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Implementing Imaginative Education through mentoring- with an English as an Additional Language focus

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Abstract

English language teaching approaches are constantly being questioned and challenged in non-English speaking countries as well as in English speaking countries in their quest of being leaders for its instruction. In the case of non-English speaking countries, the lack of authentic situations, culture and context make learning this language even more difficult and frustrating for English language learners (ELL). Imaginative education (IE) as a theory suggests that by engaging students and teachers' imaginations and emotions with regular curriculum content, learning will become memorable and significant. IE encourages teachers to shape content in a different way, tying it with emotional meaning which will empower the development of students' imagination through the use and development of certain cognitive tools. This action research project explores the story of one Mexican teacher's process of implementation of IE's principles, focusing on the subject of English as an Additional Language (EAL) with her 3rd grade classroom. Additionally, because one of IE main challenges has been implementation, a mentoring approach to support this teacher's learning process was selected to explore the potential benefits of selected activities. The following report includes a strong voice from the participant teacher with the analysis and interpretation of the researcher-mentor.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Vignette

"Something I recall vividly as a student is when I studied high school in Mesa, Arizona. By that time I didn't quite understand English and I could barely communicate in this language. All my classes where obviously 100% in English, which was a huge challenge for me, and even a reason for feeling fear because I couldn´t understand or interact in the different classes. One particular class was history, and the teacher was quite intimidating. But the thing I remember more vividly about his class is that we acted out certain scenes from world history in the classroom, we used to play a lot. One of the scenes was the World War II, in which we turned our desks upside down and made big paper balls to play our parts. Considering I didn't speak English in a way that allowed me to communicate effectively, this way, I could understand many things, and now I kind of understand why. He made history classes engaging, not by doing the `typical` activities, such as reading and answering dull questionnaires (like I used to do in middle-school)."

- Minerva, participant teacher

Introduction: Professional and Project's Background

I was born and raised in Mexico, a country with challenging systems but with a great amount of passionate people who are willing to make change. Growing up in a country like this, were you can only do so much in a so-called "democracy", can make you think quite pessimistically. However, having the opportunity of getting involved with the Mexican education community while studying in Canada, has allowed me to acknowledge serious and thoughtful efforts towards improvement in private and public educational settings.

The summer of 2014, I had the opportunity to start a pilot research project in Mexico, with the Imaginative Education Research Group and Dr. Kieran Egan as a supervisor. Our purposes were to explore the potential effectiveness of the Imaginative Literacy Program in a Mexican context, for which we designed and delivered a workshop for teachers with the support of the Regional Centre for Teachers Education and Educational Research[1] in Sonora, Mexico. Twenty five teachers attended to the workshop, most of them elementary school teachers. After the workshop, four teachers from different schools agreed to follow up on the next stage: initial steps for implementation. We provided on-going support for a few months and found great potential for impact on teachers and students' learning, but we encountered challenges such as distance, community-support, and time. For these reasons, we only had a chance to explore the initial steps of the implementation process.

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[1] The Regional Centre for Teacher Education and Educational Research is part of a project from the Mexican federal government aiming to improve teacher education.

Because I am certain there are still things to do to support these teachers in their understanding and implementation of imaginative education, I decided to invite one of them to participate in this action research project with the aim of exploring mentoring for implementation purposes and with the additional purpose of improving my own professional practice as researcher-implementer. Gladly, she agreed to participate with the same group she had tried out some IE lesson plans before. Minerva is a 3rd grade English teacher, teaching this language as an additional language in a private Mexican school with an ecological philosophy of education. In the previous project, she demonstrated enthusiasm to learn more about imaginative education and how to use these principles in her classroom and daily practice. Having a background as an ESL teacher myself, in Mexico and in Canada, I share her interest in exploring the use of imaginative education's cognitive tools in additional language instruction. Therefore, the research question this project aims to explore is if mentoring can be an effective approach to support the implementation of the Imaginative Literacy Program, with a specific focus of English as an Additional Language. This focus will also allow the exploration of an additional question which is to analyse the possible beneficial connections of imaginative education and second language instruction.

