all levels to:
>
> 4.2.1. ensure that language instruction is fully integrated within the core of the educational aims;[5]

> 4.2.2. use a holistic approach, ensuring the coherence of objectives and attainments in all languages within a lifelong learning curriculum framework;
> 4.2.3. promote the development of the awareness and understanding of language use and competences throughout the educational process in order to create an informed public opinion on language issues in society and as a basis for autonomous language learning throughout life;
> 4.4.2. give due consideration to the development of the learners' plurilingual capacities; . . . (Committee of Ministers 3-4)

Targetted Actions in the Classroom

Teaching global and citizenship issues is not an easy task as teachers need to ponder the object of their study as well as the best way to engage their students. This process requires more commitment from students and a shift: moving the teacher away from the centre, towards the students, regarding the way to achieve knowledge rather than teaching as the key: "Teaching global issues is as much a matter of how we teach as of what we teach. This involves a shift from passive to active learning, from teacher to student-centred and more importantly to learning-centred classes" (Altan 63).

One of the most efficient ways to work on global issues, i.e. citizenship topics, is to use an approach based on intercultural communication, which greatly improves students' language skills: "There is a great need for us all to understand and tolerate each other, and one of the only ways to do this is to talk to each other, to communicate in and between cultures; to make our culture more and learn more about others" (Harmer 1). The development of speaking skills becomes vital, calling for the use of all available resources – from written texts as a starting point to communication amongst peers in the classroom to online network communication.

The work with *Trifles* was designed to bring the theatre auditorium into the classroom, thus increasing the motivation of learners who could reveal/develop abilities leading to a greater trust in their capacity to use the English language, creating or improving their taste for other forms of artistic expression, beyond just music or cinema – the most common at their age.

> Drama fosters and sustains learners' motivation as it is fun and entertaining and because it engages feelings it can provide a rich experience of language for the participants. Drama as a process is inevitably learner-centred because it can only operate through active cooperation. . . . Being a collaborative and participatory teaching approach it contributes positively to the development of the learners' self-esteem and self-efficacy (one's beliefs about their capabilities in certain areas) especially to those they have rather low levels. (Zafeiriadou 5)

While not forgetting all the benefits of drama some of its more problematic areas need to be born in mind, such as the long texts to be memorized, the need for a careful and expensive investment in the production of sceneries and wardrobe, as well as the fact that I am not an expert in the area. Thus, staged *reading* came up as the most appropriate approach.

A *staged reading* is usually a form of theatre without sets or full costumes though it can be devised otherwise. The actors, who read from scripts, may be seated, stand in fixed positions, or incorporate some stage movement. A *staged reading* of a new play in development is an intermediate phase between a cold reading, with the cast usually sitting around a table, and a full production. A narrator may read stage directions aloud. The purpose is to gauge the effectiveness of the dialogue, pacing and flow, and other dramatic elements that the playwright or director may wish to adjust. Audience feedback contributes to the process. *Staged reading* is as well one of the tasks carried out by young actors for practice. Some Portuguese stage directors, such as Nuno Cardoso, are trying this out namely in plays presented in Teatro São João in Porto, directed at secondary school students. They want to take some of the classic texts to juveniles in a lighter way, increasing their interest and making them easier to grasp. It made sense that my students would use the same technique but also enriching it with details such as props, voice intonation and gestures in order to make it more appealing, challenging and innovative. It was a great opportunity to develop learners' creativity.

Students' involvement was absolutely essential in order to achieve better results and so it became clear they had to participate actively in all decisions concerning the activity. This attitude is firmly defended by Susan Stern who "stated that drama heightened self-esteem, motivation, spontaneity, increased capacity for empathy, and lowered sensitivity to rejection. All

these facilitate communication and provide an appropriate psycholinguistic climate for language learning" (Sam 4).

After having read and analysed *Trifles*, students were divided into four groups to prepare the *staged reading*. Each group received a part of the text having to decide which lines, gestures and actions they wanted to emphasize, bearing in mind the public's understanding was going to be affected by their choices. In those groups they negotiated a subdivision of their part of the text, the props to have on stage, the way to present/represent them, the movements and gestures, if any, that would be used. Some groups chose to draw the scenery and some of the props on the board – it was an Arts class – others recreated and photographed it projecting it on the board. They reflected upon the details they wanted to add to their clothes, faces and hair in order to convey to the audience of this *staged reading* their interpretation of what they had read and they wanted to be seen on the stage. Since they had already divided their part of the text into two and made all the necessary arrangements, each group split up into two more. In each one of those eight smaller groups and still respecting the decisions made in the larger ones, they decided the role of each participant, practiced intonation, reading, gestures and so on.

The *staged reading* was an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge of the text, *Trifles*, to analyse it more carefully, to debate, to develop critical thinking and to open the way to areas of more creativity and to the writing exercise. Some learners gave a lot of thought to how to represent Minnie's chair on stage, others concentrated on her apron and shawl, others on the canary and its cage, amongst many, and the results varied a lot, ranging from the very classical representations to the most modern and atypical ones. Nevertheless, what was important was that all the groups could explain their reasons and how their choices reflected their interpretations. This process required from the students the use of several abilities, some connected with the learning method and others with the social skills, putting into practice strategies devised to debate, persuade, criticize and negotiate, all of them essential for their success as students and as citizens.

All this work involved the use of information, image and sound technologies, namely by using the Internet for research about the characters, time and space of the play, the author and so on. Filming the *staged reading* enabled not only the reflection upon the more and the less positive aspects of the performance but also the use of technologies the students really enjoyed and where some of them showed an expertise which certainly surprised us all and increased their confidence and self-esteem.

Despite defending that the *staged reading* must be done involving the students in every step of the process so that the teacher is a facilitator rather than a controller of the actions and decisions, many other activities were promoted, ensuring a better understanding of the play and enhancing the learners' personal and linguistic development.

The first activity aiming at motivating students to the reading focused their attention on a significant object in the play, Minnie's chair. They had to devise reasons for that object to play such a crucial role in the text. The students' mind map drawn on the board created a wide range of possibilities which were narrowed down so as to meet the subjects of domestic violence, the duty of committing to society and the existence of such characters nowadays as well, women like Minnie Foster who endure all kinds of suffering silently.

