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CONTEXTUALIZING READING CONTENTS TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ORAL FLUENCY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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Resumen

Para Colombia, un país donde el inglés es una lengua extranjera, es esencial pensar en diferentes medios para lograr que el aprendizaje esté realmente vinculado a la realidad de sus estudiantes, fomentando aplicaciones reales y por ende un uso eficaz del idioma. Uno de los medios para esto es la instrucción basada en contenidos (CBI, por sus iniciales en inglés), un enfoque que tiene como fin el uso de contenido en materiales y clases para facilitar la adquisición de vocabulario, estructuras y expresiones de la lengua, siendo más significativas para los estudiantes. A través de la lectura como habilidad, CBI llegará a los estudiantes quienes con ayuda del contenido contextualizado en textos podrían vincular su realidad a dicha información, y así se obtendrá de forma oral sus respuestas y se desarrollarán habilidades comunicativas en especial la fluidez oral dentro del salón de clase.

Palabras clave: CBI, lectura, fluidez oral.

Abstract

For Colombia, a country where English is a foreign language, it is essential to think about different approaches to connect foreign language learning to learners' reality, fostering real application and consequently an effective use of language. One of these approaches is CBI (content based instruction), an approach which aims at using content in materials and classes as a way to enhance vocabulary, structures and chunks acquisition, making them more significant for students. Reading with contextualized content is the skill that can be exposed to learners, considering essential principles taken from CBI. In this way, they could link their reality to contextualized content, presenting their answers orally, developing communicative skills especially oral fluency in the learners' context.

Key words: CBI, Reading, oral fluency.

Contextualizing Content in Reading for Oral Fluency Development

In order to introduce the topic of this paper, it is important to mention that foreign language (FL) learning has gone through several changes along the years, where different approaches and methods have been applied in order to get both suitable environment and conditions for carrying this process out. One of these approaches is Content – based instruction (CBI), which is focused on language learning through content implementation. CBI is a widespread approach which displays five different models as follows: Immersion Education, Content – Enriched Courses, Sheltered, Adjunct and Theme – based Model that are offered and applied according to students' needs. CBI could be introduced in classrooms through one of the four language skills. Considering the focus of this paper, reading was chosen as the most adequate since teachers can provide contextualized content through it in order to facilitate and enhance the FL learning process while other skills can be fostered, in this case, speaking. Considering the above mentioned, the goal of this paper is to highlight the importance of contextualizing content through CBI in reading to help foreign language students develop oral fluency.

Along the paper, some topics will be discussed. First, some factors that influence the FL learning process will be described. Next, communicative competence as a goal to reach will be introduced. Afterwards, CBI will be discussed, considering items such as classroom context and use of FL for real purposes. Subsequently, oral fluency and its reinforcement through the implementation of CBI in reading will be explained. Also, oral fluency and the need to enhance it in Colombian classrooms will be discussed, considering specific goals: the promotion of interaction and the support of communicative bases into FL learning process. In order to draw a clearer panorama of

how content contextualization could be carried out by teachers, some tasks that support and exemplify the proposal of this paper will be introduced, considering their process and requirements.

Factors that Influence Language Learning

It is important to highlight the role of factors of the language learning process and their relevance in it. It is important both to understand how these factors work and to define the concepts that will be discussed in this paper. According to Brown (2000) and Stern (1991), language learning process is affected by a series of factors: cognitive and personality factors are intrinsic to students, while sociocultural factors are external; they help to construct the foundations of learning context and attitude towards a language. In sociocultural factors, important issues are interwoven; one of them is culture. In Larson and Smalley's words (1972, as cited in Brown, 2000, p.176), culture is defined as "the blueprint which addresses people behavior in a community and it grows in familiar living. It helps people to realize which their goals and limitations as individuals and their responsibility in a group are"; however, this is not an easy term to define. There are several conceptions around culture, but Brown's definition is considered the most suitable for this paper. The author explains culture as a group of ideas, customs, abilities, arts and tools that made a group of people special in a specific lapse (2000, p. 177). These items establish a system of patterns that addresses people to act according to specific affective and cognitive contexts that are stated by culture itself.

Culture affects society and people. As Brown claims, the individual creates a personal view of the context in which evolves both personally and in a community. It is not a whole but a part of it, defined according to personal perceptions about the setting where the individual lives and is created by cognitive and affective factors (2000).

As it can be seen, culture can be linked to issues in language learning such as cognitive and affective factors. According to Brown (2000) and Stern (1991), additional to them, the influence of sociocultural factors is important in language learning. This item concerns how social context and language are applied and built hand by hand. In Jimenez's terms:

the social context is taken as not something external from the speaker, but the perception that learner has about it, in other words, his / her experience and interpretation about this social context, its influence over students' attitudes and motivation, and how social factors affect both language learning and some conditions from this process. (2002. p. 75)

As it has been explained before, culture, as a group of customs, abilities and arts that influence people's acting in a determined context, is connected to some factors that belong to the FL learning process (cognitive and affective factors). As a result, culture and language learning are interwoven and influence each other. However, what happens in FL learning, where several cultural contexts and languages are faced by the student in the classroom and out of it? In the next section, the relationship between FL learning and learner's native context, and some examples of how these are studied together in classrooms will be discussed.

