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Language Learning and Knowledge Building in a Collaborative Virtual Environment: An Autoethnographic Investigation

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**Language Learning and Knowledge Building in a Collaborative
Virtual Environment: An Autoethnographic Investigation**

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The candidate declares that the work submitted is entirely his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I explore my own possibilities of learning a foreign language (in this case, Spanish) in a collaborative virtual environment over a period of seven months. Language learning is approached from three different angles: (a) sociocultural theory (SCT), independent language learning (ILL) and the nature of interactivity in social network sites (SNSs).

Despite the spectacular growth of SNSs in both daily life and mainstream education, little research to date has been conducted concerning the use of such sites in foreign language learning (Clark & Gruba, 2010: 164, Harrison & Thomas, 2009: 121). This study may help bridge this gap by conducting an investigation in this type of environment. From a linguistic perspective, this study also allowed me to revisit concepts about good language teaching/learning practices and to investigate how these may or may not apply to the field of ILL.

Throughout the time in which I conducted this investigation, it seemed clear to me that, given the nature of knowledge building and the complexity of language learning, it would be extremely difficult to analyse my learning process without making constant references to my language partners, online community members who helped me achieve my goal. Therefore, the nature of collaboration underpinned this work in ways I had not originally presupposed.

From a more nuanced perspective, this dissertation can be seen as my personal endeavour to revisit and shed light on my thirty-five years of English language teaching (ELT) and what stood out, however idiosyncratically, as my own defining principles of language learning.

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

CALL – Computer-assisted language learning

CERF – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

COP – Community of Practice

CPE – Certificate of Proficiency in English

ELT – English Language Teaching

FCE – First Certificate in English

FL – Foreign Language

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

ILL – Independent Language Learning

IRF – Initiation-Response-Feedback

LA – Learner Autonomy

L1 – First language or mother tongue

L2 – Second or target language

MA – Master of Arts

OCD – Obsessive-compulsive disorder

PARSNIPS in ELT- Politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms (*such as communism or atheism*), and pork.

SCT – Social Cultural Theory

SLA – Second Language Acquisition

SNS – Social-networking site

TALL – Technology-assisted Language Learning

TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 My Experiences as a Language Learner and Teacher

Like many of my peers, I started my teaching career by “being in the right place at the right time” (Senior, 2006: 56). I had recently arrived back in Brazil from a year long trip to Australia. I was a CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English) Grade A holder in search of a job. A language school had recently opened doors in my hometown. The owners were in dire need of “teachers”. I was nineteen years old and had enough language knowledge to get me going. They had the methodology, which they claimed I would be able to learn over a five-day training programme. That was when my love for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) began. That was also when I began to foresee a future career in teaching. This was more than 35 years ago and I have been working in the field of language teaching ever since.

My love for the English language, however, dates back to when I was a small child. My father was my first encourager. He belonged to the Rotary Club and was, therefore, used to dealing with foreigners. At home, he liked to throw in a little English in his everyday conversations with his children. “*How are you today, son?*” was my cue to reply “*Fine, thanks, dad*”. “*Could you pass me the salt/rice, please?*”, he used to ask during lunch or dinner. Without knowing it, he taught me my first few “language chunks” in English (cf. Lewis, 1993). I began to study English formally at the age of 11. When I arrived in Australia to spend a year as a Rotary Exchange Student in 1979, I had already passed the First Certificate in English (FCE) and felt rather comfortable in my newly acquired English-speaking environment.

English was not the only foreign language I studied. I also had French lessons to a Higher Intermediate level when I was a teenager. Additionally, at one special moment in my teaching career in the late 80’s, I was given a number of beginner groups to teach and felt the need to put myself in my students’ shoes, i.e., I felt the need to refresh my mind about the problems faced by students when they start to learn a new foreign language. I decided to start studying a new language myself. I chose to try Japanese because I had always loved the Japanese culture.

I studied the language for 2 years, took and passed the Japan Foundation Proficiency Test (level 4 – Basic), gave myself a holiday trip to Japan, but in the end, decided I did not have the time or energy to keep on working towards a higher language proficiency in the language. The experience of being a beginner student was completed and I had achieved my initial goal of being a language student again.

1.2 The Experience of Learning Another Foreign Language as an Adult

When the time came for me to submit a proposal for this dissertation, I felt the urge to apply some of the theory I had studied to the learning of a new foreign language, in this case, Spanish. As part of my MA course, I had taken an online module entitled *Learner Autonomy*, a course which helped me to revise my theoretical perspectives vis-à-vis the way we learn languages. This course most certainly prepared me for the challenges of learning a fourth foreign language, this time, in a fully autonomous manner.

Although I had never formally learned Spanish, I had been able to read technical books in this language somehow fluently since my university years. My general listening ability was also adequate, as I had had the chance to attest to during various trips around Brazil's neighbouring Spanish-speaking countries. This *built-in* knowledge of Spanish should not come as a surprise if one takes into account the intrinsic similarities between my first language (Portuguese) and the Spanish language (cf. Frigo, 2006; Andrade Neta, 2012; Almeida Filho, 1995). However, when it came to speaking the language, I had always been unable to utter a sentence without the distinct impression that I was in fact relying on my knowledge of Portuguese and had been, therefore, speaking “*portuñol*”, i.e., an unsystematic combination of Portuguese and Spanish. When I first started this investigation, this was the core issue I was attempting to deal with.

To learn Spanish, I chose to work with Italki (<http://www.italki.com/>), a language exchange website. I had used this website intermittently since August 2015 to brush up my French. Now I had decided to use this website to help to improve my overall performance in Spanish in all the four skills, with an emphasis on speaking and writing. Part of the personal challenge I had set to myself included

learning to speak and write reasonably accurate Spanish, thus, avoiding Portuguese interference mistakes.

In order to provide a more tangible goal towards which I might work, I decided to use the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Higher Intermediate (B2) level as a benchmark. I was hoping to reach this level in Spanish after a period of approximately seven months. Initially, in order to prepare myself for my language learning experience, I intended to rely on the tools available at the Italki site. Moreover, I counted on the help of language partners and one Spanish teacher, with whom I would interact via Skype (<https://www.skype.com>).

My investigation would focus on the challenges I faced in my attempt to learn Spanish and, ultimately, on how this experience would help me reshape my own view of how adults could best learn a foreign language.

1.3 Principles and Beliefs: Complexity Theory, Emergence, and Dogme

The complexity of the teaching/learning process has been well-established in the field of language teaching (Tudor, 2001: 209; Nunan, 1992: 230; Wallace, 1991: 13). A useful metaphor for this level of complexity is found in Malderez & Bodóczy (1999: 18) when they discuss the make-up of a competent classroom teacher (see **Figure 1**) and propose the image of 'The Mentor Iceberg'.

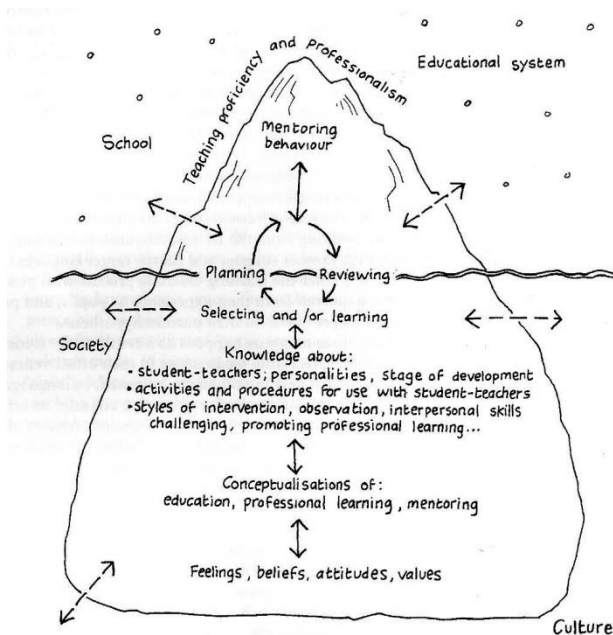


Figure 3 The Mentor Iceberg
(Malderez 1996)

Figure 1: The Mentor Iceberg (Source: Malderez & Bodóczy, 1999)

Learning to be a teacher covers a number of ‘tangible’ observable skills related to a teacher’s behaviour in class as well as a number of ‘intangible’ components, most of them linked to our *intra* and *interpersonal* skills, our feelings and beliefs, our attitudes and values. If this level of complexity is true of teaching, it should also encompass learning.

In trying to explain this level of complexity, Todd (2003: 4) reminds us that:

*“psychoanalysis has taught us that what transpires in the everyday practice of education between teachers and students, and students and curriculum, involves **complex layers of affect and conflict that specifically emerge out an encounter with otherness**”* (my emphasis).

Over the last decade, my work as a teacher trainer and as a psychotherapist has led me to investigate the links between complexity and language teaching in increasingly greater depth. It is, therefore, understandable that the underlying idea behind my study plan to learn Spanish should be based on the overarching principles of Complexity Theory. Allwright (2003: 13), in defining six promising directions in Applied Linguistics, urges the reader to recognise *“the essential and irreducible complexity of the phenomenon of classroom language learning and teaching”*.

Larsen-Freeman (1997: 141) attempts to demonstrate how the study of complex nonlinear systems “casts several enduring SLA conundrums in a new light”.

My personal experience tells me that dealing with the complexity of second language interaction may be best appreciated from a more holistic perspective: an “*ecological approach to language*” in which emphasis is shifted from scientific reductionism to the notion of *emergence* (cf. Van Lier, 2000: 246).

My motivation for applying complex system thinking to educational systems may have been equally influenced by my interest in Dogme, which I have followed since its inception in March 2000. This is where much of my knowledge in the field of complexity stems from. The key principles that characterise a Dogme approach (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009: 8) are clearly in tune with those behind Complexity Theory.

Of these principles, the three core precepts which stand out to me are listed below because they will be crucial to understanding the nature of my approach to learning Spanish:

- Dogme is about teaching that is *conversation-driven*.
- Dogme is about teaching that is *materials-light*.
- Dogme is about teaching that *focuses on emergent language*.

Complexity theory suggests that language learning is less to do with *covering* items on a syllabus than *uncovering* the ‘syllabus within’ (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009: 10). This principle implies trusting the inherent learning capabilities of students and their ability to contribute to the lesson with input and ideas. The apparent lack of structure or methodological rigour of a Dogme lesson is frequently contrasted with a classroom setup in which structure and order are still dominant and most strongly determined by the perceived authority of the teacher. As a classroom teacher, I was never able to experiment with this approach and the flexibility of learning a foreign language outside an institutional setting proved to be ideal for the purpose of my investigation. Thus, the nature of this self-investigation would invariably be in consonance with my vision of language teaching as an environment where knowledge would most naturally *emerge* from the interaction between a teacher and his students or, in this case, from language exchange partners helping one another.

CHAPTER 2 - BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

2.1 The Challenges of Learning Spanish on My Own

The similarities between Portuguese and Spanish are often seen as problematic for Brazilian language learners. From a contrastive analysis perspective, they are generally seen as a source of many mistakes that, while not necessarily affecting communication, can generally distance Brazilian speakers from speaking Spanish accurately at Higher Intermediate level. Spanish teachers of beginner students understand that, in an attempt to speak, most Brazilian learners will inevitably produce “portuñol”, “*a typical interlanguage of Brazilian learners in which lexical items will inevitably become word blends coming almost randomly from one language or the other*” (Frigo, 2006: 1). From this angle, perceived similarity of form, combined with an assumed similarity of meaning, provides the basis for establishing a simplified one-to-one relationship between an L1 and an L2 item.

For a similar reason, Brazilian learners are also advised to study the structures of the Spanish language carefully in order to avoid fossilisation. Frigo (2006: 5) compiled a brief list of positive and negative aspects of learning Spanish by Brazilians. On the positive side, she included the similarities between the languages, which allows students to read in L2 with ease as well as to “improvise” while they speak. On the negative side, she mentions that the similarities between the two languages can lead to overconfident learners who feel they can speak the language more or less fluently from the start. This misconception can induce them to make many mistakes due to lack of self-monitoring. Finally, she also mentions the number of false cognates as a barrier for effective verbal communication. A basic list of where Portuguese and Spanish compare and contrast has been compiled from Andrade Neta (2012: 46-55) and Steely (n.d., para. 4-5) and can be found in **Appendix 1**.

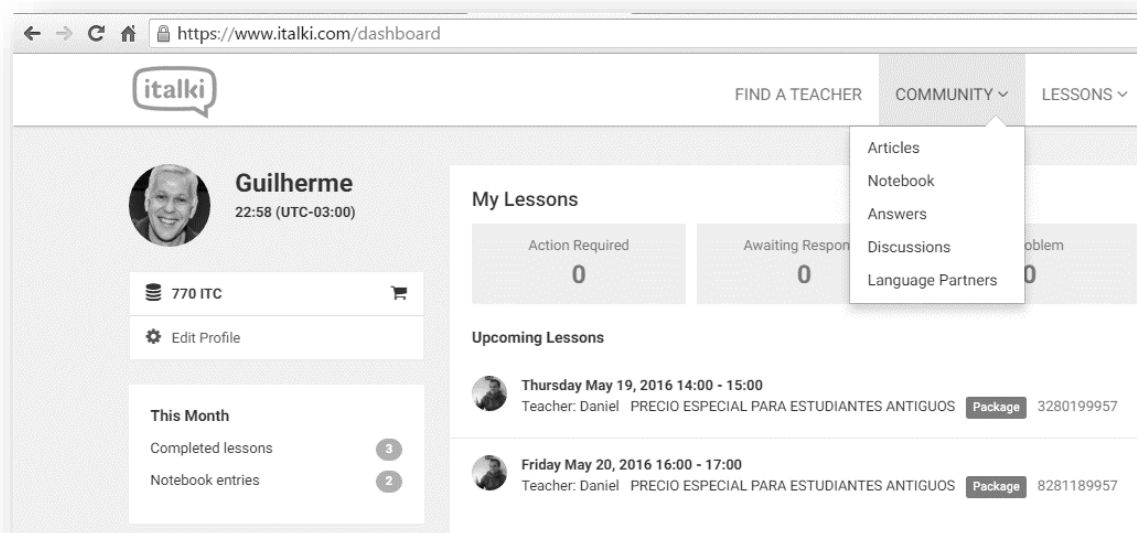
My initial concerns about this learning venture included, therefore, an awareness of the importance of using my receptive knowledge of Spanish to *notice* (cf. Schmidt’s, 1990 mentioned in Schmidt’s 2010: 721) similarities and differences between Spanish and Portuguese as well as to work with contrastive analysis at some significant level. Schmidt’s noticing hypothesis, i.e., the claim that “*learners*

have to consciously notice instances of the constructions of a second language in input in order to acquire them" (Frota & Bergsleithner, 2013: 141), was key to my personal experience of learning Spanish as a foreign language and will be further discussed in this dissertation.

I was equally aware of the need to allow L1 interference mistakes to occur and, thus, learn from my own errors. Personally, this seemed like a fundamental challenge, as I had always cherished language accuracy and had always had it as a personal learning goal when studying a foreign language. However, at that moment, I was willing to forego my need to be accurate in order to allow myself to start using the language, or more specifically, start speaking and writing it.

2.2 Italki as an Online Language Community

Italki is a collaborative virtual environment that helps language learners connect with language partners and with online teachers (for more details, cf. also **Appendix 2**). Eager to explore the opportunities of promising technologies and to assess their added value for language education, TALL (Technology-assisted language learning) researchers and practitioners have recently shown a growing interest in the social web (Zourou, 2012: para. 1). Online spaces such as Livemocha, which was bought by Rosetta Stone (<http://www.rosettastone.eu/>) in 2013, Babbel (<https://www.babbel.com/>), and Italki belong to the category of Web 2.0 language learning communities and are basically designed to bring native and L2 speakers together for language interaction and socialization purposes.



(Figure 2: Italki dashboard with dropdown menu of Community features)

The notion of interaction is prevalent with Italki where, once you become a member, you have access to a large community of language users with whom you are able to exchange ideas and generate content via forum discussions, blog entries and question and answer forums. Unlike some of its counterparts (cf. Babble and Rosetta Stone), Italki does not offer language learning materials *per se* and any learner who expects a more formalised learning experience has to rely on the number of teachers available for paid lessons.

In general, because of its basic characteristics, Italki seemed ideal for my learning of a foreign language. Most informal, naturalistic environments, such as Italki, provide extensive exposure to language and the possibility for interaction with native speakers of a foreign language in a variety of authentic communicative settings. In other words, it provides both a large quantity and variety of native-speaker L2 exposure and opportunities for L2 production (Cziko, 2004: 26).

This is the essence of *tandem e-learning*, when two proficient learners of different languages work together online to help each other learn the other language.

At Italki, participants are two people interested in studying each other's language at a distance in a relatively autonomous way. I use the term "relatively autonomous" because, as I mentioned beforehand, participants can resort to a teacher's professional mediation, if they so wish. Furthermore, since each partner can speak the other's language, at least to some extent, they have more

opportunities to help one another: through explanations in L1, through comparisons, or corrective feedback. As learning in tandem is always based on communication between members of different language communities and cultures, it also facilitates intercultural learning. Finally, central to an understanding of tandem language learning is the principle of *reciprocity*, which Little & Brammerts (1996: 11) summarise thus:

*“successful learning in tandem is based on the **reciprocal dependence and mutual support of the partners** and both partners should contribute equally to their work together and benefit to the same extent”* (my emphasis).

2.3 Learning a Language Independently: A Basic Framework

When I first set off in my project to learn Spanish at Italki I was unsure of how easy or difficult it would be to find suitable language partners. I decided to spend the first month working individually on the receptive skills while gaining some confidence to start learning in tandem. My first few attempts to speak to a member of the Italki community over Skype made me realise that I was not linguistically prepared to *converse* in Spanish, but was certainly willing to help others with their English. It also gave me a more realistic perspective on the difficulties of finding suitable partners. I created a social profile in order to enhance “*social presence*” (cf. Gunawardena, 1995: 151), but initially underestimated the difficulties of finding exchange partners. Two factors worked against me. First, the overall assumption by community members that the “native speaker” is the ideal interlocutor for tandem learning. Being a Brazilian looking for English/Spanish exchange, I was clearly at a disadvantage. Secondly, the difficulties of working synchronously with partners who may have been located in a different time zone and the need to timetable the meetups carefully.

At this beginner stage, as I will explain in more depth later in this dissertation, the role played by social interactionism was crucial in helping me convert interaction into learning. By interacting with other members of the Italki community, I managed to overcome problems that, initially, I could not solve by myself and that allowed me to progressively move to the next stage of my development. Social constructivism, therefore, provided a theoretical framework and the key concepts

to help me understand the complex layers of interaction that occurred while I attempted to learn Spanish using Italki as my chosen social network site.

Over the years, the concept of *agency* has become an important theoretical construct in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It reflects the view that L2 learners need to take an active role in their learning process. Duff (2012 cited in Muramatsu, 2013: 44) defines agency in this way:

“People’s ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal and social transformation”

In my attempt to build minimum language competence, I was forced to make a number of unexpected choices and, thus, become the *agent* of my own learning. These choices went beyond the linguistic level and contributed to create a new online social identity to myself. Such is the nature of autonomous language learning. Such was the nature of my experience.

CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Sociocultural Theory

3.1.1 Sociocultural Theory: The Basics

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) has its origins in the works of the Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky and his colleagues (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006: 197). The most fundamental concept of SCT is that the mind is mediated. As with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, *mediated*, relationship between themselves and the world. (Lantolf, 2000: 17). Language is clearly the most important and pervasive symbolic artifact we use (Swain, 2000: 103; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006: 201). SCT argues that while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher order thinking, the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through *interaction* within social and material environments.

A SCT perspective to language acquisition clearly does not imply a purely internal and cognitive process. Neither is it a matter of converting *input* into *output* (Skehan, 1996: 18). The concepts of input and output, therefore, have both come under question driven by the increasing popularization of SCT. Sfarid (1998 cited in Donato, 2000: 40), for instance, argues that, for us to have a broader understanding of SLA, we need to move from the so-called “*acquisition metaphor*” to the idea of a “*participation metaphor*”. Van Lier (2000: 252) prefers to talk about *affordances*, a term he believes could aptly substitute *input*.

“Affordance as a particular property of the environment is relevant – for good or for ill – to the active, perceiving organism in that environment. (...) What becomes an affordance depends on what the organism does, what it wants, and what is useful for it. (...) Parallels to language learning can easily be drawn. If the language learner is active and engaged, she will perceive linguistic affordances and use them for linguistic action.”

For the author, the unit of analysis for SLA researchers should not be the linguistic *input* provided by the teacher, but the active learner, or the activity itself. (Gibson, 1979, cited in Van Lier, 2000: 253). Thus, the studies which emerge bringing together SCT and SLA have attempted to investigate learners’ interlanguage

development from a completely new perspective. The teaching-learning process becomes what Mercer (1995: 84) calls a *long conversation*: “*the talk generates its own context and continuity, so that the knowledge that is created carries with it echoes of the conversations in which it was generated*”.

In explaining how Swain reviewed her own model of Comprehensible Output (1985), França da Silva (2006) mentions the article entitled “*The output hypothesis and beyond: mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue*”, from 2000. In this article, Swain reconsidered her previous research in the light of the influence of Vygotskian SCT. From this new perspective, she argued that language learning could only occur through collaborative, knowledge building dialogue (Swain, 2000: 97). This dialogue would be mediated by language itself and encompasses both language *use* and language *learning*. Therefore, it is simultaneously both a *social* and a *cognitive* activity. According to Swain (1995) output is crucial to the learning process because “*it pushes learners to process language more deeply – with more mental effort – than does input.*” (Swain, 2000: 99). Swain goes on to say that:

“With output, the learner is in control. In speaking or writing, learners can ‘stretch’ their interlanguage to meet communicative goals. To produce, learners need to do something. They need to create linguistic form and meaning, and in so doing, discover what they can and cannot do. Output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production.”

Furthermore, output may promote *noticing*, a concept which I have dealt with previously in this study. Noticing implies being able to see a ‘hole’ in the learner’s interlanguage. As we will see, this concept was crucial to my own acquisition process of the Spanish language.

3.1.2 Interaction and Language Learning

The role of interaction is crucial in understanding my perspective on SLA. Interaction is also of crucial importance to SCT (Van Lier, 2000: 247) and deserves some further commentary.

Ellis (1999: 1 cited in Paiva, n.d.) defines interaction as:

“the social behavior that occurs when one person communicates with another”. He also says that it *“can occur inside our minds, both when we engage in the kind of ‘private speech’ discussed by Vygotsky (1978), and, more covertly, when different modules of the mind interact to construct an understanding of or a response to some phenomenon”*.

In describing the role of the SLA researcher, Van Lier (2000: 250) says they must attempt to study the interaction in its totality and to show *“the emergence of learning, the location of learning opportunities, the pedagogical value of interactional contexts and processes, and the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies”*. From this angle, sensory, cognitive and affective processes are all part and parcel of the educational process. This perspective is often known as *“ecological”* and calls upon the teacher to *“wait a moment”* sometimes. It may also have many instances of *“it depends”* (Tudor, 2001: 10), i.e., instances when a teacher will deviate from the typical right/wrong approach to education. It proposes a radical alternative to Cartesian rationalism (Van Lier, 1997: 783 cited in Tudor, 2001: 9) and relates well to my goals and expectations towards this project.

In the classroom, the process of interaction is mediated by a teacher working at their students' zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD has been defined by Vygotsky as:

“the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978: 86).

From a Vygotskian perspective, the teacher's role is to mediate the child's learning activity as they share knowledge through social interaction (Dixon-Krauss, 1996: 18). To Vygotsky, it is clear that teacher and students working jointly are able to co-construct contexts in which expertise emerges as a feature of the group (Lantolf, 2000: 17). Working on their students' ZPD allows the educator to understand the cycles of development a child has been through and which have not fully matured, as well as to identify the processes which are undergoing transition and maturation (França da Silva, 2006: 26).

The ZPD can, therefore, be seen as the collaborative construction of learning instances/opportunities. In order to help students, the teacher will be constantly scaffolding the work done in class. The term scaffolding was coined by Jerome Bruner, researcher in cognitive and educational psychology, and refers to the dialogic process which occurs when speakers assist each other in performing a function or activity which otherwise they would be unable to perform individually. For SCT, a learner's mistake or limited capabilities can be a signal for a more competent peer to upgrade the scaffolding. Conversely, the scaffold may be dismantled once the learner is able to show evidence of awareness of the internalisation of knowledge co-constructed in one such shared activity. In other words, the teacher must consider very carefully when the time has come for a scaffold to be removed. Furthermore, implicit in the concept of "*a more competent peer*" is the fact that help will not necessarily come from the teacher, but could equally be in the hands of a fellow student. This implies that learner–learner interaction provides opportunities for L2 learning because it allows learners to act as both experts and novices.

Dobao (2012) suggests that much research has been devoted in the past few years to the study of collaborative dialogue as an opportunity for L2 learning in learner–learner interaction. The concept of collaborative dialogue will be decisive to this study, since it demonstrates that collaborative work among language partners provides the same opportunity for scaffolded help as seen in the teacher-student relationship in a regular school setting.

SCT construes language as a cultural tool used to carry out concrete goal directed activities. Therefore, tasks such as traditional language tests, designed to elicit displays of a learner's linguistic knowledge, are insufficient evidence of development. Such evidence must be sought in tasks in which language is a means to some concrete end. These can be tasks that parallel activities in the everyday world or they may be in tune with project-based learning. For SCT, evidence of development in a new language is taken to be changes in control over the new language as a means of regulating the behavior of the self and of others in carrying out goal-directed activity. This will also be how I intend to provide evidence of my learning of Spanish in the presentation and analysis of results.

Finally, central to our discussion of SCT is the concept of *agency*, a concept which I have briefly dealt with previously in this investigation. To understand collaborative activity, we also need to understand “*how the learner relates himself to the learning task and how this relationship is based on the learner’s self-constructed goals*” (Donato, 1988: 5 cited in Gutiérrez, 2003: 233).

3.2 Language Learning in Social Networking Sites

3.2.1 Social Networking Sites as Communities of Practice

The advent of Web 2.0 and the rise of social networking have also seen a growth in online language learning communities or ‘marketplaces’ (Hockly, 2015: 311). Social-networking sites (SNSs) are becoming increasingly popular because they allow people to express themselves and to interact socially with others. (Liw, 2011: 36). Development of SNSs has allowed technology to both present and transfer knowledge to learners

From a linguistic standpoint, either on their own or as directed by teachers, students are using social media to improve their second language learning (Beatty, 2015). If a language student decides to work on their own, one of the ways they can organize their language practice is by engaging in language exchange. Prior to the growth of the Internet, language exchange usually involved sending letters to “*pen pals*”, native or fluent speakers in the target language, and to occasionally talk to them on the phone (Kozar, 2015). The modern day pen pal takes advantage of video-conferencing, for instance, to do the same.

At the core of SNSs are the profiles and network of “friends” that users create. Language exchange websites provide language learners with a tool to make friends. In Italki’s language exchange model, for instance, learners are linked voluntarily with teachers, native speakers or proficient users of a given language. As any typical SNS, the platform fosters an environment of sharing and reciprocation.

Gutiérrez (2003) proposes that a sociocultural approach to language learning should provide a useful theoretical framework to investigate the process of collaborative activity in SNSs. According to Anderson (2008), this theoretical framework is in consonance with Etienne Wenger’s concept of a “*community of*

practice” because they show how members of a learning community both support and challenge each other, leading to effective and relevant knowledge construction.

The term Community of Practice (COP) has been applied to different fields, including education, and could be defined as:

“groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 1999: 1)

From this perspective, Italki is clearly one such community as it brings together individuals who are keen to learn a new language as well as to share their expertise on languages they may speak fluently.

One feature of the COP model that has received a lot of attention from second language learning researchers is the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation*. Learning takes place when newcomers to a community have a legitimate reason or purpose for participation. In other words, when they see themselves as legitimate members, or at least potential members, of the community. Initially, however, the newcomers’ participation in the practices of the community tends to be peripheral in that they begin as outsiders and gradually move towards full participation. (Van Benthuisen, n. d.).