In order to introduce some of the characters to the students and to provide them a few hints on the text they were given a set of sentences, having to decide how many people were involved and their gender.

- "By the way, has anything been moved? Are things just as you left them yesterday?"
- "Well, she looked queer."
- "Well, women are used to worrying over trifles."
- "Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?"
- "And why was that? You didn't like her?"
- "It never seemed a very cheerful place."
- "My, it's cold in there."
- "Mrs. Peters?"
- "Do you think she did it?"

- "But Mrs. Hale, the law is the law."
- "I s'pose maybe the cat got it."
- "I don't like this place."

They also read the first paragraph of the theatre play, rebuilding their answers if necessary. Using the information available, they tried to characterize Mr. John Wright and Mrs. Minnie Foster Wright. The results were very interesting and amazingly close to the reality of the play.

Since this is a theatre play, the learner's first contact with the text couldn't be always by reading it. Therefore, I approached two of my students, two girls, so that they would do the *staged reading* of a small dialogue between two female characters. Like these students one of them was a strong woman, a leader (Mrs. Hale), and the other was more fragile and an introvert (Mrs. Peters). None of us told the others about this little arrangement. So on the scheduled day, when these students rose from their chairs, walked to the front and started playing their roles, the others were absolutely astonished. The result was excellent because the unexpectedness made them pay closer attention, it raised their expectations about the end, facilitated their understanding of the excerpt and gave them the chance of experimenting the position of the spectators. Though they were so drawn to the scene developing in front of them, they kept an analytical mind being able to comment on their classmates' performance. They also had an inside view of how powerful criticism can be and often referred to this experience later on when planning the *staged reading*.

The journalistic dimension of this literary work was also exploited since Susan Glaspell had learned about all the facts while working as a reporter for the *Des Moines Daily News*. She wrote the first news story on the murder and as she got really interested in it she wrote about twenty articles on the subject between 1900 and 1901. She wrote about the murder, about Mr. and Mrs. Hossack, other family members and neighbours, following the first and the second trial and stating her opinion on the matter, at first clearly condemning Mrs. Hossack but then as Glaspell learned about her living conditions, more specifically the complaints of domestic abuse, she became more sympathetic and ended up defending her. This event marked her and made her write *Trifles* and *A Jury of Her Peers* years later. "Glaspell voices her concerns with the

dilemmas of womanhood; she openly condones the breaking of patriarchal codes of behaviour that strangle women and deny them self-fulfilment" (Ozieblo 83). Her job, at a time when women only had a say and a place inside the home, was a subject for discussion in the classroom, prompting the learners to establish a comparison with the present. All the issues concerning the media, their influence on people's lives, whether famous or common citizens, moulding their minds and behaviours were also widely debated. Students considered the topic of invasion of privacy and pondered on it, recalling events of a closer past and of the present to prove their points. They all agreed that the freedom of the press has to respect certain limits and that everybody has the right to some privacy.

To handle the journalistic facet and simultaneously have learners come into contact with different types of texts, the students were given some of the news articles written by Glaspell along with some contemporary ones so they could compare the dissimilar styles. There was collaborative work, with students sitting in groups of four, having received an article by Glaspell at the time of the events and another one, a contemporary one. Students had to compare the structure of each, summarize the text and present it to the other groups. They were also supposed to keep a timeline of the different articles written by Glaspell in 1900 and 1901. This activity promoted the development of speaking skills as they had to interact in the small group first and then in the large one – the class – but there was plenty of opportunity to discuss matters and practice before getting to that second stage, which provided them with confidence.

Comparing the basic rules of writing a newspaper article with the ones Glaspell wrote, the students immediately realized that she used another style, one which was characterized by an "almost" first-person narrator, since she often used the expression "your correspondent", gave her own opinion, talked about rumours and suppositions. According to Linda Ben-Zvi: "She is a constructed presence who invites the reader to share some privileged information, intriguing rumour, and running assessment of the case and of the guilt or innocence of the accused" (24). It was important that students understood the cultural differences between 1900 and nowadays as well as grasp the clues as to what kind of writer Glaspell would become.

The means of communication have a major role in spreading information, opinions, attitudes, frequently being used by governments and organizations to publish pictures and widely disseminate messages that must reach all citizens – the so called institutional publicity. On the other hand, it also mirrors the thoughts, the mentality of a certain time/decade. Students were divided into groups of four and given three advertisements, one of each of the following sets: institutional campaigns against domestic violence, current ads in which women are portrayed as mere objects and publicity of the 50's-70's, echoing the submission of women and the ease violence against women was faced. Learners established comparisons and reached conclusions about behaviours and mentalities and the changes, or lack of them, over the years. This was shared and debated with the whole class.

Some teachers and textbook authors may believe that such images of violence must be avoided in class but the truth is that youngsters are exposed to it every day as there are always so many reports of domestic abuse in the newspapers, on TV, radio, etc. Herbert Puchta and Michael Schratz advocate that teachers need to make language learning more relevant: "The way forward lay in making our language teaching more personally relevant, in a word, more 'humanistic'" (1). It is also vital that juveniles learn about these terribly wrong behaviours and that they become aware that when a citizen knows of such a situation involving others he/she ought to report it to the authorities. In fact, discussing the issues of discrimination based on gender and of domestic violence also meant providing the students lessons on Sexual Education, thus following the instructions of the Portuguese Ministry of Education – Lei n. º 60/2009, de 6 de Agosto: "The class teacher, the teacher in charge of the Health and Sexual Education Project and all the other teachers of each particular class must devise the sexual education project carrying out transversal educational activities".[6]

Amongst its numerous aims are many of particular interest for this paper as they relate so closely to some of the objectives foreseen for the usage of *Trifles* in the classroom: to promote equality between the genders, to eliminate discrimination based on gender issues, to promote the respect for the differences and to protect youngsters against all forms of exploitation and abuse.[7]

Worldwide the issues of discrimination based on gender and domestic violence are being discussed namely at international organisations like UN. Actually, on the 3rd December 2009 – thirty years after the international treaty banning the discrimination of women – its secretary, Ban Ki-moon, recognised and alerted the world population to the fact that women and girls are still the target of continued physical and emotional abuse:

> Thirty years after an international treaty banning discrimination against women came into force, women and girls are still suffering from the scourge, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today.
>
> "Violence against women and girls is found in all countries," he told a session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) marking the three decades of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). "The results are devastating for individuals and societies alike: personal suffering, stunted development and political instability.
>
> So while we recognize the Convention's successes, we must also acknowledge the urgent need for the entire UN system to support its full implementation," he added, calling on the few countries that have not yet ratified the treaty to do so. ("Women" n. p.)