Relationship between learner's native context and FL learning

In Brown's (2000) conception: "it is apparent that culture, as an ingrained set of behaviors and modes of perception, becomes highly important in learning a second language" (p. 177). Then, it would be taken for granted that the process of FL learning implicitly imposes the learning of the foreign culture and context characteristics. However, this is a misconception. As Brown (2000) affirms "many students in foreign

classrooms learn the language with little or no sense of the depth of cultural norms and patterns of the people who speak the language” (p. 182). Then, teachers in the 21st century should reflect on the idea of considering context in relation to a FL in order to enrich their teaching and to provide students with tools which allow them to understand elements beyond the language grammar or vocabulary they are learning.

In recent years, a process called acculturation has received attention from several researchers such as Schumann and Brown. In acculturation, FL students get involved with the culture where it is spoken. It carries not only the FL culture, but also the creation of a second identity surrounded by this culture, since culture and language are linked. In Brown’s (2000) words “culture is a deeply ingrained part of the very fiber of our being, but language – the means for communication among members of a culture – is the most visible and available expression of that culture” (p. 183). However, in the FL learning process, both the native and foreign cultures are present while students are learning the FL, provoking a cross- cultural disruption. This might be conducive to a non- suitable environment for the students’ FL learning process. Such situation could affect learners both academically and affectively due to the lack of knowledge of the foreign culture managed in the FL class. An example of this is a Colombian teacher teaching learners in rural areas of Pasto how to go to the train station and buying a ticket.

It is important to consider that FL learner’s misunderstanding could elicit feelings such as lack of motivation, confusion, and frustration, among others. Those, in turn might affect negatively the learners’ performance and academic results due to the fact of some topics from the foreign culture studied in classroom sessions are not understood and interiorized at all by them. Considering these possible problems and negative effects of cross - cultural disruption, it would be appropriate to attempt to prevent them

by taking into account the actual context where the learner lives as an essential element involved in FL learning. In the next section, communication as a goal of FL learning will be discussed through the review of the concept of communicative competence.

Communicative Competence: a Goal for Reaching Language Development

The term “communicative competence” was coined by Dell Hymes. Hymes (1972, as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 246) referred to communicative competence as “that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts”. Lessard – Clouston (1992), as cited in Sercu (2000 p. 29) claims that communicative competence “recognizes culture through the importance of features such as context, discourse, and language appropriateness: communicative competence involves a linguistic, sociolinguistic, strategic, discourse, sociocultural and social dimension”. Savignon (1976) noted that communicative competence does not look for surface features (as linguistics) in order to shape the performance; it indeed sees the whole communicative situation considering to whom, relationship, context and intent. In other words, communicative competence is developed as an interpersonal competence, in which language has a relationship with the context where participants are immersed in. Therefore, the communicative competence role considers the sociocultural item as ultimate in the FL process, whose role demands the presence of this item in its development. As Celce –Murcia (1995) cited in Manjarrés (2009 p. 144) claims, the communicative competence role is based on “how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication (and it) represents the speaker/listener’s background knowledge of the target community”. This aspect of language was researched considering one of the goals of the FL learning which is the interaction between students, especially in their

context. Considering the importance of the concept of communicative competence in the exchange of messages in a social context, in the next section some examples of contextualized foreign language instruction will be presented.

Language learning in the foreign context: a review of a case study

McCrum (2010; as cited in Kumaravadivelu 2012. p. 19) considers language as the most visible expression of a culture, in this case, the English speakers' one: "At the time you highlight English culture, an amount of terms and values come to your mind: freedom, individuality and originality; they reflect some conceptions why this language and culture want to be learned". One case about foreign culture and learning that is studied in this paper is Spanish as FL which is taught in the United States.

McIntyre et al (2009) share their own experience being part in Spanish as a FL class. They expected to learn Spanish grammar, vocabulary and even some cultural norms; however, most of the students did not obtain any level of fluency. They learnt about Spanish but with low chances to use it in meaningful situations. As it can be seen, learning a FL sometimes implies only the learning of the grammatical structures of it, leaving behind its application for a meaningful and communicative purpose in a context.

The non-English speaking world learns and uses English language for communicative purposes and not for cultural identity formation (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 19). The statement above needs to be linked to the idea of making FL, in this case English, a means of communication among different cultures and countries. This conception is considered as one of the goals of FL teachers when language and context are interwoven in the classroom:

For our purposes as language teachers, context refers to the degree to which meaning and situations from the world outside the classroom are present in an

instructional approach, method, or classroom activity, thus engaging learners in constructing meaning and in using L2 to communicate and acquire new information. (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 47)

In other words, context has to be present and considered in the application of an approach, in order to keep students engaged in building their own communicative competence while they share information in the classroom, so they create meaningful experiences. One case that will be analyzed as an example deals with some Indian communities studied by Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998; as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 19). They claim that “Indians learn English to meet their educational and institutional needs, and they keep it separated from their cultural beliefs and practices”. A similar situation took place in some Pakistanis communities researched by Mahboob (2009; as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 19). “For Pakistanis, English reflects Islamic values, and embodies South Asian sensitiveness. The goal of using English language is not a perpetuation of the English culture, but the spread of own culture and the expansion of their knowledge horizons through this language”.

These cases highlight the value of FL when FL learning and its use is focused on a communicative goal instead of a spread of foreign culture. The situations described above focus on real needs and cultural contexts of students. In this way the learners’ native culture and FL learning are interwoven; both aim at achieving a communicative environment in the classroom setting or even out of it, as Indians and Pakistanis do.

As a conclusion, in order to motivate and enhance conditions for FL learning, it is not essential to get close to an English context, but it is necessary to give English language a real and meaningful application into the actual learners’ context. The students could communicate with others in a classroom setting keeping in mind their

own culture and context. Considering this need of communication, it should be advisable the application of an approach that encourages oral communication in students' through contextualization. Considering the aim of this paper, it is suggested that the contextualization can be carried out through content. One of the most suitable approaches to achieve this is content – based instruction (CBI), whose features will be discussed in the next section.

