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## *Anaphoric reference in the L1 English-L2 Spanish classroom*

Carmen Ríos-García [c.riosgarcia@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:c.riosgarcia@sussex.ac.uk) and María Sánchez-Ortiz

Students of Spanish as a second language often struggle with the expression of topic continuity at the intermediate and advanced learning stages, up to and beyond level C2 of the CEFR. Written and oral production in L2 Spanish often shows interference from L1 English in the syntax/discourse interface.

As a null-subject language, Spanish allows for subject drop in cases where the referent has been introduced in previous discourse. Native Spanish speakers (and speakers with native-like proficiency) drop the subject (canonically a [Det + Noun] phrase) to reflect topic continuity, proceeding to retrieve the same overt phrase usually – but not exclusively – when a competing referent appears. This is in line with Ariel's (1991) Hierarchy of Accessibility Markers, which assigns overt, complex referring expressions to antecedents which are either long distance or in focus, and null/zero anaphors to antecedents which are either short-distance or in topic position.

While L1 interference can affect the processing of L2 properties involving parametric differences such as the combination of Romance and Germanic languages (Ríos-García 2010), its impact on production tasks seems to be significantly higher.

In order to explore the processing and expression of anaphoric reference in advanced L2 Spanish, a study was set out with the help of María Sánchez-Ortiz<sup>1</sup> in 2014, involving 26 students of Advanced Liaison Interpreting. They were recorded for 15:11 hours, and subsequently asked to complete a follow-up questionnaire based on Lozano's (2009) Overt Pronoun Constraint and Contrastive Focus Constraint, in order to explore whether performing without the time pressure that informs the interpreting process would result in native-like selection of the overt/null anaphor. The analysis is currently work in progress.

A separate study involving topic continuity and focus in written tasks (Ríos-García, in progress) aims at fostering explicit learning which is facilitated by engagement and by paying attention (Philp and Duchesne, 2016). Preliminary results from the oral and written domains show that, as argued by Sorace (2011, 2012), Serratrice *et al.* (2012) and Lozano (2016), end-state learners of null-subject L2s show residual deficits at the syntax-discourse interface such as the overuse of overt pronouns (due to processing costs). Preliminary results suggest that peer assessment tasks that raise awareness of topic/focus can be beneficial in the classroom.

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## ***ESAP Principles in Establishing Links between Foundation Year Academic Development and Psychology***

**Deirdre McKenna**

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From its introduction as a general study skills module in 2015, Foundation Year Academic Development (AD) has transformed through the work of the Module Convenors and AD tutors, particularly in moving towards subject specific links with the relevant departments of Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, and Psychology. As the AD Psychology Strand Leader, my role has involved liaising with the Psychology department to establish the perceived needs of the FY Psychology cohort, to gain a greater awareness of the types of discourse students are likely to encounter, and to develop materials for the AD Psychology module. My previous background in materials development has been for modules in the field of English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), which can be defined as the language and skills taught in relation to a specific subject or university department (Hyland, 2006, p.9), and is generally thought of in terms of non-native English speakers. Despite the differences in working with a largely native-speaking FY cohort, my role as AD Psychology Strand Leader has benefitted from my previous ESAP experience.

Basturkmen, (2010, p.137) points out that a needs analysis is widely considered ‘the cornerstone’ of ESAP. This is used to identify the specific sets of skills, texts, forms and communicative practices required by a particular group of learners (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p.6). As part of this needs analysis process, I interviewed the FY Psychology lecturers to identify their perception of the skills FY Psychology students tend to need support with, which they identified as: APA referencing, essay structure, academic writing style, critical thinking and depth of analysis, analysing sources, report writing and effective seminar discussions. In addition, the Psychology lecturers supplied examples of what they considered

to be 'weak' and 'strong' pieces of FY student writing. This sample writing was analysed to identify what was considered 'effective' writing within the subject, and then used as a basis to write a working model of a sample essay as part of the Online Academic Writing Guide (the self-study component of the module). As well as this, the Psychology lecturers provided sample questions (for essays and presentations) and key readings which have been exploited both within the AD seminars, as well as on the OAWG. Liaising with the Psychology department has been invaluable in developing the AD Psychology module thus far, in line with Hyland's (2006, p.88) assertion that engagement with the department is 'essential' to gain an understanding of the learner's target discourses and establish what will be relevant and useful to the learner.