The construction of identity within a community of practice is also a central feature of Lave and Wenger’s model and the development of social presence. As a newcomer to the community, it may be easy for you to ignite interest in your profile, but developing a sustained presence may be more difficult to achieve. Boyd & Ellison (2007) outline the concept of identity in relation to four different community processes:

1. *Impression management*, or the ability to send out identity signals by means of the information you disclose in your profile.
2. *Friendship management* the ability to use your profile as a benchmark to establish levels of social interaction.
3. *Network structure* or the ability to build up a network of friends by actually participating in the activities proposed by the SNS.
4. *Bridging* of online and offline networks or your ability to become an integral part of other users’ actual life offline (Turkle, 1995).

Lave & Wenger (1991) further explain:

“Learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and (...) the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community. Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice. This social process, includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills.” (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 29)

All in all, I believe there is a lot of potential in the use of SNSs in education. By raising global awareness, by developing social and cross-cultural skills, by stimulating critical skills thinking and by building collaboration strategies, these communities are clearly helping their users develop learner responsibility and involvement.

3.2.2 Asynchronous Tools for Language Learning

For language learners in institutional settings, e-mail mediated tandem language learning is possibly a common out-of-class experience. They are also the closest we can get to *pen pals*, previously mentioned. Brammerts (2003 cited in Sasaki, 2015) suggests that the goals of tandem exchange encompass improving the learners’ L2 communicative and linguistic ability, as well as learning from each other’s culture, knowledge and experience.

Although discussing e-mail tandem may be going beyond the scope of my study, there are two important points to remember. Firstly, e-mail exchange is possible through SNSs. Besides, there are other types of asynchronous tools available in SNSs, which may serve a similar purpose to that of e-mail. At Italki, for instance, a popular tool is the “notebook” which works like a blog and caters for self-expression. My experience using the website tells me that there are a number of users who may **not** be willing to videoconference, but will go to great lengths to make sure that your notebook entry gets proper feedback.

Furthermore, asynchronous tools allow for greater preparation and may be particularly instrumental in the early stages of the language learning experience, at a time when using a voice-chat tool may be perceived as quite daunting.

3.2.3 Basic Principles Covering the Use of SNSs for Language Purposes

The following principles have been adapted from Beatty (2015) and summarise what I found useful to remember when I was trying to create an online learning experience for myself:

- What are your needs? Do the creators of a particular online social media language-learning website use a pedagogical model of instruction? Does this website match my needs and expectations? (Many websites show the tendency to make use of the affordances of the computer and Internet-based practices rather than start with language learners and their needs.)
- Does the website expect me to contribute my time and expertise for free? (Italki, for instance, relies on members' volunteer efforts to correct notebook entries)
- If the practice of crowdsourcing is the norm in many of these websites, how will that affect the quality of materials and the teaching? (For instance, many Italki users complain about the quality of the feedback received and of the lack of expertise of many contributors.)
- Is the learning in tune with basic precepts of an adequate language learning approach? For instance, if the website in question claims to use the communicative approach as a basis for learning, does it keep to its principles of purposefulness, reciprocity, negotiation, synchronicity, unpredictability and heterogeneity as described by Thornbury (2010, para. 2)?

Generally, SNSs for language learners tend to cater for the adult learner (as opposed to children and adolescents) and have been seen as providing ample opportunities for authentic communication in meaningful contexts (Godwin-Jones, 2008). Furthermore, the casual nature of the courses is perhaps better suited to helping one update one's skills or learn the basics of a new language for reasons of pure interest (Beatty, 2015).

McBride (2009) puts forward the case for making use of SNSs in language learning and teaching in quite simple terms:

“SNSs are websites built to allow people to express themselves and to interact socially with others. Self-expression and social interaction are some of the most important contexts for language use that we try to create, or at least emulate, in our foreign language (FL) classrooms to encourage language acquisition.” (McBride, 2009: 35).

SNSs equally encourage learners to become “language experts” (Kozar, 2015). By providing formal or informal feedback on the use of your L1 to other learners, one is increasing meta-awareness of language learning, which may correlate positively to effective language learning. (Appel, 1999)

3.2.4 Drawbacks of Using SNSs for Language Learning

Unfortunately, not all learners find the experience in SNSs useful. Some of the pitfalls of working with SNSs listed in the literature (cf. Lloyd, 2012) include:

- The effectiveness of learning in online environments are limited and may not have been extensively tested. Lloyd (2012) believes that those learners with a more extrovert dimension to their personalities tend to be more comfortable with using the synchronous spoken option of voice chat.
- The ultimate objective of most websites is economic. Choosing an online social media language learning website should be done with a consideration of the costs involved.
- The demand for languages differs and the lack of reciprocity in a language exchange is common. Additionally, speakers of less popular language groups may have problems finding exchange partners.
- Finally, low quality feedback from other community members may be a drawback and a clear demotivating factor in one’s effort to learn a language in a SNS.
- Some SNSs members are seen as having ulterior motifs for joining the community. The literature in the area coined the term “*alpha socializers*” to describe, for instance, young males who use the website for flirting and entertainment.

3.3 Autonomy and Language Learning

3.3.1 Learner Autonomy – A Working Definition

There has been a significant amount of research on Learner Autonomy (LA) and Independent Language Learning (ILL) in language education over the years (Tudor, 1997, Benson, 2007, Smith 2003). This trend has greatly increased with the advent of modern technology and the use of the Internet in distance education (White, 2004; Godwin-Jones, 2011). LA and ILL have led teachers, learners and linguists in general to address many important issues concerning how one best learns a foreign language and the roles played by teachers and learners in the process of acquiring a second language (Reinders, 2010).

LA in foreign language teaching stems from the work done at the *Centre de Recherches et d'Application Pédagogiques en Langue* (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy in the 1970s. One of the most cited researchers in LA, Henri Holec, belonged to this centre. In relation to LA he says:

“To take charge of one’s learning is to have (...) the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning (...)” (Holec, 1981 cited in Little, n.d.: 39).

Implicit in this definition is the idea that LA should be one of the most fundamental functions of adult education and that ultimate success in learning depends on the learner themselves and their attitude towards the learning process.

For the purpose of this research, I will define both LA and ILL as the capacity for making informed decisions about one’s own learning. From this perspective, the terms autonomous and/or independent learners may be envisaged as referring to learners who are able to reflect on the learning process in general and on their personal learning style in particular. By so doing, they will progressively understand how to become more independent learners and more efficient at solving problems which language learners typically face in their attempt to acquire knowledge of a foreign language.

In considering the concept of LA, Sinclair (1997: 12-13) describes eleven different aspects of autonomy, out of which four are extremely pertinent to this discussion:

- Autonomy involves a learner's capacity and willingness to take responsibility for making decisions about their own learning.
- The capacity and willingness to take such responsibility are not necessarily innate.
- Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process, i.e., conscious reflection and decision making.
- Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom.

Independent language learning encourages learners to take an *active role* in the learning process, but it does not presuppose learning without a teacher (Esch, 1996). In relation to language education, this premise assumes that, firstly, learning a foreign language is a complex process that cannot be fully encompassed by the classroom interaction (Tudor, 2001: 209); secondly, it assumes that no syllabus may ever be able to contemplate the amount of exposure that language learners effectively need in order to become reasonably proficient. Therefore, developing an autonomous *life-long* learner is what any good language teaching should be aiming at.

By helping students to become independent learners, teachers should hope to make their presence redundant in their students' lives as swiftly as possible. However, this scenario is set against an educational background of a predominantly top-down teaching model where students are often being *spoon-fed* and lack the "*ability to take charge of (their) own learning*" (Holec, 1981: 3 cited in Benson & Voller, 1997).

From this perspective, encouraging teachers themselves to learn more independently before they teach students about LA, is helping them "*walk the talk*". To a large extent, this is what this project represented to me personally: an attempt to experience LA first hand, with all its challenges, but also with its many opportunities.

3.3.2 Learner Autonomy and the Adult Learner

The educational context in which adults are learning a foreign language varies tremendously, Italki being simply one of them. So do their personal reasons for learning it. A brief look at the five main language partners I worked with, here introduced through vignettes, attest to that (cf. **Appendix 3**).

Learning a language in adulthood is undeniably challenging. Regardless of the reason why an adult may feel motivated to learn a foreign language, it seems clear that the learning requires value and relevance. Smith and Strong (2009: 1), for instance, state that adult language learners are goal oriented and direct their learning to achieve their needs or demands.

In an attempt to distinguish between the way younger learners in primary and secondary school and their adult counterparts learn, Malcolm Knowles created the term *andragogy*. Originally defined as the “*art and science of helping adults learn*” (Knowles, 1980: 43), the term gained new perspective and meaning in a more recent publication: “*the science of understanding (theory) and supporting (practice) lifelong and lifewide education of adults*” (Knowles et al., 2011).

Here andragogy is seen from a wider perspective. Language learning seems to be perpetuated in this more recent definition. It involves *theory*, but is mostly about *practice*. It is or should be *lifelong*, as anyone who has stopped using a language can attest to. It is also *lifewide*, as it involves real contexts and authentic settings.

Knowles describes six key assumptions about adult learners, which are the foundation of adult learning. Those assumptions are graphically summarised in **Figure 3** below:

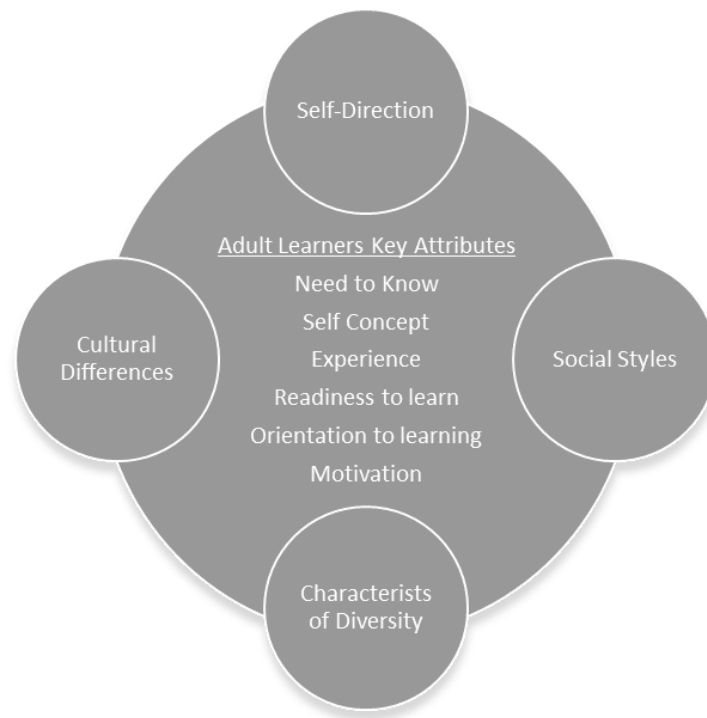


Figure 3: Six Key Assumptions about Adult Learners (Source: Smith & Strong, 2009)

These assumptions are detailed in Taylor and Kroth (2009). A personal view of how these assumptions applied to my own learning context can be found in **Appendix 4**.

In general, adult language learners can communicate confidently and effectively in their first language and may code switch between several other languages (Smith & Strong, 2009: 2). Furthermore, adults tend to bring their individual experience of life into the learning context. This may include not only their everyday experiences, but also their prior learning experience. In my personal case, for instance, my knowledge about language learning was crucial in determining how I wanted to learn Spanish and with whom.

The practical nature of adult language learning is often cited as a key characteristic of how adult learners learn: adult learning is usually seen as “*problem-oriented*” (Miroballi, 2010). In general, adults are more capable of developing autonomy and to employ strategies to monitor and evaluate their own learning than their younger counterparts.

Like the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1987) before him, Crabbe (1993 cited in Benson & Huang, 2008: 178) argues that the decisive factor in the development of learner autonomy is the nature of the *pedagogical dialogue*. In order to conduct such a dialogue effectively, teachers would need to engage in a “*probably protracted process of negotiation by which learners can be brought to accept responsibility for their learning*”. Adult learners may have had to take up a number of responsibilities in their lives and it is, therefore, easier for them to understand that this applies to learning a language as well.

This resonates with my experience: on a deep, personal level, this study forced me to be responsible for literally all the decisions concerning the different aspects of the learning process. I had to determine my own objectives, define the contents I intended to focus on, monitor my own progress and, ultimately, evaluate how much I was able to acquire. The experience was not simple, but definitely worth the effort.

3.3.3 Learner Autonomy and Motivation

When it comes to promoting learner autonomy, the role of motivation is crucial and SLA research has a lot to contribute in this area. Motivation has been studied extensively by both linguists and psychologists. It is listed by Rubin (1975 cited in Ushioda, 2008: 19) among the three essential variables on which good language learning depends. Brown (cited in Ellis, 1986) identifies three types of motivation: *global*, *situational* and *task* motivation. Gardner & Lambert (cited in Ellis, 1986) use the terms *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation to refer to the learner’s wishes to identify with the culture of the L2 group (integrative) and the learners’ goals for learning as being mostly functional (instrumental). Finally, the process-oriented model of motivation developed by Zoltan Dörnyei (2001, cited in Lightbrown & Spada: 64) seems interesting and worth describing in some details, as I feel it carries implications for LA. The model is divided into three phases:

- *Choice motivation* refers to the beginning of the decision making process of starting to learn a new language and setting some initial goals.
- *Executive motivation* is about carrying out the tasks which will help us maintain motivation.
- *Motivation retrospection* refers to students' ability to appraise his/her performance and his/her overall reaction.

This model seems to suggest that, irrespective of how motivated one is when one starts to learn a language, this level of motivation will be strongly influenced by the specific context in which learning is happening. Consequently, it also implies that motivation can be developed by a careful selection of tasks (executive motivation) and by the possibility of creating an awareness on the part of the learner of how they may best learn (motivation retrospective). These aspects are subject to the same rules that apply to good language learning in general and should never be underestimated. However, they do not seem to encompass the wider picture of how the learner perceives motivation.

Over the past decade there has been growing interest among motivation researchers in the *socially situated context* of motivation and in the significant role of social processes and influences in shaping individual motivation (Ushioda, op. cit.: 23). This view draws on the sociocultural theories of Lev Vygotsky, whereby learning and motivation to learn are socially mediated processes. From this perspective, Ushioda maintains that effective scaffolded support enables the learner to achieve what Ryan and Deci (2000 cited in Murphy, 2011) refer to as “*an optimal challenge*” and prompts self-evaluation. This concept is useful because it does not invalidate the importance of tasks (i.e. executive motivation) and appraisal (motivation retrospection), but it shows how this is best achieved with the help of a peer/peers. This concept ties in with the concept of otherness (cf. Todd, op. cit.), which was briefly developed in the introduction of this work. Ultimately, a situated view of language learning attests to the fact that good language learning is never simply in the hands of the motivated learner (Ushioda, op. cit.: 25). It develops through *social interaction*. This was certainly my experience in my attempt to learn Spanish, a theme which will also be further exploited in this study.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Autoethnography: Basic Considerations

The increasing use of personal narratives in educational research is consistent with the idea that narrative is rooted in life. Human existence is rendered significant by means of stories (Ellis, 2004: 32; Oxford, 2013: 95). Storytelling and story writing are pedagogical tools that language teachers have always relied on as part of their classroom practice. It seems, therefore, legitimate to see these writings as an equally rich source for research. Furthermore, it is not unusual to hear teachers refer to their beliefs about teaching with reference to classroom anecdotes and stories.

Autoethnography is part of a broader trend of narrative inquiry in which the researcher engages in “*intense and transparent reflection and questioning of their own position, values, beliefs and cultural background*” (Trahar, 2009). It seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography is, therefore an ethnography which is focused on the self, where the author of the study is both the informant and researcher/analyst. The investigator builds an ethnographic description from an analysis of their own behaviour (Osborne, 2013: 297). Like any ethnographic study, it recognises the ineradicable role that the researcher’s personal subjectivity plays throughout the research process (Rampton et al., 2014: 3).

Exploring the potential of first-person accounts of the long-term process of learning a foreign language is not new in the literature of second-language acquisition. Schimdt & Frota (1986) describe an analytical study of the development of conversational ability in Brazilian Portuguese during Richard Schimdt’s 5-month stay in Rio de Janeiro. Osborne (op. cit.) describes a foreign language learning opportunity using a mobile phone word card application to learn Italian vocabulary. Godfrey-Smith (op. cit.) explores and attempts to make sense of the tensions she experienced in negotiating her identity as an adult learner of French as an additional language in Montreal. Using an autoethnographic approach that included self-aware participation, learner diaries and peer debriefing, Clark & Gruba (2010) investigated the social networking site

Livemocha to study Korean. Another important example of language learners' stories is the book "*Learners' Stories: Difference and Diversity in Language Learning*", edited by Phil Benson and David Nunan and published by Cambridge University Press in 2005. In this book, the editors use a collection of nine original papers to explore dimensions of individual difference in language learning from narrative and biographical perspectives. By so doing, the editors highlight the importance of the *learner* (who sometimes plays an "invisible role", cf. Benson & Nunan, 2005: page 5) in the process of doing language research.

4.2 Data Collection Tools, Procedures and Rationale

The motivation for this study was to inform my professional practice as both a teacher and a teacher trainer. Identifying a suitable online learning environment for this project was reasonably easy because, as I explained beforehand, I had been a member of this online community for more than a year when I started learning Spanish. My initial participation, however, was intermittent and "*peripheral*" (cf. Wenger, 1999, op. cit.). When I began this research project, my aim was to visit the platform on a more regular basis: at least three times a week. I was also aware of the need to find other possible sources of materials and for that I relied on the Internet at large. I started practising Spanish on a daily basis and various aspects of the experience, both during the learning process and retrospectively were recorded in a paper-based diary. The process of data collection also involved the use of *worksheets*, which will be further dealt with.

The aspects of the experience recorded were not predetermined, but were allowed to emerge in as natural a way as possible. The learning experience lasted a period of seven months, which proved sufficient to give me an overall knowledge of Spanish at the desired CEFR B2 level. The diary entries were subjected to an iterative thematic analysis (cf. Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) to identify key categories and emerging themes, using a basic model found in qualitative research in which (a) concepts are identified from the data and are given a label; (b) concepts which are closely linked in meaning become part of a single category; (c) categories which have similar meanings can be brought together into a theme.

This system proved useful in helping me to seek emergent themes and is similar to the one proposed by grounded theory and described in Oxford (op. cit.: 102). From this perspective, an initial list of items which included “Javier Marías”, “Gabriel Garcia Marquez”, “Macondo”, “Isabel Allende”, “El Amante Japonés”, etc. were re-grouped under the category **The Pleasures of Reading Novels in Spanish**. This category was later incorporated into a new category which also included “the pleasures of listening to Spanish music”, “Spaniards and their need to speak English”, “Brazilian politics from a Spanish perspective”, etc. This new category was given the broader name of **Language, Culture & Cooperation**. The basic themes which emerged from this process (Language, Culture & Cooperation, Autonomy and the Emergence of a Syllabus, Language Awareness and the Value of Noticing, Using Google, Affect & Autonomous Learning, The Quality of the Language Exchange, and Choosing a Language Exchange Partner) will be further dealt with in the next chapter.

4.3 Challenges in Writing an Autoethnography: The Role of Subjectivity

Autoethnography challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act (Ellis et al, op. cit.). A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product.

Autoethnography has been questioned as a research method because of the prominence it gives to the researcher’s subjectivity. By writing themselves into their own work as major characters, autoethnographers have challenged accepted views about silent authorship, where the researcher’s voice is not included in the presentation of findings (Holt, 2003).

Furthermore, autoethnography is dismissed for social scientific standards as being insufficiently rigorous, theoretical, and analytical, and too aesthetic, emotional, and therapeutic (Ellis, 2009). These criticisms erroneously position art and science at odds with each other, a condition that autoethnography seeks to correct. Overall, autoethnographers believe research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical *and* emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena (Ellis et al, op. cit.).

The existing polarization of social scientists between the two extreme positions of objectivity and subjectivity is illustrated by the positions of many autoethnographers themselves (Chang, 2008: 45). Anderson (2006: 379), who leans towards the objectivity camp, advocates a research position which includes the following conditions:

- The autoethnographer is a complete member of the social world under study;
- He/she engages reflexivity to analyse data on self;
- He/she is visibly and actively present in the text;
- He/she includes other informants in similar situations in data collection;
- He/she is committed to theoretical analysis.

In order to comply with the above-mentioned conditions of objectivity, I used *three* basic methods of data collection in my research: a reflective journal, language worksheets and, last but not least, protocols of sample interactions. When I began this research project, I was also aware of the need to find possible sources of study materials. For that, I relied largely on the Internet. In order to counterbalance the lack of a coursebook or pre-set materials, I began to create worksheets based on a model suggested by Lloyd (op. cit.), which included both language information and reflections on the materials I was using. Some of these worksheets have been included in **Appendix 5** and will be further referred to in my analysis of results.

Finally, in order to give this study a clear analytical framework, I have also included protocols of my language exchanges with one of my Italki language partners (based on a model found in Donato, op. cit.: 31-44) and protocols of similar interactions with the only teacher with whom I had contact. For a period of four weeks, my language partners were not available for weekly interactions due to their professional commitments. In order to keep momentum going, I was forced to hire a teacher. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this move proved useful because it gave me the chance to compare and contrast the interaction in two slightly different contexts.

This study was equally supplemented by a literature review of academic journals and books, the bulk of which has been mentioned under **Literature Review** in

the previous chapter. In combination, these elements comprised the tools I use to construct this autoethnographic research.

4.4 Basic Rationale for my Focus

Despite the spectacular growth of social networking sites in both daily life and mainstream education, little research to date has been conducted concerning the use of such sites in foreign language learning (Clark & Gruba, op. cit.: 164, Harrison & Thomas, 2009: 121). This study will help bridge this gap by conducting an investigation of my learning of a foreign language in exactly this type of environment. From a linguistic perspective, this study will also allow me to revisit concepts about good language teaching/learning practices and to investigate how these may or may not apply to the field of independent language learning. Finally, from a personal level, this investigation will allow me to rethink my attitude towards language learning in general and help me build a new mindset from which to approach my profession.

Starr (2010: 4 cited in Godfrey-Smith, op. cit.: 9) describes autoethnography as particularly suited for educational research. Autoethnography is related to the exploration of identity because it allows us to “*take stock of experiences and how they shape who we are and what we do*”. Therefore, this methodological approach seems suited to someone who would like to learn how to speak a new language in adulthood and who has spent his entire adult life teaching English as a foreign language, training language teachers, and researching second language education.

This approach seems to be in tune with Thorne (2000: 224) who argues in favour of the continued pluralism of SLA foci and methods. In his article, he points out that:

“Practice and sociocultural paradigms of learning (...) seek relational, historical, and non-dualist ways of conceptualizing learning and behaviour as change and practice”.

Similarly, Atkinson (2011 cited in Murphey, 2013) warns researchers about the domineering influence of cognitivism in second language acquisition and the need for alternative social approaches. From this perspective, an essentially

cognitivist view of the learning process is clearly insufficient to investigate the element of diversity in which language users in a globalised world are immersed.

4.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How feasible is it for me to reach a good Higher Intermediate level of accuracy and fluency (CEFR B2) in Spanish in both its spoken and written modes? How much can I learn within a 7-month timeframe?

RQ2: How has Italki helped or hindered my learning?

RQ3: How do I typically deal with obstacles to language learning?

RQ4: What is the nature of the interaction between my exchange partners and me?

RQ5: In what ways has this interaction fostered or hindered language learning?

These questions were initially design to cover the most basic elements of this research project from a linguist/pedagogical perspective (RQ1 and RQ5), from a purely technological point of view (RQ 2) and finally from a more personal perspective (RQ3 & RQ4). Taken together, they provided me with a tool to critically investigate the complexity of learning a foreign language in a SNS as well as helped me not to get off track and sift through a large quantity of data in my search for relevant input to this investigation.

From a different, but nonetheless important angle, these questions have also helped me give prominence to what this study is effectively about, namely, how *people* learn languages, as opposed to how *technology* may be providing the tools for learning. Much as I endorse the use of technology in education, this is simply not the focus of this investigation.

5. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This research was conducted over a period of 7 months (December 2015 to June 2016). During this period, I participated in regular language exchanges with four different Spaniards and one Colombian teacher. I spoke sporadically with eight other Italki members. Luis was my most regular exchange partner and when I talked to him about this project, he consented to have our meetups recorded. I was also given authorisation to record my sessions with Daniel, my teacher. The transcribed material in **Appendix 6** was collected from these two sources.

After this 7-month period, I spent a week at an accredited Instituto Cervantes centre in Montevideo, the Academia Uruguay. The purpose of this trip was to have my overall language knowledge validated by professional Spanish teachers. I did a levelling test when I arrived and was placed in a Higher Intermediate group (level 5). At the end of the week, after 20 hours of language work, I received a Certificate of Attendance which corroborated my B2 level in Spanish (cf. copy of certificate of attendance and the school's general description of levels in **Appendix 7**). This part of my overall mission was coming to an end.

Learning Spanish independently was not necessarily a simple task. Initially, I had to overcome a number of obstacles. On a personal level, I had to deal with the fact that I had a good receptive knowledge of Spanish, but was not able to use it productively. I spend the first four weeks of this project reading and listening to Spanish and writing short paragraphs about myself (for a more detailed description of the first month of my investigation cf. **Appendix 8**). Those initial weeks were crucial in providing me with the confidence I needed to start the Skype meetups.

The following paragraphs include an overall comment on the protocols of recorded language exchanges as well as data collected from the iterative thematic analysis used on the diary entries. Together, they will attempt to answer the research questions that guided my study.

5.2 Evidence of Language Proficiency

Language proficiency refers to the degree of skill at which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand a language (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985: 159). Language proficiency indicators may vary considerably. Factors related to communication skills may include, for instance, the use of a variety of means of communication (in person, over the telephone, over Skype, by correspondence), register (i.e., the formality or informality of the language), context (interpersonal communication, academic or professional use), the nature of a task and the predictability or unpredictability of a given situation. From this perspective, it is clear that the protocols I have transcribed are somewhat limited, in the sense that they describe informal one-to-one interactions over Skype and deal with mostly predictable language exchanges of a very informal nature. From a longitudinal perspective, however, these protocols provide the reader with enough evidence of language acquisition. The evidence comes from a number of contributing factors, which include:

- The focus on language form (typical of early stages of learning) gives way to meaning and points to a conversation style that is closer to natural setting conversations.
- Typical initiation-response-feedback (IRF) exchanges of classroom interaction and present in the earlier stages of my interactions give way to a more facilitative and cooperative form of interaction (cf. Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992).
- The use of learner strategies continues, but the nature of strategies vary. In the beginning, I make use of a number of compensatory strategies (e.g. code-switching, foreignising, literal translation). Towards the end, I am more inclined to make use of L2-based strategies such as substitution, paraphrasing, and restructuring (cf. Ellis, 1986: 184-185).
- The level of accuracy improves over time and some basic Portuguese interference mistakes seem to disappear or become less constant.
- The length of the contributions expand with time. The use of more complex structures becomes more evident and the range of vocabulary being used also increases.

- As I grow in confidence, I alternate between preparing myself for the exchange and speaking unprepared. I become progressively able to handle a variety of communicative tasks more successfully.
- As I grow in confidence, the need to code switch diminishes. I become progressively able to try to express myself in Spanish only.
- As I grow in confidence, I feel less worried about finding the right words. If I cannot make myself understood, I revert to paraphrasing, thus, keeping the conversation alive.

Appendix 9 is an attempt to contrast the basic mistakes described in the literature with my own mistakes during the first four months of the investigative period. As an awareness raising task, I also used rating scales designed by Nunn (2000) to grade my interactions. Towards the end of my learning period, I believe I had reached a good overall level of language ability, as recorded in **Appendix 10**. However, the reader should bear in mind that these were used to promote *learner autonomy* and *self-awareness* and cannot be considered accurate depictions of language levels.

5.3 The Learning Process as it Emerges from the Iterative Thematic Analysis

5.3.1 Choosing a Language Exchange Partner

Finding a language partner to do the exchanges proved to be the biggest of my initial challenges. Over the seven months of this investigation, I contacted 93 Italki members who were Spanish speakers, but I only managed to talk to 12. As I mentioned beforehand, the overall assumption was that a “native speaker” is the ideal interlocutor for e-tandem learning. Time differences were also problematic. From this perspective, it would have been clearly easier to work with Latin Americans, but Spaniards proved to be in greater number, more keen to learn, and in general, more dependable partners.