Content and skill integration

Before talking about CBI, a brief overview of the language skills and their integration as one of the purposes featured in recent approaches will be presented. This is discussed because of the need to stress out how CBI could be implemented and how it effectively encompasses all the skills of language.

Learning a language, as communicative competence has suggested, means to be proficient in the four essential skills. Through their development in a suitable context, students could be prepared to face communicative situations. This would be the purpose of language teachers in the 21st century. According to Brown (2001), the four language skills are divided into two groups: perceptive performance (aural and reading) and productive performance skills (oral and written). The recent tendency deals with skills integration since perceptive performance abilities cannot act by themselves; they need productive performance abilities in order to give a result or product (output). This integration of language skills supports an interactive and communicative framework. CBI not only integrates the skills, but also supports interaction and exposure to diverse content. This approach will be presented below.

What is content – based instruction?

For explaining CBI, it is important to consider what the concept of “content” deals with. In Richards and Rodgers’ terms (2001), content is the subject used to communicate or learn through language. Therefore, for some teachers, content is implicit in the language and in the structures that are supposed to be taught. Cook (1983, p. 229) presents an example about how to apply content. For instance, the passive voice could be taught using a report of a football match or a recipe for cooking beans. The importance of implementing content in curriculum is connected to communicative competence. As Striker claims:

The fundamental organization of the curriculum is derived from the subject matter rather than from forms, functions, situations or skills. Communicative competence is acquired during the process of learning about specific topics such as math, science, art, social studies, culture, business, history, political systems, international affairs or economics. (1997, p. 6)

In other words, content is the matter which is learnt or transmitted via the FL and enhances communicative settings. Its application in a curriculum is focused on subject rather than language structures, and it develops communicative competence.

Having discussed what content is, it is time to examine how Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is defined. CBI integrates the learning of some specific subject – matter content with the learning of a second language (Brown, 2000, p. 234). Its framework is based on highlighting the nature of a subject instead of language form. Consequently, language is a means used by the student to get informative subject matter of his / her interest and relevance. In specific terms, CBI is defined by Snow (n.d. as cited in Brown, 2001 p, 49) as “the integration of content learning with language teaching aims. More

specifically, it refers to the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material”.

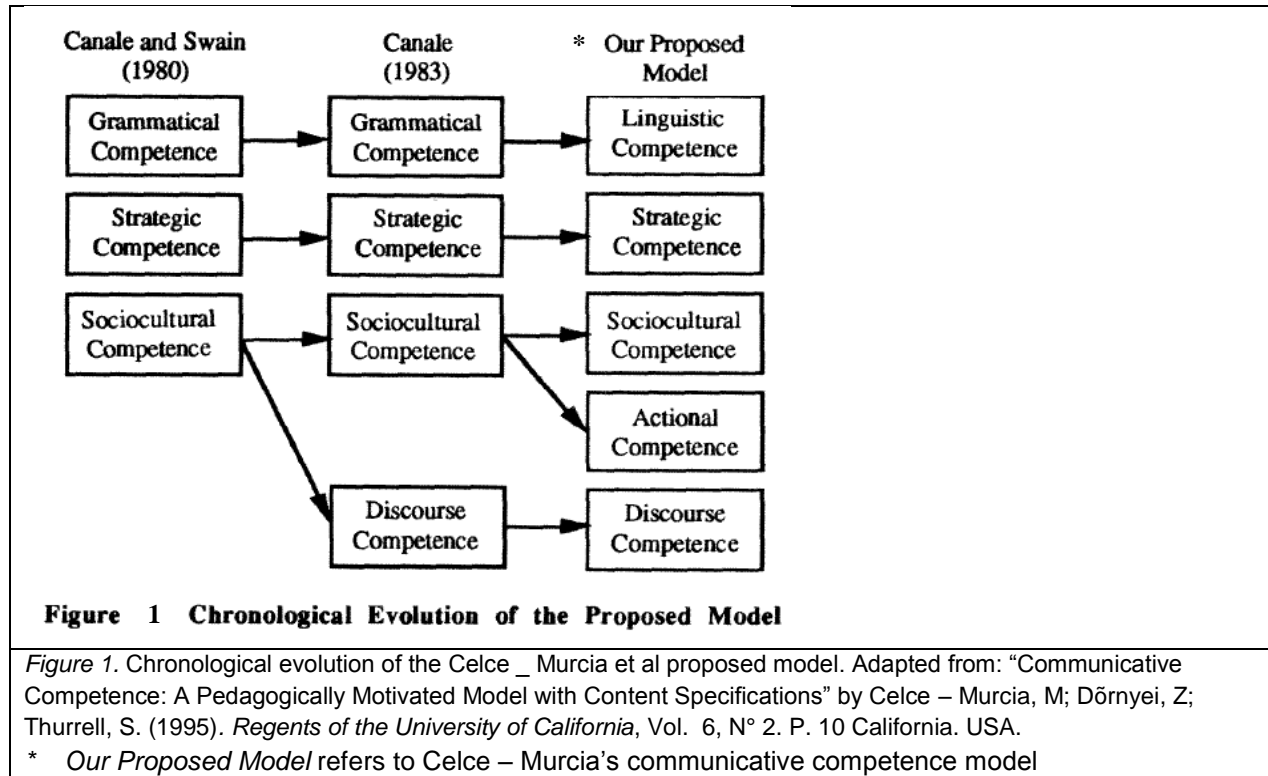
In conclusion, CBI in the FL process is the means through which relevant and interesting matter is shared to students, so content becomes the focus of learners rather than learning of grammatical structures. Grammatical structures are involved and applied in tasks based on the subject content learnt in class. In this way, content does not only facilitate the acquisition of these features, but also it pushes the real application of grammar, chunks and items showed through the content. That is one of the advantages of applying CBI in a FL context. Next, CBI and communicative competence will be briefly reviewed in terms of their connection in order to describe how these could enhance the FL learning process, involving language and social items.