He urged the population to act, having the organization prepared several actions to set the example.

> "From Cameroon to Morocco, from Kyrgyzstan to Thailand, it has been a catalyst for legal reforms and new national laws that enshrine women's human rights and gender equality," he said, citing "the huge strides" made towards realizing women's human rights on the national and international stage, including at the UN, which has registered a 40 per cent increase in women in senior posts since he assumed office three years ago.
>
> "We must move beyond debates to concrete action that will increase the impact of the Convention," he concluded. "Let us all work even harder to raise awareness and to work for the Convention's full implementation worldwide". ("Women" n. p.)

One of the tasks suggested to learners and immediately accepted was conceiving posters for an exhibition to be displayed in the school grounds alerting the population to the escalating crimes of domestic violence. Using the Internet they chose an article from a newspaper of an English speaking country reporting such a case and another from a Portuguese one. Using their skills in the areas of drawing, design, photography and arts in

general they built the cards with the news, a photograph/drawing produced by them and a slogan in English. The outcome was really excellent as they truly involved themselves in the task, showing great creativity as well as awareness of the situation.

Though the target of my thesis was the woman as a victim of gender discrimination and violence, I thought that the fact men are sometimes victims of domestic violence had to be addressed as well and so it was done, by using some institutional publicity.

Aiming at the involvement of other areas of study and thus connecting different subjects, namely the Arts, the teacher of Drawing was invited to participate in the project. She promptly accepted the request. The text was divided into small strips, one for each student, who should illustrate it according to his/her interpretation of that bit. The final product was a beautifully illustrated book, including the text of Susan Glaspell and the drawings of this class. The cover page was absolutely brilliant, a very pungent remarkable drawing from one of the learners, a girl, who truly depicted the suffering of Minnie Foster and the key symbols of this theatre play.

All the tasks, all the negotiations, all the discussions took place in English, having the students actually kept loyal to the arrangements made earlier. The fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, amongst others, largely benefitted from this practice as well as from the relaxing but enthusiastic work atmosphere.

> All forms of interaction take place in the target language . . . . While it is potentially inhibiting to insist on this rigidly with a monolingual group, it should be encouraged as far as possible during rehearsals and discussions of the production. If this can be achieved, most of the language acquired during a drama project will probably stem not from the actual play itself, but from the discussions surrounding the production and rehearsals. The student is learning, albeit unintentionally. (Wessels 12)

Working with these two literary works of Susan Glaspell, namely the play, enabled the achievement of the intended goals and of others like the bond created between the two teachers and the students, a connection which contributed to the improvement of students' motivation and hard work and consequently of their marks. Most of all their relationship with the English language and subject changed drastically for the better.

Conclusions

Taking *Trifles* and *A Jury of Her Peers* from the shelf of the library to my classroom was really worthwhile as all the background reading I had done proved to be true. Using the language in a meaningful situation reinforced learners' motivation, interest, self-esteem and improved their language knowledge. Students acted as active participants thus promoting self-learning, group interaction in authentic situations and peer teaching. It reinforced the feeling of belonging to a group since there was so much peer assisted work.

Many other areas and activities could be explored when studying *Trifles* and/or *A Jury of Her Peers*. John Wright, the murdered husband is absent from the stage but he is essential for the play as without him it wouldn't exist. Students' creativity could have been exploited to fill in that gap, had there been time.

> With Hume's exploration of cause and effect in mind, proximate cause aptly describes the manner in which this thesis will discuss absent characters in American drama. Despite the term's specificity to the legal profession, proximate cause accurately defines the way that characters who remain offstage nevertheless "produce events" onstage that would not have occurred had the characters appeared onstage. To use Hume's logic, these absent characters represent the "no longer perceivable cause" that produces the effect(s) seen by the audience.
>
> What the audience might not realize and what critics have thus far failed to discuss, though, is the fact that these absent characters *are* the causes – in fact, the proximate causes – for the onstage action. While the audience and the critics might infer this absence, the ways in which absent characters produce the effects or foreseeable injury seen onstage deserve attention and elaboration. (Morrow 4)

The way the story was created – as if it was a detective story – is another issue which wasn't handled but it is of major importance. That's one of the most important factors to attract the attention of teen students besides being an innovation in the theatre subgenre. It might have been extremely interesting to create a bridge to the present by having students watch an episode from, for instance, CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) and compare the gathering and analysis of evidence with the play, trying to spot all the materials that could be collected had it happened nowadays.

An interesting activity and I believe one that would thrill the students would be to open a Twitter class account – or as alternative to create a blog – so that students and teacher would share with people all over the world their findings concerning gender-based discrimination and domestic violence. Russel Stannard, a professor at Westminster University and author of many school books, makes no apology of the use of this and other Internet related resources:

> If you spend 15-20 minutes a day, you can really build up an amazing network of contacts. I have around 1000 followers now and it is a very powerful way for me to direct people to my content or interesting things I have found – but also to get a constant flow of great content from other tweeters around the world. (Stannard 52)

This learning strategy would require a discussion of the risks underlying the use of the Internet and social networks, making students reflect upon the dangers of giving unknown people personal data as well as recall examples of personal situations or others reported by the media.

This paper aimed at, within the inevitable time and space conditioning, showing how important it is to bring these issues into the classroom, connecting the last with the real world. Moreover, meeting Susan Glaspell and her literary works of art, *Trifles* and *A Jury of Her Peers*, fosters her recognition as a priceless asset to literature and to a changing world .