In this report, first I will briefly introduce the analysis of three themes which are relevant to this AR project in the literature review section. The first theme is the use of mentoring as an approach to implement educational programs. Even though my professional practice as researcher-implementer in the last project—which was my first experience—aligns with certain mentoring practices, this time I decided to explicitly select and explore a mentoring approach to

implementation. As part of this theme I intend to revise imaginative education's uniqueness in its principles and practices, and to identify implementation practices that might enhance the theory's comprehension.

A second theme is the relevance of linking theory and practice in teacher education, exposing the problematic of performance-based teacher training programs, where teachers are not being encouraged to reflect on the *why's* of the skills they are taught to acquire for teaching "successfully". I aim to connect this idea with the attempts that IERG has been making so far in implementing IE programs by developing guides and other helpful teacher resources.

And a third theme is the brief analysis of the current approaches and tendencies to teach English as an Additional Language and the possible beneficial connections of Imaginative Education and EAL. Also, here I will present Mexico's context related to EAL learning and its urgent need of further study and stronger international collaborations.

In the second part of the report, I will provide an overview of action research methodology emphasizing on collaborative practices between researchers and practitioners, which connect with certain phases of the implementation process.

As a third part, I will analyse the action research project's data collected having present the themes I mention in the literature review. These themes mainly emerged from the data collection process, which allowed me to interpret this rich data in a way that made sense for the project's objectives.

And lastly, I present the conclusions emerged from the analysis of the project, mostly focusing on those areas I would study further and areas that revealed significant findings for my own professional practice and career. I also expect to showcase Minerva's voice throughout the report, not only as a participant teacher in this action research project, but as a co-researcher, too.

Chapter 2. Literature review

Mentoring as an approach to implement educational programs

When discussing implementation, the main objective is often achieving effectiveness and sustainability of programs. Many actions or factors have been recommended through academic research and educational policies for the success of implementing educational programs. Trying to find a current model for the implementation process in general, I came upon an article by Meyers et al. (2012), in which they try to suggest a set of specific steps for the practice and research of implementation. Having previously studied an overview of implementation of educational programs in EDUC 830[2], I was surprised about the relevance of this 'science', as these researchers call it, in many areas.

In their article, Meyers et al. created a *Quality Implementation Framework* which is a synthesis of 25 frameworks found in 27 different sources, which most of them were based on health or education related programs or issues. Their framework suggests four phases, which I will briefly name, describe and relate to my quest of answering my action research question.

The first phase is *initial considerations regarding the host setting* in which you assess the necessity of the innovation being offered to a specific context and make decisions in terms of strategy planning including staff recruiting and training, resources needed, support being offered in the setting, among others. The second phase is *creating a structure for implementation*, which includes the careful planning and selection of activities and timeline for the implementation plan, specifying roles and responsibilities. The third phase is *ongoing structure once*

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[2] EDUC 830-G031- Implementation of educational programs

implementation begins which involves ongoing support strategies including assistance and coaching. They recognize the difficulties that emerge once the implementation process begins and that ongoing support is fundamental for the application of the innovation. And the fourth phase is *improving future applications*, in which they emphasize the need of critical reflection on the practices carried out and the results. They also recognize that by learning from experience and sharing this experience with others will enhance the effectiveness of future applications of the innovation.

As I revised this article and several more in the subject of implementation, action research kept coming to my mind since I found very similar steps and implications. The purpose of implementation might differ from the purpose of action research. However, in action research one often *implements* a new practice, philosophy, or theory. The phases of this *Quality Implementation Framework* reminded me of the phases of the action research methodology, generally involving "action, evaluation and reflection and, based on gathered evidence, changes in practice are implemented." (Koshy, 2010, p.1)

Implementing an educational program often involves whole schools or whole districts, and action research is often in a smaller scale, usually for one's professional growth in relation to educational practice. However, on their study of the implementation phenomenon, Meyers, et al. (2012), recognize that "individual or multiple case studies have been the primary vehicle for learning about factors that affect the implementation process, yet the methodological rigor and generalisability of these reports varies" (p. 464). I would add that action research can provide the engine for this vehicle in the educational context.

Hence, in the context of this action research project and according to one of the *Quality Implementation Framework* phases—*ongoing structure once implementation begins*—I decided to explore 'mentoring' as an approach to implement imaginative education practices with an in service teacher in Mexico who had already been through the first phase of *training*, and analyse the actions and activities selected and carried out throughout this phase.

The Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG) has developed several guides to implement their programs, such as the *5 Step Guide to Implementation* of the Imaginative Literacy Program, in which I based most of my actions for the prior research project last year. This 5 Step Guide suggests several steps for teachers who want to implement these practices such learning basic principles and practices, forming a team, initial implementation, full implementation, and sustaining, expanding and outreach. (IERG, 2013)[3] Even though IERG members emphasize on their availability to support teachers who want to try out their programs, it is true that not everyone reaches the group and it is also a fact that it is complicated to give ongoing support to teachers from other countries. For that reason, they have developed these guides and aim to reach people who may have been to an Imaginative Education conference, presentation, talk, or other and are not quite sure how to follow up with these attractive ideas. The guide can be extremely helpful; however, having someone who provides ongoing support might enhance the learning process regarding the theory's principles and practices. In response to this issue, 'mentoring' might have several strengths to offer for the implementation of IE practices.

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[3] 5 step guide: http://ierg.ca/ILP/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/5-steps-Kit.pdf

Imaginative education is a complex educational theory which cannot be only applied as a set of simple steps to follow. Its underlying principles and philosophy require in depth analysis, which sometimes includes the challenge of personal beliefs or underlying assumptions about the purpose of education itself. In this scenario, acknowledging that implementing something this complex will not be exactly easy, I agree with Fragoulis (2013) about the aim of mentoring being to provide support and guidance in resolving problems which arise during the implementation of an innovation.

In addition, in the context of teacher education and according to Bey (1992), mentoring is "the process of professional advisement between as support teacher (mentor) and a supported teacher (mentee). This process usually results in the pairing of two people with differences in background, abilities and talents." (p. 111) Depending on the goals for mentoring, she suggests considering the different moments in the teachers' career in which they will be involved in this activity. She follows differentiating these types of teachers according to the phase of their career they are at, which will inevitably influence on the mentorship itself. These teachers are prospective teachers, referring to those who are "urged to think about teaching as a career choice"; student teachers, who "are taught to transfer educational theories to the real world of teaching; intern teachers, who are being "guided through the beginning phase of teaching as an on-the-job trainee; beginning teachers, who "are assisted in developing and strengthening teaching skills"; career teachers, who are "encouraged to renew and expand existing teaching skills"; and master teachers, who "are advised to share exemplary abilities and contribute to teacher research. (Bey, 1992, p. 116)

Because the participant teacher in this project falls under the 'career teacher' category, I will reference Bey's recommendations for mentors working with teachers in this phase of their professional lives. She suggests mentors to encourage the teacher "to analyse and refine existing teaching practices, as well as incorporate new teaching practices".

Being one of the goals of this project to mentor a teacher implementing imaginative education practices, I will appoint to Egan et al. (2010) in their claim that typical teacher education programs often neglect certain components needed in teachers' 'toolkit', which are essential to engage students' imaginations and enhance their learning. These teaching practices involve using metaphors, shaping curriculum content into story form, using affective images, and deploying humour in the classroom—all of them which are new to the participant teacher in this action research project. Therefore, it is important that teachers who are new to use these components in their classrooms fully understand why these should be used, and not just use them as "hooks", since it is not imaginative education's goal.

In the 5 step guide, IERG also suggest teachers some steps to use their planning frameworks, which is a part where teachers usually struggle with. They are very familiar to a typical way of planning and these frameworks can be seen as an extra load of work, which they don't need. Mentoring teachers in this process will allow them to become gradually autonomous and confident in these practices which they will hopefully adopt in a more permanent way.

Issue being mediated in mentoring: Linking theory and practice

New practices usually have awkward relatives: the theories in which they are based. Returning to the idea that in this specific project, mentoring aims to support the implementation of new teaching practices for a *career teacher* (in service), it is important to consider both, the new and existing teaching practices, the theories in which these are based, and the possible compatibilities or incompatibilities among these two.

The main issue relies on the `theory versus practice` conflict in teacher education. Dennis argued back in 1976, that teacher training programs were usually performance-based focused and that teachers were not being encouraged to reflect on the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the purpose of all these skills they were taught to use.