Based on my own observations, there have been a number of effects of these subject specific links, primarily in terms of student motivation. For example, when students are informed that their Psychology lecturers have chosen the topics/ readings/ assignment questions they seem to be more engaged, possibly due to their general interest in Psychology, or due to the perceived 'authority' of the subject specialists. Making explicit links between the skills covered in the AD module with those needed in their FY Psychology modules (e.g. writing annotated bibliographies/ discursive essays) has also helped students to apply what is covered in AD to other modules, and to see the relevance of these skills, especially in terms of assessments. Peer teaching observations have also been useful in furthering links between the AD and Psychology core modules, even in the sense that the students have remarked that the AD and Psychology tutors work together, rather than in isolation.

When comparing my experience of teaching on the general AD module compared to working on the AD Psychology version, I believe the subject specific changes have been positive ones. As a tutor, I also feel more confident delivering material on skills which link explicitly to the students' degree subject, rather than largely 'generic' materials. However, there is still progress to be made and ideas which have not yet been implemented due to inevitable time constraints e.g. corpus analysis of discipline specific writing to provide further authentic, contextualised examples of language use (Tan, 2002, cited in Tomlinson 2010 p.84). Overall, it appears that student feedback has been relatively positive for the subject specific AD strands, and hopefully my colleagues and I can continue to build on the progress we have made so far.

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## *Intercultural Competence and Critical Incidents in the Language Classroom*

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I recently attended and presented two talks at the 2018 Korea TESOL International conference at the Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, as an invited speaker, representing IATEFL's Teacher Training and Education Special Interest Group.



My first talk was on Intercultural Competence and Critical Incidents in the language classroom where I drew on recent literature (Wagner et al 2018, Snow 2015, and McConachy 2018) and illustrated this with examples from my own teaching experience. Intercultural Competence (IC) has become a buzzword in recent years in the field of EFL, EIL and ELF but what does it mean to be interculturally competent as a learner, given that English (and foreign language) courses are the ideal platform to prepare students for intercultural situations. Not only do courses provide relevant practice opportunities, but they engage students at a personal level, too. Incorporating IC into students' language learning activities will make the learning process more meaningful whilst enabling them with future communication strategies to engage with other cultures.

We looked at some critical incidents that had occurred in my teaching and training sessions. I gave an example of how a Nigerian teacher trainee was teaching a group of low level mixed nationality students some basic fruit vocabulary. He showed a picture of an orange and elicited 'orange' but when he came to concept check the word, asking what colour it was, he would not accept orange as the answer, even though the visual on the slide was clearly orange. Why was this? He told me that in Nigeria, oranges are not orange, they are yellow or green. The students, as you can imagine, were confused by this as their conception of this fruit had been challenged. However, as this was a teacher training class, it was used a tool to promote some interesting and valuable discussion.

Another example was provided by a Chinese student, recently arrived in the UK, and enrolled onto a Business Masters Programme. She had never been to England before and had learnt all her English language through the school system and course books. A few weeks into her stay, she found herself holding a door open for an English woman. As the woman passed through the doorway, the Chinese student had expected her to say ‘thank you’ as this was what she had learnt to expect. However, the woman said ‘Cheers’, which confused the student. As far as she knew, ‘Cheers’ was what you say when you are having a drink with someone. She immediately got her phone out and googled the word and found out that indeed ‘Cheers’ also means thank you in an informal scenario.

Culture plays a key part in how we see and experience everyday objects and if this is tested it can throw us into a spin. Noticing how new language is used and in which situations, is an important skill to obtain as a language learner, as we need to accept that the way we view ideas and concepts is not always the same in other cultures.

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## From our students

### ***Individual goal setting for pronunciation: a classroom-based action research project with English language learners in a UK University context.***

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## MA ELT Dissertation summary

The focus of this dissertation is in the areas of learner phonological development and learner autonomy, examining the extent to which learners are able to develop goals for their pronunciation learning. Previous research studies and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) debates have highlighted that ‘intelligibility’ and ‘communicative context’, rather than ‘nativeness’ are key in supporting learners to develop realistic, user-based pronunciation goals (Cook, 2016; Jenkins, 2005; Kang; 2015; Yazan, 2015). Research has also emphasised the value of awareness-raising of both segmental and suprasegmental features (Baker, 2014; Derwing and Monro, 2005; Levis et al, 2016), of learners developing ‘metacognitive’ reflective strategies (Hedge, 2000; Dornyei, 2001) and of individualised pronunciation instruction (Couper, 2016; Thomson and Derwing, 2015).