Notes

[1] Portuguese Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language: "Relembra-se que, embora colocando o enfoque na actualidade, é sempre possível, em qualquer domínio de referência proposto, estabelecer conexões com o passado, enquadrando os domínios apresentados nos seus contextos histórico-culturais no pressuposto de que o passado pode ajudar a compreender o presente" (Moreira et al. 24).

[2] Portuguese Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language: "No contexto de uma Europa plurilingue e pluricultural, o acesso a várias línguas torna-se cada vez mais valioso para os cidadãos europeus, não só como requisito para a comunicação com os outros, mas também como fundamento-base de educação cívica, democrática e humana. No contexto escolar, a aprendizagem de línguas assume, assim, um papel relevante na formação integral dos alunos, não apenas no que diz respeito aos processos de aquisição dos saberes curriculares, como também na construção de uma educação para a cidadania. Com efeito, a aprendizagem de línguas inscreve-se num processo mais vasto, que ultrapassa a mera competência linguística, englobando aspectos ligados ao desenvolvimento pessoal e social dos alunos, levando-os a construir a sua identidade através do contacto com outras línguas e culturas" (Moreira et al. 3).

[3] This issue will be discussed in more detail later in the article.

[4] See Barbara Ozieblo: "[T]he American writer made her case more difficult by applying it to the whole human race, whereas the Norwegian confined it to the individual" (2).

[5] As also suggested by the Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe and as indicated in the various Language Education Policy Profiles.

[6] See:

> Lei n.º 60/2009, de 6 de Agosto
> Artigo 7.º
> **Projecto de educação sexual na turma**
> 1 — O director de turma, o professor responsável pela educação para a saúde e educação sexual, bem como todos os demais professores da turma envolvidos na educação sexual no âmbito da transversalidade, devem elaborar, no início do ano escolar, o projecto de educação sexual da turma. ("Lei n. 60/2009" 5097)

[7] See:

> Lei n.º 60/2009, de 6 de Agosto
> Artigo 2.º
> **Finalidades**
> Constituem finalidades da educação sexual:
> *e*) A capacidade de protecção face a todas as formas de exploração e de abuso sexuais;
> *f*) O respeito pela diferença entre as pessoas e pelas diferentes orientações sexuais;
> *h*) A promoção da igualdade entre os sexos;
> *l*) A eliminação de comportamentos baseados na discriminação sexual ou na violência em função do sexo ou orientação sexual. ("Lei n. 60/2009" 5097)

Works Cited

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. "Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7E." *Council of Europe > Education and Languages.* 2008. 1-16. Web. 14 Jan. 2010. <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp>

Altan, Mustafa Zülküf. "Teaching Global Issues through Intercultural Communication, Critical Thinking and Multiple Intelligences." *Modern English Teacher* 19.1 (2010): 60-64.

Bagherkazemi, Marzieh, and Minoo Alemi. "Literature in the EFL/ESL Classroom: Consensus and Controversy." *LiBRI. Linguistic and Literary Broad Research and Innovation* 1.1 (2010): 1-12.

Ben-Zvi, Linda. *Susan Glaspell: Essays on Her Theater and Fiction*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P., 1995.

Gainor, J. Ellen. *Susan Glaspell in Context: American Theater, Culture, and Politics, 1915-48.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P., 2007.

Glaspell, Susan. *Trifles*, in *Plays by Susan Glaspell*. Ed. C. W. E. Bigsby. New York: Cambridge UP, 1987. 35-46.

Harmer, Jeremy. "CULTURE or Culture? Language, Methodology and Content in a Complex World." *TESOL Spain*, 2005. Web. 17 Oct. 2009. <www.tesol-spain.org/convention2005/harmer.pdf>

"Lei n.º 60/2009." *Diário da República Electrónico* 1.151, 6 Agosto 2009: 5097. Web. 27 Dec. 2010 <http://dre.pt/pdf1s/2009/08/15100/0509705098.pdf>

Moreira, Gillian *et al.*. *Programa de Inglês, 10.º, 11.º e 12.º Anos*. Ministério da Educação, Departamento do Ensino Secundário, 2001-2003.

Morrow, Sarah. "Absent Characters as Proximate Cause in Twentieth Century American Drama." *English Theses*. Paper 58. 2009. *Digital Archive@ GSU*, Georgia State University. Web. 27 Dec. 2010.

Ozieblo, Barbara. *Susan Glaspell: A Critical Biography*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Puchta, Herbert, and Michael Schratz. *Teaching Teenagers*. Essex: Longman, 1993.

Sam, Wan Yee. "Drama in Teaching English as a Second Language: A Communicative Approach." *The English Teacher* 19 (July 1990): n. p. MELTA: Malaysian English Language Teaching Association, 2001. Web. 20 Dec. 2010. <www.melta.org.my/ET/1990/main8.html>

Stannard, Russel. "Twitter Totally Demystified." *Modern English Teacher*. 19.1 (2010): n. p.

Wessels, Charlyn. *Drama, Resource Books for Teachers*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

"Women still suffer discrimination 30 years after global treaty banned it – UN chief." *UN News Centre*. 3 Dec. 2009. Web. 30 March 2012. <www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33140&Cr=women&Cr1>

Zafeiriadou, Nelly. "Drama in Language Teaching: A Challenge for Creative Development." *ISSUES* 23 (2009): 4-9. Web. 30 March 2012. <www.ekadeve.gr/arthra/ekpaideutika/article_14.pdf>

e-TEALS no. 3 | 2012
An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies

The Black and White World of Film Noir in the Black and White Text of Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions*

Mark POOLE
| University of Porto

Paul Auster's 2002 novel, *The Book of Illusions*, was written at a time when he had recently completed a five-year foray into the world of filmmaking, having written the screenplays for *The Music of Chance* (1993), *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face* (1995) and *Lulu on The Bridge* (1998), which he also directed. If we add the years of preparation and promotion involved in any Hollywood picture, another two years can be added to this time span for the screenplay of *The Music of Chance*, as Auster himself alludes:

> The two films with Wayne Wang[1] took two years of my life… *Lulu on the Bridge* was an accident. I wrote the screenplay for Wim Wenders and then he had a conflict; he wasn't able to direct the film. At his urging, I decided to take on the job myself. And so, boom, there went another two and a half years of my life. (Auster, "Interviewed")[2]

It is not surprising, therefore, that much of *The Book of Illusions* reverberates with the echo of filmmaking still so fresh in Auster's mind and the book reads as if written by a man torn between his love of literature and cinema. Both media tell stories and in *The Book of Illusions*, Auster attempts to depict in detail the visual experience of watching two, at the time, fictional films, called *Mr Nobody* and *The Inner Life of Martin Frost*. I say "at the time" because, in 2007, the film version of *The Inner Life of Martin Frost* was released, having been written and directed by Paul Auster.[3] This, by his own accounts, must have taken up a further two years.