Many of the spontaneous forum discussions started by Italki members have to do with the issue of finding exchange partners. For instance, Richard, an active member in the Italki community and a community teacher, mentions six of these

reasons, which could be summarized as having to do with: (a) the intrinsic difficulties of learning a foreign language (be it face-to-face or online) (b) the intrinsic difficulties of finding a reliable partner (c) the overall difficulty in keeping momentum when faced with encumbrances such as time differences, other life commitments, occasional technical issues, and the inevitability of starting an exchange with people with whom you have few common interests.

I corroborate Richard's ideas as, indeed, do many other members of Italki (cf. extract from an informal interview with Joanne in **Appendix 11**).

SIX REASONS WHY IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND A LANGUAGE EXCHANGE PARTNER



1 Learning a language is hard work

- Yes it helps to speak to someone. This improves our listening skills. But if the listener doesn't understand something, they must ask for an explanation. If they do not ask, they will not learn.
- The time spent talking to your partner is helpful, but it's not enough. The learner must read grammar documents and websites, do exercises, develop questions when they don't understand something, identify grammar-related problems, and prepare for the next exchange.
- And please know that learning a language or becoming fluent cannot be done overnight (i.e., in a very short time).

2 Language Exchange Partners

- Many people want to learn English, but not all English speakers want to learn another language.
- Even if the English speaker wants to learn another language, it may not be your native language that they want to learn.

More discussions

- I need somebody to practice English with me and I help you with the Portuguese
- I'd like to improve my english for C1 exam at university :)
- Chinese in Beijing try to practice English or swap Chinese for English or Zulu
- Quero aprender ingles
- Need a partner to practice English together
- Merhabalar Türk arkadaşlar anyorum. Türkçe iyi bilmek için.
- How different is having an accent from mispronouncing?
- QUIEN SABE PARA QUE SIRVEN LOS PUNTOS QUE DA ITALKI POR ENTRADA AL CUADERNO ¡OJO! NO LOS ITC.....
- i need a english partner and french in exchange of arabic one
- absalom and achitophel

(Figure 4: A snapshot of Richard's Forum Discussion on Finding an Exchange Partner)

Like Richard, I had the chance to initiate at least two similar threads on the issue of finding a reliable partner. In one of these discussions threads, I was asked to explain what I meant by "*reliable*". My reply was:

I find my partners reliable when:

- (a) They do not stand me up. If they have to cancel, they do it in advance, usually the day before.
- (b) They respect the 50/50 agreement. In other words, when it's time to switch languages, they do it!
- (c) They listen to me, respond to my comments, are patient with me and correct me when they feel I am making a glaring mistake!

(d) We sometimes agree on what the topic will be beforehand, thus, giving the encounter a "sense of purpose" and later a "sense of achievement"!

From the very beginning, it was clear to me that the dyad format in these language exchanges was a space of intimacy. Therefore, finding the right exchange partners became crucial. I was lucky enough to begin my second month into this investigation with two very reliable partners. I worked systematically with them for two months having regular meetups twice a week. This was enough to give me an initial exposure to two intensive hours of Spanish a week. The other two hours were dedicated to their learning of English. The meetups became a fixed routine during four days of my week for a period of two months. Because of professional reasons, both partners had to reduce the number of contact hours after the second month. That was when I decided to start having lessons as well. I had regular lessons once a week for the rest of the investigative period (64 contact hours). To a great extent, these lessons were only needed because I could not find reliable partners to work with over the full 7-month period. I needed to keep my motivation going and I knew that spending a couple of weeks without speaking to anyone might have been enough for me to lose momentum. From this perspective, my regular lessons with Daniel served as a safety net in numerous ways.

5.3.2 Using Google

Dudeny and Hockly (2012 cited in Artusi, 2014: 4) explain how developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have impacted on ELT over the past two decades. Language teachers began with computer assisted language learning (CALL) back in the 1980's and progressed to the so-called Web 2.0 era where ICT plays a major role in transforming lessons into more student-centred environments. In this scenario, Google appears as a major provider of educational solutions for both teachers and students.

I started this research assuming that Italki itself was going to be crucial to my learning process, given the prominence of SNSs cited in the literature. It turned out that, once I got going, Google had a much bigger impact in helping me to learn Spanish. Initially, Google was my only source of materials, an immense

repository from where I could select materials. Literally all my sources of language practice and language awareness materials came from an initial Google search (cf. also **Appendix 12** for further comments on some of the websites which I used in my investigation). Once I began to have my exchanges over Skype, any points my partners mentioned which raised my curiosity would immediately become a topic for research and further investigation. My inspiration to continue to learn grew from there and consistently led me to more language practice materials.

“Today Xavi mentioned the Spanish speaker Sergio Fernandez and his work on positive thinking. I simply Googled “Sergio Fernandez + pensamiento positivo” to have access to his website. Since then, this site has become a rich source of reading and listening materials to me.” (diary entry)



Figure 5: Sergio Fernandez's homepage (Source: <http://www.pensamientopositivo.org/>)

Very quickly I began to realise that *Google Translate* was also a useful source of language chunks or structures I wanted to use both in writing notebook entries or in preparing myself for a meetup.

“Today I wanted to talk about my family. In preparation I used Google Translate to help me with useful vocabulary and structures. It turned out that many of the words were similar in Portuguese, but the exercise of translating gave me the confidence I needed to talk. I left Google Translate open, in case I needed more words. It was simple to switch from Skype to Google Chrome and I guess I was quick enough in doing so because Luis didn’t seem to have noticed I was ‘cheating’. I didn’t care if not all sentences came out right. They were a great starting point for our conversation. For instance, Luis corrected me when I said: Mi padre es muerto. I should have used “está” instead of “es” - the usual problem with the verbs “ser” and “estar”. I’m glad I’m not the only one who gets it wrong. Google does, too!” (diary entry)

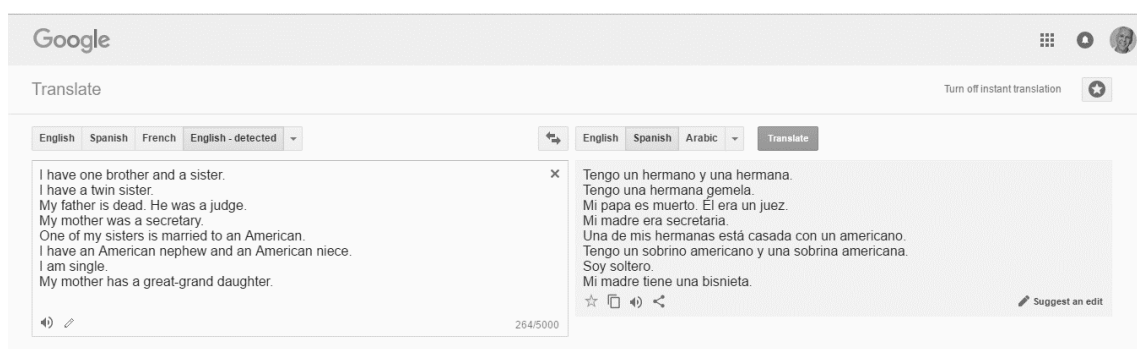


Figure 06: Google Translate (Source: <https://translate.google.com/>)

Furthermore, I began to do *Google searches in quotation marks* to double-check the accuracy of the sentences I wanted to create for compositions. This simple built-in tool, which was created to search for string of words, proved to be extremely useful in providing me with samples of standard Spanish usage. Similarly, I used the asterisk as a wild card to find the missing word in a phrase and check the feasibility of the sentence I intended to use.

*“Today I was not sure how to say “watch TV” in Spanish. I tried “pasar el tiempo * la tele” on Google and I immediately got the verb I needed: ver la tele.” (diary entry)*

This built-in tool was extremely useful even when the result was not what I expected because it offered me other linguistic alternatives, many of which I could incorporate into my conversations.

*“I wanted to write “a car is an expensive item” so I used Google to search “un coche es un * caro”. There were no exact options for the word item, but the options I got were very much to my liking: “un coche es **un capricho muy caro**” [an expensive **caprice**], “un coche es **un gasto muy caro**” [an expensive **expenditure**], “un coche es **un lujo demasiado caro**” [an expensive **luxury**]”.*
(diary entry)

Over time, this simple “*trick*” had a great impact on my vocabulary learning because it offered me a wide range of more Advanced or colloquial language to choose from.

Overall, Google gave me the autonomy I needed to study the language without resorting to a coursebook or syllabus. David Eastman praised Google in its early days as being “such a good search engine”. According to him, Google was “*street ahead of its competitors*” (Eastman, 2004: 404). Throughout the years, Google continued to spearhead changes in ICT and I believe it is still a major source of language materials for autonomous learners.

5.3.3 Language Awareness and Noticing

The Noticing Hypothesis states that input does not become intake for language learning unless it is *noticed*, that is, consciously registered. The origin of the Noticing Hypothesis was the claim that “*a learner must attend to and notice linguistic features of the input that they are exposed to if those forms are to become intake for learning*”. (Schmidt, op. cit.: 724)

Personally, I believe there can be no language learning without attention and conscious learning. It was clear from the very beginning of my studies that noticing language (as opposed to formally learning the grammar) would be my way into Spanish. Noticing became part of all language activities I did. My log sheets included a space for noticing and a brief look at them is enough to estimate the broad range of language aspects I intended to work with. Over time, I

managed to deal with a wide range of language aspects, some of which are described in **Appendix 13**.

Furthermore, my notebook entries turned out to be a major source of language samples for noticing. As a teacher, I have always been a great fan of writing as a means of reinforcing language or, as Ur (1996: 162) suggests, “*writing as both means and end*”. In my own language learning process, it should not have been any different. I began to write notebook entries from the beginning. It surprised me how quickly I would have my notebook entries corrected, sometimes by more than one native speaker. This was particularly useful in my learning process because two native speakers did not necessarily correct the same mistakes. Furthermore, some more diligent assessors included corrections that were suggestive of other ways to say what I had in mind and language varieties coming from different Spanish-speaking countries:

“I always love it when an Italki user includes extra bits of language information when they correct my compositions. Today, for instance, in my composition about the working journey, two users told me it was OK to say “trabajar informalmente” [to work informally], but it would make more sense to use “trabajar en negro” [to work in the black economy], a more colloquial expression. I liked it because I was reminded of the same expression in French: “travailler au noir” – just a different preposition!” (diary entry)

Finally, an important moment of noticing was passed on to me in the form of delayed feedback in the lessons I had with Daniel. I was able to profit tremendously from his ability to share his computer screen during our lessons to go over my most recurrent language mistakes (cf. **Appendix 09**). Gradually, I began to build my own internal syllabus based mostly on the limitations I noticed in my speaking (and the mistakes I made during the lessons) as well as while attempting to produce notebook entries in Spanish.

5.3.4 The Quality of Language Exchange: Seeing One Another

Choosing like-minded individuals proved to be crucial to the quality of my language exchanges. A key feature of the communicative approach is that students are provided with opportunities to interact freely with one another in the classroom (Senior, op. cit.: 135). Even though my level of Spanish was limited, I expected to use the language for genuine communication from the start. This implied dealing with the interaction in unanticipated ways. As a language teacher, I was aware of the need to avoid controversial topics in teaching: the so-called PARSNIPS in ELT (cf. Gray, 2001, cited in Akbari, 2008: 281). In my language exchanges, I did not want this to be the case. I expected my interactions to reflect the topics I would normally discuss in my native language and I was not prepared to settle for less. Luis, more than any other language partner, seemed to have met my expectations in that respect. He was an open-minded lawyer interested in human diversity, world politics, different cultures as well as sports, cinema, books etc. He proved to be not only a generous listener, but also an avid defender of his own points of view. In retrospect, I believe this was the biggest motivating factor in providing me with the stimulus to learn.

“I reap enormous intrinsic rewards from working with Luis. For instance, today, Luis asked me about OCD. Initially I was only able to explain what OCD was in a rudimentary way. I became terribly frustrated and told him I wanted to go back to the issue the following week. I became obsessed (!) and spent 5 hours reading about OCD in Spanish and watching videos on the matter! This eventually culminated with my writing a text, which I shared with Luis in our following meetup. I don’t think I would have done it, had it not been for his genuine wish to learn about this disorder from me.” (diary entry)

An experimental approach to learning often involves collaboration of learners towards a common goal (Tudor, op. cit.: 82) and our learning process was not different. Luis and I both aimed at reaching a Higher Intermediate level in English and Spanish, respectively. However, it soon became clear that the quality of our interaction was crucial to us as *people*. We began to value the prospective gains

that could be obtained from deepening our relationship as individuals, and not just as language learners.

The French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas suggests that “*teaching is about staging an encounter with the Other, with something outside the self, whereas learning is to receive from the Other more than the self already holds*” (Todd, op. cit.: 29). Overall, I believed Luis and I unconsciously staged our encounters carefully: we respected and valued our differences, yet we were willing to try things out. We were equally ready to drop what did not seem to work for us. Gradually, we began to develop a quality of language exchange in which both language and content mattered. We began to appreciate the singularity in one another and this was key in helping us develop a level of responsiveness and involvement that is generally not common amongst language learners.

5.3.5 Autonomy and the Emergence of a Syllabus

Being able to apply some of the principles of Dogme to my own learning of Spanish was possibly one of the most enriching aspects of this study. As I mentioned beforehand, I was not able to try it out during my teaching career and not having to worry about a coursebook or a pre-determined syllabus was a fruitful experience. Most coursebooks in Spanish will cater for an international market. A brief look at the syllabus of the very popular “*Nuevo Ven*” was sufficient to make me realise I did not want to follow a coursebook in my learning process. In my search for coursebooks to use, I found one single book aimed at the Brazilian market: “*Conexión – Curso de Español para Profesionales Brasileños*” (Cambridge University Press). I bought a copy together with the Teacher’s Guide and used it occasionally as a vocabulary source or as reference for functional language.

Most of the times, however, I was basically noticing language and trying to use language samples as a springboard for sporadic grammar work. It would be impossible to describe in details what emerged from my daily one-hour contact with Spanish because, as I mentioned beforehand, it implies dealing with *complexity*. As an example of an emergent system, my learning process was non-linear and often unpredictable. Furthermore, it encompassed many interacting parts, often interacting in parallel (cf. **Appendix 14** for an example of a typical

learning moment) and I never knew exactly where I was heading or what the outcome for a day's work would be.

Even during the few moments when I explicitly had to deal with grammar (for instance, when I came across different verb tenses in the past) I was still *less* interested in knowing about the language and *more* interested in applying a given grammar point to my personal reality, envisaging opportunities for language use (cf. **Appendix 15**).

Language has different levels of different scale sizes: texts, sentences, clauses, words, sounds, and a change in one of these levels can have an effect across levels (Thornbury, n.d.). According to the author, this process includes the following:

- **Tallying:** the process whereby learners become automatically sensitised to the fact that certain elements and combinations of elements occur frequently in the language that they are exposed to;
- **Pattern extraction:** the capacity to identify and extract regularly occurring sequences from input;
- **Priming:** the gradual strengthening – through repeated use – of associations between elements, such as words and other words, or utterances and their contexts;
- **Chunking:** the welding together of sets of already formed associations into larger units.

As I reflect about the process by which I learnt Spanish, I actually realise that this was happening all the time. For instance, I consciously avoided grammar exercises by learning to memorise chunks (chunking). The recordings of my interactions were also useful in helping me determine the frequency of certain phrases or expressions. I began to select language based on the frequency it was being used by my language partners (tallying). Furthermore, the fact that I was able to choose to speak about the same topic twice a week (i.e. by approaching the same topic with two different people) was extremely valuable in allowing me to retain certain structures or vocabulary items (priming).

Together, these elements provided me with the unique opportunity to “play with language” (i.e., explore possibilities) and, consequently, contributed to the

emergence of suitable study materials for the building of my own version of a syllabus.

5.3.6 Affect and Learning Engagement

The area of affect is key to my work both as a psychotherapist and as a teacher trainer. For the purpose of this reflection, affect will be considered broadly as “*aspects of emotion, feeling, mood and attitude which condition behaviour*” (Arnold & Brown, 1999: 1) and, therefore, also condition language learning.

Anxiety, for instance, is generally seen as an affective factor obstructing the process of learning a language. My initial feelings of anxiety were relieved as I began to interact with fellow Italki members. It gave way to an overall excitement related to the possibility of learning a new language. I had a few things working in my favour:

- (a) I have always enjoyed travelling around South America. Being able to speak the language in these trips seemed like an excellent prospect.
- (b) I had successfully learned three other foreign languages and, to a certain extent, I understood that the task ahead of me was doable.
- (c) I had some receptive knowledge of the language, which made the task of learning Spanish seem less daunting.
- (d) I did not have to learn the language for any professional reason. I was learning Spanish simply because I liked the language.
- (e) I did not have to follow a rigid plan of action, nor did I have to pass a formal proficiency test.

These cover the appraisals as the basis for motivation as seen in Clément, Dorney & Noels (1994), namely, pleasantness (b & c), goal relevance (a), coping potential (e) and norm/self compatibility (d).

However, motivation is more than a state of cognitive and emotional arousal. It requires a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort (Williams & Burden, 1997: 120) as I was quick to discover. In order to achieve the goal I set out to achieve, I had to count on the involvement of significant others (cf. Williams & Burden, op. cit.: 133). Just like teachers are important in motivating learners, it

became clear to me that choosing the right language partner was crucial to the process of e-tandem learning.

The basic principles of tandem learning suggested in Little & Brammerts (op. cit.) highlight reciprocal dependence and mutual support of the partners. I was lucky enough to have that from at least two of my exchange partners. As it turned out, I was often greeted by them with the same amount of enthusiasm that I myself was bringing into the learning process. In retrospect, I believe this was crucial to the overall success of this project.

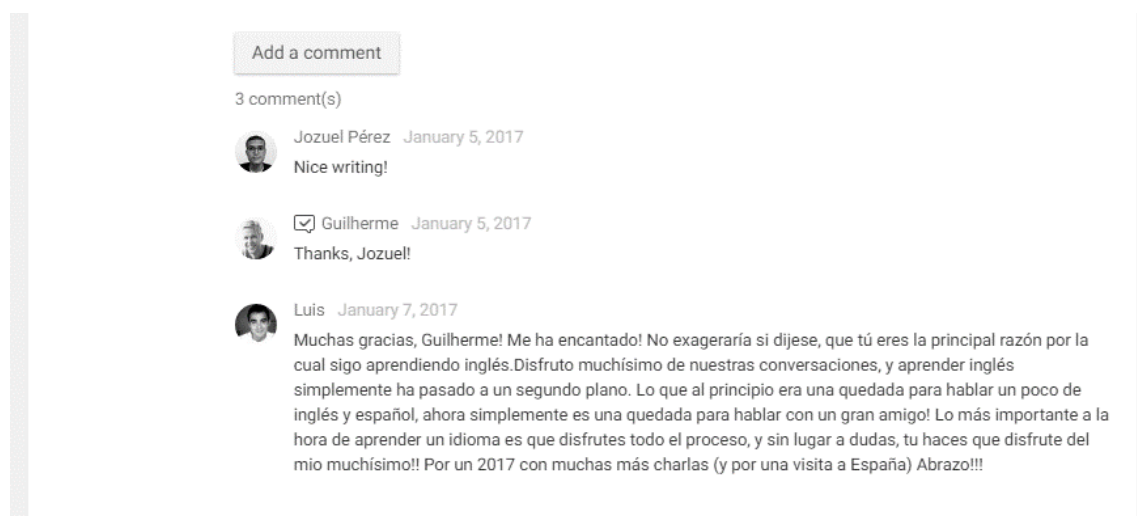
In exploring language learner narratives, Oxford (op. cit.: 98-99) highlights four important themes: flow and hot cognition, complexity, emotion and identity. Two of those are worth exploring here.

My very first interactions were fraught with an uncertainty that I had anticipated, given my lack of experience in using the spoken language. A certain level of generalised distrust of my own ability to live up to my interlocutor's expectations was also present. I managed to deal with that by memorising a number of conversation starters in Spanish, which helped me break the ice. However, breaking the ice was not enough. In many cases, very much like therapy, the problems reflected an imbalance in the "working alliance". The passion for language learning was possibly present, but it was not enough to keep momentum going. In other instances, such as in the case of my interactions with Luis, a sense of *flow* (cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) and *hot cognition* was always present.

Gradually, I stopped worrying about a possible agenda for the meet-ups because I trusted, once we got together the interaction would always lead to a fruitful exchange and be linguistically rich and interesting. Luis was quick at figuring out how to help me to learn and emulated many of my actions during our slots in English. For instance, I used to scaffold his work by writing in the chat box the new vocabulary he required. He began to do the same with me during our 30-minute slots in Spanish. Furthermore, I often made use of reformulation as an error correction technique or a noticing strategy. Here again, he started to imitate me. We soon discovered that we had several characteristics in common and we drew on these to create a working atmosphere that was truly conducive to learning. During our conversations, we learnt about each other and quickly felt like close friends. Ultimately, our relationship reflected the level of engagement

that we brought to our exchanges. Luis achieved his goal of passing FCE at roughly the same time I came back from Montevideo in July, 2016. Nonetheless, it is not surprising that, in spite of our heavy workload, we still find the time once a fortnight to get together and chat. It is not by chance that one of my notebook entries was dedicated to him (cf. **Appendix 16**). His reply reflects a frame of mind that is both his and mine:

“Thank you very much, Guilherme. I loved your entry. I wouldn’t be exaggerating if I said that you are the main reason why I keep on learning English today. I enjoy our chats tremendously. Learning English has taken a secondary place. What started off as a get-together to speak English and Spanish is now an excuse to speak to a good friend. When it comes to learning a language, the most important issue is to enjoy the process. Without the shadow of a doubt, you make me enjoy my learning process very much. Here’s hoping for a 2017 with many hangouts and, why not, a visit to Spain. All the best!!!”



(Figure 07: Luis’s reply to my notebook entry)

5.3.7 Language, Culture & Cooperation

Learning a language is an open invitation for developing cross-cultural understanding and my experience with Italki was not different. It would have been impossible for me to have exchange partners if I was not prepared to learn about my partners as people. In other words, I had to be willing to learn about their culture. Initially, it was a simple question of trying to locate myself in a map as I learnt where my exchange partners resided. Later, it was interesting to start noticing the cultural differences within the same country. I learnt about Egoitz, who lives close to Bilbao and comes from a Basque family. I learnt about how Luis had grown up in Galicia and how he was exposed to Galician as a child. I learnt about Xavi, who lives in Barcelona and speaks Catalan as well as Spanish. Gradually, I was able to perceive slight nuances in their accents.

As our life stories unfolded, we began to share our cultures and learn from one another. Many of our stories seemed to reflect our status as global citizens. For instance, it was always humorous to hear an exchange partner describe a Netflix series they had started watching and realise it was the same series I intended to start watching. At a moment of political uproar in Brazil, Luis recommended me a Spanish video in which the leader of the political party “*Podemos*”, Pablo Iglesias, described the situation in my country. Naturally, I was eager to watch it.



Figure 08: Pablo Iglesias, host of the TV programme Fort Apache

This is just one small examples to demonstrate how we used culture and our cultural similarities and/or differences to enhance the quality of our interactions. In this sense, I was lucky to be working with exchange partners who believed in diversity and were willing to value our cultural differences.

It became clear to me that culture was an integral part of my language learning process, simply because culture is an integral part of everyone's life. A brief look at some of the titles of my notebook entries (once I had gone past my initial stage), as seen in **Appendix 17**, should be enough to help the reader understand how pervasive culture was in this context.

Furthermore, these seven months provided me with the opportunity to start reading literature in Spanish. Until the beginning of this project, I had limited my reading in Spanish to technical articles in the area of Education or Psychology. Learning Spanish in more depth gave me the opportunity to pursue higher goals, one of which included reading my favourite living author, the Spanish writer Javier Marías, in the original. I read two of his shorter novels (Travesía del Horizonte [Voyage Along the Horizon] and Mala Índole [Bad Nature or With Elvis in Mexico]) in this period as well as three other books, La Hojarasca [Leaf Storm], El Amante Japonés [The Japanese Lover] and El Paraíso en la Otra Esquina [The Way to

Paradise] by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende and Mario Vargas Llosa respectively.

It seemed clear to me that, given the richness of the materials I had access to via the internet, novels, and through the collaboration of my exchange partners, not having a coursebook to follow was not a problem. Richard (1993 cited in Edge & Wharton: 298) suggests that “*many coursebooks attempt themselves to do the work of decision making and pedagogical reasoning, and therefore, do not encourage teachers to use them in a creative and personal way*”. In retrospect, I am glad I chose not to use a coursebook. By having the freedom to start from scratch, I also gave myself the opportunity to plunge into unknown territories and experience language and culture in a manner that led to positive results and authentic and meaningful practice.

6. WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THIS PROJECT

In this autoethnographic research I have set out to determine if it would be possible for me to learn Spanish to a Higher Intermediate level after seven-months of studying the language autonomously. I also hoped to derive some insight into the way an adult learner can best learn a foreign language.

My Spanish made a great improvement since I started and I believe I have achieved my immediate aim. However, there are clear limitations in this research and generalising findings beyond this study should not be attempted. The first limitation may have to do with the choice of research method itself. I tried to deal with this issue in the chapter on **Research Methodology**. In retrospect, I also believe that the number of protocols submitted could have been bigger. Furthermore, I could have clearly exploited Italki as a SNS in more depth. I refrained from doing this because I believed the topic was of inferior relevance when compared to the one I chose to explore, i.e., the nature of the *interaction* that has taken place with the help of the platform. Furthermore, this work will give the reader a less than adequate idea about the nature of collaboration in tandem e-learning. Had I been equally able to deal with the English interactions with my language exchange partners, it would have been easier to demonstrate that our exchanges were mutually beneficial in our interdependent attempt to co-construct language knowledge. From this perspective, I can only hope that the reader will recognise that my ability to learn Spanish is not idiosyncratic and could, to a greater or lesser extent, be replicated by other Italki users, in particular, other Brazilian speakers.

Finally, I have failed to include an in-depth discussion on the topic of spoken language assessment. A brief look at what Bachman & Palmer (1996: 68) suggest as being areas of language knowledge to be covered in a model for the assessment of communicative competence and language ability (**Appendix 18**) suffices to demonstrate that this would have gone beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Overall, I believe that this dissertation offers some food for thought for language educators who may be interested in learning about the process of SLA of a fellow language teacher and a few of the challenges faced by adult learners in their attempt to speak another language.

As I mentioned in the introduction, this study was secondarily aimed at providing the reader with a personal insight into what teaching and learning a foreign language as an adult may signify to me now. A few important points stand out:

- Language *teachers* will play a more active social role to the extent that they understand their overarching role as *educators*. Language teachers can only gain by going beyond the level of teaching a given *language* to teaching a *code for self-expression*.
- Autonomy in the learning process should become part of any language-learning programme for adult learners. For the most part, “learning to learn” is key to speeding up the process of learning a foreign or second language.
- I could not have achieved what I achieved, had it not been for the help of my language partners. Autonomous learning goes beyond *individual work* to encompass the notion of *learning with and from others*.
- The notion of *authenticity* goes beyond materials to include the possibility of valuing learners for who they are, recognising their contribution to learning through the exploration and sharing of their life experiences and knowledge. From this perspective, learning equates *investigation* as well as *collaboration*.
- Language learning materials should require and facilitate *self-investment*. (Tomlinson, 1998: 11). The most enjoyable moments in this project were exactly those moments in which I was discovering about *language* as well as about *myself*.
- Learners should become *active* participants in the learning process. This may require an in-depth investigation into the usefulness of adhering to a course syllabus too closely in regular adult classes. In my experience, working *without* a tight course syllabus was clearly advantageous.
- Lastly, this dissertation corroborates code switching (cf. Hall & Cook) as a useful strategy or resource for autonomous language learning. Anton and DiCamilla (1998: 319), for example, established that L1 use can play "*a strategic cognitive role both in scaffolding and in establishing intersubjectivity*" in face-to-face discourse between dyads of adult native speakers of English who studied Spanish at the beginner level. Swain and Lapkin (1998: 333) observed that their French immersion students used their L1 "*to regulate their own behavior, to focus attention on specific L2 structures, and to generate and assess alternatives*". This

idea seems particularly relevant in today's global world with its multilingual environments, including the classroom (cf. Milambiling, 2011). Together with contrastive analysis, code switching proved to be a natural instrument for understanding my own learning of Spanish.