CBI as a Means of Communicative Competence Development

As it could be seen, communicative competence deals with language proficiency in a determined context where the speaker is able to transmit and understand messages successfully. It is important to identify the items of communicative competence and their relationship with FL, so the learners would be able to interchange or share their knowledge and experiences with others. There is a communicative competence schema that has been modified through the years. That is the Celce Murcia's latest proposal (1995). This proposal is divided into five competences, used as the base for further model modifications: linguistic, strategic, sociocultural, actional and discourse.

Figure 1 represents the development of communicative competence model from Canale and Swain's to Celce Murcia's. The items of the first proposal have been divided into several components. The focus of this evolution is observed in the sociocultural competence, which has been separated in discourse competence and actional

competence in Canale's and Celce – Murcia's proposal, respectively. The focus of the current proposal is on the model developed by Celce – Murcia (1995).



From the five competences, the sociocultural is the most developed one since it correlates factors such as language use, chunks and context, among others. This co – relationship emerges from the concept that communicative competence model is a framework of competences which joins language with a real purpose: a successful interaction. It does not consider language as an isolated system; it keeps the learner's identity and context where the language will be applied (Celce Murcia, 1995).

Both CBI and communicative competence converge in considering issues such as identity, society and culture; that is why it is important to take into account some sociocultural items in FL learning since they deal with meaningful communication. Therefore, CBI acts as a support in this purpose, providing students with contextualized content and fostering chances for interaction. However, it is essential to identify what

implies to carry out a suitable FL learning process. Such ideas will be studied next.

Implications of CBI in the FL Context

One of the most ultimate implications to consider in CBI application is target students' English level. CBI should be carried out from intermediate to advanced English level students, whose use of FL is centered on academic or occupational issues for an extended time. Also, CBI is likely to be applied in classrooms whose goal is FL learning for communicative purposes, like Colombian ones, where the Common European Framework is a guide and communication is one of its goals. So, these classrooms face some challenges while they bring new chances to students. In Brown's terms:

Content – based classrooms may yield an increase in intrinsic motivation and empowerment, since students are focused on subject matter that is important to their lives. They are pointed beyond transient extrinsic factors, like grades, to their own competence and autonomy as intelligent individuals capable of doing something with their new language. (2000, p. 50)

Talking about implications for CBI in Colombia and in its FL teaching process, it is important to take into account what Rios and Valcárcel (2005) suggest about the application of contextualized content in class. One of them is the selection and design of the reading activities they carried out in Luis López de Mesa School located in Cundinamarca following parameters like student's interest, age, visual support, as well as students' likes and activities they like to develop during and after the readings. The latter ones are really centered on their own reality. The consideration of these issues in Rios and Valcarcel's research "not only expanded students' vocabulary and reinforced the use of structures, but they also promoted learner's creativity and imagination; they encouraged them to produce different speeches in the target language" (Rios and

Valcarcel, p 63. 2005). These results are similar to some of the purposes expected to attain with CBI application in a FL context like ours.

Another implication to consider is teacher's preparation and knowledge. Peterson (1997) refers to knowledge not only as the management of the target language and its components, but also the subject that acts as a means of it. Subjects such as math, science, or history are developed under this approach, and it is necessary for CBI English teachers to understand and work with this kind of information. Getting back to Rios and Valcarcel's research (2005), the topics developed into their reading material were related to students' environment and situations that took place in their setting or were otherwise related to it: "the material also promoted meaningful reading because the topics and activities were based on real situations or events that were happening" (Rios and Valcarcel, 2005, p. 63). In this way, English is not taught anymore as a mere language demanded to be managed in a certain level, but a tool that is possible for learners to be used by them to transmit and share knowledge to others, being aware of language used for real purposes (Rios and Valcarcel, 2005). The implications mentioned above would reach the enhancement of not only communicative skills but also intrinsic motivation and students' capacity and autonomy to apply the learnt language in a real context, since the content learnt by students becomes meaningful to them.

As a conclusion, CBI tackles several implications such as learners' English level, basic requirements in material development and choice, and the importance of teacher's preparation, the capability of reaching students' autonomy and intrinsic motivation; and one of the most important ones: to consider FL learning for a communicative purpose. Taking into account this communicative purpose, in the next section some advantages

of CBI will be studied, for instance, communicative competence enhancement and skills development, especially in reading.

CBI as a Means of Skills Development

As it was discussed previously, communicative competence could work hand in hand with CBI thanks to content contextualization that this approach offers to students through the material, fostering a real use of FL in class for getting a meaningful output. Also, this relationship could foster a link of skills, which will be seen in the next section.

Richards and Rogers (2001) provide some facts about CBI and its strong relationship with FL skills, how they are developed and why are important in it:

CBI views language use as involving several skills. In a content – based class, students are involved in activities that link the skills, because this is how they are involved in the real world. Hence students might read and take notes, listen and write a summary, or respond orally to things they have read or written (p. 208).