"Sibermann suggested that the ineffectiveness of teacher training lies not in the fact that they are given inadequate mastery of the techniques of teaching, but rather that "they are not trained to think about either, the purposes or the processes, the ends or the means, of education" (referenced on Dennis, 1976, p. 90)

This problematic seems to permeate in the education system nowadays, where teachers want to know what works in classrooms and try out 'innovative` but isolated practices. Even though action research in education gives an opportunity for teachers to grow and reflect on their profession and their beliefs, general teacher education is still more focused on practices rather than in depth consideration of educational assumptions.

Egan (1998) argues there is a profound problem in the current education system regarding the incompatibility of aims we try to accomplish. He identifies three engrained educational ideas with distinct views on what education is for and he claims that many of the problems we encounter in schools today are consequences of the incompatibility of these three ideas and our attempts to accomplish their goals at the same time. These three ideas in education are socialization, rationalization and natural development. Imaginative education emerged from Egan's study of the incompatibilities of these aims in education. His theory is definitely complex, but reaches fundamental and valuable criticism about what education is for.

Not only he looks into this incompatibility and its failure in the education system, but he also gives valuable arguments about the learning process, which challenges several taken-for-granted and common current beliefs about how students learn. These beliefs usually have Jean Piaget's signature, but Egan claims that the origin of these progressivist thoughts comes from Herbert Spencer. "His (Piaget's) developmental theory embodies most of the wrong ideas we have encountered in Spencer's writings". (Egan, 2002, p.97)

Some of these beliefs, or myths, as Egan would call them, which influence educators' practices nowadays, are based on the idea that the human mind grows organically and develops as the human body. Egan refutes this idea and highlights the oddity of the human mind and argues this misleading belief "has resulted in diminishing the distinctiveness of the mind's development, seeing it as too much like the body's". (2002, p.98).

This issue has certainly influenced the present education system, specifically teacher education programs. I could even say I have been a 'victim', and I agree with Egan, having experienced firsthand the fact that "his progressive stage model—despite recent research and theoretical attacks—is taught to students as simply how things are; they have to recognize these stages of development and their characteristics so that they can facilitate students' cognitive development". (2002, p.105) I remember having Piaget's cognitive development stages posted on the wall on the first school I worked in and it was our usual reference for students' learning process. But I also remember I was never taught to question this theory. I assume because my teachers also thought there was nothing to question. On the contrary, Egan's ideas on education and my experience in this master program have taught me to question even more, to see learning on a different light and to value even more teachers' role and our profession.

English as an Additional Language through Imaginative Education

Teaching methods for second languages is a common research topic among education researchers and linguists, and as a result, the world of second language education has many principles and methods where to choose from to use in our daily teaching practice. The current emphasis connected to globalization is the need for students to acquire fluency and accuracy in the target language, being English the most common second language for non-native English speakers. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) recognize the value of this variety in second language education methods. In their broad presentation of different techniques along with their principles, they emphasize the need for teachers to become aware of their own beliefs, warning that if we don't become clear to ourselves about

them, our decisions will become conditioned and not conscious. Consequently, knowing where these techniques come from before we try them out is something we might want to consider.

The diversity of second language teaching methods is vast. The differences rely on the principles they are based on, such as methods using only the target language because educators wanted to "maximize students' opportunities to use the language they were studying" (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, p.5) An example would be the direct method, were no translation is ever allowed in order to get students to communicate in the target language and to learn to think in it. Some of the implications are that this method is oral-based approach, and students are encouraged to speak more than write. Even though Larsen-Freeman and Anderson do not mention an author for this method, their bibliography on this method's chapter dates back to the 1880's.

This method emerged from the more traditional approaches in second language education such as the grammar-translation method, which allows the use of students' native language but fails to "prepare students to communicate in the language of instruction". One of this method's expectations was that the study of the grammar of the target language would allow students to "become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write in their native language better." (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.13) The use of learner's native language has been retaken and studied recently with the emergence of terms such as "multilingualism" and "plurilingualism". (See CEFR Council of Europe 2001) There is much controversy in differentiating these two terms and in applying their principles in classrooms

rather than using monolingual approaches to teach English as a foreign, second or additional language (Taylor & Snoddon, 2013). But the underlying conflict is the inclusion/exclusion of native languages in second language education.