7. FINAL THOUGHTS

By trying to learn Spanish autonomously, I was forced to take an active role in the process. My willingness to learn placed me in contact with like-minded individuals who, in their turn, helped me build my confidence in the process itself. The learning process was essentially “*exploratory*”: unplanned and unexpected. Eventually, this process led me to enough exposure to the language to signify that some language acquisition had occurred. How exactly did it happen? This study is an attempt to clarify that, but only to a limited extent. The complexity of the process may have been fully embraced by the learner in me, but only minimally understood by the researcher.

Overall, this MA project has given me the opportunity to learn about language teaching in ways I could not have envisaged when I started. On the one hand, writing this dissertation could be seen as an invitation to reflect on the past, my more than 30 years of professional work in TEFL. On the other, it could be perceived as an invitation into the future, a future where my professional beliefs will always be questioned and revised: an exercise on learning, unlearning and relearning a trade.

My knowledge of Spanish is still limited, but the friends I made along the way are real and the fun we had together makes up for my language imperfections.

Language imperfections: whenever this issue was brought up in one of my conversations with Luis and I complained I was not learning fast enough, he would quickly contradict me: “*Pues, mira, estás hablando español de puta madre.*” It loosely translates as “*Just listen to yourself: your level of Spanish is awesome.*”

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Basic Difficulties for Brazilian Learners learning Spanish - abridged from Andrade Neta (2012) and Steely (n.d.)

Lexical Variations

Vocablos heterotónicos

These words often share the graphic form and/or meaning. The point of divergence of these words is their tonicity. For instance, the word “*democracia*” [democracy] sounds like *democracia* in Portuguese and *democracía* in Spanish.

Vocablos heterogénicos

These words are also identical or similar in the way they are written and in their meaning. However, they differ in terms of gender. For instance, the word “*nariz*” [nose] is masculine in Portuguese (i.e., *o nariz*) and feminine in Spanish (i.e., *la nariz*).

Vocablos heterosemánticos

This group consists of a myriad of false friends or false cognates. False friends are identical or similar words in the way they are written, but vary in their meaning in the two languages. For instance, the word “*polvo*” means “octopus” in Portuguese and “dust” in Spanish.

Morphosyntactic Variations

Some of the basic difficulties for Brazilians learning Spanish include the use of the articles (e.g. the presence of a neutral article in Spanish); the adjectives (e.g. the *apocope* or loss of a sound at the end of a word which exists in Spanish, as in “*un buen hombre*” [a good man] as opposed to “*un ~~bueno~~ hombre*”; the use of personal pronouns (e.g. the use of the formal subjective pronoun “usted” in Spanish which does not have an equivalent in Brazilian Portuguese); the use of verb tenses (e.g. the distinction which exists in Spanish between an indefinite and a definite action in the past), the use of direct object pronouns (e.g. *lo/los, la/las, le/les*), etc.

Spelling Differences

The use of the circumflex accent (^) in Portuguese, the use of “ñ” in Spanish, the use of *digraphs*, a combination of two letters representing one sound, which exist in Portuguese in “ss”, “lh” and “nh” and not in Spanish.

Phonological Differences

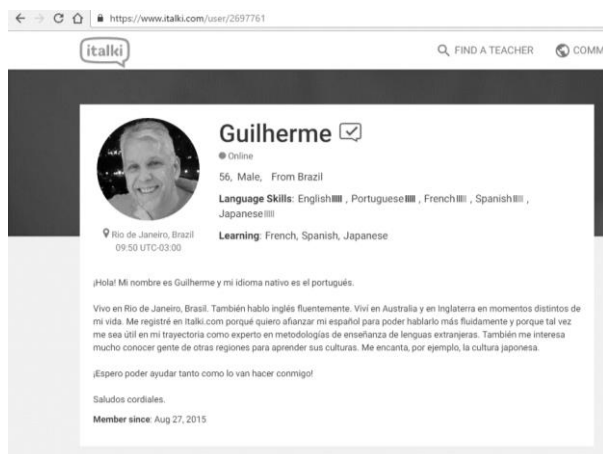
A few phonological differences between Portuguese and Spanish include:

- The letter “a” in Spanish is not always a pure, open sound, but sometimes it is more like the clipped, indistinct English schwa, more like an /ə/, especially when it falls on an unstressed syllable at the end of a word.
- The Brazilian digraph *nh* (e.g., “*montanha*”) is equivalent to the Spanish *ñ*, though a bit softer.
- The letters “j” and “x” are pronounced /h/ in Spanish.
- The digraph “ch” is not pronounced like in Spanish, but is always a soft /ʃ/ sound.
- The Spanish “ll” /y/ sound does not exist in Portuguese.
- The sound known as soft d, *eth* [ð], or a voiced dental fricative, as in the Spanish word “*ciudad*”, does not exist in Portuguese.
- The letter “b” is always pronounced like a hard /b/ in Portuguese, never like a soft Spanish /b/ (a fricative).

Appendix 2: Italki – Basic Features

User's Page

A user's profile may be viewed by clicking on their name. This is where the user will include some personal information as well as information about the type of language exchange they may be interested in.

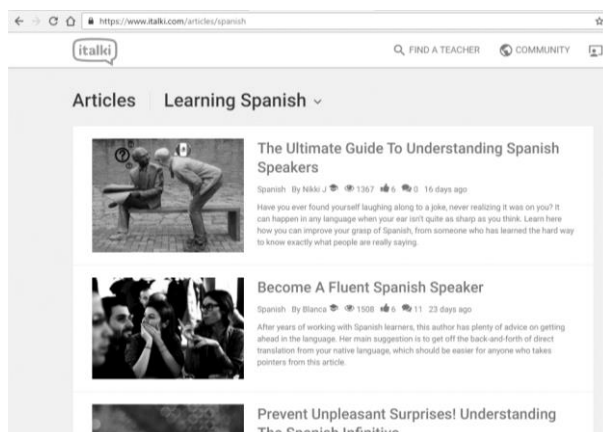


Free Features

Italki's free features are found under the Community tab.

Articles

This is where you find the Italki community blog posts. They cover a number of different languages and focus mostly on linguistic aspects of learning the language and are written either by teachers or language learners. The user is able to search by language. The majority of the articles are written in English.



Notebook

The notebook is essentially a journal entry that users would write. Once it has been posted, it goes to the online community and native speakers volunteer to correct them. Users are also able to read notebook entries which may have been posted previously.

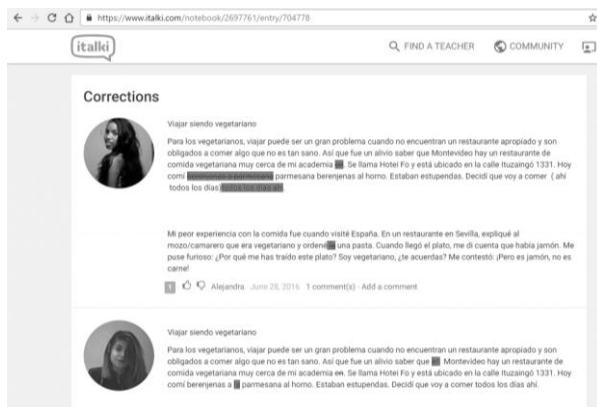


The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.italki.com/notebook/269776/entry/704778>. The page title is "Viajar siendo vegetariano". The author's profile picture is visible. The text of the entry is as follows:

Para los vegetarianos, viajar puede ser un gran problema cuando no encuentran un restaurante apropiado y son obligados a comer algo que no es tan sano. Así que fue un alivio saber que Montevideo hay un restaurante de comida vegetariana muy cerca de mi academia en. Se llama Hotel Fo y está ubicado en la calle Ituzaingó 1331. Hoy comí berenjenas a parmesana al horno. Estaban estupendas. Decidí que voy a comer todos los días ahí.

Mi peor experiencia con la comida fue cuando visité España. En un restaurante en Sevilla, expliqué al mozo/camarero que era vegetariano y ordené la pasta. Cuando llegó el plato, me di cuenta que había jamón. Me puse furioso. ¿Por qué me has traído este plato? Soy vegetariano, ¿te acuerdas? Me contestó: ¡Pero es jamón, no es carne!

Below the text is a small image of a menu board with the word "MENU" visible.



The screenshot shows the "Corrections" section of the notebook entry. It features a list of corrections from other users. The first correction is from a user named Alejandra, dated June 28, 2016, with 1 comment. The corrected text is as follows:

Viajar siendo vegetariano

Para los vegetarianos, viajar puede ser un gran problema cuando no encuentran un restaurante apropiado y son obligados a comer algo que no es tan sano. Así que fue un alivio saber que Montevideo hay un restaurante de comida vegetariana muy cerca de mi academia en. Se llama Hotel Fo y está ubicado en la calle Ituzaingó 1331. Hoy comí ~~berenjenas a parmesana~~ parmesana berenjenas al horno. Estaban estupendas. Decidí que voy a comer (ahí todos los días ~~berenjenas~~).

Below the correction is a comment from Alejandra: "Alejandra · June 28, 2016 · 1 comment(s) · Add a comment".

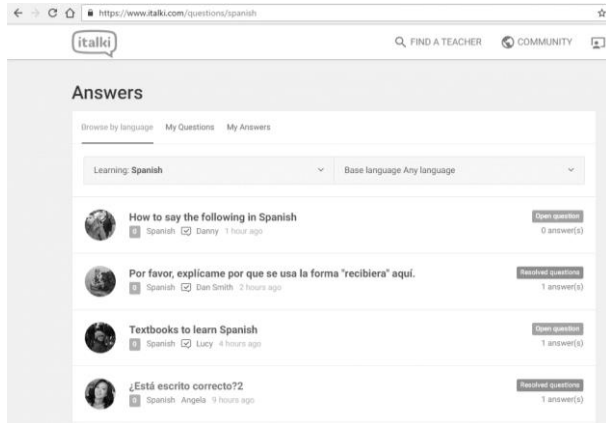
The second correction is from another user, dated June 28, 2016, with 1 comment. The corrected text is as follows:

Viajar siendo vegetariano

Para los vegetarianos, viajar puede ser un gran problema cuando no encuentran un restaurante apropiado y son obligados a comer algo que no es tan sano. Así que fue un alivio saber que Montevideo hay un restaurante de comida vegetariana muy cerca de mi academia en. Se llama Hotel Fo y está ubicado en la calle Ituzaingó 1331. Hoy comí berenjenas a parmesana al horno. Estaban estupendas. Decidí que voy a comer todos los días ahí.

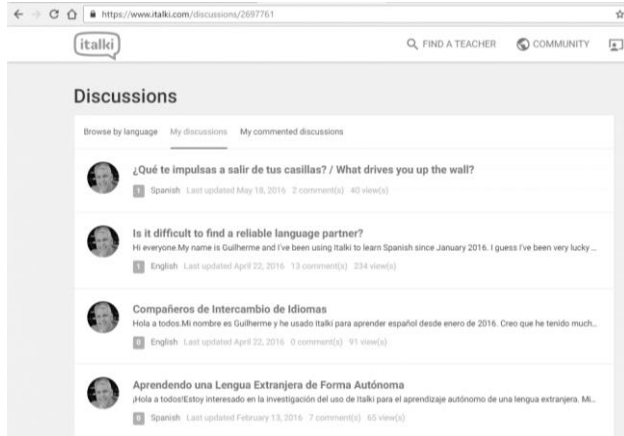
Answers

Users are encouraged to post their questions and queries in this area. Native speakers and/or language experts will subsequently answer their question.



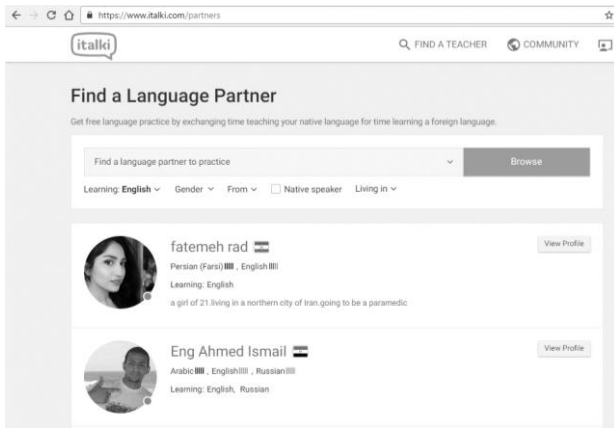
Discussion

This is a forum discussion area, where people can have conversations in the form of posted messages.



Find a Language Partner

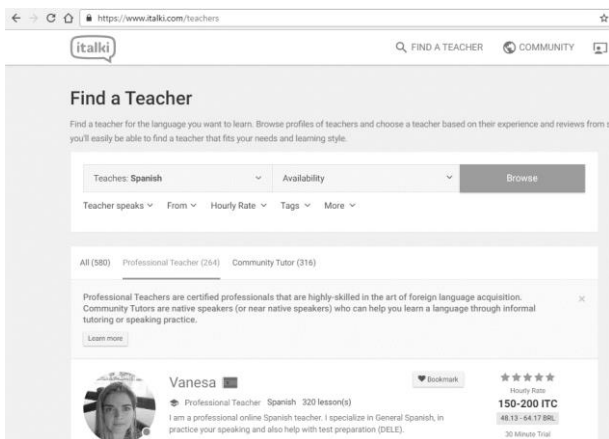
This feature allows the user to search all other language partners in the community based on where they are from, their native language, and the language they are learning. They can read their contact information before deciding if they would like to befriend another user. The conversation is ultimately over Skype. The Italki site is used mainly as a place to find potential language partners.



Paid Features

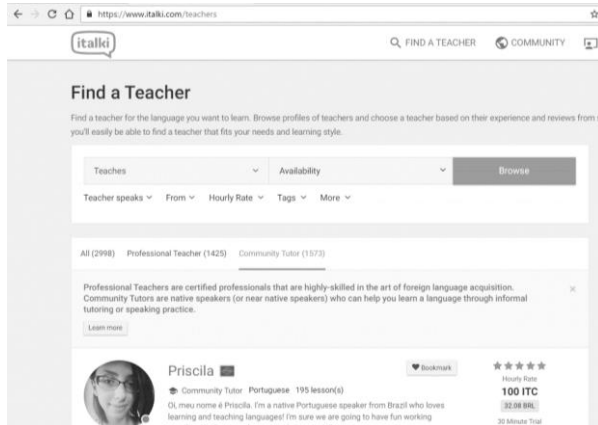
Professional Teachers

The language lessons option is given only by *professional teachers*. This would be those members of Italki who have experience teaching offline/in the real world, with certification as language professionals. Their certificates are uploaded to the site for potential students' verification.



Community Tutors

Community tutors are language experts who are eager to help others by teaching a given language. They may or not may have experience teaching over Skype, and would most likely have a day-job unrelated to teaching. Community tutors are *informal* tutors and tend to set their prices lower than professional tutors.



Appendix 03: My Most Active Language Exchange Partners - Vignettes

Luis is a lawyer with an MBA in Contract Law. He has the FCE and is currently self-studying to pass the Cambridge Advanced Certificate (CAE). He does not necessarily need English for his current job, but may wish to apply for a career in International Law in the future.

Elisenda is a social worker with an MA in Mental Health and Wellness. She applied for a job in England and was told she required a minimum level of B1 in English to be selected. In six months, Elisenda went from being a false beginner to reaching the desired B1 level by self-studying and by talking regularly to five different Italki exchange partners.

Xavi is a business administrator who spent a year in Australia in order to improve his overall level of English. When he returned to Spain he was C1 in level. He then started an MBA programme in International Business in Barcelona, where he is currently living and working. The MBA programme is taught in English. Xavi also uses English as a *lingua franca* to communicate with native and non-native speakers worldwide.

Alberto is a young adult who graduated in Chemical Engineer and needed a B2 level of English to start an MA programme in the same area. He passed FCE when he was 19. He wants to keep on practising English in order to take the IELTS (7.5) and, thus, satisfy the entry requirements for a PhD course in Spain. The IELTS will also be useful if he decides to apply for an Erasmus “sandwich” scholarship.

Isidro works as a tour guide in Spain’s Canary Islands. When I first met him, he had roughly a B1 level in English and was living and working in Liverpool in order to brush up his spoken English. He stayed in England for six months before he moved back to his home country to start working as a fully bilingual tour guide.

Appendix 04: Six Key Assumptions about Adult Learning as Reflected in my Own Experience of Learning Spanish

Self-concept:

I consider myself a mature learner. At this point in my life, studying Spanish three hours a week in a language school and following a pre-established syllabus would seem implausible. It would also hint at a lack of trust in my ability for self-direction.

Experience:

I can draw on my expertise as a language learner from many different occasions in life. As a language teacher and trainer, I am equally able to create a reservoir of experiences where information will be available to help me in the decision-making process of working out a methodology that best works for me.

Readiness to Learn:

I understand that learning Spanish will be relevant not only in helping me finish my MA project, but also in helping me further develop my career as a language expert. Furthermore, speaking reasonably good Spanish will help me feel a more mindful and integrated “neighbour” to fellow Latin American residents.

Orientation to Learn:

I am fully aware of the practical application of knowing Spanish and intend to put the language into use as quickly as possible. Spanish is not a school subject I intend to know about. I intend to *use* it. This knowledge will help me perform a variety of tasks that I may be facing in *real life*, for instance, when I travel.

Motivation to Learn:

No one is forcing me to learn Spanish. I am intrinsically motivated to learn languages and my favourite writer in the world, Javier Marias, is a Spaniard. I am partly learning Spanish for the sheer pleasure of reading his novels in their original versions.

The Need to Know:

I am prepared to invest a considerable amount of time and energy into learning Spanish because I deem the experience valuable and fulfilling.

Appendix 5: Model Log Sheet and Samples

My Spanish Log Sheet

Date:

Learning Tool(s):
I studied/practiced:
I learned (this could be anything, not just language):
I noticed:
I communicated with (name of partner) by (message, Skype, other):
I made mistakes with:
I was pleased with:
I wasn't pleased with:
My difficulties are:
I would like to know:

Based on a model suggested by Lloyd, E. (2012). Language Learners' "Willingness to Communicate" through Livemocha.com. In: **Alsic**, 15 (1): 22.

My Spanish Log Sheet

A CHAT WITH LUIS

Date: February 13, 2016.

Learning Tool(s): Skype

I noticed:

No sé si **tuve** suerte / mala suerte pero...

No sé si **tuve** razón.

Me **acabo de** despertar. (Similar to Portuguese)

Sacar conversación

Hacer el **remolón** (Difficult to remember)

Flojo / perezoso

Era mí primera clase de español.

Cambiar el chip

.... o **incluso**

Tengo que **afinar el oído**.

Está muy bien.

¿Por qué te ríes?

Cometer errores

Tú tienes mi correo.

No me cuesta nada. (Similar to Portuguese)

I communicated with Luis via Skype.

The connection was particularly good today!

I made mistakes with:

Intentar y no ~~ententar~~

A el le **gustaria** comenzar a(I'm still struggling with this structure!)

Elegir y no elegir

My Spanish Log Sheet

CLAUDIO NARANJO – YAHOO NOTÍCIAS

Date: January 28, 2016.

Learning Tool(s):

Texto “Nos han criado para la ceguera”

(<https://es.noticias.yahoo.com/claudio-naranjo-criado-ceguera-111425164.html>)

I studied: SUBJUNCTIVE - IMPERFECT

Es como si la educación quisiera mantenernos dormidos...

I learned (this could be anything, not just language):

*Claudio Naranjo was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015.
He works with the Enneagram.*

I noticed:

"el mal de nuestra cultura es que mira más hacia fuera que hacia adentro"

*Hacia indica la dirección de un movimiento / para: Voy hacia tu casa.
Indica también tiempo o lugar aproximado: Llegaron a casa hacia las seis de la mañana.*

la ira, el orgullo, la vanidad, la envidia, la avaricia, la cobardía, la gula, la lujuria y la pereza

esa noción de pecado hoy no sirve

No sirvo para nada.

No sirvo para esto.

Se trata de ayudarles a deshacerse de su ego

Hacer / deshacer (Careful – “h” in Spanish instead of the “f” in Portuguese)

Ya he **deshecho el equipaje**. (unpack in English)

querer llenar un **hueco** (gap in English)

Hueco = vacío

Su programa de autoconocimiento es un referente [Portuguese / different gender – **uma referencia**]

My Spanish Log Sheet

EL PRESO NÚMERO 9

Date: March 28, 2016.

Learning Tool(s)

El Preso No 9 – Gerardo Reyes

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKmleyb-tlw>)

El Preso No 9 – Joan Baez

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cjaa-OhDm8Q>)

El Preso No 9 – Nelson Ned

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6Fggg4Mjnc>)

El Preso No 9 – Chavela Vargas

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LA3yAfyhuDc>)

Letra – El Preso No 9 – Roberto Cantoral

(<http://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=1509062>)

I studied / practised: Listening Practice – Listening for Detailed Comprehension

I learned (this could be anything, not just language):

I didn't realise this song was so popular – there are so many different versions of it! It seems the song was written for a film.

I noticed:

Al preso número nueve ya lo van a confesar.

El preso número nueve era hombre muy cabal.

Le confesé al sacerdote que había pecado. (This sounds here strange in Portuguese. Why not the subjective pronoun “yo”?)

Padre no me arrepiento ni me da miedo la eternidad.

Arrepentirse

Arrepentimiento

Arrepentido/da

**No me arrepiento de haber venido hasta acá.
No me arrepiento de haber regresado a mi país.
Yo creo que te hayas arrepentido de haber comido tanto.**

I would like to know: NEW VOCABULARY

Cabal – que tiene juicio y honradez.

Celda – en un cárcel, cuarto en el que se encierra a los presos.

My Spanish Log Sheet

Y POR ESO ESTOY SOLTERO

Date: April 21, 2016.

Learning Tool(s): Youtube Video Snippet:
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZHEX8Gdfe0>)

I studied/practiced: Listening Skills

I learned (this could be anything, not just language): Argentinians are funny. ¡Los argentinos pueden ser muy graciosos!

I noticed:

Probecito (Argentinian Pronunciation) “pobexiito”

Como se la soltería fuera....

Te importa si te saco una papa...

Yo no mido mis palabras. (Similar to the English – **measure your words**)

Decir cosas desubicadas en el momento más inoportuno

I was pleased with: the fact that I was able to listen to the passage as many times as I felt like it – not just two as we normally do in a typical language lesson!

I found the transcript of part of the snippet in his FB page and I noticed a sentence I would never have understood: a ti te regalaron la licencia de conducir o que...

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=141239999347608&story_fbid=175576409247300

My difficulties are: Some of the sentences are impossible to understand because of the speed with which he speaks, but my overall understanding was pretty good.

I would like to know:

Flojo – flojedad poco apretado / que tiene poca fuerza / descuidado

Si pudiera pasar las 24 horas del día comiendo, lo haría.

Si pudiera bajarte una estrella, lo haría.

Papas Fritas

Decir cosas desubicadas

My Spanish Log Sheet

A CHAT WITH ISIDRO

Date: April 28, 2016.

Learning Tool(s): Skype

I learned (this could be anything, not just language):

I noticed:

poder defenderte (en un idioma)

De todos modos, yo....

No me gusta hacer cómo los demás. Soy un poco extraño.

... super bien...

Hay días que pienso que estoy en Polonia!

Aunque yo no me doy cuenta....

...sacar la conversación de la gente...

Eso me ha hecho mejorar mucho.

Hoy en día...

... cometer errores...

I communicated with (name of partner) by (message, Skype, other):

Isidro by Skype

My difficulties are:

I was not able to say GIFTED:

Está muy dotado para los idiomas.

INTENTAR (I'm still getting it wrong.)

Escribir un folio = write a paper

Estoy haciendo (PRON)

Estás loco! (~~Es maluco~~)

Me ayuda a **retener** la información en mi mente. (Not "guardar" as in Portuguese)

Appendix 06: Sample Interactions – Transcriptions

Transcription Convention for protocols

(adapted from Tannen et al., 2007 cited in Fogle, 2012)

(words)	Single parentheses enclose instances of code switching, English instead of Spanish.
((words))	Double parentheses enclose transcriber's comments.
/words/	Slashes enclose uncertain transcriptions.
/???	Indicates unintelligible words.
...	Dots indicate silence (more dots indicate a longer silence).
CAPS	Capitals indicate emphatic sound.
<laugh>	Angle brackets enclose descriptions of vocal noises (e.g. laughs, coughs).
[PORT]	Square brackets enclose Portuguese words which may have been used, instead of their Spanish equivalent.
<u>Underline</u>	Underlined words indicate language mistakes.

All protocol translations are mine and will appear side by side with the original version.

Protocol 1 [Novice Stage]

Guilherme – G

Luis – L

This extract was part of our first interaction. Over a period of more than a month, I had prepared myself intensively to have an initial synchronous encounter. My personal agenda revolved around one single topic: "About Myself". This included a list of basic structures and chunks that I had picked up from watching Italki introductory videos by Spanish teachers.

G: Voy a decir que no hablo muy bien. Empecé a estudiar español hace un mes. Pero lo que pasa, primero, <u>primer</u> ((unsure about the use of the word)) soy brasileño, entonces, portugués <u>e</u> español...	G: Let me tell you that I don't speak very well. I started studying Spanish a month ago. What happens, first, firstly ((unsure about the use of the word)) I am Brazilian, so, Portuguese and Spanish...
L: ((completes the sentence for me)) ...se parecen.	L: ((completes the sentence for me)) ... are very much alike.
G: Sí, <u>e</u> también... porque... yo... he visitado muchos países en (Latin America), entonces, <u>hablaba</u> portuñol, pero... pero... tuve la oportunidad de escuchar... entonces, es más fácil por	G: Yes, also... because... I... have visited many countries in Latin America, so, I used to speak portuñol, but... but... I had the chance to listen to... so, it's easier because of that. But, formally, I have

<p>esto. Pero, formalmente, no he jamás estudiado español. Pero, ahora me <u>gustaría de</u> hablar correctamente.</p> <p>L: ¿Y llevas un mes solo?</p> <p>G: Sí.</p> <p>L: ¡<i>Guau!</i></p> <p>G: Porque yo leo muchísimo en español, <u>e</u> yo escucho español, entonces es un poco más fácil. Pero cuando empecé [há un mes atrás] era imposible hablar... porque pensaba ((using direct speech)): “Estoy hablando portugués todo el tiempo.” <u>E</u> para mí era [INSUPORTÁVEL] ((not exactly sure about the word)). Ahora porque estoy practicando, decidí escribir, decidí pensar un poco más... <u>Entento</u> ((not exactly sure about the word)) hacer algo en español por una hora todos los días. Esto es más o menos lo que puedo en este momento... porque realmente yo acredito en esto, aprender una lengua es exposición. Es poder practicar oralmente, escribir, leer... <u>se haces</u> con una regularidad ((not exactly sure about the word)) te vas a llegar donde quieres.</p> <p>L: Oye, te expresas muy bien en español.</p> <p>G: No, es muy difícil para mí. Yo estoy motivado... quiero mejorar... quiero aprender más.</p>	<p>never studied Spanish. But, now I'd like to speak correctly.</p> <p>L: And you've been studying for just a month?</p> <p>G: Yes.</p> <p>L: Wow.</p> <p>G: Because I read a lot in Spanish, and I listen to Spanish, so it's a little easier. But when I started, a month ago, it was impossible to speak... because I thought ((using direct speech)): “I'm speaking Portuguese all the time.” And for me it was unbearable ((not exactly sure about the word)). Now, because I've been practising, I decided to write, I decided to think a bit more, but... I try ((not exactly sure about the word)) to do something in Spanish for an hour every day. This is more or less what I can do at the moment... because I really believe that in this (strategy), learning a language is exposure. It's to be able to practise orally, to write, to read...if you do it regularly ((not exactly sure about the word)) you will get where you want.</p> <p>L: Trust me, you express yourself very well in Spanish.</p> <p>G: No, it's very difficult for me. I am motivated... I want to improve... I want to learn more.</p>
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Comments:

My initial interaction did not last longer than 15 minutes, after which, we switched back into English. It was made possible thanks to the number of memorised phrases and structures I had been learning during my initial contact hours with the Spanish language. During this initial interaction, I paused frequently to search for the right word or to read Luis's facial expressions for signs of understanding. Every nod was an encouragement for me to continue. I was pleased to see that my pronunciation was intelligible enough and did not seem to be a major issue. (This proved to be the case throughout the project. I was often complimented for my clear pronunciation.) From a linguistic perspective, I noticed how much I relied on **repetition** (cf. use of the adverb “pero”) and how I deliberately used **Portuguese** (cf. Pero cuando empecé há un mes atrás era imposible hablar...) possibly as a **communicative strategy** to keep the conversation going.