The interconnection between skills when students are required to produce output through CBI should be considered as an ultimate goal, as Richard and Rogers (2008) express the importance of integrating skills as a way to support and improve each other. For this paper, reading will be featured, considering CBI's influence in it and how this skill reinforces the others, especially speaking.

As Brown claims (2001), although reading research has been limited, it has showed interesting features about reading and its components that affect the FL learning process. One feature of reading that needs to be considered by teachers is the difference between bottom – up and top – down processing. The former one refers to the recognition and organization of a huge genre of linguistic signals such as letters, phonemes, syllables, discourse markers and so on. In other words, a deep analysis of

reading discourses considering their linguistic issues. On the other hand, the top – down process deals with the interaction of student’s intelligence and experience in order to understand a text and decide which information should be retained by the learner.

Recent research has showed the integration of these two processes would be an essential ingredient into reading methodology. Such integration fosters comprehension. In Bautista’s words (2013), comprehension requires an active participation from readers, where abilities to seek, organize and reformulate are interwoven with their previous knowledge and experiences. Considering comprehension as a process which is improved through students’ experiences and knowledge, CBI would be a suitable approach to be applied to reading, since it involves these two mentioned items through its application. In the next section, CBI application in reading skill will be studied taking into account aspects such as materials and students’ role.

Why carry out CBI through reading?

Students’ experience and background knowledge take a big role in language proficiency, especially in reading. Rosenblatt (1991; as cited in Rincon, 2013. p. 235) affirms that “readers are active subjects whose ideas, feelings, emotions, and thoughts play a very important role during the reading process”. CBI would be suitably displayed by reading since contextualized content can be connected with students’ experience and background knowledge. Teachers might work adapting, abridging or modifying the information present in reading passages to fit students’ realities or to introduce cultural comparisons that help learners develop intercultural awareness and an appreciation for differences. Additionally, Scott and Winograd’ (2001; as cited in Bautista, 2013) discuss how the use of contextualized reading helps students to get involved in specific content – based expressions and vocabulary, getting skillful and conscious about them, even in

the organization of information and FL structure. They could be able to use terminology related with the content showed through reading, fostering confidence in them.

Giving contextualized content to provide students with meaningful input, also contributes to making FL learning more interesting to them, thus enhancing motivation and involvement among the students. Reading about topics instead of focusing on structure also contributes to giving learners information and tools to carry out debates or discussions. Ur (1996) has suggested that one problem in speaking is that sometimes students do not speak because they do not have anything to say. Having vocabulary, content and information will help learners avoid this problem. Additionally, this input involves the promotion of a communicative setting since students are provided with enough information and grammatical structures that would be given in a metalinguistic or a direct way (through form – focused instruction) in order to interact in class:

the teacher's use of meaningful target language input (...) can only occur in the presence of communicative contexts and interesting topics. (...). Of critical importance is selecting texts that reflect natural language use and bring content and interest to learning tasks (Shrum and Glisan. 2010, p. 84).

Therefore, CBI through reading not only catches the learners' attention through meaningful content but also promotes a communicative environment. It is important for material development to consider two components: motivation and logical structure. In Oller's words (1983; as cited in Shrum & Glisan, 2010): motivation comes up with a goal: to hold attention and interest of the audience, avoiding being bored.

When CBI is applied to reading instruction, it also involves students into contextualized content which is meaningful for them and can give them not only knowledge of a language, but also knowledge of the world. This can be particularly

rewarding for example, for adult learners in college who would benefit from reading interesting texts that enrich their education. It acts as a bridge between their knowledge and real context, so they are able to enhance the communicative competence in a suitable environment. In order to materialize this advantage of CBI, the material teachers use should include two specific characteristics named before. In other words, both content and structure are important in reading for being applied into a CBI class. In the next section, the influence of CBI applied in reading material in communicative classroom environment will be discussed, considering one of the relevant factors in language learning and interaction with others that is oral fluency.

Oral Fluency

Before talking about oral fluency and CBI into reading, it is suitable to describe the importance of fluency in the language learning process, its role and functions. Oral fluency is considered one of the goals to be reached in language learning. According to Brown (2000), speaking takes place in the initial levels of language learning process and is improved taking into account its accuracy. That is why fluency should be considered in elementary level of language learning process due to its relationship with accuracy. Also, it has a highlighted role in interaction, since it takes part in the micro skills of oral communication. In other words, oral fluency involves processes such as language improvement and interaction. Oral fluency should be fostered through suitable tasks; in this case, developed from CBI since it considers students' knowledge and improves grammar in order to improve learners' output. Next, the influence of oral fluency on language proficiency and interaction will be discussed and its improvement through the application of CBI into reading and material.

Oral fluency for language proficiency

CBI could reinforce the linguistic side of language since when students read they acquire vocabulary, they notice patterns in language, and are exposed to real samples of language and to how structures should look. In Stoller's words (2004; as cited in Hernandez, 2005, p.6) one of the principles for CBI application deals with grammar instruction where it is seen as a component of other skills, and which should emerge from sources and mean a direct outgrowth of input, output and curricular objectives.

Continuing with Stoller (2008, as cited in Hernandez, 2000, p.6), he considers teacher plays a highlighted role at the time of identifying and reinforcing grammatical structures in reading activities worked in the class in order to access the information and use it adequately for communicative purposes. This highlighting of grammatical structures in a FL teaching approach is called form – focused instruction (FFI). Next, FFI and its influence on CBI will be discussed, considering its advantages and limitations, in order to develop oral fluency.