In parts of his work, Lev Vygotsky (2012) emphasized the difference in learning one's native language and learning a second language. One of the main differences he writes about is the fact that learning a second language is often a much more conscious process than learning our first one. He uses this analogy to explain the differences in learning spontaneous versus scientific concepts, relating second language learning with learning scientific concepts. The implication of this analogy is that learning a second language, in Vygotsky's words, would need thoughtful mediation, having in mind the process in which we acquired our first language. For this reason, Egan's approach to use cognitive tools seems worthy to explore in a second language education context.

Some attempts have been made to analyse the potential of imaginative education in second language education, such as Broom's (2011):

> "Although the kinds of understanding have links to English language levels by matching a progression of activities based on teaching cognitive tools that provide scaffolding for higher levels of language and thought, students reach the classroom having already completed many of these kinds of understanding in their own language-learning experience." (p. 4)

Even though this might be true for students exposed to learning with these cognitive tools, the context of English language education in Mexico is definitely quite different. Cognitive tools are characteristics of the different kinds of understanding we are able to develop as we acquire language in its different forms,

but these tools are also the key to provoke these kinds of understanding. The difficulty in using an IE approach in second language instruction relies on the issue that if students haven't mastered these cognitive tools in their own native language, they will hardly enhance students' second language learning. For example, if a student has never used metaphors in his or her language and does not understand the basics of this language tool, which then becomes a cognitive tool, they will not be able to use it in a way that helps understand a new language.

My concern emerges from the unique situation in Mexico, where students are massively failing; first, in reading comprehension skills in Spanish; and second, in basic English language skills. Recently, a study by Mexicanos Primero (*Mexicans First*)[4] about learning English in Mexico published worrying results in their report titled "Sorry". They designed and applied an exam throughout several cities to assess the English language level of young Mexicans upon completing basic education (6-7th grade) and found that "97% of students did not reach the level of English established by the Ministry of Education (SEP) to graduate from lower secondary school"[5] and 79% of these students presented a complete lack of knowledge.

The relevance of these results is not about students' academic incompetence; it is just another consequence of the lack of opportunities Mexicans face in their educational system. Leon Krauze[6], who presented the report "Sorry", referred to English language as a universal master key, which allows individuals

[4] Mexicanos Primero is an independent organization working towards improving the quality of education in Mexico: http://mexicanosprimero.org/
[5] http://mexicanosprimero.org/images/stories/sorry/tp-ingles-ok-ok.pdf
[6] http://www.mexicanosprimero.org/index.php/educacion-en-mexico/como-esta-la-educacion/estado-de-la-educacion-en-mexico/sorry-2015/sorry-english

who possess it to open many doors which without it would just have remained closed. And then he follows: "how much world are we robbing to young Mexicans?" However, as I mentioned before, this may also be the consequence of other crucial problems in education in Mexico, such as lack of reading comprehension in our native language, which was also presented in the last PISA exam results. How can students learn a new language when they are not learning to read and understand texts in their own native language? How can we aim to enrich learning in another language when our comprehension and use of our native language is not rich enough?

In this context, it is a matter of empowering young Mexican students and teachers through an imaginative understanding of languages. For this reason, I expected to find possible strategies that encourage me and Minerva, to start with, in exploring imaginative education's value to English language instruction in a Spanish speaking context and if possible, in any other language environment where English is not the native language.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Action research gives educators the chance to work as practitioner researchers. The role of a practitioner researcher often involves changing one's practice and reflecting on the actions and effects of these changes. Koshy (2010) mentions some unique characteristics of action research, emphasizing in its power and usefulness, such as the opportunity to generate new knowledge based on own experiences and the role of participants as researchers, which may differ from traditional research methodologies. Some of the definitions she quotes in her book have several elements in common, but the most repeated one is about the purpose of action research, which is usually directed to the engagement of practitioner researchers in the improvement of educational practice.

For this project's purposes I looked into a collaborative approach to action research. This project doesn't involve me as a typical practitioner researcher with a regular group of students; it involves me as a practitioner researcher with a different role, a mentor's role which I intend to reflect on in the context of my educational practice working with Mexican teachers aiming to implement imaginative education practices. Minerva, the participant teacher in this project has the mentee's role, but she's also a practitioner researcher, since she is implementing change and reflecting on her educational practice as an elementary EAL teacher.