Overall, although the conversation was restricted to a single topic, I was able to sustain a reasonably effective performance and was pleased with that.

Protocol 2 [Novice Stage]

Guilherme – G

Luis - L

During one of our initial meetups in English, Luis and I discussed about the **role of error correction** in language teaching. This interaction comes from our beginning stage and shows Luis in the role of **language assessor**. Initially, this role was deemed important. In due time, we agreed to drop it because it seemed to slow down the pace of the conversation excessively. In this particular conversation, I was trying to explain to Luis why I was able to spend part of the week in São Paulo and part of the week in Rio de Janeiro, where my home is.

G: Entonces esto es lo que hago dos días de la semana, <u>e... e...</u> puedo hacerlo de donde quiera.	G: So, this is what I do for two days during the week, and... and... I can do it from wherever I want.
L: Sí. ((an attempt to show interest and encourage me to continue.))	L: OK. ((an attempt to show interest and encourage me to continue.))
G: Los otros tres días tengo que estar con un grupo de otros entrenadores y por esto me quedo en Rio de Janeiro	G: The other three days I have to be with a group of other trainers and, because of that, I stay in Rio.
L: Sí.	L: OK.
G: Para que ((uncertain of what to say)) podamos...	G: So as to ((uncertain of what to say)) so we can...
L: Sí. ((to signal that the verb was correct))	L: OK. ((to signal that the verb was correct))
G: ... <u>cambiar</u> ideas	G: ... change ideas.
L: Intercambiar ideas.	L: Exchange ideas.
G: ((I repeat) Intercambiar ideas.	((I repeat) Exchange ideas.
G: Voy a escribir para no <u>olvidar</u> .	G: I'll write it down, so that I don't forget.
L: Sí, claro.	L: Yes, of course.
G: Intercambiar ideas y decidir lo que nos gustaría hacer en el futuro... hay mucho espacio para prepararnos.	G: Exchange ideas and decide what we would like to do in the future... there's a lot of room for preparation.
L: Espacio, ¿a qué te refieres? Tiempo...	L: Room? What are you referring to? Time?

<p>G: Tiempo, sí,</p> <p>L: Espacio quiere decir lugar... dentro.</p> <p>G: Sí, nos dan mucho tiempo para preparar <u>e</u> pensar... porque es un trabajo... intelectual, en el sentido que estamos siempre... pensando el algo... una de las razones <u>por que</u> estoy <u>ententando</u> aprender...</p> <p>L: Por las que...</p> <p>G: Una de las razones por las que estoy <u>ententando</u> aprender español... en línea es que... es exactamente para saber cómo en el futuro puedo ayudar los alumnos a también... ((I change my mind about the sentence I want to build)) a ser un poco más independientes. Lo que pasa en Brasil es que todos los alumnos están acostumbrados a tener, en inglés <u>dimos</u>, (spoonfeed). Sabes... como una mamá... los alumnos brasileños son todos (spoonfed).</p> <p>L: ((Clearly understanding my point, but failing to translate the word into Spanish)): Pero esto no es culpa de los alumnos. Esto es culpa de los profesores, el sistema.</p> <p>G: Sí, claro. Por supuesto... pero <u>nosotros</u> nos gustaría enseñar la cuestión. ((rephrasing the thought)) Nos gustaría <u>enseñar los alumnos</u> a ser más [INDEPENDENTES].</p> <p>L: Enseñar a los alumnos, enseñar a alguien.</p> <p>G: Y yo estoy realmente ((rephrasing))... es increíble lo que... pu...do... pudo... lo que pudo hacer en dos meses...</p> <p>L: ¿Lo que tú has podido?</p> <p>G: Sí.</p>	<p>G: Yes, time.</p> <p>L: Space means a place... inside.</p> <p>G: Yes, they give us a lot of time to prepare and to think... because this type of work is... intellectual, in the sense that we are always... thinking about something... one of the reasons that I am trying to learn...</p> <p>G: Reasons why...</p> <p>G: One of the reasons why I'm trying to learn Spanish... online... is that... is exactly to know how in the future I'll be able to help students to also... ((I change my mind about the sentence I want to build)) to be a bit more independent. What happens in Brazil is all our students are used to being... in English we say "spoonfeed"... You know... like a mother... All Brazilian students are spoonfed.</p> <p>L: ((Clearly understanding my point, but failing to translate the word into Spanish)): But that is clearly not the students' fault. It's the teachers' fault, the system is to blame.</p> <p>G: Yes, absolutely. But we would like to teach the issue ((rephrasing the thought)) We would like to teach our students to become more independent.</p> <p>L: The verb "enseñar" is followed by the preposition "a".</p> <p>G: I am really ((rephrasing))... it's amazing what I... can... could... what I manage to do in two months...</p> <p>G: What you have managed to do?</p> <p>G: That's right.</p>
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L: ((Luis repeats the sentence in the first person)) Lo que yo he podido hacer en dos meses.	L: ((Luis repeats the sentence in the first person)) What I have managed to do in two months.
G: Lo que yo he podido hacer en dos meses... porque la verdad es que dos meses atrás no tendría... no podría hablar como estoy <u>ententando</u> hablar ahora contigo.	G: What I have managed to do in two months... because the truth is that two months ago I didn't have... I couldn't try to speak like I'm trying to speak with you now.
L: No hubiera podido, pero esto es difícil.	L: I couldn't have tried to speak, but that's kind of difficult.

Comments:

Some of the basic characteristics of a **teacher-student interaction** were present in the first four weeks of work and this extract is representative of that. Luis is trying to play the role of a teacher by (a) not saying too much and, thus, reducing his teacher talking time (cf. the use of “s” in the dialogue, an unusual move for someone who is generally very talkative and willing to give his opinion on any subject matter). I try to play along by behaving like a good student (cf. my attitude towards new vocabulary: “I’ll write it down, so that I don’t forget.”). As I become self-conscious of the number of mistakes I make, however, my contributions also become more limited. Interestingly enough, when I switched into English to explain how teachers tend to “spoonfeed” students, he was not able to provide me with what would have been the obvious translation “se lo da todo mascado a sus alumnos”. It seemed to me that Luis was so predisposed to play the role of a language assessor that he was not actually listening to content. From a more linguistic perspective, it is interesting to notice the number of **typical Portuguese interference mistakes** that appear in the conversation (cf. the use of the conjunction “and” and the verb “to try”).

Protocol 3 [Novice Stage]

Guilherme – G

Luis - L

This conversation was typical of our beginning stage when we tended to start out meetups with the same questions: *How are you today?* and *How was your week?*, when we met on a Saturday. These repeated questions provided me with a safe scaffolding to begin talking and I would always rehearse possible answers to them.

L: ¿Qué tal tu semana?	L: So, how was your week?
G: Mi semana. Una semana muy normal.	G: My week. A regular week.
L: ¿Sí?	L: Meaning?
G: Sí. No hice nada muy importante porque no tuve que visitar escuelas, <u>simplesmente</u> me quedé en mi despacho e trabajé en muchos (reports), no me acuerdo como decir (reports) en español.	G: I didn't do anything important. I didn't have to visit any schools. I just stayed in the office working on a number of reports. Reports, I don't actually remember how to say it in Spanish.

<p>L: Informes.</p> <p>G: ((I repeat the word.)) Informes, sí, claro. ¡Gracias! Escribí como que doce o trece informes</p> <p>L: Uf...</p> <p>G: Sí, es un poco aburrido, pero como visité muchas escuelas, ahora tengo que también poder [colocar no papel] para que todos tengan la misma información, porque, yo trabajo con una cosa que es muy [sensível] porque voy a asistir clases y después tengo <u>de</u> decir algo para que puedan mejorar un poco.</p> <p>L: Es complicado, las críticas constructivas, ¿no?</p> <p>G: Exactamente. Es tan difícil hacer las críticas constructivas, así que lo que hago es, primero, hablo con el profesor, porque quiero escuchar lo que <u>tien</u> a decir de su clase y porque tomo ciertas decisiones. Claro, hay siempre un libro que puedes seguir, pero muchos profesores deciden hacer otras cosas. Este es un problema porque muchas veces toman decisiones que no son tan buenas.</p> <p>L: Decisiones no pensadas, decisiones no reflexionadas, ¿no?</p> <p>G: Si, decisiones no pensadas. La verdad es que siempre dicen que pensaron con cuidado, entonces tengo que decir: ((using direct speech)) “Mira, lo que pasó...”. Todo eso para llegar a un consenso, a un medio término... ((not sure about either of the two words)) de lo que sea una buena clase. Esto es lo más importante, por lo que mi papel no es <u>de</u> [auditar]. Mi papel es <u>de</u> ayudar <u>al</u> <u>profesores</u> a mejorar como <u>profesionales</u>. Pero cuando termino, tengo que escribir un informe para los gerentes.</p>	<p>L: Informes.</p> <p>G: ((I repeat the word.)) That’s it, informes. Thank you. I wrote about twelve or thirteen reports.</p> <p>L: Whew...</p> <p>G: Yes, I know, it’s a little boring, but because I visited many schools, now I have to put it down on paper, so that everyone has the same piece of information because I work with very sensitive material. I watch lessons and then I have to say something that may help teachers improve a little.</p> <p>L: It sounds complicated, you know, constructive feedback?</p> <p>G: Exactly. It’s so difficult to give constructive feedback, so what I do is, first I talk to the teacher because I want to hear what they have to say about their group and why they has taken certain decisions. Of course, there’s always a book you can follow, but most teachers decide to do other stuff. Sometimes it’s a problem because they take decisions which are not so good.</p> <p>L: You mean, unreflected decisions, decisions they haven’t thought through, right?</p> <p>G: That’s right. Unreflected decisions. The truth is they always say they have thought things through, so I need to say to them: ((using direct speech)) “Look at what happened...”. I do that so that we can come to a consensus, a happy medium ((not sure about either of the two words)). A consensus as to what a good lesson is. This is crucial because my role is not that of an audit. My role is to help teachers become better professionals. But when I finish I have to write a report to the managers.</p>
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<p>L: Directores.</p> <p>G: Para los directores. Esto es un poco más problemático, porque para los directores es siempre [preto] o blanco. No hay nada en el medio. Es como se fuera: ((using direct speech)) “Quiero profesores perfectos”. Pero no existen.</p> <p>L: Claro, porque la persona perfecta no existe.</p> <p>G: Sí, pero a los directores <u>le gustaría tener</u>, <u>le gustaría</u>... <u>le gustaría tener</u> profesores casi perfectos ((I’m clearly unsure about the use of the verb here)).</p> <p>L: Tú tienes una mirada muy objetiva porque eres profesor y psicólogo. Tu mirada es muy objetiva, es muy realista, ¿no? Esto es muy bueno, es genial.</p>	<p>L: School directors.</p> <p>G: To the directors. This is slightly more complicated because for them the lesson is always black or white. There’s nothing in between. It’s as if they were saying ((using direct speech)): “I want perfect teachers.” But they don’t exist.</p> <p>L: Of course, because the perfect individual does not exist.</p> <p>G: Yes, but directors would like, they like, they would like their teachers to be almost perfect. ((I’m clearly unsure about the use of the verb here)).</p> <p>L: Your outlook towards a lesson is more objective because you are both a teacher and a psychologist. You’re more objective and realistic, aren’t you? This is wonderful.</p>
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Comments:

It seems clear from this interaction that Luis is genuinely interested in what I have to share. To a certain extent, this is what motivates me to continue talking. As I get to know Luis more closely, I also begin to feel more confident and more relaxed about using the language. I realise that I am able to **communicate minimally and without difficulty when responding to direct questions**. My pauses are often perceived as a “cry for help” and Luis is able to **scaffold the work** efficiently by providing me with extra vocabulary (cf. the way he introduces “críticas constructivas” and “decisiones no pensadas”) into the conversation. From a linguistic perspective, it is clear that some of the **basic Portuguese Interference mistakes**, common to most Brazilian speakers, are also recurrent in my attempt to speak Spanish. Typical also is my difficulty with the use of the verb “gustar”, a problem for many learners of Spanish as a foreign language.

Protocol 4 [Novice Stage]

Luis was very conscious of the need to switch into Spanish after the first 30 minutes of conversation and does so immediately after the clock struck 5:30 a.m. For a minute, I assume he is asking for help with the expression, so I translate it into English.

Guilherme – G

Luis – L

<p>L: Es totalmente cierto.</p> <p>G: You've got a point, is what we say in English. ((I type in the expression. Luis repeats it in English and carries on in Spanish.))</p> <p>L: Es totalmente cierto.</p> <p>G: Porque estamos.... <with a rising tone indicating surprise></p> <p>L: Toca español.</p> <p>G: Oh, God!</p> <p>L: Que te pasa. Ultimamente estas un poco reacio a hablar español. Cuando cambiamos a español dices <mocking tone> "Oh, God!" ¿Estás saltándote del español?</p> <p>G: Es porque es muy temprano en Brasil e mi <u>cerebro</u> no está funcionando tan bien...</p> <p>L: Pues arráncalo. Que empiece a funcionar. <laughter></p> <p>G: <u>Arráncalo</u>. Exactamente lo que voy a hacer.</p>	<p>L: "Es totalmente cierto."</p> <p>G: You've got a point, is what we say in English. ((I type the expression. Luis repeats it in English and carries on in Spanish.))</p> <p>L: "Es totalmente cierto."</p> <p>G: Why are we....? <with a rising tone indicating surprise></p> <p>L: Time to switch into Spanish.</p> <p>G: Oh, God!</p> <p>L: What's wrong with you? Lately you've been a little reluctant to speak Spanish. Whenever we change to Spanish you say: <mocking tone> "Oh, God!" Are you deserting the ship?</p> <p>G: It's because it's way too early in Brazil and my brain is not working well...</p> <p>L: Then boot it up. Make it work. <laughter></p> <p>G: Rip it off. That's exactly what I intend to do.</p>
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Comments:

This brief interaction illustrates how important it was for me to exchange languages with someone who was fully aware of the need for both languages to be practised. It reflects our *modus operandi* based on constant mutual growth and improvement. Luis was seriously concerned about what seemed to be my utter lack of interest in speaking Spanish. It also highlights one of the key problems faced by synchronous e-learning students, i.e., **adapting to differences in time zone**. The five-hour difference between Brazil and Spain and the need to begin at 5:00 a.m. is clearly taking its toll on my side.

From a linguistic perspective, it is also interesting to notice how I misread the meaning of the **false cognate** “arrancar” in this context and responded in a way that made no sense in the context.

Protocol 5 [Novice Stage]

Luis started off discussing the Big Brother reality show in Spain and the way some of his acquaintances were hooked on it. Once again, it seemed natural to keep to the same topic.

Guilherme – G

Luis – L

<p>L: Muchas gracias. ((I had just explained the meaning of a word in English to him. Luis realises we had been speaking for 30 minutes and switches into Spanish automatically.))</p> <p>G: De nada. <laugh></p> <p>L: <laugh> Por fin puedo hablar en español. Por lo que estaba diciendo, no quiero que me interpretes mal, ni pienses que tengo la verdad absoluta y estoy juzgando a la gente. Cada uno es libre de hacer lo que quiera y yo lo respeto.</p> <p>G: Sí, claro.</p> <p>L: Pero, yo jamás participaría.</p> <p>G: Sí, yo tampoco. Primero porque no podría jamás me... estar cerrado... en una casa... por tanto tiempo... porque me gusta salir, me gusta ver gente... también esto es un problema <u>del puente</u> de vista psicológico. ((Luis interrupts me.))</p> <p>L: Desde el punto de vista psicológico.</p> <p>G: Desde el <u>punto</u> de vista psicológico... no es... natural... que las personas ve... ((I'm not sure of the verb form.)) vean solamente... dos, tres, cuatro, cinco personas... Hay que <u>ententar</u> ver muchas personas, personas diferentes, e... entonces, no es bueno para nosotros, para <u>nuestro</u>... ((hesitantly)) <u>nostra</u>... nuestra mente. Tenemos que [variar]... ((I remember the word in Spanish and</p>	<p>L: Thank you. ((I had just explained the meaning of a word in English to him. Luis realises we had been speaking for 30 minutes and switches into Spanish automatically.))</p> <p>G: You're welcome. <laugh></p> <p>L: <laugh> I can finally speak in Spanish. As I was saying, I don't want to be misunderstood. I don't want you to think I have the absolute truth and that I'm judging people. Everyone is free to do what they want and I respect that.</p> <p>G: Yes, of course.</p> <p>L: But I couldn't take part (in the programme).</p> <p>G: Neither could I. First of all, because I could never... be enclosed... in a house... for so long... because I like to go out, I like to see people... from a psychological point of view this is also... ((Luis interrupts me.))</p> <p>L: Psychological POINT of view.</p> <p>G: From a psychological point of view ... it's not... natural... that people should see... ((I'm not sure of the verb form.)) only see... two, three, four, five people... You have to try and see many people, different people, and... so, it's not good for us, for us... ((hesitantly)) ours... our mind. We have to change ((I remember the word in Spanish and correct myself)) vary. We need variety</p>
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<p>correct myself)) cambiar. Tenemos que cambiar <u>e</u>, entonces, estar cerrado en un [única] casa por más de <u>un</u> o dos días es muy difícil. (...) Prefiero tener la [liberdade] de hacer cosas diferentes que... también en el programa para mí... el mayor problema es saber que hay una camera que te [filma] todo el tiempo</p>	<p>and, then, to be closed-in in one house for one or two days, that's very hard. (...) I'd rather have my freedom, freedom to do different things... also one of the problems for me... the biggest problem is to know there is a camera recording everything all the time.</p>
<p>L: Si, que te está enfocando...</p>	<p>L: Yes, you become the focus of attention.</p>
<p>G: Si, que me está enfocando todo el tiempo. Para mí, esto también es un problema porque... mira, cuando empecé a trabajar con educación a distancia... el mayor... problema que tuve fue exactamente poder... acostum... ((I am unsure about the pronoun.)) acostumbrarme con esta cosita ((pointing at the webcam)) porque el principio para mí era cómo si... ((using direct speech)) "Ohhh, que malo..." porque no puedo [simplesmente] escucharme... porque tengo que estar... es una cosa increíble... ((Luis interrupts me.))</p>	<p>G: Yes, you become the main focus of attention. For me, this is also a big problem for me because... you see, when I began to work with distance education... the biggest... problem I had to get ... used... ((I am unsure about the pronoun.)) to get myself used to speaking to this thingy ((pointing at the webcam)) because in the beginning it was as if...((using direct speech)) "Ohhh, how bad..." Why can't they just listen to me? ... why do I have to be... it's an incredible thing... ((Luis interrupts me.))</p>
<p>L: Perdón, pero yo creo que al principio... ellos están... muy incómodos... influenciados con las cameras. Cuando pasan los días el cuerpo humano se acostumbra a todo.</p>	<p>L: Sorry, I think in the beginning... we all get... we all feel uncomfortable... influenced by the camera. But as the days go by the human body gets used to to everything.</p>
<p>G: Sí.</p>	<p>G: Yes.</p>
<p>L: Ellos se acostumbran y ya actúan como si no hubiese cameras. /???</p>	<p>L: They get used to it and act as if the cameras were not there. /???</p>
<p>G: Sí, yo tengo una amiga que es actriz. Ella ((I pronounce the word with a Latin American accent and correct myself.)) Ella me dice que la misma cosa... que tener dos o tres cameras no es un problema porque <u>e</u>l olvida de las cameras, entonces, es normal.</p>	<p>G: Yes, I have a friend who's an actress. She ((I pronounce the word with a Latin American accent and correct myself.)) She tells me the same thing ... to have two or three cameras is not a problem because she forgets about them. It's normal.</p>
<p>L: A mí, por ejemplo... el otro día, no... el otro día, hace una semana más o menos fue a ver un <i>meeting</i> político, ¿sí?</p>	<p>L: In my case, for example... the other day... the other day, roughly a week ago I went to a political rally, get it?</p>
<p>G: Sí.</p>	<p>G: Yes.</p>

<p>L: La primera vez en mi vida... que venían aquí a Alicante. Me quedé asombrado, porque cuando el entró... no te exagero... veinte cameras, cómo unas cameras de estas grandes. Él estaba aquí en el medio y tenía veinte cameras al alrededor... VEINTE. Y yo me pregunto: “¿Cómo una persona puede aguantar eso?” No sé, a mí me es difícil creer que te puedes acostumbrar a eso. Pero... al parecer, sí. Cuando seamos famosos lo veremos. <laugh></p>	<p>L: The first one in my life... they came to Alicante. I was amazed, because when he came in... I'm not exaggerating ... twenty cameras, like big ones. He was in the middle and there were twenty cameras around him... TWENTY. And I ask myself: “How can a person put up with that?” I've no idea. It's very difficult to imagine one could get used to that. But... it is possible. When we're both famous, we'll find out. <laugh></p>
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Comments:

Three weeks into my beginning stage of learning and my utterances become lengthier, a possible sign that I am getting more used to speaking in Spanish, even if the linguistic problems described in previous protocols still remain. The subject of today's meetup is being co-constructed by Luis and me and now Luis feels the need to clarify some of the points he had made during our English exchange. He seems in dire need not to lose face. It is our eleventh meetup and we both feel the urge to “look good” to one another. From a linguistic perspective, this is reassuring because I have a clear idea where the conversation is heading and listening becomes easy as I am able to predict part of the content which lies ahead.

As my utterances get bigger, I also realise that I am more aware of some basic pitfalls and I begin to test some hypothesis as I go along (e.g. nosotros, nuestro, nostra, nuestra mente). Luis waits patiently while I decide on the most suitable form.

At this stage I am equally aware of the need to keep the conversation going and I am ready to share a few details of my personal life (e.g. when I mention my friend, the actress) as a means to avoid long embarrassing moments of silence. Luis does the same and mentions the political rally he had just attended. This is important because it initiates a pattern common to our work whereby participation is characterised by extended sequences of exchanges in which our personal narratives will unfold. (The internal “syllabus” of our language “courses” would eventually emerge from that.)

Protocol 6 [Novice Stage]

We started this conversation talking about stereotypes. Luis was preparing himself to sit for the FCE examination and sometimes he brought typical exam questions for our practices. Commonly, our conversations would go off to other subjects, as we remembered and shared everyday stories that may have happened to us. My narrative of a trip to the US is an example of that.

<p>L: Sí, aquí somos bastante más extrovertidos. Sí, yo creo que comparado, sobre todo con Inglaterra, somos gente mucho más... España tiene también esa idea de fiesta, no sé qué, y además...</p> <p>G: No es exactamente fiesta todo el tiempo, es un <u>nivel</u> ((I correct by own pronunciation)) nivel de informalidad que para mí es muy confortable porque <u>se te vas</u>... incluso, por ejemplo, cuando tuvo la oportunidad de viajar por un mes en los Estados Unidos, porque mía hermana vivía en (New Orleans), Nueva, (well, New Orleans)...</p> <p>L: Ajá. ((Luis nods his head as if to encourage me to continue)).</p> <p>G: Y tendría un (ticket) especial que <u>me permetería irme</u> a donde <u>quiera</u>... un (stand-by ticket). Por ejemplo, podría irme al aeropuerto y decir: ((using direct speech)) "Quiero <u>irme</u> a Washington." Y si hubiera una silla libre... en el vuelo... podría entrar e irme. Entonces visité casi que cómo 15 ciudades americanas en un periodo de 40 días.</p> <p>L: ((tries to but in)) Sí...</p> <p>G: Siempre <u>volvendo</u> a la casa de mi hermana para...</p> <p>L: Pues para dormir.</p> <p>G: No necesariamente para dormir, porque muchas veces... era muy conveniente podría [passar] ((correcting myself)) podría <u>me</u> quedar 3 o 4 días en Nueva York con una, una, no con una cosa muy grande...</p>	<p>L: Yes, we're more of a nation of extroverts. Well, if we compare ourselves to others, especially with England, then I guess we are much more...Spain has this thing about partying all the time and so on.</p> <p>G: I don't think it's actually partying all the time, it's a level of ((I correct by own pronunciation)) it's a level of informality which is very comfortable to me, personally, because if you... including, for instance, when I had the opportunity to travel around the US, because my sister was living in Nueva, well, New Orleans.</p> <p>L: Uhum. ((Luis nods his head as if to encourage me to continue)).</p> <p>G: I had a special ticket which allowed me to go where I wanted to go... a stand-by pass. For instance. I could go to the airport and say: ((using direct speech)) "I'd like to go to Washington, please." And if there was an empty seat... in the plane.. I could just get in and go. That's how I managed to visit something like 15 different American cities in a period of 40 days.</p> <p>L: ((tries to but in)) I see...</p> <p>G: Always returning to my sister's to...</p> <p>L: In order to sleep.</p> <p>G: Not necessarily to sleep, because many times I'd...it'd be more convenient to spend ((correcting myself)) I could spend 3 or 4 days in New York with a, you know, something that is not very big.</p>
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<p>L: Ah, una mochila.</p> <p>G: Exactamente, una mochila... y después iría de nuevo a New Orleans para lavar la ropa, descansar un poco e después <u>una</u> otra viaje a San Francisco, no importa dónde.</p> <p>L: ¿Hiciste un poco muchilero, no?</p> <p>G: Sí, sí, la única vez que tuve la oportunidad de hacer un poco muchilero, muy informal, (playing it by ear). La verdad es que no me importaba dónde <u>irme</u>, quería visitar ciudades.</p>	<p>L: Ah, a backpack.</p> <p>G: Exactly, a backpack... and then I'd go back to New Orleans to wash my clothes, to rest a little and then afterwards one more trip to San Francisco, or no matter where.</p> <p>L: So you've been a bit of a backpacker?</p> <p>G: Yes, I guess this was the only chance I've ever had to be one, something a little more informal, playing it by ear. The truth is I didn't really care where I was going. I just wanted to visit American cities.</p>
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Comments:

Towards the end of my beginning stage, I feel comfortable talking to Luis about most subjects and do not worry about having a pre-established agenda in mind. As a consequence, the conversations begin to flow more naturally. In general, I still feel reluctant to ask questions, but I try to answer Luis's questions with confidence and ease. In general, my utterances seem natural enough and not just expansions of learned materials and stock phrases: the purpose of the interaction is clearly communicative and Luis helps me along the way (cf. my struggle in explaining "backpack" and his help with the word and later his introduction of the term "backpacker" in the conversation, possibly as a means of expanding my vocabulary range).

As I gain confidence, I am able to contradict Luis more frequently and this extract carries two examples of that (cf. the use of "no es exactamente.." and "no necesariamente..."). From a more linguistic perspective, it is interesting to notice how I use sentences in direct speech as a linguistic strategy, i.e. **simplification**, in an attempt to facilitate the task of communicating. Interestingly enough, this strategy is used continually until the end of this investigation and points out to a clear language limitation to be addressed in the future.

Protocol 7 [Novice Stage]

This interaction starts with 20 minutes of a chat in English in which Luis, having learnt that I also work as a psychotherapist, brought up the topic of ADHD. When the time came for us to talk in Spanish, I assumed the logical thing to do would be to keep to the same topic.