Form – focused instruction into CBI

According to Spada and Lightbown (2008), people who have been studying a FL from an early age tend to display rather adequate levels of second language management and use. This issue could suggest that explicit grammar instruction in second language acquisition should be lessened since the younger someone learns a language, the less he / she recognizes consciously the structure and form of it. Thus, instruction may not be effective as suggested by Wudong (1994; as cited in Nunan, 1999). An example of this is teaching explicit grammar rules to young children who are later unable to translate this declarative knowledge (the rules) to procedural knowledge (communicating in the L2). That is why CBI should be accompanied by form-focused

instruction (FFI) so as to enhance the learning opportunities and also accuracy. As suggested by Montgomery and Eisenstein (1985, as cited in Nunan, 1999): “grammar + opportunities to communicate led to greater improvements in fluency and grammatical accuracy than grammar only” (p.50). Doughty (1988), cited by Nunan (1999), supports this premise stating that “learners receiving instruction both meaning and form-focused outperform those receiving only instruction” (p.50).

FFI helps learners to use adequately and proficiently the sounds, words and sentences of the FL they are learning, without neglecting communication. Some empirical works around the knowledge reinforced thanks to FFI were developed and they showed that it has an influence on students learning by CLT and CBI, since it helps them use their L2 with greater fluency and accuracy (Spada & Lightbrown, 2008).

FFI would improve students' performance in two possible ways: either enhancing grammatical issues learnt or practiced in the class. Learners could improve their output at the time they are applying grammatical structures studied in form –focused practice in class. On the other hand, they could achieve adequate use of grammatical structures in form – focused practice that could be learnt in a metalinguistic way in practical language sessions. Considering reading skill and its goal of fostering fluency, FFI would be a useful tool, helping to reach a proficient level in oral fluency, keeping in mind the grammatical chunks contextually used in class. Next, some possible advantages and limitations of FFI in CBI will be discussed.

Advantages and limitations of FFI in CBI and reading skill

As it can be seen, CBI and reading go hand in hand aiming to oral fluency, providing students with meaningful content contextualization. It would be suitable to work CBI, FFI and the reading skill; their adequate application could contribute to getting

a high level of fluency, from which is possible to get meaningful and proficient output.

In Spada and Lightbown's (2008) words, although CBI emphasizes meaningful content, grammatical and form – language items are not developed at all due to the core of the approach is content in class. This fact could provoke some difficulties in pronunciation and language structures, among others. That is why advocates of CBI have claimed the benefits of applying tasks that include FFI suitably.

An advantage of FFI in CBI is their role as a means of focusing on language - form features while language is used in a communicative setting and for real purposes. FFI would act as a tool for reinforcing the grammatical chunks shared by the students. Another advantage is the profitable teacher's interventions that could happen in the class, some of them could be predicted by her/him. This feedback or brief explanations could help students to express meaning in an adequate way rather than a class explanation without any practice included or an ongoing language real practice without any language – form reinforcement. A final advantage is about language chunks internalized by the student through real application. Considering the communicative purpose of CBI in a classroom, the teacher would expose through reading specific language chunks to be used in class in order to keep communication going, thereby those phrases or expressions are kept by the students through practice. As a result, FFI in CBI promotes interaction between students in a communicative context.

However, FFI does not have a predictable point of application in a CBI class, so the teacher has the role of identifying any possible and profitable chance to apply FFI as grammatical items reinforcement. Taking into account reading and its influence on CBI, FFI could be seen as a tool of grammatical reinforcement if the teacher is able to profit the chances to use it. In conclusion, the application of FFI in CBI tasks has a great

potential for facilitating the development of fluent and accurate language and which could be used inside the classroom, aiming to FL use outside of it. Such development would be essential to create spaces for interaction and reinforce grammar bases. The promotion of spaces for interaction by means of oral fluency will be briefly discussed next, keeping in mind the role of FFI and CBI in such interaction process.

Creating spaces of interaction for oral fluency development

Considering reading as a skill that acts, grows and develops into a social context which has been modified due to the ongoing increasing social environment and the students' personal experiences, this skill has a strong link with the personal reality view and the context where the FL process members act. Ríos Olaya and Valcárcel (2005) give an example about reading and opportunities to broaden cultural appreciation: when native speakers read the tongue they have understood and spoken since birth, they could be able to transfer this previous knowledge to the English reading process. Taking into account this statement, reading should aim the learners' interests not only considering previous knowledge, but also giving the possibility of a wide appreciation of their context. In this section the improvement of oral fluency will be studied, especially one of its main purposes that is interaction.

In Kasper's words (1995), linguistic and cognitive development through CBI classes and material are beneficial for the activation of schemata; it acts as a support in the interaction process. Also, such knowledge obtained from reading material helps students practice language skills while handling the primary topic found in it. The variety of texts would mean an advantage since when students obtain contextualized information through different types of texts, there would be more chances of feeling comfortable with one or more of them, providing a meaningful input that could be

processed and exposed in interaction (expository pieces in written and oral way, illustration, debates, and so on). Considering the width of reading and content in it, Ríos and Valcárcel (2005, p.63) highlight the relevance of teachers in FL reading process:

Reading is a way to communicate and understand our environment; consequently, it must have a specific intention or purpose. It is a way to open our minds to other cultures and fields of knowledge. Reading can be a tool to explore the world, other cultures and compare them with our own.

In other words, the more students feel identified with the text, the more meaningful the output presented by them through interaction would be, taking into account the importance of teachers in reading process as a guide and foster of it.