Citation: Mark Poole, "The Black and White World of Film Noir in the Black and White Text of Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions*", *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 3 (2012): 76-89. ISSN 1647-712X

We have seen the time Auster has dedicated to the filmmaking process. If we add to this what Auster says about his writing process, it shows that his writing is an equally laborious task:

> I'm one of the few people left without a computer. I don't write on a word processor, and I don't have email and I'm not really tempted to get it. I'm very happy with my pen and my old portable typewriter . . . (Auster, "Interviewed")[4]

Auster is prepared to expend a significant amount of endeavour working on literature and film, suggesting a love of these media which, in *The Book of Illusions*, amounts to a questioning as to how far reality can be expressed in either. Here David Zimmer, the narrator of the book, talks about viewing *The Inner Life of Martin Frost*: " Until the film began to play out on the screen in front of me, all these things had been real. Now, . . . they had been turned into the elements of a fictional world" (243). What is pertinent here is that Auster presupposes that the fictional world of literature is "real" whereas the cinematic world is a "fictional world." The one thing that unites the so-called real world of fiction in cinema and literature is narrative structure. Both media create fictional worlds, which the creator makes as involving as possible, so that the reader/viewer suspends reliance on a reality outside the confines of the novel/film, and is drawn into the plot, so as to be transported through the literary or cinematic text.

This paper will be arguing that Auster's love of cinema has been extended into the diegesis of *The Book of Illusions* in ways which, at first, might not seem obvious, but, when referenced with classic Hollywood film-making, in particular Film Noir, becomes clear. To support this notion I am using Internet links to clips and quotes related to cinema, which will illustrate the points being made. The links should be clicked on, so that the argument being made in textual form is supported by the words and images the links provide.

To summarise the plot of *The Book of Illusions*: the main events of the narrative are set in 1988, with flashbacks to almost 60 years earlier, and tell the story of David Zimmer, a Literature lecturer who lost his wife and two children in a plane crash 3 years previously. Grief stricken, he falls into a bottle, and eventually finds solace in the films of Hector Mann, a silent

movie star Zimmer caught a film of one night on TV, who disappeared just as his career was taking off.[5] He subconsciously manages his grief by turning it into an obsession to watch all 12 films starring and directed by Hector Mann. This task takes him all over America and to Europe, leading Zimmer to write the only book on Mann's work. After its publication, Zimmer tires of the city and moves to Vermont to concentrate on translating Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (whose title he translates as *Memoirs of a Dead Man*). His sojourn in Vermont is interrupted by the arrival of Alma Grund, a woman in her thirties who claims that Hector Mann is still alive. She is insistent that Zimmer travels with her to New Mexico to visit the dying Mann; so insistent that she pulls out a gun which Zimmer actively encourages her to kill him with. The gun malfunctions and they eventually end up in bed together, before flying to New Mexico the following day. During the flight, Alma, who has been writing a biography of Mann, tells the story of why Hector Mann disappeared (he covered up the presumed accidental killing of his girlfriend by a former lover of his), and what he had been doing in the interim years (various things: working in a sports shop; part of a live sex act, and film-making in the New Mexico desert).

Upon arriving at the Blue Stone Ranch[6] in New Mexico he is frostily received by Mann's wife, Frieda, and has a brief meeting with Hector Mann, before he is rudely expelled from the house to stay with Alma. During the night, Mann dies, under suspicious circumstances, according to Zimmer, and while Alma and Frieda take care of funeral arrangements, he watches *The Inner Life of Martin Frost*. Frieda then burns all the copies of the films that Hector Mann has made, reportedly at his request, since their arrival in New Mexico, along with the remains of Hector Mann. Alma and Zimmer spend one more night together and agree that she will join him in Vermont, as soon as she has settled her affairs in New Mexico. While Zimmer awaits Alma in Vermont, Frieda continues in her destruction of all things related to Mann and starts burning Alma's biography. Trying to protect her work, Alma pushes the old lady, who knocks her head and is killed. Distraught, Alma faxes Zimmer her intention to kill herself (conveniently with Zimmer's sleeping pills, prescribed to combat his fear of flying, which he had left in New Mexico). She dies.

In what is effectively an epilogue, Zimmer returns to his translation of Chateaubriand and picks up the pieces of his life. We also learn the text we are reading was supposedly written approximately 11 years after the denouement of '88. And in one final narrative flourish, we learn that Zimmer himself is dead and that *The Book of Illusions* has been published posthumously, which gives added poignancy to the title of the Chateaubriand Zimmer was translating: *Memoirs of a Dead Man*; the dead men being Chateaubriand, Hector Mann and David Zimmer.

When reading the melodramatically presented previous two paragraphs, which condense the 321 pages of *The Book of Illusions*, and then consider the events making up the cause and effect of the narrative arc, it reads, at best, as fantastic and at worst, far-fetched. But it certainly could not be described as realistic. Yet its lack of realism does not prevent it from being enjoyable. Indeed, the serpentine logic of the plot is just as enjoyable and far less far-fetched than many film noir plots. One of which, for example, is Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep* (1945), originally written by Raymond Chandler:

> Any further attempts to outline the plot (of *The Big Sleep*) would be futile: the storyline becomes so complicated and convoluted that even screenwriters William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, and Jules Furthmann were forced to consult Raymond Chandler for advice (he was as confused by the plot as the screenwriters). (Erickson)[7]

If Auster's novel complies with the noir tradition of a convoluted plot, then other aspects of the novel also need to be examined under the light and shade that noir brings. The first of these has to be the two characters that dominate the book. Hector Mann, the artist whose entire body of work is destroyed, and David Zimmer, the intellectual who writes about him, and is supposedly the author of the book we hold in our hands. This, by implication, drags the meta-narrator, Auster, into the equation.