Guilherme – G

Luis - L

<p>G: Vamos a mantener <u>e</u>l mismo [assunto]... (ADHD) no es una cuestión de medicar las [crianças] pero sí de poder... tener un tipo diferente de educación ... una escuela que no sea en un [espaço] cerrado... las [crianças] ... los chicos <u>e</u> chicas tienen mucha energía. Hay que haber un canal para...</p>	<p>G: Let's keep to the same subject, shall we? ... (ADHD) it's not a question of medicating children with ADHD ... to have a different kind of education ... a school which is not a closed-in space ... children ... boys and girls have a lot of energy. There is a channel ...</p>
<p>L: Perdona. TIENE que haber un canal.</p>	<p>L: Sorry to interrupt. There's got to be a channel.</p>
<p>G: Gracias, tiene que haber un canal para ... ((not sure how to say what I want to say in Spanish)) voy a intentar ... [colocar su energía para fuera]...</p>	<p>G: Thanks, there's got to be a channel ... ((not sure how to say what I want to say in Spanish)) let me try ... [put energy out]...</p>
<p>L: Lo dijiste bien, te entendería perfectamente... ((correcting me)) GASTAR su energía.</p>	<p>L: Well said, I would have understood you... ((correcting me)) SPEND their energy.</p>
<p>G: Si, claro, gastar su energía. Muchas veces van a medicar una [criança] que no necesita de medicación... Hay algo..... es como una... es como una [moda] ... ((looking for confirmation he understands the word 'moda')) sabes?</p>	<p>G: Yes, of course, spend their energy. Very often a child who doesn't need medication will be medicated... There's something..... like a... like a fad ... ((looking for confirmation he understands the word 'fad')) you know?</p>
<p>L: Es un poco lo que te estoy diciendo que ... yo creo que es urgente, como dices tú, que suele tener mucha energía y le cuesta mucho canalizar ... canalizar ((looking for confirmation of my understanding of the word 'canalizar'))).</p>	<p>L: It's what I'm telling you ... it's urgent you know, like you said, they have a lot of energy and it's difficult to channel all this energy ... channel ((looking for confirmation of my understanding of the word 'channel'))).</p>
<p>G: Sí, claro.</p>	<p>G: Yes, of course.</p>
<p>L: Canalizar su energía, les cuesta mucho. Y, bueno, yo pienso, lo creo que cuando ellos saben canalizar su energía ... son muy productivos.</p>	<p>L: It's hard for them to channel so much energy. Well, I think, I believe when they can channel this energy ... they're more productive.</p>

<p>G: ¡Sí, claro!</p> <p>L: Por ejemplo, yo cuando ... a mí me cuesta a veces mantener la atención ... pero cuando estoy trabajando, me centro totalmente y me ... no sé cómo decirlo... <laugh> me evado de todo, evado... ((looking for confirmation)) Me abstraigo ... la entiendes?</p> <p>G: (I think... Just a quick comment in English, then we'll go back to Spanish. I think what you are saying is the line that separates a normal life and ADDH is very subtle. There's a very fine line... ((I type "a very fine line" on the chat box.)) A very thin line that separates the two. You also said something very important which is... ADDH, or people with a lot of energy, they need challenges.)</p> <p>L: (Yes), sí. Español. <laugh></p> <p>G: Yo creo que lo que intentaba decir es que necesitamos de los... desafíos ((hesitant – not sure about the word 'desafíos')).</p> <p>L: Si, si, desafíos, ((changing the subject to compliment my level of Spanish)) hablas genial español.</p> <p>G: Recuerdas que muchas palabras son parecidas en portugués e español.</p> <p>L: Pero to te quites mérito. Me refiero, sí que es cierto que muchas palabras son parecidas, pero si ahora mismo me pongo a hablar también fallaría, prácticamente no tengo que corregirte. Yo estoy impresionado. De verdad es que hablas muy bien español.</p> <p>G: Gracias, entonces los desafíos son muy importantes para que los niños puedan [FOCAR]...</p>	<p>G: Absolutely!</p> <p>L: For instance, when I ... I often have problems concentrating and focusing ... but when I'm at work, I'm totally focused and I ... don't know how to say it... <laugh> I escape... ((looking for confirmation)) I disengage from anything else ... you get it?</p> <p>G: (I think... Just a quick comment in English, then we'll go back to Spanish. I think what you are saying is the line that separates a normal life and ADDH is very subtle. There's a very fine line... ((I type "a very fine line" on the chat box.)) A very thin line that separates the two. You also said something very important which is... ADDH, or people with a lot of energy, they need challenges.)</p> <p>L: (Yes), yes. In Spanish! <laugh></p> <p>G: I think what I was trying to say is we need... challenges ((hesitant – not sure about the word 'challenges')).</p> <p>L: Yes, yes, challenges ((changing the subject to compliment my level of Spanish)). Your Spanish is great.</p> <p>G: Remember – many words are similar in Spanish and Portuguese.</p> <p>L: Still, it's your merit. I mean, of course some of the words are similar, but when I speak I also make mistakes, and there's very little for me to correct in your Spanish. I'm impressed. It's true, you speak very good Spanish.</p> <p>G: Thanks, well, then challenges are very important for children to focus...</p>
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L: Centrar. Sí, centrarse. ((Luis types “centrarse” in the chatbox)).	L: Concentrate. Yes, concentrate on. ((Luis types “concentrate on” in the chatbox)).
G: Centrarse, gracias. Yo creo también que [REALIZAR] ejercicios físicos es fundamental – para todos.	G: Concentrate on, thanks. I also believe that to do physical exercises is very important – to all of us.

Comments:

This protocol shows a typical interaction from the beginning stage of my learning. Having spoken about ADDH in English for roughly 20 minutes, Luis now assumes the status of listener, allowing me to try and express myself in Spanish. He corrects me at times (e.g. he butts in when I say “hay que haber”) but, for the most part, he is an attentive listener, encouraging me with his silence. As is often the case, Luis gets out of his way to comment on how good my Spanish is. He also scaffolds my learning by suggesting more appropriate options to my original utterances (e.g. “colocar su energía para fuera”/“gastar su energía”). This is similar to many other instances in the course of our exchanges for this initial period. As usual, this conversation is typically communicative and Luis acts as a co-participant, being genuinely interested in what I have to say.

From a linguistic perspective, some typical features of my early attempts to speak Spanish include (a) **Portuguese interference mistakes** (e.g. using interchangeably the Brazilian word for children “crianças” and the Spanish equivalent “chicos y chicas”; (b) a **hesitant speech pattern** due to my constant search for words and my internal monitoring of language; (c) a need to **code-switch** into English as a linguistic strategy to clarify a point or simply an attempt to have a break from my painstaking attempt to speak Spanish.

Protocol 8 [Sample Teacher/Student Interaction]

Guilherme – G
Daniel - D

This is an example of a typical interaction with my Colombian teacher, Daniel. I started having lessons with him 9 weeks into my learning experience, at a moment when Luis was having problems at work and needed to leave home earlier. As I could not find any other Italki member to exchange languages with, I decided that having lessons would be the most logical way to have exposure to the spoken language. In this interaction, I am trying to explain to Daniel (himself an MA holder) what my dissertation was about.

G: Mira, lo que pasa conmigo ahora es que... ahora es el momento de la investigación. Puedo, claro, empezar a escribir algo, pero la investigación... que deseo hacer no va a terminar hasta julio, o... a... agosto, porque lo que estoy investigando es la posibilidad de aprender una lengua en medio... virtual, en línea. Entonces, no puedo escribir algo ahora porque es muy temprano. Todavía tengo três meses adelante. Entonces, imagino que en tres meses voy a mejorar	G: Listen, what is happening to me right now is... right now I am investigating my own learning. Of course I could start to write, but the investigation... the investigation I set out to do will not be finished before July, or... or August, because I'm investigating the possibility of learning a language in a virtual environment, I mean, online. So, I cannot write anything right now because it's too early. I still have three months ahead of me. So, I imagine that in three months I
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<p>un poco más. Entonces, no puedo escribir algo ahora. Sí, claro, tengo que hacer un diario, toda semana tengo que pensar en lo que aprendí, cómo practiqué, <u>se</u> tuve suerte de hablar con un o dos compañeros, <u>se</u> tuve clases, no importa, todo. Y tengo que escribir cómo fue la semana, como se fuera un diario de un adolescente, pero [focando]... pero, no puedo hablar de resultados porque es muy temprano.</p> <p>D: Sí, pero te doy un consejo. Si yo estuviera en tu situación, lo haría una cosa: yo veo que tú tienes un nivel avanzado porque tú me entiendes todo y, bueno, puedes mantener una conversación conmigo. Cuando hago un proyecto, cuando hago una tesis, como tal, siempre busco separarlas por fases. Por ejemplo, voy empezar hablando de mi proceso de aprendizaje, sí. Esta fue la primera fase, sí, voy hablar de lo que pasó, cómo tuve que buscar una página web, no sé qué, ta, ta, ta... (???) ... fase transición, y voy explicando todo, así que te aconsejo que vayas fase por fase hasta que llegue al momento final cuando la mayor parte de la tesis estará más o menos lista.</p> <p>G: Es un muy buen consejo, en verdad..., de hecho, es lo que voy <u>ententar</u> hacer ahora. En los próximos diez días. Porque yo veo claramente dos fases: la primera fase cuando decidí, cuando volví de Patagonia y decidí: "No quiero más hablar simplemente portuñol. Quiero poder estructurar un poco... la verdad es que... sentía vergüenza de hablar español en Argentina y simplemente era más fácil hablar en inglés. Cuando decidí que quería aprender, yo percibí que tenía exactamente este problema, porque... pensé: "Voy a Italki, voy a invitar dos o tres personas a <u>cambiar</u> lenguas, personas que yo pueda enseñar inglés...que puedan me enseñar español, pero lo que <u>se</u> pasó en verdad, por el primero mes [<u>inteiro</u>] es que yo estaba ((correcting myself)) estuve enseñando inglés, pero cuando era la hora de</p>	<p>will improve a little more. So, I cannot write anything now. Well, of course, I have to write, I write a diary, every week I think about what I learnt, how I practised, if I was lucky to speak to a friend, if i had lessons, it doesn't matter. I have to write how things went every week, like a teenage who writes a diary, but focusing... but I cannot talk about results because it's very early.</p> <p>D: Of course, but here's some advice. If I were in your situation, this is what I'd do: I can see you have an advanced level because you can understand everything I say and, well, you can maintain a conversation with me. When I have to do a project, a dissertation so to speak, I always like to divide things up in phases. For example, I'd start talking about my own learning process, this would be phase 1. I would talk about what happened, how I used Internet pages, whatever else I may have done... (???) ... transitional phase, and I go on explaining everything. So, I advise you to go phase by phase until you reach the final moment, when the bulk of the dissertation will be more or less ready.</p> <p>G: This is a great piece of advice, really. In fact, this is what I'll be trying to do now. Within the next 10 days. Because I can clearly see two phases: the first phase when I decided to, when I got back from Patagonia and decided: "I don't want to speak portuñol." I want to structure my sentences more... the truth is... I was ashamed to speak Spanish in Argentina and it was a lot easier to use English. When I decided that I wanted to learn (Spanish) I realised I had exactly this problem, because... I thought: "I'm going to join Italki, I'm going to invite two or three people to do language exchanges, people I can teach English to... people I can learn Spanish from, but what happened in reality was, during the first whole month was that I was...((correcting myself)) I was teaching English, but when it was time to change into Spanish, I would say: "I don't want to." I was very much afraid.</p>
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<p>cambiar, yo inmediatamente decía: “No quiero”. Tenía mucho miedo. Lo que me ayudó en esta primera fase fue poder empezar a escribir. Primero, empecé a escribir cosas muy chiquitas y me puse a intentar aprender, memorizar frases y expresiones que [podría] usar en un primero momento. Esto me ayudó muchísimo.</p>	<p>What helped me in this first phase was to start writing. First, I started to write really short texts and I began to learn, memorise phrases and expressions which I could use in the beginning to start a conversation. This helped me a lot.</p>
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Comments:

I have decided to include this interaction to demonstrate how it does not differ from the informal interactions with language partners. Daniel is aware of my need to talk freely in Spanish and responds accordingly. In this particular case, we are discussing a topic that is reasonably “safe” and I am able to develop my argument in a clear and confident manner. This extract seems to place me beyond the typical A1/A2 level. My need to use memorised phrases diminishes. My choice of structures goes beyond basic structure patterns. I am able to link a series of sentences into a connected, sequence of points (a characteristic which is clearly B1 in level). If we compare, for instance, the length of my speech with that of my teacher’s, it seems clear that there is not much difference between them.

Protocol 9 [Sample Teacher/Student Interaction]

Guilherme – G
Daniel – D

This extract is particularly important because it attends to a special moment in Daniel’s lesson when he goes over my most glaring mistakes systematically. These instances of delayed correction are possibly the only way in which my lessons with Daniel were different from a regular language exchange, and therefore, deserve attention.

<p>G: No [comprendo]... porque para mí un juego de fútbol es siempre un trabajo de equipo, como tú <u>dicemelo</u>.</p>	<p>G: I don’t get it. Because football is always about teamwork, like you said me.</p>
<p>D: Como tú me lo dices. OK, bueno. ¿Te gustaría que revisáramos?</p>	<p>D: Like you told me. OK, well. Shall we revise now?</p>
<p>G: Sí, claro, por favor.</p>	<p>G: Yes, please, of course.</p>
<p>D: Muy bien. La clase pasada no alcanzamos a terminar. Te voy a compartir mi pantalla... ((Daniel shares his screen with me.)) para que sea un poquito más fácil... Para hablar de tu trabajo, use “investigación”. Es que “pesquisa” suena muy portugués.</p>	<p>D: Very well. Last class we didn’t get to do that. Let me first share my screen with you... ((Daniel shares his screen with me.)) it will be a little easier for you... In order to talk about the work you are doing, use the word “investigación”. Because “pesquisa” sounds like Portuguese.</p>
<p>G: OK, gracias.</p>	<p>G: Sure, thanks.</p>

<p>Entonces, leyendo... ((On the screen: Estoy leyendo...) Acá..., en portugués ustedes utilizan el verbo “tener”. Nosotros utilizamos el verbo “haber”. Yo he hablado, escrito. ((On the screen: Yo he escrito...)). ((Daniel writes another example)) “A mí me han invitado a trabajar en el equipo de ellos.” Sí, o me han invitado para que yo trabaje con ellos. ((Daniel conjugates the verb forms)) Yo he, tú has, él ha, nosotros hemos, ellos han. Aquí este es el artículo neutro, sí, el “lo”. A veces no le estas utilizando. Es importante usarlo. Ayer te di un ejemplo: ¿Compraste la casa? Entonces, la respuesta es: “Sí, la compré.” ¿Compraste el carro? “Sí, lo compré.” Poquito más de, reforzar un poquito más los, el objeto directo. “La verdad es que...” A veces suena cómo “La verdad e...” Que te suene un poquito más la “s”.</p> <p>G: La verdad es que...</p> <p>D: Aquí, salió un poquito el portuñol...</p> <p>G: Sí, claro.</p> <p>D: las ferramentas... las herramientas... ((Daniel writes usar las herramientas))</p> <p>G: Hay muchas palabras que empiezan con “f” en portugués... que son... que en español hay un “h”. Sé que es un problema.</p> <p>D: Aquí también, escuché portuñol. Dijiste “manter”. Mantener.</p> <p>G: Mantener, claro. ((Daniel writes: Van a mantener la motivación))</p> <p>D: Aquí. “Es más importante que... No hay necesidad del “do”. ((Daniel writes: Es más importante que el aspecto tecnológico /Nadar es más difícil que dormir.)) Todo el resto hice a distancia. ((Daniel writes: Todo el resto lo hice a distancia.)) Todo el resto lo hice a distancia. Una vez más, el artículo neutro.</p>	<p>Then, the verb read... ((On the screen: Estoy leyendo...) Here..., in Portuguese you use the verb “to have” as the auxiliary verb, in Spanish the verb “there to be” ((On the screen: Yo he escrito...)). ((Daniel writes another example)) “A mí me han invitado a trabajar en el equipo de ellos.” Or you could say say: “Me han invitado para que yo trabaje con ellos”. ((Daniel conjugates the verb forms)) Yo he, tú has, él ha, nosotros hemos, ellos han. Here you should use the neutral particle “lo”. You’re not using it frequently enough. It’s very important to use it. I gave you an example yesterday: ¿Compraste la casa? The answer should be: “Sí, la compré.” ¿Compraste el carro? “Sí, lo compré.” You need to reinforce that point, little by little. “La verdad es que...” Sometimes it sounds like “La verdad e...” You need to say the “s” a bit more clearly.</p> <p>G: La verdad es que...</p> <p>D: Here, it came out as portuñol...</p> <p>G: Yes, of course.</p> <p>D: las ferramentas... las herramientas... ((Daniel writes usar las herramientas))</p> <p>G: There are many words that start with an “f” in Portuguese and... they are... in Spanish they are written with an “h” . I know that is a problem.</p> <p>D: Here I heard portuñol again. You said: “manter”. It should be “mantener”.</p> <p>G: Mantener, of course. ((Daniel writes: Van a mantener la motivación))</p> <p>D: Here. “Es más importante que... There’s no need for the preposition “do”. ((Daniel writes: Es más importante que el aspecto tecnológico /Nadar es más difícil que dormir.)) Todo el resto hice a distancia. ((Daniel writes: Todo el resto lo hice a distancia.)) Todo el resto lo hice a distancia. Once again, the neutral article.</p>
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G: Sí, muy problemático para nosotros.	G: Yes, definitely a problema for us, Brazilians.
D: Vale. Bueno, entonces continuamos mañana.	D: OK. Well, I guess we'll continue tomorrow then.
G: Sí. Gracias.	G: Yes, thank you.
D: De nada, Guilherme. Hasta mañana. Tchau.	D: You're welcome, Guilherme. See you tomorrow. Bye.

Comments:

This extract shows that some of the basic mistakes made by a Brazilian in Spanish are still very much present in my interactions. The use of the verb “haber” [to have] to talk about the past is something that I clearly assumed I had managed to eradicate. Having lived in Brazil for 6 months, Daniel is skillful at identifying areas which are problematic for Portuguese speakers and his feedback is focused on exactly that. From a personal perspective, Daniel’s ability to monitor and give feedback was crucial to my development, because it allowed me to notice and, later, bridge the gap that existed between my receptive and productive competence in Spanish.

Protocol 10 [Intermediate Stage]

In the course of our interactions, it becomes clear to Luis and me that we have a number of interests in common. Luis seems particularly interested in drawing on my knowledge of psychology and psychoanalysis to learn more about human relationship. Personally, I welcome his interest in these issues, firstly, because I am fond of the subject matter (motivation) and, secondly, because I read extensively in the psychoanalytic literature in Spanish.

L: A veces te molesta una cosa y no lo dices. Un poco por, una mezcla de varias cosas, ¿no? Un poco por temor a ser rechazado, un poco también porque no quieres a decirle esto... y esto no es bueno.

G: Es muy importante poder decir, porque la otra persona necesita [de este] tipo de información, de *feedback* ((assuming the word is also used in Spanish)), para cambiar. La verdad es que muchas personas dicen "ah, es cómo es, no va cambiar y todo eso, pero, no, hay que decir algo, es una [troca].

L: Totalmente. Yo, por ejemplo, hablaba el otro día decía con un compañero de despacho que nuestro jefe..., digamos en el despacho hay varios jefes, ¿no? Pero hay uno que, digamos es más jefe de todos, pues hablábamos de esto, un poco de esto que estamos hablando nosotros, de saber escuchar. Mi jefe es un hombre muy duro, bastante duro, es bueno, buena persona, y mi compañero me decía, /???/ por saber escuchar, decía, si te das cuenta, Carlos, qui es el jefe, cuando tú hablas, él se para y te escucha totalmente. Si es una mierda no que dices, te va a decir. Logo no tiene tacto, si no le gusta no que dices, te lo dices, pero te escucha. Es una escucha totalmente activa. Si no le gusta lo que dices, te no va a decir. Y él decía que era una de las cosas porque había progresado tanto, sabe escuchar muy bien y sabe coger los puntos de la gente que habla, porque los escucha. E me he dado cuenta que es cierto, aunque sea dura, lo escucha muchísimo. Tiene una escucha activa muy buena.

L: Sometimes, something is bothering you and you don't say anything. Maybe because, a mixture of several things. Maybe fear, fear to be given the cold shoulder, sometimes you just don't want to say it... this is no good.

G: It's very important to be able to say it because the other person needs the information, your feedback ((assuming the word is also used in Spanish)), in order to change. The truth is, many people feel things are what they are and will not change and because of that, but of course, you have to say it, it's what an exchange is.

L: Totally. For instance, I talking the other day to a workmate the other day and I said that our boss... there are many bosses at the office, right? Well, one of them is more of a boss, and we were talking about this, exactly about what we are discussing now, the ability to listen. My boss is a very tough guy, very tough, he's an OK person, a good person actually, and my workmate would tell me, /???/ exactly because he knows how to listen to people, Carlos, that's his name, when you talk, you realise that Carlos stops and listens. If what you are saying is shit, he will tell you to your face. He is not very tactful, if he doesn't like what he hears, he will tell you, but at least he listens to you. It's active listening. If he doesn't appreciate what you say, he will certainly tell you. And he said this actually helped him improve, Carlos is able to listen to you and he can go over areas that you need to improve because he is actually listening. I realise he is absolutely right, even though he is tough, he will listen carefully to you. He has an excellent ability to listen.

<p>G: Muy interesante. Es exactamente eso. Yo no tengo problemas con los que quieren decir algo y son muy <u>duras</u>. No tengo ningún problema porque cómo dijiste están escuchando y, por lo tanto, tienen algo a decir. En mi trabajo, por ejemplo, yo soy considerado muy duro, exactamente porque, cómo sé escuchar, voy a decir: ((using direct speech)) “Esto no es verdad, punto. Si quieres puedo producir documentos, emails para probar que no es verdad.” Pero estoy siempre escuchando todas las personas, pero se tengo que decir, mira, soy muy asertivo en este punto.</p> <p>L: Seguro que debes ser el ejemplo perfecto de una persona asertiva. No sé porque pelo me pareces.</p> <p>G: Si, pero es algo que aprendí: voy siempre a escucharlo, pero en el trabajo, muchas veces no tenemos tanto tiempo, así que puedes decir a las personas de una forma asertiva que: ((using direct speech)) “Mira tengo 10 minutos, cóntame lo que quieres contar en 10 minutos, porque no tengo más <u>de</u> 10 minutos. Después voy a pensar y vuelvo a ti con una solución, una propuesta, no importa.” Pero esto también es una forma de limitar... yo voy a decir una cosa horrible, pero la verdad es que trabajo con muchas mujeres y creo que las mujeres...</p> <p>L: ¡Machista! ¡Eres un machista! <laughter></p> <p>G: Si, soy muy machista. Porque hablan realmente, es una forma diferente de pensar, muchas de las personas, no tengo por ejemplo, un amigo hombre que hable demasadamente, pero diez amigas mujeres que <u>están siempre queriendo hablar</u> y no pueden escuchar, e un...</p> <p>L: La balanza</p> <p>Si, la balanza, trabajo con muchas profesoras, muchas mujeres, entonces,</p>	<p>G: Very interesting. This is exactly it. I don't have any problems with people who want to tell something to my face and they are tough. I don't see it as a problem because, like you said, they are listening to you and because of that they have something to say: ((using direct speech)) “This is not the truth – full stop. If you wish, I can produce documents, emails to prove that this is not the truth as I see it.” But I'm always listening to people, but if I have to take a decision, well, I'm very assertive about it.</p> <p>L: I'm sure you are a good example of an assertive person. I don't know why, but you look very assertive.</p> <p>G: Well, there's something I've learnt: I'm going to try and listen to you, but in the workplace you don't always have time, so I believe you can say to people in an assertive manner ((using direct speech)) “Listen, I have 10 minutes, so tell me what you want to tell me in 10 minutes because that's all I have. I'll think about the issue and I'll get back to you with a proposal, a solution, I don't care - something.” But it's also a way to limit people... I'm going to say a terrible thing, but the truth is I work with many women and I believe women...</p> <p>L: Sexist You're being sexist! <laughter></p> <p>G: Yes, I know, I'm being sexist. But they do speak more, I guess it's a different way of thinking, many people, I don't have a male friend who speaks too much, but on the other hand, ten of my female friends are extremely talkative and they end up not listening, and ...</p> <p>L: A balance is needed.</p> <p>Yes, a balance. I work with many female teachers, so I guess I see this trait more</p>
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creo que veo esto más en el [feminino], no voy a ponerlo como mujer, es algo más [feminino], que masculino, la asertividad es algo más masculino.	often in the feminine, that's it, I'm not labelling it woman, it's to do with the feminine in everyone, as opposed to the masculine. Assertiveness is more of a masculine trait.
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Comments:

This is a typical conversation of the Intermediate stage of our interactions. We have become friends and this allows us to speak freely and honestly about our feeling and opinions. This also mean that we can be playful with one another (cf. his comment: ¡Machista! ¡Eres un machista!). Contributions are evenly distributed as we take turns in our conversations.

Protocol 11 [Intermediate Stage]

Guilherme – G
Luis - L

This is an example of a later stage in our conversations and was totally unprepared. In this case, Luis brings up the topic during his initial 30 minutes and we keep on discussing the same topic in my 30 minutes.

G: Creo que para el tema de la eutanasia, la misma cosa es importante, la responsabilidad. Me acuerdo de ver... ((I'm unsure about which verb tense to use)) de... (I remember having seen. It's a difficult structure.)	G: As far as euthanasia goes, the same thing is important. I remember see... ((I'm unsure about which verb temp to use)) seeing... (I remember having seen. It's a difficult structure.)
L: Recuerdo haber visto...	L: I remember having seen...
G: Sí. Exactamente. Me acuerdo haber visto una película [candadense] muy interesante sobre el tema. Una película que recomiendo. No me acuerdo ahora del título. <laughter> Pero es una película muy interesante sobre una persona que decide que.. que va... porque no... porque tiene una [doença]...	G: Yes, exactly. I remember having seen an interesting Canadian film about the topic. A film I recommend. But I can't remember the title. <laughter> It's a very interesting story about a guy who decides he is going to... because he is not... because he has an illness...
L: Una enfermedad...	L: A disease...
G: En-fer-me-dad ((I write the word down.)) Como se fuera un cancer, una enfermidad que... ((I'm clearly at a loss for words.))	G: Dis-ease ((I write the word down.)) Something like a cancer, a disease which ...((I'm clearly at a loss for words.))
L: Una enfermedad terminal.	L: A terminal disease.

G: Una enfermedad terminal. Entonces decide que no quiere, no quiere tener que su cuerpo... ((emulating the words of the character)) No quiero tener me quedar dos años en un hospital con aparatos y todo... No quiero nada de esto, quiero irme consciente, no quiero tener que irme de una forma inconsciente. Entonces decide que va a reunir [uns] amigos para un fin de semana con ello e después... una de las amigas es una enfermera que va a aplicar algo y que... se va. Es una película estupenda porque muestra este lado más humano de la eutanasia... poder decidir cuando quieres morrir. Pero muchas veces tenemos un argumento moral porque es como si fuera un suicidio. ((clearly in need of a break)). ¡Ahora, tu!

L: Yo apoyo 100% lo que dices. Yo, por ejemplo, en este caso, mi postura es mucho más clara. Así cómo el aborto, no acabo de definir mi postura porque veo cosas, no sé, totalmente tajante, en este caso estoy totalmente a favor con la eutanasia porque, al final, sobre todo en caso de enfermedades que estás sufriendo al final de tu vida, terminales, te falta algo, cuando estas sufriendo al final de la vida, seis meses de vida y, ¿tienes que está sufriendo esos seis meses? Me refiero, al final creo que tú eres responsable de tu vida, y al final, si quieres morir, pues que, y no quieres sufrir, por supuesto. Me refiero, que solo veo totalmente lógico. Obviamente, nunca son buenos los extremos, me refiero, no legalizaría absolutamente, si una niña o una señora de 40 años dije que está deprimida, que lo ve todo negro, por le ha dejado su marido, y que quiere morirse, pues no, porque evidentemente sabes que ella está equivocada. Esta persona si sale de la depresión, verá la vida de forma diferente. Pero en caso cómo enfermedades terminales de gente que está sufriendo y tal, por supuesto, por supuesto que sí. De hecho, aquí no lo es aún, pero espero que en un futuro lo sea.

G: A terminal disease. So, he decides he does not want his body to... ((emulating the words of the character)) I don't want to spend two years in a hospital with machines and all that... I don't want any of that, I want to be conscious when I go, I don't want to be unconscious when I depart. So, he decides he is going to reunite a... friends for a weekend with him... one of his friends is a nurse and she's going to inject something.. and he will go. This is a wonderful film because it depicts a more humane side to euthanasia... to be able to decide how you die. But very often, we have a moral argument because it's like suicide. ((clearly in need of a break)). Your turn, now!