Reinforcing Communicative Bases through Oral Fluency

As Ríos and Valcárcel (2005) claim in their research, reading is the skill that is supposed to provide extensive input, but they thought it could produce short writing or oral output when learners used what they knew through reading in interventions in class (reading aloud, performing the dialogues or reading by their own) which, according to the authors, some students liked too. So, learners gained confidence each time they participated. On the other hand, those who were so shy preferred to be quiet, listening to the others and repeating when they were asked to do it. Also, they became aware of their mistakes and helped in pronunciation to their partners.

Reading and CBI not only help in interaction, but also they could foster settings that prepare students to use the FL in a real context, enhancing weaknesses and considering knowledge they manage as a useful and valuable tool for communication. Students construct knowledge through their concept of reality and this one is offered in reading, so schemata is activated for being able to transmit information and prepare

them for using the FL for real uses. About grammar structures, Rios and Valcárcel (2005) had to face a problem in their research, since students used to apply mother tongue rules to FL. This situation was solved through teacher's intervention and reading focused on contextualized content, showing to students the content referred to their reality that exposes the grammatical rule and demands its application in interactive post-reading tasks which let students talk about their own reality. Hence, not only the vocabulary is reinforced, but also grammar that is presented to FL learners in a familiar context with familiar content presented through reading skill, too.

In conclusion, oral fluency is fostered through reading offering to students a comfortable base which they could go on. Reading is a tool for enhancing communicative bases and help correct mistakes in pronunciation and grammar in class, since students feel more confident about the knowledge they manage and information in reading is related to their context. As it has been explained the benefits of reading for fostering interaction and supporting communicative bases, next some suitable tasks to be applied in order to achieve such benefits will be mentioned.

Suitable Tasks for Developing Oral Fluency

At the time of thinking which some suitable tasks for developing oral fluency through CBI focused on reading, considering FFI could be, it is a little broad. But, Shrum & Glisan (2010) say that besides the maximum use of FL, meaningful teacher's feedback among other conditions, it is needed to consider the integration of oral and printed authentic texts and the identification of pertinent content in order to work on interesting topics in classroom context in which students can communicate, which "leads to engagement of students and increased interest in language learning" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 80). One example of this was developed in Colombia by Ríos and

Valcárcel (2005). They managed four work guides which were applied to students working the seasons, the Olympic Games, daily activities and Halloween as topics. As a conclusion they affirm that:

(...) while using these work guides we realized that students liked them a lot because they were related to their reality. They had already seen some news about the Olympic Games, so it was interesting for them to know about this in English. Also, sports are one of the topics they prefer. (p. 64)

This material includes questions in the post reading activities whose intention was to get some information about learners. They allow students to get in touch with their own reality and share their experiences through speaking, “for instance, they had to talk about their daily activities; they had to describe their or another partner’s clothes or the way they used to celebrate Halloween” (Ríos & Valcárcel, 2005, p. 62). Also, it is possible to develop other kinds of activities such as a performance, in this case, it was performed a fashion show which was fun and enjoyable for students. The results achieved from the application of this material were compiled and concluded as a successful way of learning to read and speak about different topics using a FL. Booth (n.d; as cited in Rincon Ussa, 2013) defends the link between students’ lives and texts, consider their bonds with the text from their personal development and knowledge, and the possible interpretations the text provokes.

This paper focuses on the application of CBI in reading as a tool for improving oral fluency in FL students. This purpose considers potential limitations such as the distance between students and FL context, differences between native and foreign contexts and the goal of achieving some appropriate conditions for developing oral fluency in learners such as a comfortable classroom environment, chances to exchange

information and interact with partners and the provision both vocabulary and structures through contextualized reading, taking into account all the time to get in touch with learners' knowledge and foster the activation of schemata.

CBI – Focused Reading Tasks: a Tool for Enhancing Oral Fluency in FL Students

CBI is an approach based on content as a tool for learning a FL considering learners' knowledge as a base for acquiring new information about a specific topic. As it was mentioned in previous pages, CBI in reading should be rather applied at intermediate to advanced levels considering students' English management level which facilitates a wider variety of tasks, especially oral ones than in an elementary level.

Nowadays, teachers could use CBI in reading as an ultimate approach for reinforcing oral skills, since it provides learners not only with new knowledge, but also the confidence for sharing their experiences and thoughts through the use of new words, expressions and the feedback given by the teacher and classmates.

In this section, some possible tasks from intermediate to advanced level will be presented. They have as a goal to provide useful vocabulary and expressions that are studied in the content which is linked to learners' previous knowledge. This involves and motivates students to take part in oral tasks being aware of their own knowledge and the grammar, structures and new information included in the reading. In this way, CBI in reading works, and, in agreement with the purpose from this paper, it can foster oral skills.

The first text refers to a student's personal information. Learners have a reading about an American girl considering her family, interests and hobbies. First of all, learners ask for vocabulary if it is needed. Next, they have to use the text as a model for talking about themselves, changing information from the text with their own. Finally, they have

some questions referring to the readings, main information from the text is asked to students and both texts are compared through a series of questions. In this case, it is necessary that students produce their own output orally, which can be reinforced through writing (taking notes, outlining, and brainstorming), so they gain confidence while they answer the questions in a round table.

The second reading is about holidays. It is advisable in upper intermediate for advanced level learners. The activity starts with a series of questions in a pre - reading task that are referred to holidays around the world, in order to define learners' information about the topic and break the ice. Next, a series of short descriptions about holidays around the world is exposed. Learners read them aloud and ask for vocabulary. At the end of the reading, some questions focused on describing students' favorite holiday will be presented. Therefore, they should be answered using the vocabulary and structures presented in the reading. Some questions ask for main information about readings and others ask about holidays from students' towns, cities or countries. In the final stage vocabulary and structures learnt in the readings will be used to perform a short presentation about a chosen holiday by the students. They are able to use one of the texts as a model for their oral presentation or create another one on their own.