Since Zimmer is the character Auster makes responsible for the release of information, the role of the narrator in *The Book of Illusions* should be examined. The first point to be made is related to the significance of the name of the narrator and the two books he works on

referred to in the text he writes; *The Silent World of Hector Mann* and the translation of Chateaubriand's memoirs, which he conveniently translates as *Memoirs of a Dead Man*.

Thus, we have Mann, an imaginary man residing in the head of the fictional Zimmer, the German for room, who is constructing a version of a Chateau(briand), which is a work that exists outside the confines of the narrative; in other words, in the real world. So, there is a man, obviously an everyman to the meta-narrator through his choice of name, in a room and a house; a construct housing characters created by Auster:

> But to get back to the *Book of Illusions,* to Hector Mann and his film career: the fact is that Hector was born inside me long before I got involved with the movies myself . . . I thought perhaps I would sit down at some point and write a book of stories that would describe his silent films – each story a different film. (Auster, "Interviewed")[8]

Not only does the above citation display the origins of a fictional world that Auster seeks to depict as real, it also shows how closely linked his interest in literature and cinema are. However, Auster is even more inextricably linked to Zimmer and Mann. It is revealed that Mann was born in 1900 (Auster, *The Book of Illusions* 3) and loses his son, Tad, in 1938 (206), Zimmer, for his part, loses his son, Todd, in 1985 (5). Firstly, the minimal pairing of the names is something that Auster's narrator is aware of and comments on: "No mental gymnastics required in that. Tad and Todd, It can't get any closer than that, can it?" (206). Secondly, the age of the two men when they lose their children is 37/38. This can be worked out from Zimmer's age in 1998, to which Auster conveniently furnishes us a clue on page 317: "I turned fifty-one in March 1998".

But Auster is not content simply to have the two men at similar ages when they experience traumatic events. He has bound himself even closer to his narrator, because Auster was born on the 3rd of February 1947, thus making him, at most, a month older than David Zimmer. Through such numerology, Auster is stating that Zimmer and Mann are aspects of his own personality; one facet interested in Literature (it should be remembered that Zimmer has been a teacher of Literature), the other absorbed by Cinema.

It has already been noted that, within the narrative structure, Zimmer's *The Book of Illusions* was published after his death. This sleight of hand by Auster, has implications in the way in which we reinterpret the previous 318 pages before this detail is announced. Auster has used a traditional first person past tense narrator, including the sidetracking of Alma's reported speech telling the back story of Hector Mann, as reported by the supposedly reliable narrator, Zimmer, up until page 318. It is thus the reader's assumption that Zimmer survives the events of the book, and, as it were, steps beyond the confines of the last page to take his place in some fictional, parallel reality. A happy-ever-after of still being alive, if you will, regardless of the misery of the ending.

This traditional first person past tense narrative voice is similar to the cinematic convention of the flashback voiceover, where a normally reliable character relates[9] relevant events from an earlier time, so that the audience can be informed of apposite factors. If Auster had foregrounded this information, and stated at the beginning of the book that the narrator was dead and was speaking from "beyond the grave", which is part of the alternative title for Chateaubriand's memoirs,[10] then the effect would be similar to the floating body of Joe Gillis (William Holden) with his accompanying voiceover at the beginning of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950).[11]

The dead narrator speaks from beyond the grave in *Sunset Boulevard* and *The Book of Illusions*, meaning Auster shares with Noir the use of the dead narrator. The fact that in the film Gillis's death is announced at the beginning of the film makes the audience wonder *how* and *why* the narrator is dead. In the book, by withholding the knowledge of the narrator's death to the end of the book, Auster seeks to create greater dramatic impact, thus making Zimmer's death, however undramatic it might be, the culmination of the narrative arc, the final link in the manacles of cause and effect that the events of the book have been chained to. In the following quote, Zimmer is talking about the death of his family, but the words he chooses could equally apply to the entire story Zimmer tells and the structure the meta-narrator, Auster, has chosen: "Everything was a part of it, every link in the chain of cause and effect was an essential piece of the horror" (6).

However, the dead man talking does add another layer. Since Zimmer is aware of his impending death, in retrospect the book takes on the quality of a confessional; a man atoning for his acts, setting the record straight, in his own words, giving his own interpretation of events, similar to Frank Chambers (John Garfield) in Tay Garnett's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), or to Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) in Billy Wilder's 1944 *Double Indemnity*.[12]

Just as Neff feels the need to record his confession to Walter Keys (Edward G. Robinson), so Zimmer feels the need to unburden himself with the words in the book, of the crimes committed within the narrative framework:[13] "I don't think I was wrong to have held my secrets for all these years, and I don't think I was wrong to have told them now" (318). In the aforementioned quotation, it can be seen that Auster uses the first person singular subject pronoun four times in a twenty-seven-word sentence. His use of this pronoun does, at times, draw attention to his technique in *The Book of Illusions* in ways which read as maladroit. Consider, for example, two paragraphs on pages 56-57 where the first person pronoun is used 31 times. For diametrically opposed reasons, it is reminiscent of the use of the word "knife" in Hitchcock's *Blackmail* (1929) (*see* www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvlyQaJbJgs).

Hitchcock uses primitive sound recording equipment brilliantly to depict Alice White's (Anny Ondra) sense of guilt, whereas Auster repeated use of the first person pronoun does not really work as a representation of a self-obsessed man. But, instead, perhaps it represents a self-obsessed author. If we accept, Barthes' notion in *The Death of the Author* that "[t]he author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance of saying *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person'" (187), then Auster is attempting to depict the subjective *I* of the real world and combine it with the literary voice of a narrator. Since his chosen medium to do this is the novel, then his attempt is doomed to failure and consigned to being interpreted as gauchely drawing attention to its own artifice.

One final point concerning the relationship of the characters to each other and to Auster: it has been established above that Zimmer and Mann represent different facets of Auster's personality. Mann's work is destroyed on his death and Zimmer's book only published posthumously. Auster has missed a trick here. It would have been a far more eloquent novel,

in terms of narrative symmetry, if the publication of *The Book of Illusions* had been withheld until after Auster's own death.