L: I support 100% what you've just said. I, for instance, in this case, my perspective is clearer. In the case of abortion, I can't really make up my mind, I don't know, I see things, things are not so categorical, but in this case, I am all in favour, I'm all in favour of euthanasia because, in the end, especially in the case of illnesses, someone who may be suffering in the end of their lives, six months to live... Do you really have to suffer these six months? I mean, in the end, I believe you are responsible for your own life and, if you want to die, so, be it, and if you don't want to suffer, of course, it's totally logical. Obviously, the extremes are always a problem, I mean, I would not legalise it 100%, if a young girl or a 40-year old woman is depressed, if she sees a bleak future, because her husband has left her, and now she wants to die, well, obviously we know she's mistaken. If this person manages to shake off her depression. She will see life differently. But in the case of terminal diseases, people who are suffering and everything, of course, of course they should be allowed. In fact, in spite of the fact this is not possible here in Spain just yet, I hope it will be in the future.

Comments:

In the beginning of our interactions, it was clear that Luis would refrain from talking too much during my 30 minutes, assuming (quite rightly) that it was my chance to speak and his opportunity to listen and to give feedback (cf. protocol 2 above). As we progress, Luis's attitude changes radically. He no longer feels the need to play the role of a teacher (who may be worried about his or her own teacher talking time). Instead, he feels genuinely interested in sharing his opinions and will hold the floor as he sees fit. I suspect at this stage, I am doing the same with him, during our 30-minute slots in English. This points to the fact that we both seem to feel comfortable initiating discourse, taking turns and holding the floor as we see fit. Luis is clearly still scaffolding the work, but it seems easier for him to guess the word/expression according to context (cf. what he does with illness/terminal illness). In turn, this also means I am less inclined to code switch and more prone to use circumlocution as a means to clarify a point (cf. my comment "como se fuera un cancer, una enfermedad que...").

Protocol 12 [Intermediate Stage]

Guilherme – G

Luis - L

This is a sample from a later stage in our learning when I began to feel more confident to talk about films and plays which I had recently seen. This is not impromptu speaking because I prepared myself to this meetup by reading a few Internet page on the play and by listing a number of key words and expressions which might have come in handy. This type of preparation gave me the confidence I needed to get me going, even then my list was faulty and failed to include key words such as "prestamista" (moneylender) in this specific case.

<p>G: Me gustaría hablar un poco sobre Casa De Muñecas.</p> <p>L: Vale.</p> <p>G: La obra de Ibsen... porque normalmente esta obra es considerada la... ((not sure about gender)) el primero... el primer texto feminista en el teatro... porque es una historia... la verdad es que la historia es un poco complicada, pero... ((I decided to talk about the plot)) un casal, hay una pareja, la mujer es una mujer muy dependiente de su marido, y le gusta comprar, le gusta gastar dinero, mucho dinero... es una mujer muy pija. <laughter> ((the expression "chica pija" had been mentioned in a previous conversation)).</p> <p>L: ¡No me hagas perder el tiempo! <more laughter></p>	<p>G: I'd like talk about A Doll's House a little.</p> <p>L: Sure.</p> <p>G: The play by Ibsen... because it's normally considered the... ((not sure about gender)) the first... the first feminist text in the theatre... because it's a story... the truth is the story itself is a little complicated, but... ((I decided to talk about the plot)) there's a couple, the woman is very dependent of her husband, and she likes to go shopping, she likes to spend money, lots of money... she's a "posh woman". <laughter> ((the expression "chica pija" had been mentioned in a previous conversation)).</p> <p>L: You don't waste time, do you? <more laughter></p>
--	--

<p>G: Verdad, no te hago perder el tiempo. El marido ahora, cuando empieza la obra, el marido es un director de una fábrica, así que es un hombre rico, pero poco a poco sabemos que la mujer, durante un periodo al principio del matrimonio, la mujer tuvo que...</p> <p>L: ((correcting verb use in the third person)) tuvo</p> <p>G: La mujer tuvo que pedir dinero... a un <u>agiota</u>. ((Luiz frowns as if to signal lack of understanding)).</p> <p>G: ((I try to paraphrase)) A una persona que <u>empresta</u> dinero...</p> <p>L: Un prestamista.</p> <p>G: Un prestamista. Tuvo que pedir dinero a un prestamista la mujer tiene una <u>duda</u> ((correcting myself)) una deuda muy grande. Entonces es todo el conflicto, porque el prestamista empieza a amenazarla. Pero, esto no es <u>el más</u> importante. Claro, un día el marido va a saber lo que pasó <u>e</u> se <u>poe</u> ((correcting myself)) se pone furioso, total odio contra la mujer y la mujer, y es cuando la mujer decide: ((using direct report)) "No puedo quedarme en este matrimonio." Porque no conocía realmente el hombre con quien estuve casada. Ahora que <u>veo</u> realmente quien es este hombre. Pero también para la mujer hay un cambio muy grande, porque al <u>comezo</u>, ((correcting myself)) al comienzo, es una mujer muy... sabe cómo todas las mujeres que está siempre muy contenta, su marido llega en casa, besito, besito <laughter>, ¿hola que tal? Claro, con todo el problema con el prestamista, ella empieza a ver su marido de una forma diferente, y al final decide que... la pareja tiene tres hijos y decide que por un tiempo necesita irse, y... estar sola, para poder entender quién es.</p>	<p>G: No, I don't waste time. And now her husband, when the play begins, the husband is a factory director, in other words, he's a rich man, but little by little we find out that, during the beginning of their marriage, the woman did have to...</p> <p>L: ((correcting verb use in the third person)) the woman had to...</p> <p>G: Borrow money from.. from a borrower. ((Luiz frowns as if to signal lack of understanding)).</p> <p>G: ((I try to paraphrase)) A person from whom you can borrow money...</p> <p>L: A moneylender.</p> <p>G: Yes, a moneylender. She had to borrow money from a moneylender so the woman has a doubt ((correcting myself)) a huge debt. This is all the conflict, because the moneylender starts to threaten her. But this is not the most important. Of course, one day the husband will find out what happened and he is ((correcting myself)) he becomes furious, total hate, and that is when the woman decides ((using direct report)) "I can't stay in this marriage." Because she really didn't know the man she was married to. But now she can see who he really is. But for the woman as well this is a huge change, because to begin ((correcting myself)) in the beginning she is a very... you know that woman who is always very happy, her husband arrives home, kisses, kisses <laughter>, How are you? Of course, with the problem she's having with the moneylender, she begins to see her husband in a different way, and in the end she... the couple has three children and she decides to, for a while, she decides she needs to go, and... she needs to be on her own to understand who she is.</p>
---	--

Comments:

Even though I still pause for grammatical and lexical planning and repair, I can keep going comprehensibly and naturally in Spanish without major difficulties. The final longer stretch of production in this protocol is a clear example of that. I am able to self-correct (cf. my use of *al comezo/al comenzo*). Overall, I seem to have a sufficient range of language to be able to express myself.

Appendix 07: Academia Uruguay – General Description of Levels & Certificate of Attendance

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level	Academia Uruguay
A0 - Absolute Beginner	Level 1
A1 – Beginner: Breakthrough	Level 1
A2 – Elementary: Waystage	Level 2
A2+ - Elementary: Borderline B1	Level 3A
B1 – Intermediate: Threshold	Level 3B
B1+ - Intermediate: Borderline B2	Level 4
B2 – Upper Intermediate: Vantage	Level 5
B2+ - Upper Intermediate: Borderline C1	Level 6
C1 – Advanced: Effective Operational Proficiency	Level 7
C1+ - Advanced: Borderline C2	Level 8
C2 – Advanced: Mastery	Level 9



Academia Uruguay

CERTIFICADO DE ASISTENCIA

Academia Uruguay certifica que

Guilherme Bomfim Pacheco


realizó el curso de ESPAÑOL PARA EXTRANJEROS

Intensivo (grupal)

correspondiente al nivel **5,8** (de 9 niveles)
(Equivalencia MCER B2 80% completo)

del 28/06/2016 al 01/07/2016

equivalente a **20 horas de clase**
(1 hora de clase = 55 minutos)


Profesor/es

María José Viranco
Aclaración


Por Academia Uruguay

Soledad Górga Opeiro
Aclaración

Montevideo, 1 de julio de 2016


Instituto Cervantes
Centro Acreditado


Inscrito en el Registro
de Instituciones de Enseñanza
de Español Lengua Extranjera


MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN Y CULTURA

Appendix 08: My First Month at Italki

My personal aim during my first month was to get to know the website and learn from other users. I was fully aware of the fact that I was not prepared to speak to someone in Spanish over Skype because I simply did not have the skills to use the language! I realised very quickly that watching the Italki video messages from teachers could be the start of it all because they would give me the framework for a personal presentation. Besides, most messages had been recorded in both Spanish and English. The English version would provide me with the perfect scaffolding or temporary support that I needed. Additionally, they would allow me to get to know some of the teachers who were available, in case I felt the need to hire one. I also became aware of the need to pre-select the language I intended to use very carefully. I wrote in my diary:

“Simplify! That’s my motto. If I want to get anywhere, I need to work gradually on the structures. I’m hearing so many subjunctives in video presentations and it’s frustrating not to be able to use them (as yet!) Right now, all I can do is to save them for a later stage of my learning.”

I spent at least 10 hours of my first week working systematically on the video introductions. In the end, I had so much language *input* that I had difficulty deciding how to change that into *output*. I decided to separate the language I had transcribed from the videos into three basic categories (a) ready-made structures for immediate use (b) structures for future reference (c) interesting vocabulary and chunks.

Ready-made structures for immediate use included, for instance:

- Me llamo **Guilherme**, pero prefiero que me llamen **Gui**. [My name is Guilherme, but I prefer to be called Gui.]
- El **portugués** es mi **lengua nativa**. [Portuguese is my native language.]
- **Hace algún anos estudié para convertirme en psicoterapeuta**. [A few years ago I studied to become a psychotherapist.]
- **Tengo experiencia como** profesor desde 1980. [I have been working as a teacher since 1980.]

Structures for future reference included, for instance:

- Estoy buscando compañeros **que estén** motivados para aprender mi idioma. [I'm searching for partners who are motivated to learn my language.] This sentence involved the use of the subjunctive in Spanish.
- **A lo largo de** mi experiencia como docente, pude **aprender a desarrollar y a identificar** las diferentes **habilidades y fortalezas** de mis alumnos, y así trabajar en pro de ellos. [Throughout my years as a teacher, I could learn to develop and identify the different abilities and strengths of my students, and thus, I managed to work in their favour.] This sentence clearly reflected my own ideas about language learning, but was far too complex at that stage!

Interesting vocabulary and chunks included, for instance:

- Aprender **a través de la conversación** [learn through conversation]
- **Escritura** [writing]
- **Escoger un método apropiado** [choose a suitable method]
- **Fluidez** [fluency]
- **Pizarra** [whiteboard]

As I began typing up the examples I also began to realise that I would have to be careful with accents. The circumflex, for instance, which is so common in Portuguese, is not used in Spanish. The Microsoft keyboard language preference tool in WORD was a useful initial instrument in aiding me to notice differences in writing between Portuguese and Spanish. Towards the end of the 10th hour, my first text in Spanish was ready. I began to realise that the task I had set out to do (learning without a coursebook) was clearly much more time-consuming than I had originally envisaged.

The first text that I wrote was the introduction for my personal Italki page. It was used as the basis for my first e-mail exchanges with Italki users and represented my first attempt at recruiting language exchange partners. It was basically a compilation of sentences I found in the videos with a few obvious substitutions.

¡Hola! ¿Qué tal? Mi nombre es Guilherme y soy de Brasil. Nací en una ciudad llamada Vitória, pero vivo en Río de Janeiro. Soy profesor de inglés y entrenador de profesores. Estudié lengua y literatura en la universidad y he sido profesor de

inglés por años. Hace algunos años estudié para convertirme en psicoterapeuta. Sin embargo, mi mayor pasión son los idiomas. Hablo inglés, portugués, francés y un poco de japonés. Ahora quiero aprender español. También puedo ayudarte a ser un excelente hablante de inglés o portugués. ¡Que aprendamos juntos! No dude en contactarme. Hasta pronto.

[Hello! How are you? My name is Guilherme and I'm from Brazil. I was born in a city called Vitória, but I live in Rio de Janeiro. I'm an English teacher and trainer. I studied languages and literature at the university and I've been an English teacher for many years. Some years ago, I went back to school and I trained as a psychotherapist. However, my greatest passion is languages. I speak English, Portuguese, French and a little Japanese. Right now, I'd like to learn Spanish. I can help you become an excellent speaker of English or Portuguese. Let's learn together! Don't hesitate to contact me.]

I wrote in my diary:

"I felt a great sense of accomplishment and some relief when I finished this task. I realised, however, that I had no confidence in saying those words. I could send an e-mail, but I was still not ready for a Skype call per se."

It would have been another three weeks before I could pluck up the confidence to speak to someone in Spanish. Luckily, my first exchange partner was a 21-year-old CAE prospective candidate from Spain, Alberto, with whom there was no *exchange* as such: we talked in English for the whole hour. I used his language expertise to ask a few language questions (e.g. *What's the difference between a "maestro" and a "profesor"? Which one am I?*). I listened to his reply in Spanish and nodded in agreement "Si, lo comprendo" [Yes, I get it]. Chatting to Alberto over Skype gave me a clear idea of the potential behind these language exchanges. However, I decided to prepare myself by primarily focusing on an Italki tool which was much to my liking and seemed potentially very useful: the **Notebook**. I had been correcting a number of entries in both English and Portuguese, so I decided it was time I wrote my first few entries in Spanish.

italki

Home » Notebook » Spanish

Compañero/a para hablar español o francés



¡Hola a todos! Me gustaría encontrar un compañero/a para hablar español o francés. Puedo ayudarte con tu portugués, ya que es mi idioma materno. Podría ayudarte también con el Inglés. Fue maestro de inglés por muchos años e también vivi en Australia y Inglaterra. Si estás interesado, escríbame, por favor.

Hi everybody! My name is Guilherme and I'm looking for users who may be interested in exchanging Skype lessons in Spanish and French. I can help with Portuguese, my native tongue, or English. I lived in Australia and England and taught English in Brazil for many years in the past. If you are interested, please, drop me a line.

Bonjour, tout le monde! Je voudrais trouver un partenaire pour parler espagnol ou français. Je peux vous aider avec portugais, ma langue maternelle, et avec l'anglais. J'ai enseigné l'anglais pendant de nombreuses années. J'ai déjà vécu en Australie et en Angleterre. Si vous êtes intéressé, contactez moi – merci!

Guilherme August 29, 2015 1 correction(s) 174 view(s) Flag

Add a comment

More notebook entries written in Spanish

- Que me gusta (1)
- LA LEYENDA DE LA BANDERA DE MEXICO (0)
- Inferno (4)
- No deberes hoy. Solamente unas palabras sobre mi familia y yo. 01 (1)
- Hola! (2)

In less than thirty minutes, I received a corrected version of my text. It had been corrected by Joxian, an Italki user from Venezuela.


Seguro | https://www.italki.com/notebook/entry/598506

italki

Alex August 29, 2015

Bonjour, Soy Alex y vivo en Panamá. Hablo español y me gustaría que nos intercambiáramos nuestros idiomas, porque me gustaría aprender inglés y a usted español. Cualquier opinion, contacteme a mi correo de redes sociales a: netroiko@gmail.com Espero que no sea de mal agrado mi información. GRacias y Bendiciones!!!

Corrections



Compañero/a para hablar español o francés

¡Hola a todos! Me gustaría encontrar un compañero/a para hablar español o francés. Puedo ayudarte con tu portugués, ya que es mi idioma materno. Podría ayudarte también con el Inglés. Fue fui maestro de inglés por muchos años e y también también vivi en Australia y e Inglaterra. Si estás interesado interesado, escribíame escríbeme por favor.

Hi everybody! My name is Guilherme and I'm looking for users who may be interested in exchanging Skype lessons in Spanish and French. I can help with Portuguese, my native tongue, or English. I lived in Australia and England and taught English in Brazil for many years in the past. If you are interested, please, drop me a line.

Bonjour, tout le monde! Je voudrais trouver un partenaire pour parler espagnol ou français. Je peux vous aider avec portugais, ma langue maternelle, et avec l'anglais. J'ai enseigné l'anglais pendant de nombreuses années. J'ai déjà vécu en Australle et en Angleterre. Si vous êtes intéressé, contactez moi – merci!

Joxian August 29, 2015 0 comment(s) - Add a comment

I immediately began to foresee the potential of this specific tool for my personal language learning development. Just by looking at the mistakes, I was able to identify some of the areas which would be problematic due to Portuguese Interference. These areas have been extensively described in Frigo (2006). I began to come to terms with one of the clearest problems I was bound to face: L1 Interference. I counted on my ability to notice language to gradually help me deal with this problem.

Simultaneously, I began to feel the need to be a little more audacious in my writing.

“If I’m still not ready to take a few risks while I speak to Alberto, I can at least be a bit more adventurous while I write.”

I perceived how easy it would be for me to use the same strategy I had applied for the video introductions with reading texts. I had recently re-watched an Argentinean film entitled *Elefante Blanco* [White Elephant] with Spanish subtitles and I considered writing a short notebook entry about it. The process of writing this entry involved reading a couple of reviews of the film in Spanish and copying structures or words that I thought were useful.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.italki.com/notebook/entry/603133>. The page title is "Elefante Blanco". The main content is a notebook entry by user "Guilherme" dated "September 10, 2015". The entry text reads: "La película argentina Elefante Blanco está protagonizada por Ricardo Darín y Jérémy Reiner, que interpretan dos sacerdotes católicos. Juntos con una asistente social (Martina Gusman) trabajan en un asentamiento informal de Buenos Aires y enfrentan a los poderes gubernamentales y al narcotráfico para ayudar los más pobres. El elefante blanco del título es una referencia a un hospital abandonado que solo sirve para dar refugio a los sin techo. Es una película muy realista que puede enganchar a todo tipo de público - una película política como tantas otras grandes películas argentinas que tengo visto e que siempre me encantan muchísimo." Below the text, it says "Gracias por tu ayuda en la corrección." and shows "2 correction(s)" and "144 view(s)". There is an "Add a comment" button and "0 comment(s)". On the right side, there is a section titled "More notebook entries written in Spanish" with a list of links: "Que me gusta (1)", "LA LEYANDA DE LA BANDERA DE MEJICO (0)", "Inferno (4)", "No deberes hoy. Solamente unas palabras sobre mi familia y yo. 01 (1)", and "Hola! (2)".

Seguro | https://www.italki.com/notebook/entry/603133

italki FIND A TEACHER COMMUNITY LESSONS

Corrections

Elefante Blanco

La película argentina Elefante Blanco está protagonizada por Ricardo Darín y Jérémy Reiner, que interpretan dos sacerdotes católicos. Juntos con una **asistencia social** (1)(Martina Gusmán) trabajan en un asentamiento informal (2) de Buenos Aires y enfrentan a los poderes gubernamentales y al narcotráfico para ayudar a los más pobres. **El elefante blanco del título es una referencia a un hospital abandonado que solo sirve para dar refugio a los sin techo.** Es una película muy realista que puede enganchar a todo tipo de público - una película política como tantas otras grandes películas argentinas que **siempre he visto e** que siempre me encantan muchísimo.

Gracias por tu ayuda en la corrección.

(1) En México se llama "trabajadora social" pero puede llamarse de otra forma en otros países.
(2) En México se diría "asentamiento irregular"

Tomás September 10, 2015 0 comment(s) - Add a comment

Elefante Blanco

La película argentina Elefante Blanco está protagonizada por Ricardo Darín y Jérémy Reiner, que interpretan dos sacerdotes católicos. Juntos **en** a una asistencia social (Martina Gusmán) trabajan en un asentamiento informal de **en** Buenos Aires y **enfrentándose** a los poderes gubernamentales y al narcotráfico para ayudar a los más pobres. **El elefante blanco del título es una referencia a un hospital abandonado que solo sirve para dar refugio a los "sin techo".** Es una película muy realista que puede enganchar a todo tipo de público - una película política como tantas otras grandes películas argentinas que **siempre he visto e vistas** y que siempre me **encantan** gustan muchísimo.

Gracias por tu ayuda en la corrección.

carlos September 10, 2015 0 comment(s) - Add a comment

Towards the end of the first month, I had experimented with enough techniques and practices to know what worked for me. They included:

- Choosing listening and reading texts coming straight from the Internet.
- Identifying short texts in simplified Spanish that could serve as a springboard for notebook entries (e.g. DELE A1/A2 model compositions).
- Preparing a list of structures that would potentially be problematic for me and deserved my future attention.
- Working on my Log Sheets systematically.
- Working on a list of mistakes collected from notebook entries that would serve as potential areas for grammar learning.

Appendix 9 –Basic Mistakes in Spanish during the First Four Months

(All data Collected from my Interactions with Daniel)

What I Said	What I should have said
<p><i>Casi todo que escucho...</i> Yo tengo acá... <i>Observar todo que pasa...</i> Yo preguntaba... Yo dije la verdad a ella...</p>	<p><i>Casi todo lo que escucho...</i> Lo tengo acá... <i>Observar todo lo que pasa</i> Yo le preguntaba Yo le dije la verdad a ella...</p>
<p>Comment: The rules behind the use of objective pronouns in Spanish are numerous and, therefore, difficult for any language learner. It was not surprising to realise that I was not able to master these rules after the initial four months of this investigation. Most of the times, my tendency was to speak the sentence without using them. As a coping strategy, I also noticed how I would be constantly repeating the object in order to avoid using a pronoun.</p>	
What I Said	What I should have said
<p>La ultima viaje que hice... Simplemente no soy... Al menos... Estoy calmo porque medité durante una hora. Tengo dos profesiones y me gustan las duas. No saben cómo lidar con... Hoy tuve un longo entrenamiento... Van a trazer problemas... Gañar la confianza de los pacientes... En termos de urbanismo. Yo estaba avergoñado... Para mí, en lo general, el Facebook es una perda de tiempo. Las ferramientas que uso... La película es en preto y blanco. Es importante refletir antes de actuar.</p> <p>Si no paso el examen... Tengo que ver las datas Empiezan como deportista amador... Lo que preocupa es el fato que... Hay una crise política... Puedes monitorar... Los londrinos...</p>	<p>El último viaje que hice... Simplemente no soy... Por lo menos... Estoy calmado porque medité durante una hora. Tengo dos profesiones y me gustan las dos. No saben cómo lidar con... Hoy tuve un largo entrenamiento... Van a traer problemas... Ganar la confianza de los pacientes... En términos de urbanismo. Yo estaba avergonzado... Para mí, en lo general, el Facebook es una pérdida de tiempo. Las herramientas que uso... La película es en blanco y negro. Es importante reflexionar antes de actuar.</p> <p>Si no apruebo el examen... Tengo que ver las fechas Empiezan como deportista amater... Lo que preocupa es el hecho que... Hay una crisis política... Puedes monitorear... Los londinenses...</p>

<p>Comment: The similarities between the two languages is clearly a double-edged sword. I have managed to learn a lot from making these mistakes and some of them are no longer present in my speech. However, it is interesting to notice how I was not able to avoid any of the pitfalls that I had read about before beginning the investigation.</p>	
What I Said	What I should have said
<p>Voy a intentar hacer todo lo posible para que... Tuve que ayudar mi madre.... Fui a visitar mi madre...</p>	<p>Voy a intentar de hacer todo lo posible para que... Tuve que ayudar a mi madre... Fui a visitar a mi madre</p>
<p>Comment: There are many cases of cognate verbs that require a preposition in Spanish, but not in Portuguese.</p>	
What I Said	What I should have said
<p>Me gustaría que fueses mi amigo.</p>	<p>Me gustaría que fueras mi amigo.</p>
<p>Comment: The Imperfect Subjunctive proved to be a difficult verb tense to master, possibly because the verb form in Spanish looks very much like the verb form known as Pluperfect Indicative in Portuguese.</p>	
What I Said	What I should have said
<p>El mejor aeroporto queda ... Fui invitado a almuzar por una pareja que conozco desde hace mucho tiempo. Siempre estoy indo y vinindo... Ellos están indo a protestar... Estoy escribindo... Estoy aprendendo... Los impostos son todos muy altos.</p>	<p>El mejor aeropuerto queda ... Fui invitado a almorzar por una pareja que conozco desde hace mucho tiempo. Siempre estoy yendo y viniendo... Ellos están yendo a protestar... Estoy escribiendo... Estoy aprendiendo... Los impuestos son todos muy altos.</p>
<p>Comment: The graphemes I/E and O/E are a cause of great confusion for a Brazilian learning Spanish. This was particular true when it came to verbs, for instance, “aprender” (same infinitive in both languages) but different spellings in the gerund (aprendendo/aprendiendo). This still is a cause of great hesitation when I speak while the brain searches for the appropriate word. It is also a cause of overgeneralisations, as can be seen in the example “almuezar” when the Spanish word is actually quite similar to its Portuguese equivalent (almoçar/almoçar).</p>	

What I Said	What I should have said
Lo que le dice ... Él simplemente dije ... De lo que diciste ...	Lo que le dijo ... Él simplemente dice ... De lo que dijiste ...
<p>Comment: The conjugation of the verb “decir” (to say) proved to be extremely difficult to remember and I was constantly mixing up present/past forms. Because this was a particularly recurrent verb in our conversations, I decided to formally look at a conjugation table in order to try and memorise the correct forms once and for all.</p>	
What I Said	What I should have said
Hay los apps que... En el cárcel ... Son 15:00 horas en Brasil. La agua está a punto de hervir.	Hay las apps que... En la cárcel ... Son las 15:00 horas en Brasil. El agua está a punto de hervir.
<p>Comment: Remembering the right article to use was never easy because the gender of some common words vary in the two languages. For Brazilians, there is always the additional problem of deciding which words are neuter in Spanish. Another difference which I had problems with was the use of the article before hours (las 15:00) simply because it not used in Portuguese. It also took me a while to remember that water is masculine in Spanish.</p>	

Appendix 10: Rating Scales for Small Group Interaction

These scales created by Nunn (2000) helped me gauge my level of Spanish along the process. I have highlighted in grey what I consider the level I reached towards the end of my learning experience.

Interactive Skills

Keeping a Conversation Going: Turn Taking and Negotiation

- 1 Has (almost) no ability to keep a conversation going. Without constant help, the conversation is always likely to break down.
- 2 Rarely self selects, but responds minimally to other speakers, and sometimes supports their contributions. Negotiates rarely and/or only with a very limited repertoire. Communication sometimes breaks down without support.
- 3 Responds fully when nominated, supports other speakers, and sometimes self selects. Has an adequate repertoire for negotiation. Communication almost never breaks down.
- 4 Is able to take initiatives, self-selecting and negotiating whenever necessary drawing on a wide repertoire of expressions and techniques. Helps other participants to join in and interrupts politely when appropriate

Keeping a Conversation Going: Turn Taking

- 1 Has (almost) no ability to exploit turn-taking to keep a conversation going. Without constant help, the conversation is always likely to break down.
- 2 Rarely self selects, but responds minimally to other speakers, and sometimes supports their contributions. Only rarely nominates other speakers, even when he/she has the floor. Communication sometimes breaks down without support.
- 3 Responds fully when nominated, supports other speakers, and sometimes self selects. Communication almost never breaks down.
- 4 Is able to take initiatives, self-selecting, holding the floor, interrupting or nominating as the conversation demands. Helps other participants to join in.

Making Communication Effective: Negotiation

- 1 Has (almost) no ability to negotiate effectively. Without constant help, communication of even basic information is unlikely to be successful.
- 2 Sometimes adjusts to the contributions of other speakers, but rarely negotiates, and then only with a very limited repertoire, which limits the effectiveness of the communication.
- 3 Is able to negotiate when necessary, adjusting to the contributions of other speakers and demonstrating an adequate repertoire for negotiation. Communication is normally effective and successful.
- 4 Is able to adjust fully to other speakers' contributions, taking initiatives and negotiating persistently whenever necessary, drawing on a wide repertoire of expressions and techniques. Takes a full share of the responsibility for successful communication.

Content of Contribution: Exchanging information, ideas and feelings

- 1 Has almost no ability to communicate even basic information such as age, price, etc.
- 2 Can only communicate the most basic information, and cannot really express ideas or feelings on anything but the most basic everyday topics.
- 3 Can communicate information on a reasonable range of topics, and can express opinions, feelings, and ideas to a certain degree on a more limited range of topics.
- 4 Has a sound ability to communicate information, and to express feelings, opinions, and ideas on a variety of topics.