The collaborative approach to action research taken by Rahman et al. (2011)—in their project implementing a project-based method with several teachers—had similar aims to the connections I am trying to portray in this section. Their purpose

was to assist teachers throughout their process of implementing this approach through the development of their action research project. A collaborative approach was explored and they found that:

> "...it provides an opportunity for collaboration between the researchers and the teachers to help the teachers improve their practice. The researchers found that collaborative action research is a suitable method in the setting of the study in which practitioners had limited knowledge and skills related to the new approach and methods to be implemented." (p.288)

The findings of this collaborative action research project are closely related to the objectives of the action research project presented in this report. One of these objectives was to enhance the teacher's confidence when using imaginative education and to cultivate a deeper understanding of its principles through its practice. Rahman et al. (2011) found that "at the end of the study, the teachers also become clearer and more comfortable with the approach implemented, have a better level of confidence in the conducting of the approach and recognize the benefits of this approach to children." (p.288)

Additionally, the collaborative nature of these projects gives mentoring an important place. Rahman et al. (2011) also concluded that "discussions with research partners help to facilitate the learning process in all phases in of the cycles in the action research project." (p.288) With this in mind, mentoring as a collaborative approach in an action research project gives the implementation process a unique flow, respecting practitioners' learning processes.

According to Trotman (2010), "the development of a complementary methodology for the research and representation of imaginative education

remains elusive". (p.146) I would add that research focused on the implementation of imaginative education practices also remains elusive. Even so, action research seems to contribute a valuable route in which we could find significant insight.

the first time I applied a short IE lesson with the 3rd grade group I really liked their

reaction and the dynamic of the class, which was different. I know I should put more

Chapter 4. Data analysis

effort, but I would also request from you, as far as possible, to send me extra

resources for me to keep reading and refreshing my memory. Oh, and YES! I would

love to participate! I truly appreciate you considering me!"

For this project's analysis I categorized data findings into three themes, similar to the ones in the literature review section: implementation through mentoring, linking theory and practice and English as an Additional Language through imaginative education. My hope is that this categorization demonstrates an in depth analysis of all the rich data, mostly provided by Minerva, connecting findings with the objectives I set out in the action plan. (See appendix 1)

Theme: implementation through mentoring

<u>*Planning: Selection of timeline and activities*</u>

Since I decided to follow up with the previous project I started with IERG, I tried to plan everything respecting Minerva's times and professional interests. As I mentioned earlier in this report, Minerva participated in the first workshop we did in Sonora, Mexico and then agreed to try out implementing imaginative education practices in her classroom for a few months. When I emailed her asking her to help me with her participation in this action research project she answered the following:

Perfect, I noticed eagerness, room to grow professionally, she requested for my assistance, and showed a positive attitude. I truly appreciated her enthusiasm to participate; now, we were ready to start planning.

Our mentorship dynamic included a few Skype sessions, written feedback on lesson plans and ideas for activities, Minerva's engagement in reflective practices such as journal writing and answering questionnaires designed by me before starting implementing her IE lesson plans and after. Even though we planned a timeline for having these activities, holidays came in between and we had to re-schedule and readjust some of them. My purpose in creating a timeline was to not overload Minerva with assignments, writings, and other. For that reason I sent her my proposal for the timeline and checked in with her before submitting it to the class. (See timeline in appendix 1) I also considered important to have her involved in the planning process, since mentorship programs require both sides to be thoughtfully coordinated.

I based my selection and proposal of the mentoring activities in the 5 step guide to implementation of the Imaginative Literacy Program for teachers, and in research related to mentoring and reflective practices in teacher education and professional development.

Lesson planning

After our first Skype session she decided to try out three lesson plans which were included in the unit she had to cover on the following weeks. These topics were focused on phonics, grammar and vocabulary. Last time she tried out IE

lesson plans with topics of vocabulary, and now she wanted to challenge herself and try to shape differently her phonics and grammar lessons too.

Minerva decided to start with the phonics topic which was 'words with *er, ore* and *re'*. In relation to her request for more resources, I sent her a mythic unit plan I designed on the topic of short and long vowels and several examples I found particularly useful from the "Teaching literacy" book by Egan (2006) and Gillian Judson's appendix in it.

One example of the resources I sent her is the following:

Cognitive tool: Jokes and Humor

How can you use jokes to help students with spelling?