Now the link between Auster and the two central male characters has been established and their connection with male film noir protagonists suggested, we need to examine in more detail what aspects of the male film noir protagonist are inherent in David Zimmer and which aspects of Noir in general can be seen in *The Book of Illusions*. To help with this, we need to reread the plot of *The Book of Illusions* as if it were an example of hard-boiled detective fiction; the source of so many great Noir films, as written and/or adapted for the screen by Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain and Dashiell Hammett amongst others.

In these terms, *The Book of Illusions* tells the story of David Zimmer, a troubled, hard-drinking loner, drawn into detecting the whereabouts of Hector Mann's films and their creator's disappearance. Seemingly successful in the first part of his quest, his world is turned upside down, when, during a thunderstorm, Alma Grund, a woman he is instantly attracted to, turns up out of the blue, a woman prepared to do whatever it takes to get Zimmer to meet the dying Mann. Their paths are intertwined on a journey leading to the deaths of all three.

One of the central traits of the male Noir protagonist is their troubled, emotional isolation from those around them. They interact with the world on their own terms. They have their own agenda, forged through experience and their somewhat skewed knowledge of the ways of the world. This profile can be seen in the following description from Raymond Borde's and Étienne Chaumeton' essay *Towards a Definition of Film Noir*:

> As for the ambiguous protagonist, he is often more mature, almost old, and not too handsome. He is also an inglorious victim who may suffer, before the happy ending, appalling abuse. He is often masochistic, even self-immolating, one who makes his own trouble, who may throw himself into peril neither for the sake of justice nor from avarice but simply out of morbid curiosity. (Borde et al. 22)

Much of the aforementioned quote could have been written with Zimmer in mind. He is approaching middle age (younger readers would say he is already there), and is a victim of the

circumstances which have taken his family away from him. His masochism is shown by his squeezing the trigger when he points the gun at his head, which acts as a form of bizarre courtship with Alma, and after vehemently refusing to go to New Mexico, he eventually does so out of a sense of flippant curiosity, which he justifies to Alma in the following way: "I can't think of anything else I have to do tomorrow. Why shouldn't I go?" (115).

Zimmer's and the male film noir protagonist's emotional isolation can also take on attributes in terms of physical dislocation, leading the protagonist to wander, seeking either adventure, (Frank Chambers, referred to immediately below), or, in Zimmer and Mann's case, escape. If we look at the beginning of Tay Garnett's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) we see the hitchhiking, itinerant, Frank Chambers (John Garfield) stopping at a rural diner tempted by the sign "Man Wanted", a sign which works on many levels, bearing in mind that Cora Smith (Lana Turner) is a wolf dressed in a fleece of white (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe9ALvuzwYg). Before Alma barges into Zimmer's life, he has removed himself to the remoteness of a "ridiculous little house" in Vermont, which "was the right size and shape for a man who meant to live alone, and it had the further advantage of complete isolation" (57).

With financial independence, ironically established by the insurance payout from the death of his family, he can become itinerate in his habits, whereas Chamber's meandering was born out of wanderlust.[14] Zimmer can travel across America and over to Europe to view the missing Mann films, he can hole up in Manhattan to write his book on Mann, before retreating to Vermont in splendid isolation to work on his translation and make his final excursion to the wilderness of New Mexico.

In classic Film Noir, this physical and emotional isolation indicates the peril the protagonist represents to those around him. If you get involved with him, your mutual interests mean you can rely on him only for a while, but either your manipulation of him or his desertion of you will lead to your death or incarceration.[15] The unlikely femme fatale of *The Book of Illusions*, Alma Grund, learns this lesson only too well.

That she is a femme fatale in the Noir sense of the term cannot be denied, if we look at her actions with the insight of the following description of the Film Noir femme fatale in Borde and Chaumeton's aforementioned essay *Towards a Definition of Noir*:

> . . . there is the ambiguity surrounding the woman: the *femme fatale* who is fatal for herself. Frustrated and deviant, half predator, half prey, detached yet ensnared, she falls victim to her own traps. (Borde et al. 22)

Alma is initially frustrated with, and by, Zimmer as she attempts to persuade him to go to New Mexico with her and is devious enough to have brought a gun. This automatically makes her a predator when she pulls the gun after reasoning has failed. The following passage describes the moment the gun is pulled:

> We were ten or twelve feet apart, and just as she stood up from the sofa, a fresh onslaught of rain came crashing down on the roof, rattling against the shingles like a bombardment of stones. She jumped at the sound, glancing round the room with a skittish perplexed look in her eyes, and at that moment I knew what was going to happen next. . . . I knew that within the next three or four seconds she was going to stick her right hand into the purse and pull out the gun. (107-108)

This quote not only reads like hard-boiled detective fiction, while establishing Alma as a gun-toting seductress, but also introduces another trope of film noir: the thunderstorm, always a portent of histrionic acts in noir, according to Paul Schrader in *Notes on Film Noir*:

> There seems to be an almost Freudian attachment to water. The empty noir streets are almost always glistening with fresh evening rain and the rainfall tends to increase in direct proportion to the drama. (Schrader 57)[16]

The combination of the nighttime setting, Alma's actions and the thunderstorm clearly signify her as a femme fatale, albeit a sheepish one when compared with Lana Turner's wolf. Even

more of one when Zimmer and Alma fall prey to each other and end up ensnared in each other in bed.