Content of Contribution: Exchanging information

- 1 Has almost no ability to communicate even basic information, such as age, price, etc.
- 2 Can only exchange the most basic information on everyday topics.
- 3 Can exchange information adequately on a reasonable range of topics.
- 4 Has a sound ability to exchange information on a wide variety of topics

Content of Contribution: Expression of opinions, ideas and feelings

- 1 Has (almost) no ability to communicate even basic opinions, ideas, or feelings.
- 2 Can only express opinions, ideas, or feelings in a fairly limited manner on everyday topics.
- 3 Can express opinions, feelings, and ideas adequately on common topics.
- 4 Has a sound ability to express feelings, opinions, and ideas on a variety of topics.

Inteligibility

Pronunciation of individual sounds and intonation

- 1 The speaker is almost impossible to understand.
- 2 Inadequate use of intonation and/or poor pronunciation of individual sounds make(s) the speaker very difficult to follow without compensation.
- 3 Adequate use of intonation and pronunciation of individual sounds; some attempt is made to make important syllables prominent. The message is intelligible, although there are occasional lapses.
- 4 Good use of intonation and accurate pronunciation of individual sounds makes the speaker easy to follow. Intelligibility is almost never impeded by wrong sounds, insufficient or misplaced prominence.

Intonation

- 1 Flat intonation makes the speaker almost impossible to understand. There is (almost) no attempt to make key words or tonic syllables prominent.
- 2 Inadequate use of intonation makes the speaker very difficult to follow without compensation. There is little effort to make important words or syllables stand out.
- 3 Adequate use of intonation, making the intelligibility of the message fairly high, although there are occasional lapses. Intelligibility is sometimes impeded by making the wrong syllables prominent.
- 4 Good use of intonation makes the speaker easy to follow. Intelligibility is almost never impeded by insufficient or misplaced prominence.

Pronunciation of individual sounds

- 1 The speaker is almost impossible to understand.
- 2 Poor pronunciation of individual sounds makes the speaker very difficult to follow without compensation.
- 3 A reasonable pronunciation of individual sounds; the message is intelligible, although there are occasional lapses.
- 4 Accurate pronunciation of individual sounds helps to make the speaker easy to follow. Intelligibility is almost never impeded by mis-pronounced sounds.

Grammar and Vocabulary

- 1 Poor structure and/or inadequate and inappropriate use of vocabulary make it (almost) impossible to understand.
- 2 Barely adequate use of structure, and limited vocabulary, make it difficult to follow without compensation.
- 3 Vocabulary and structure are normally adequate for the task. Fairly frequent errors don't seriously impede comprehension.
- 4 Good use of structure and vocabulary make the speaker easy to understand. Only a few errors which don't impede comprehension at all.

Intelligibility: Grammar

- 1 Poor structure makes it (almost) impossible to understand.
- 2 Barely adequate use of structure makes it difficult to follow without compensation.
- 3 Structure is normally adequate for the task. Errors may still be fairly frequent but they don't seriously impede comprehension.
- 4 Good use of structure makes the speaker easy to understand. Only a few errors, which hardly impede comprehension at all.

Intelligibility: Vocabulary

1 Inadequate and inappropriate use of vocabulary make it (almost) impossible to understand.

2 Limited and inappropriate use of vocabulary make it difficult to follow without compensation.

3 Vocabulary is normally adequate for the task. Some inappropriate usage, but it doesn't seriously impede comprehension.

4 Normally appropriate use of a wide repertoire of vocabulary. Only a little inappropriate usage, which hardly impedes communication at all.

Appendix 11: Extract from an Informal Interview with Joanne

I contacted Joanne because I liked her comments in one of the discussion threads we had both joined. She kindly accepted to talk to me about her experience learning two languages at Italki.

Joanne: I had a look at Italki and joined for two reasons, really: one, I had visited French-speaking Africa earlier last year, and it made me realise that it was a pity I had spent 5 years learning French at school and it had died completely when I learned Spanish. So, it was a way of trying to resurrect my French, but also, I knew that in trying to learn French again, the danger was I would forget my Spanish. So, therefore, I wanted to find some partners to continue to practise my Spanish with.

Guilherme: And how are you doing so far? Are you happy with the partners you have? With the sort of arrangements you have? And are you able to keep up with both languages?

Joanne: The Spanish has been really easy. I've been contacted by lots of people, I've had to turn people away. I realise that, right now I'm not working, so I'm dedicating quite a lot of time to language learning, far more than I would when I get a job again. But, so, Spanish has been quite straight-forward because my level of Spanish is fairly good, and people I have, I've got three Spanish speaking partners, all in Spain, because really, of the logistics of time frame, time difference, and we work fairly well. One of them is new, so I don't know how well this is going to work, but two of them I've had more than one conversation with, and I would say that works quite well. One partner, our language ability is probably similar, and with the other partner, I would say that my Spanish is better than her English, but they're not so far apart that it's a problem. French was more difficult, partly because I knew I was very limited on what I could say. (...) I've also been using a teacher in French on Italki, and I would say my first teacher selection was not a good one, and I very quickly learnt that this was not a very good choice for me. I learnt also that I need to be very specific about what my expectations were. I said I wanted to practise talking but really that meant they

just sat there and asked me questions, without any preparation or structure, which really, the level of French I had, it was just a useless hour, really! I now have another teacher who does half-hour lessons and I feel like, although my French is still bad, I'm making progress.

Comment:

Joanne's remarks correspond to what I believe to be crucial issues faced by adults when learning a language in tandem. They include:

- the need for constant language exposure and language practice;
- the logistics of finding a partner;
- the difficulties of working with beginners and the possible need to limit the timeframe;
- the expectations raised by initial meetups and the need to be clear about what one wants out of exchanges, i.e., setting a few ground rules;
- the possible need for a framework/structure to fall back on.

Appendix 12: Comments on Websites for Spanish Language Learning

Spanish Language Stack Exchange

(<http://spanish.stackexchange.com/>)

Spanish Language Stack Exchange is a question and answer site for students, teachers, and linguists wanting to discuss the finer points of the Spanish language. This website was particularly useful in my learning journey as a source of basic information about language (grammar and lexis, mostly). By reading users' questions and possible answers to their queries, I was able to deepen my knowledge of both English and Spanish. I also able to ponder about the complexity of language systems. One interesting feature of the website is the possibility of selecting what you consider to be the best answers, which are automatically voted up and rise to the top of the page.

When I was short of time but felt like learning something new in less than 15 minutes, I chose an entry from the website randomly. I was able to read about a grammar point or vocabulary item/expression and image a context in which I would be able to apply it within the timeframe mentioned. Here's a diary entry which illustrates just that:

“Sleep on it” in Spanish?

(<http://spanish.stackexchange.com/questions/17832/sleep-on-it-in-spanish>)

“Today I read about the Spanish equivalent to “sleep on it”. Interesting to notice how many answers mentioned “*consultarlo con la almohada*” [doublecheck with (one's) pillow] because of the fact that many times we find a solution to a problem while our head is lying on a pillow. However, it was also interesting to perceive how personally I favoured a less voted alternative “*piénsatelo con calma*” [think carefully/twice] because it seemed more neutral and, therefore, more readily applicable.

In order to help me remember the expression, I wrote:

“*Antes de tomar tu decisión, piénsatelo con calma.*” [Before you take a decision, think it over.]

“*Antes de publicar un vídeo en alguna red social, piénsatelo con calma.*” [Before publishing a video on the internet, think carefully.]”

Real Academia Española – Diccionario

<http://dle.rae.es/?w=diccionario>

There are many online dictionaries available on the Internet. I chose to add this dictionary to my list of favourites because it usually carries more definitions for each word than most dictionaries, thus, allowing me to drive straight into the abundance of the Spanish language. However, in many instances, when trying to clarify the meaning of word or a subtler use of an expression, this dictionary was unhelpful. For instance, when it came to the use of slang, it often payed to simply do a Google search on the word. Here’s a diary entry which illustrates just that:

Chingar

<http://dle.rae.es/?id=8pLhBqB>

While preparing myself to discuss the theme of corruption with Luis today, I came across the Mexican expression “*aquí aplica la ley de Herodes: o te chingas o te jodes*” [here we use Herod’s Law, either you get screwed or you get fucked], used on a Mexican black comedy political satire. I first checked the online dictionary of the Real Academia Española, but I was not at all happy with the most common definitions provided.

1. Importunar, molestar a alguien. [to importune, to disturb]
2. Practicar el coito con alguien. [to have sex]
3. Beber con frecuencia vino o licores [to frequently have wine or drinks]

I decided to do a simple Google search on the verb “chingar” and I came across a webpage (third choice on the list) which fed me with the exact piece of information I needed and also provided me with information on the use of the verb specifically in Mexico:

<http://www.speakinglatino.com/verbo-chingar-the-most-important-word-in-mexico/>

The Mexican definition of “chingar” is pretty wide and it was interesting to read what the famous Mexican writer Octavio Paz had to say about it in his essay “*Hijos de la Malinche*” [Sons of the Malinche]. The sentence from the extract found on this webpage: *For the Mexican, life is the possibility of “chingar” of being “chingado.”, gave me exactly the meaning I was looking for.*

Practica Español

<http://www.practicaespanol.com/>

As a teacher, I have always been very skeptical about encouraging students to learn idioms and colloquial expressions simply because language material writers needed/wanted to include something new and potentially unknown vocabulary in the lessons they produce. It seems to me that the same is true of Internet material writers. In my learning process I seemed to have favoured materials coming from websites aimed at native speakers to those aimed at language learners. By using so-called *authentic* materials, I had the freedom to pick and choose words and expressions I would want to learn for productive use, as opposed to having them imposed on me. I also felt more inclined to judge the usefulness of a word or expression by considering the context in which it was being used. The above-mentioned website, which I discovered in the beginning of my studies, would have been potentially useful, and I tried to use it a few times, but in the end, decided it was not stimulating enough:

The following journal entry illustrates my point:

“Cinco formas de poder “end” en español” [Five ways of putting an “end” to something in Spanish]

<http://www.practicaespanol.com/cinco-formas-de-poner-end-en-espanol>

I was drawn to this entry when I read the title. I assumed I was going to learn a variety of functions for rounding off a conversation in Spanish. This seemed useful language input and I decided to read it. To my disappointment, the page was basically a list of variations on the expression “y punto” [literally, “and full stop” /

end of story]. The article encouraged readers to learn “**y punto final**”, “**y punto pelota**”, “**y punto redondo**”, “**y punto en boca**”. I immediately suspected that if I used these expressions “to put an end a conversation”, I would sound unnatural. I decided to check “punto pelota” for frequency.

I conducted a narrow search on Google by looking for sites with the exact phrasing “hacer y punto pelota” [to do, end of story] and I got 3 results. I re-did the search using “hacer y punto” and this time the result increased to 284,000. It became clear to me that if I simply learnt “y punto” I would be better off.

Interestingly enough, the sentence which summarises the article proved to be much more useful from my personal learning perspective. It read:

En resumen, todas ellas confluyen en “se acabó”, “porque lo digo yo”, “porque sí” y “no se hable más”. [In short, all these expressions end up meaning “it’s over”, “because I say so”, “just because” and “let’s not go back to this”.]

These expressions seemed much more natural to me and, yet, they would have been overlooked by the average learner because they were not the focus of the article in question. I guess I’m going to be coming less often to this website “y punto”!

Appendix 13: Examples of Noticing coming from Diary Entries

Pronunciation

I'm beginning to realise why it's sometimes difficult to understand Argentinians. They seem to pronounce the letter c as /ʃ/. Today I heard the word "probecito" and to my ears, it sounded like "pobexiito"!

Native Speaker Mistakes

Today it took me a while to understand Isidro's comment because he misused one word. I had to go into the "Real Academia Española" website (<http://www.rae.es/consultas/ver-haber>) to realise he had used the verb incorrectly!

He wrote: "Te voy a decir lo de siempre, que **haber** cuando podemos hablar, pero desafortunadamente tengo poco tiempo..." [I'll go back to my usual phrase. Let's try and get together, knowing only too well I have so little time...]. "Haber" should be written "**a ver**".

Listening

Y Por Eso Estoy Soltero [That's Why I'm Single]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZHEX8Gdfe0>

Today I was pleased with the fact that I was able to listen to the video as many times as I felt like it – not just two! I noticed that every time I listened, I managed to understand a little more. Also, I found the transcript of part of the snippet in his FB page. Without the help of the transcript, I would never have understood the sentence: **a ti te regalaron la licencia de conducir o que...**

Portuguese / Spanish Similarities and Differences

Interesting to notice how, out of the list of seven deadly sins I found in this article (<https://es.noticias.yahoo.com/claudio-naranjo-criado-ceguera-111425164.html>) in Spanish (la ira, el orgullo, la vanidad, la envidia, la avaricia, la cobardía, la gula, la lujuria y la pereza), only two are different in Portuguese (**la envidia** [a inveja] / **la pereza** [a preguiça])

Vocabulary

Today Luis said: “Hoy estoy bastante **remolón**. Ayer me acosté muy tarde.” I liked the sound of the word “remolón”. It was funny and I could understand it from context. I decided to keep a mental note of the word. I want to use it in the near future.

Two weeks ago, I heard Isidro say “**sacar** la conversación de la gente” [**get** people to talk]. I couldn’t quite figure out what he meant by “sacar” in this context, but I started to notice how the verb “sacar” is similar to the verb “get” in English. Over a period of two weeks I came across a number of interesting examples with the same verb: “sacar una buena nota” [get a good grade]; “sacar un asesino de la calle” [get a killer off the street]; “sacar un peso de encima” [get a load off my chest]. Later I used the expression in one notebook entry describing the American film *Spotlight*: “Así, una sociedad cerrada siempre genera hipocresía y degeneración. Saca lo peor de nosotros, nuestra incapacidad para ponernos en el lugar del otro y ser capaces de dialogar.” [Thus, a narrow-minded society will generate hypocrisy and degeneration. It will get the worst of people, our inability to place ourselves in someone else’s shoes and be able to have a dialogue].

Notebook Entries

Today I wrote about street drinking (**botellón**, in Spanish) and it was nice to get a comment from a girl from Ecuador, Alejandra, saying in her country the word “botellón” simply means “a bottle of water”!

Today I got two corrections for my notebook entry on the Flipped Classroom. I noticed how the two Italki members who volunteered to give feedback used a different strategy to correct the second mistake in the sentence: “Cuando hay dudas, el profesor entra en escena para ayudar a sanar dudas y asegurar los alumnos de que cuentan con toda la información necesaria para desarrollarse.” [When there is a doubt, the teacher steps in to help clear the doubt and make sure students have all information to keep on learning.]

Both agreed that the verb for “clear doubts” should be “**resolver** dudas” and not “**sacar**” as I chose to use. They also corrected a typical example of Portuguese Interference, but in this case, the sentences looked different: “**asegurar a** + somebody + **que** + subjunctive” or “**asegurarse de que** + somebody + subjunctive. The second one sounds easier to me. I guess I’ll stick to it.

Today while reading the comments on my notebook entry, I learnt that the word for “here” is “**acá**” in South America and “**aquí**” in Spain. Thanks, Fernando, for that!

Appendix 14: An Illustration of the Emergent Nature of a Typical Study Period

Reasoning about the language

Language learners tend to use a variety of strategies in their attempt to learn a new language. For obvious reasons, independent language learners have to rely on these strategies even more frequently than learners whose language learning is being scaffolded by a teacher.

One cognitive strategy which I use very often in my learning process was that of *clarification/verification*. It involves seeking confirmation of our understanding of the language. According to specialist (cf. Rubin, 1981 cited in Wenden & Rubin, 1987: 23), this strategy allows the learner to retain a piece of information for further use.

The Internet has turned into a huge repository of data, so I often use it to clarify or verify a language ‘puzzle’ I may have had. The following journal entry illustrates that point:

I have always thought that the verb “*quedarse*” in Spanish was reflexive and that the particle “*se*” would always be needed. I wrote in one of my notebook entries: “*Acá en Brasil, somos muy divertidos y generosos. Los extranjeros que nos visitan se quedan encantados con nuestra hospitalidad.*” [Here in Brazil, we are fun and generous. Foreigners become impressed with our hospitality.]

Alberto, a Spanish native speaker, corrected the sentence by crossing out the *se*. In no way did I doubt his language expertise, but I was simply intrigued by his correction. I decided to do Google search in quotation marks with both “*quedar encantado*” and “*quedarse encantado*”.

I found interesting examples of how the expression is used with both forms:

- Los pequeños **quedan encantados**. [*The small ones become impressed*]
- Lo recomiendo a todos y **quedan encantados** siempre!!!! [I recommend it to everyone and they are always impressed by it]
- Los embajadores de la República Checa se **quedan encantados** con las playas. [Embassadors from the Czech Republic always become impressed with our beaches.]
- Y los artistas que vienen **se quedan encantados**. [All artists who visit us become impressed with our village.]

I felt the need to visit a dictionary to find out more. I checked the following page: (<http://www.wordreference.com/es/en/translation.asp?spen=quedarse>)

On my own, I could not come to a final decision as to how I should use the verb “quedase”. However, I ended up learning other useful chunks which I decided to jot down in a piece of paper for future reference:

- Quédate aquí un momento, por favor. [Stay for a moment, please.]
- Estas vacaciones nos quedamos en un hotel. [This holiday we’re staying in a hotel.]
- No quedarse con la duda [Not to be in doubt]
- Quedarse callado [to remain silent]

The last two examples called my attention immediately because they were equivalent to expressions we use in my mother tongue.

I kept on going. One of my Google searches took me to another useful page: (http://spanish.about.com/od/usingparticularverbs/qt/using_quedar.htm)

However, I decided to stop because I was hungry and I had to grab a bite to eat!

This *hyperlinked verification strategy*, which started with my being intrigued with one word, took me into so many different directions that the original puzzle I had in mind became irrelevant. Deep in me, I knew that initial language point would be clarified eventually, but for the time being, I am happy to have simply taken

the plunge. From a purely learning perspective, using this strategy was much more motivating than opening a grammar book to study some grammar rules about the use of reflexive verbs in Spanish. I had to thank Alberto for giving me the opportunity to experience just that.

Appendix 15: Sample Grammar Worksheet
Date: January 22, 2016.

Learning Tool(s): EIDE website

<http://learn-spanish-in-bilbao.com/es/lengua-espanola/preterito-perfecto-simple-y-preterito-perfecto-compuesto-en-espanol/>

I studied/practiced: Pretérito Simples y Pretérito Perfecto Compuesto

I learned (this could be anything, not just language): I am still unsure when to use one tense or the other. I have difficulties remembering when to use “he” and “has”.

I noticed:

Pretérito Simples

Anoche fui al teatro. Sergio e yo vimos na nueva producción de Macbeth con Thiago Lacerda en el papel protagonista. [Last night I went to the theatre. Sergio and I saw a new production of Macbeth with Thiago Lacerda in the leading role.]

Ayer tuve que ir al dentista. He ido al dentista casi todas las semanas desde agosto. [Yesterday I had to go to the dentist. I have been visiting the dentist almost every week since August.]

Semana pasada visité mi madre que vive en Vitória. Me quedé con ella por cuatro días y después volví a Río. [Last week I visited my mother, who lives in Vitória. I stayed there for 4 days and then I returned to Rio.]

El mes pasado fue mi cumpleaños. Nací el 22 de septiembre de 1960. [Last month was my birthday. I was born on the 22nd of September, 1960.]

El otro día hablé con mi jefe y le pedí que me despidiera. [The other day I talked to my boss and I asked her to be fired.]

Hace diez años que me papa se murió. [My father died 10 years ago.]

En 1986 viví en Londres donde hice un curso de posgrado. [In 1987 I lived in London where I did a postgraduate degree.]

Pretérito Perfecto Compuesto

Este mes he trabajado mucho y he estado cansado. [I have been working hard and I've been quite tired.]

Hoy he bebido tres cafés expresos. El último, lo bebí después de almorzar. [Today I have drunk three expressos. I drank the last one after lunch.]

Este año he leído varios libros en español. Lo que más me gustó fue Así Empieza Lo Malo de Javier Marías. Todavía no he terminado de léerlo. [This year I have read several books in Spanish. The one I liked the best was “Thus Bad Begins” by Javier Marías. I haven't finished reading it yet.]

Aún no he visitado la Noruega. [I've never been to Norway.]
 Aún no he terminado mi Maestría. [I haven't finished my MA yet.]
 Aún no hemos llegado a un estatus de primer mundo en Latino América. [We still haven't reached first world rate in Latin America.]
 ¿Alguna vez has hablado español con un chino? [Have you even spoken Spanish with a Chinese?]
 ¿Alguna vez has comido algo que te hecho vomitar? [Have you ever eaten anything which made you vomit?]
 ¿Alguna vez has traducido un texto de portugués para español? [Have you ever translated a text from Portuguese into Spanish?]
 ¿Alguna vez has podido viajar de primer clase? [Have you ever travelled first class?]
 ¿Alguna vez has podido visitar una comunidad hispanohablante en los Estados Unidos? [Have you ever visited a Spanish-speaking community in the US?]

Nunca he podido mostrarle a nadie los poemas que escribí cuando joven. [I was never able to show anyone the poems I wrote when I was a teenager.]
 Decidí tornarme vegetariano, así que nunca más he comido carne en mi vida. [I decided to become a vegetarian and since then I haven't eaten any meat.]
 No me gustan las playas de Guarapari, así que nunca más he visitado na ciudad donde mi familia se quedaba en vacaciones cuando yo era un niño. [I don't like the beaches in Guarapari. I haven't visited the city where I used to spend my holiday as a child ever again.]

I was pleased with: the number of examples of I got out of this study period (about 1 hour) which may be used in real conversation. Also, I liked the fact that I was working not only with affirmative and negative sentences, but also interrogative.

My difficulties are: Still many!

Appendix 16: A thank-you notebook entry to Luis

The screenshot shows a notebook entry on the Italki platform. The title is "Mi mejor amigo en Italki". The entry text describes the author's experience of meeting Luis, a Spanish native speaker, and how they became friends through language exchange. The text is in Spanish. Below the text, there is a comment from "Guilherme" dated January 5, 2017, with 1 correction and 59 views. There is also a comment from "Jozuel Pérez" dated January 5, 2017, saying "Nice writing!". To the right of the entry, there is a sidebar titled "More notebook entries written in Spanish" with a list of other entries.

italki FIND A TEACHER COMMUNITY LESSONS

Mi mejor amigo en Italki

Edited

Era nuevo en Italki cuando conocí a Luis. Quería conocer gente para intercambiar lenguas y entré en contacto con muchas personas de España y Latinoamérica. Luis me contestó pronto el mensaje. Estaba preparándose para un examen y necesitaba practicar el inglés. Al principio, me daba vergüenza hablar en español. Mi nivel era muy bajo, pero Luis se mostró siempre muy paciente y dispuesto a ayudarme. Poco a poco, vimos que teníamos muchas aficiones en común. Lo que más me gusta en Luis es su sinceridad y su sentido de humor. Normalmente hablamos por una hora pero no veo el tiempo pasar. Disfruto de nuestros encuentros virtuales cómo se estuviera en un bar bebiendo unas copas con un grandísimo amigo. Luis es una persona animada y divertida. Juntos, practicamos el inglés y el español mientras ¡arreglamos los problemas del mundo!

Guilherme January 5, 2017 1 correction(s) 59 view(s) Flag

Add a comment

3 comment(s)

Jozuel Pérez January 5, 2017
Nice writing!

More notebook entries written in Spanish

- Esta noche conocí a un inglés que sabía español mejor que yo... (2)
- Mi Ciudad (0)
- Algunas oraciones (3)
- Hoy, yo conocí mi nueva vecina quien habla español. (4)
- Como funciona el corazón (1)

Corrections

Mi mejor amigo en Italki

Era nuevo en Italki cuando conocí a Luis. Quería conocer gente para intercambiar lenguas y entré en contacto con muchas personas de España y Latinoamérica. Luis me contestó pronto el mensaje. Estaba preparándose para un examen y necesitaba practicar el inglés. Al principio, me daba vergüenza hablar en español. Mi nivel era muy bajo, pero Luis se mostró siempre muy paciente y dispuesto a ayudarme. Poco a poco, vimos que teníamos muchas aficiones en común. Lo que más me gusta en Luis es su sinceridad y su sentido de humor. Normalmente hablamos por una hora pero no veo el tiempo pasar. Disfruto de nuestros encuentros virtuales cómo se estuviera en un bar bebiendo unas copas con un grandísimo amigo. Luis es una persona animada y divertida. Juntos practicamos el inglés y el español mientras ¡arreglamos los problemas del mundo!

Arrosa January 7, 2017 1 comment(s) - Add a comment

[My Best Friend at Italki

I was new at Italki when I first met Luis. I wanted to get to know people I could exchange languages with and I got in touch with many people from Spain and Latin America. Luis replied to my message straight away. He was preparing himself to do an examination and he needed speaking practice. In the beginning, I was ashamed of talking in Spanish. My level was very basic, but Luis was always very patient and willing to help. What I like most about Luis is his frankness and his sense of humour. We usually talk for about an hour but time flies by. I enjoy our virtual get-togethers as if I was in a bar having a beer or two in the company of a very close friend. Luis is always cheering me up. He's great fun to talk to. Together we practise English and Spanish while we try and fix the problems of the world!]

Appendix 17: Sample Titles of Notebook Entries

Title	Brief Description
Elefante Branco	A short review of the Argentinian film "White Elephant".
La Buena Education	A brief look at education in Brazil.
Incendios	A short review of the theatrical production of the Canadian play "Scorched" (Wajdi Mouawad) by the Mexican group Tapioca.
Calidad de Vida	A reflection on my own quality of living.
Los 33	A short review of the Chilean/American film "33".
El Amante Japonés	A brief review of the book "The Japanese Lover by Isabel Allende".
La Meditación	An Ode to Meditation.
Las Redes Sociales	A reflection about social networks.
En el Mercado	A description of the street market I go to on Saturdays.
Los Medios de Transporte que Utiliso	A look into means of transport.
Escribir Postales	A language task on writing a postcard.
Fanáticos de la Moda	A reflection on the usefulness of fashion.
Los Brasileños	A stereotypical view of Brazilians.
La Política Brasileña Hoy	A reflection about politics in Brazil.
Un Pastelería en Tokyo	A short review of the Japanese film "Sweet Bean".
La Amistad Hoy en Día	A reflection about friendship.
En Primera Plana	A short review of the American film "Spotlight".
El Carnaval en Brasil	A reflection about Carnival.
Los Tatuajes	A reflection about tattoos.
La Chica Danesa	A short review of the film "Danish Girl".
Dentro de 10 Años	A personal reflection about the future.
El Botellón	A reflection about teens and street drinking.
Ventajas y desventajas de tener un coche	The pros and cons of having a car.
Aprendiendo la language de Javier	A reflection about Javier Marías and his books.
La Casa de Mis Avuelos	A description of my grandparents' house.
Algunos Consejo a la juventud	A few pieces of advice to young people.
La Clase Invertida	A brief look into the Flipped Classroom.
Peter Shaffer	A tribute to Peter Shaffer who died in June 2016.
Experiencia Laboral y Satisfacción Personal	A brief discussion on job satisfaction.
¿Que quiere la gente?	A brief discussion on world politics based on the lessons learnt from the Argentinian film "La Historia Oficial" [The Official Story].

Appendix 18: Areas of Language Knowledge (Bachman & Palmer, 1996: 68)

Organisational knowledge

(how utterances or sentences and texts are organised)

Grammar knowledge

(how individual utterances or sentences are organised)

Knowledge of vocabulary

Knowledge of syntax

Knowledge of phonology / graphology

Textual knowledge

(how utterances or sentences are organised to form texts)

Knowledge of cohesion

Knowledge of rhetorical or conversational organisation

Pragmatic knowledge

(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goals of language users and to the features of the language-use setting)

Functional knowledge

(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goals of language users)

Knowledge of ideational functions

Knowledge of manipulative functions

Knowledge of heuristic functions

Knowledge of imaginative functions

Sociolinguistic knowledge

(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the features of the language-use setting)

Knowledge of dialects / varieties

Knowledge of registers

Knowledge of natural or idiomatic expressions

Knowledge of cultural references and figures of speech