These activities are only a brief take from a huge diversity of tasks that could be applied in FL classrooms. The essential advice that should be considered is that the task must be focused on learners' context involving the content; and the questions should foster oral communication more than a short answer, providing confidence to learners at the time they express themselves taking reading as an essential base, since it reinforces FL grammar through content at the beginning of the tasks where students face it before starting to talk.

Conclusions

CBI is a tool by means of which it is possible to provide students with engaging and interesting content for them in order to learn a language without neglecting linguistic competence and accuracy. It can be said that CBI is a useful approach that can be used to link content related to students' reality and their FL learning process by means of endless choices of activities to be done in the classroom and which may support the learning of content in the L1. For instance, learners can approach the learning of interesting content using note-taking, summarizing, analyzing, evaluating tasks that might be applied to the learning of content outside the L2 classroom.

CBI has been applied into several ESL settings (India was one of the examples presented here) and as EFL (United States considering Spanish). It is necessary to take into account that the application of CBI in an EFL context, like ours, requires overcoming some difficulties such as the teaching as a grammar-focused process, the lack of chances to use FL as a tool for real communication outside the classroom, limited access to contextualized- content material, and teachers whose knowledge of CBI is limited or non-existent. In other words, CBI implementation is not an easy process to be carried out, but if teachers in an EFL context as Colombia could see past such troubles and consider CBI as a tool for engaging students into FL learning, this would be beneficial as students would be involved in learning, the skills of language would develop in a balanced way with content, and, at the same time they would be provided with real goals for the classroom and beyond.

This paper attempted to provide relevant information about CBI and reading, since given the government goals and constraints; it is one of the most enforced skills in

our context. However, the results in standardized tests such as Pruebas Saber 11 suggest that reading is not being adequately developed. It has been advised that reading combined with CBI can be a powerful strategy for teachers and learners, if we make some clarifications: For example, CBI requires work from the teacher. There is the need to contextualize, adapt, abridge content to fit students' reality and events that their lives revolve around: holidays, social conditions, music, TV shows, sports. Also, reading is not a passive activity; reading is a means by which CBI can be applied and where content related to the knowledge students have acquired can be activated and potentially enhanced along with other skills such as learning vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing.

Reading has become a widespread means to communicate and learn in our current society. People text, post comments, write e-mails and enroll in online courses and reading is the key to be able to provide adequate answers. Through contextualized information given by means of reading, students may feel more comfortable when getting immersed in FL learning and using it no longer for accomplishment of academic tasks, but for real and communicative purposes. Considering the advantages of reading, it can also be concluded that reading can foster oral fluency. Oral fluency, as Brown (2001) mentions has to be present at the elementary stage of FL learning and improved along this process since it influences accuracy and interaction. If oral fluency is supported by tasks focused on contextualized content presented by means of readings, language elements such as language proficiency, interaction and communicational bases would be reinforced.

When considering the application of reading in CBI, some specific characteristics connected to tasks need to be kept in mind. The first one is related to content that, as it

was mentioned above, should refer to students' interests and needs, even if it means that the teacher modifies existing texts or creates new ones. The texts provided by teachers should go beyond the grammar and vocabulary expected to be reinforced and provide, as stated before, content, relevance, comprehensible input and samples of grammar to be taught implicitly.

Besides supporting or developing the skills just mentioned, the tasks designed by teachers around relevant content should foster communicative exchanges in classroom setting while supporting accuracy. As Schmidt and Frota (1986, as cited in Nunan, 1999) suggest, both instruction and opportunities to communicate are necessary for language acquisition. Thus, CBI combined with instruction and contextualized materials lead the way for learners to share their experiences and opinions, taking as reference the information presented in the reading and considering the learned vocabulary and grammar. This combination of skills, materials and techniques may provide learners with more than one point of view giving chances for discussion, interaction, feedback and, ultimately, learning.

Nonetheless, all this integration of skills and material would not be as meaningful as it would be expected if we leave grammar aside. When communication and interaction are the aim of FL learning, grammar should be taken into account as an essential item in FL learning. However, it does not imply that it has to be taught explicitly. CBI can mean a huge support in grammar reinforcement, that goes forward hand in hand with Form – focused instruction when this is implemented in classroom setting and reading tasks, both aimed to provide students with communicative chances. It is important to highlight the fact of teaching grammar as a requirement in effective communicative and interactive exchanges, but not as the main goal of FL learning

process. So, it is required that grammar enhancement was carried out in an implicit way, being supported by contextualized -content material, developed in a context where students have communicative and interactive exchanges opportunities, being addressed by teachers who would be capable to teach through CBI in reading, considering material design, content and goals purposed by this approach in classroom settings and Colombian education parameters and objectives.

Finally, as teachers, it is important to realize the scope of the proposal exposed here. It covers issues such as material design that involves students in an interesting and meaningful way that would be able to get in touch with their reality, providing them with a real purpose and not only unlinked content in order to share experiences and opinions. To get immersed into CBI in reading for oral fluency development could demand a bigger effort from teachers (more research, material design, changes in class planning); however, the obtained results not only would give students a real purpose for studying a FL, but also, for English learning , especially in Colombia. In our country, CBI in reading not only could enhance oral fluency, but also pursue the main goals drawn by the Ministerio de Educacion both in its objectives in English and academic development demanded in Pruebas SABER since students would be more confident at the time of facing texts, or even to produce oral output from them.

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