There is, however, a lack of classroom-based research examining the ways in which teachers can raise awareness and support learners in this goal-setting process. This dissertation therefore took an action research (AR) approach to explore this with a group of learners in a UK University context. The project combined awareness-raising and learner training on a range of phonological features and contextual issues within the classroom and independent work using an online Computer Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT) programme (Sky Pronunciation, 2014) in the University Language Learning Centre over a 6-week period.

Inevitably small-scale, 'inductive' and qualitative in nature, the AR process made use of "method triangulation" (Atkins and Wallace, 2012), ongoing reflection and revision to enhance consistency and internal reliability. This included class discussions and initial and end-of-project questionnaires encouraging learners to reflect on their experience, awareness and attitudes to pronunciation. Ongoing reflection by learners and teacher, following in-class sessions, individual out-of-class activities and CAPT sessions, were a further part of the AR process. At the end of the project, learners produced a written action plan outlining goals for developing their pronunciation abilities. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted with learners and teachers ("critical friends") (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2012) to further explore issues raised.

Research questions were as follows:

1. To what extent are learners able to identify and reflect on their own strengths, needs and goals in their pronunciation learning?
  - 1a. What are learner attitudes to and expectations of 'nativeness' versus 'intelligibility'? To what extent does an 'NS-like' pronunciation goal preference exist for this group of learners?
2. How can teachers support learners to set individualised pronunciation goals? In particular, how can teachers raise learner awareness of segmental and suprasegmental features, and of communicative context in order to encourage individual learners to set personally-relevant goals?
  - 2a. What are learner preferences regarding the balance of teacher-led, peer and individual learning in this process?

The findings from this research indicated that with teacher scaffolding, learners were able to reflect on their pronunciation strengths and needs, and articulate goals related to 'real-life' functions and uses. Their goals reflected the fact that they valued intelligibility in both native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) contexts. While lacking at the outset, learners demonstrated a greater level of suprasegmental perceptual awareness by the end of the project. However, learner perceptions of their own productive 'deficits' appeared to persist. Teacher and learner reflections highlighted that building from receptive to productive practice was key, as was a balance of teacher 'scaffolding', individual and peer learning, and 'freer' or more 'authentic' pronunciation tasks both within and outside the ELT classroom.

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**[Editor's note: this MA ELT Dissertation has been selected for submission for the British Council's Master Dissertation Award 2018.]**

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***Artful language: The design and delivery of English for Academic Purposes to higher education students in the visual arts***

**Nicholas Webb**

**MA ELT Dissertation summary**

This study examined the provision of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at seven out of 93 English higher education institutions that teach subjects relating to architecture; art and design; film and media production (ADAM). Characteristics of this academic field are visual practice, professional reference and situated pedagogies, such as the studio critique. The study aimed to answer questions about the type of EAP provision available, particularly pre-degree; the distinctiveness of EAP for ADAM subjects; what constitutes good practice in EAP teaching for these subjects. Other recent research has examined the field through



ethnographic explorations from within particular institutions, whereas this study compared different institutions.


Some 79 institutions run a pre-sessional course, but only four are clearly subject-specific. The three main case studies are represented by several types of evidence, including observations as well as interviews. Arts universities are clearly better placed to provide specialist language teaching for pre-sessional and possibly in-sessional provision. Subject-related reading, specific and multimodal writing, technical and adapted vocabulary are all features of ADAM EAP.

Good practice is represented by generic policies such as discipline embeddedness and internationalization as well as the more specific approach of creative criticality. As recommendations, it is suggested that artistic methods could be exploited in language teaching as in General English and EAP for other subjects; while socio-pragmatic English would seem especially useful for informal studio work. Besides research practice, this exercise provided insight into the organization of EAP courses and the factors that determine their curricula.


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## Language and Culture Seminars



**Stories of 'becoming':  
Narratives of Chinese  
international students**



Eileen Laffan is a doctoral student with UCL Institute of Education. Her research examines the individual narratives of Chinese international masters students, exploring their emotions, motivations and challenges as they make a transition to UK Higher Education.

**SCLS Language and Culture Seminar**

Language Learning Centre (Arts A) | 27th March. 5.30-6.30pm  
(refreshments from 5pm)  
Free event. All welcome.

For further information contact Eileen Laffan, International Student Support:

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**Details of future *Language and Culture* talks are available on the SCLS website:**  
Sussex Centre for Language Studies: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/>

**For contributions or ideas for future editions of the *LP3* bulletin please contact:**

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