Auster's clear delineation of Alma's role in the book has implications as to her fate; the femme fatale cannot win. In Film Noir she is either brought to justice (Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) in John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in *Sunset Boulevard*)[17] or dies as the logical outcome of her actions (Kitty (Joan Bennett) in Fritz Lang's *Scarlet Street* (1945), Lily Carver (Gaby Rodgers) in Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955).[18] That Alma might be one of the least fatal of femme fatales (after all, it appears she only accidently killed Frieda), is beside the point, her position in the noir narrative seals her demise in the denouement: "If I had been more alert, I would have understood what I was walking away from, but I was too tired and too rushed for anything but the simplest gestures . . ." (293). She has been deserted by an unstable, peripatetic male protagonist working to his own agenda, and one who is capable of making his own trouble, as referred to above in the quotation from *Towards a Definition of Noir*. In Zimmer's case, his agenda is the decision to return to Vermont and the trouble he makes is his resolve not to go back to the ranch, when he realizes he has left the valium he needs to curb his fear of flying behind:

> On any other day I would have told the driver to turn around and go back to the ranch. I almost did it then, but after thinking through the humiliation that would follow from that decision – missing the plane, exposing myself as a coward, reaffirming my status as a neurotic weakling – I managed to curb my panic. (294)

And so, due to the noir male protagonist's inability to act decisively at a crucial time to prevent a murder (Joe Gillis, his own, in *Sunset Boulevard*, Chris Cross [Edward G. Robinson] murdering Kitty in *Scarlet Street*), Alma's trajectory as the femme fatale reaches its logical conclusion. Trapped by her own sense of guilt, after killing Frieda she then uses the valium left behind by her lover as the weapon[19] to terminate herself and, with her suicide, she becomes literally "fatal for herself".

The Book of Illusions ends with every central character having died. And with only one of the deaths, Zimmer's, apparently being by natural causes. Crimes have been committed and the guilty parties have, in rather protracted ways, paid for them as only Noir characters can; with their deaths. Thus, the inevitable end of any Film Noir and *The Book of Illusions* is achieved. Crime may pay in the short term, but, in the long term, it is the lack of trust between the male protagonist and the femme fatale, combined with their resulting unreliability, that brings about their downfall. In *The Book of Illusions* Zimmer could not be relied on to stay at the ranch and Alma was not trusting enough of Zimmer before taking her own life. Auster has taken the Noir staples of the undependable, troubled male, the fickle femme fatale, the voiceover, heavy rain and crime and worked them into an examination of the literary and cinematic creative act. In so doing he has intertwined the black and white world of classic Film Noir within the static black and white text of *The Book of Illusions* .

Notes

[1] Wang is the director of *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face.*

[2] See www.believermag.com/issues/200502/?read=interview_auster.

[3] As can be seen in the trailer (www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeauVS9KI8k), the tag line for the film is "a true story begins when real life ends" – an interesting view of how Auster views reality and fiction.

[4] See www.believermag.com/issues/200502/?read=interview_auster.

[5] But conveniently for Auster just before the Talkies came in, thereby allowing Auster to concentrate on the depiction of image and not an analysis of what is being said.

[6] In some ways this is the central image of the book. Mann names his ranch after a supposed jewel he spotted on the pavement in the street. In his attempt to grasp the jewel, he realises that it is nothing more than a gob of phlegm. One of Auster's most poignant metaphors for the beauty and dirt of life, it alludes to the ungraspable beauty that artifice can produce (the films of Mann) and the darker side (Mann's wilderness before he met Frieda) and suggesting that both the beauty and the darkness can be interpreted as illusionary.

[7] See www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1002352-big_sleep/.

[8] See www.believermag.com/issues/200502/?read=interview_auster February 2005.

[9] Consider what is said here about the reliability of the flashback: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BFZ9coMDm8

[10] "*Mémoires d'Outre Tombe. Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*. That feels awkward to me. Too literal, somehow, and yet at the same time difficult to understand" (Auster, *The Book of Illusions* 62).

[11] Watch the clip from one minute 27 seconds onwards: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkDLI43iiTs.

[12] Watch the clip from four minutes onwards: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPOcR087uxM.

[13] Mann's covering up a murder, Frieda smothering Mann, Alma killing Frieda.

[14] When asked at the beginning of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*: "Why do you keep looking for new places, new people, new ideas?", Chambers replies, "Well, I've never liked any job I had. Maybe the next one is the one I've always been looking for." (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe9ALvuzwYg).

[15] Watch all of *Double Indemnity* to see this illustrated.

[16] Consider the ending to Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942), not thought of as noir but made so by the inclusion of Bogart, playing Rick Blaine who has travelled from America through Ethiopia, Spain and France to Morocco, thus making him a wanderer, in the noir tradition. Furthermore, his complicated relationship with Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), an accidental femme fatale, since she is unable to reveal the existence of her supposedly dead husband to Rick, yet beginning a relationship with him only to leave him without warning. Though the ending could not end with the deaths of any of the three central characters, since the film is a subtle form of propaganda promoting America's entry into the War, the film uses noir tropes. Rick, manipulating for his own purposes, acts as a metaphor for an isolated, uninvolved America, eventually does the right thing and gets involved. Ilsa is the European female working to her own agenda against the Germans, while Victor Lazlo (Paul Henreid), an Eastern European, becomes the patsy: unknowing of his role until the end of the film. He is an idealist, and even naïve, unable to match the tiredness and subterfuge of the American who knows what he has to do (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDhGS4EJS8M&feature=fvwrel).

[17] One of the great movie endings: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttBO5tpVr6s&feature=related.

[18] Never has a femme fatale been so utterly destroyed than in *Kiss Me Deadly*: see www.youtube.com/watch?v=lksupwUvhq4&feature=related.

[18] Which does beg the question, what had happened to the gun she pulled out so melodramatically earlier? And, indeed, where it came from in the first place? Auster's filmic imagination, is a possible answer.

Works Cited

Auster, Paul. *The Book of Illusions*. 2002. London: Faber & Faber, 2003.

Auster, Paul. Interview by Jonathan Lethem. *Believer* 3.1 (Feb. 2005): n. p. Web. 30 March 2012. <www.believermag.com/issues/200502/?read=interview_auster>

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Modern Literary Theory*. 1989. London: Arnold, 2001.185-189.

Borde, Raymond, and Étienne Chaumeton. "Towards a Definition of Film Noir." *Film Noir Reader.* 1996. New York: Limelight Editions, 2001. 17-25.

Erickson, Hal. Rev. of *The Big Sleep*, by Howard Hawkes. *Rotten Tomatoes* > Movie Info. Web. 30 March 2012. <www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1002352-big_sleep/>

Schrader, Paul. "Notes on Film Noir." *Film Noir Reader.* 1996. New York: Limelight Editions, 2001. 53-64.