Jokes and humor have the power to draw attention to the written word, to objectify it in such a way that different spelling patterns may be easier to recognize. Students could learn about homophones by making up jokes that highlight the different meanings of the words, or students can also create miscommunications using homophones. Consider the following example:

(At a wine and cheese event for body parts)

Eye: What do you do?

Ear: Hear.

Eye: Yes, here, what do you do?

Ear: I said hear. I hear here. And *you*?

Eye: Oh, I *see*.

Ear: Yes, like me!

Eye: No, I see…

(Egan, 2006, p.144)

My goal with these examples was to enhance the value of these cognitive tools particularly in her teaching subject. Also that she could have a sense of how these cognitive tools might be used in the classroom and how they require the engagement of students' intellect, tied up with their imaginations and emotions. I'll analyse the value of second language education through imaginative education further in the last theme. I present this example as a way of portraying how the mentoring dynamic in lesson planning took place.

She then sent me her first phonics lesson plan for which she used the mythic framework; in the email she commented:

I found interesting that she thought of the binaries after she shaped the content into a story form. When planning with a mythic framework, imaginative

educators are usually encouraged to think first of these binaries and then follow through the lesson planning. The reason is that these binary opposites will shape the whole affective meaning of the stories and might be easier to think of this first and then shape it into story form.

Trying to provide meaningful and accurate feedback I designed an instrument for myself with questions on each of the cognitive tools included in the mythic and romantic frameworks. (See appendix 2) This instrument also allowed me to analyse these pieces of data as the project advanced.

Questionnaires

I designed two questionnaires; one to give Minerva before re-starting implementing IE, and one for her to answer by the end of this project. At first, my purpose with these questionnaires, were to analyse and compare any changes in her beliefs or practices, resulting from implementing IE. However, being such a short period, these questions didn´t serve for that purpose. The bright side is that I had the chance to ask in depth questions about IE's principles and found very interesting answers regarding her perceptions on why emotions and imagination are important in learning. Also, I had the chance to analyse the mentoring process with her opinions about it.

In addition, with the questionnaires, I intended to mediate some actions proposed in the 5 step guide to implement the ILP. One of them is keeping a personal file or portfolio including teachers' notes as they go through the program. The guide also suggests teachers to evaluate themselves and students' response to

the program. My intention with these questionnaires was to give Minerva an opportunity to reflect on her learning, and help her identify successes or struggles.

An example for mentoring purposes is the question about her goals during this project:

would like to have more efficiency using this theory in practice with the purpose of applying its different tools with my other groups and subjects, just like with vocabulary, grammar and phonics. Also, I would like to put it into practice more frequently. And finally, I would like to learn about the other kinds of understanding and how to put their tools into practice to enrich my classes for my students, and make them different, more attractive and meaningful.
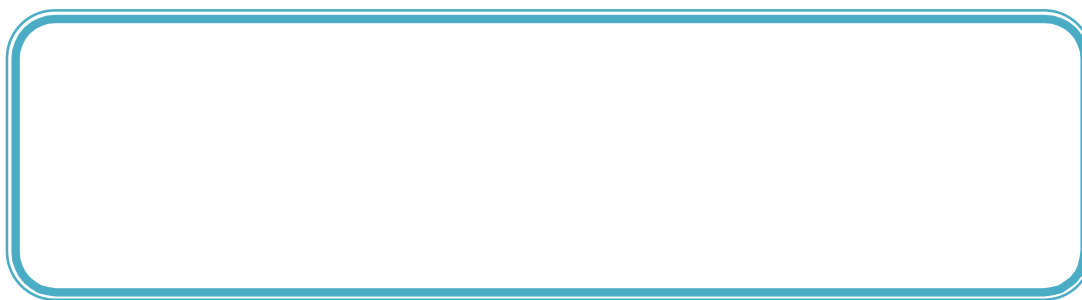
Her answer guided me in thinking how I could help her more in achieving her goals.

Journaling

I proposed Minerva to write a reflective journal where she could also identify her level of comfortableness with ILP practices, including the planning process and the implementation of her lesson plans.

Going through several readings about reflective practices, there seems to be a significant value in teacher education. The activity of writing a reflective journal would fall under the "evidence-based" reflective practice described by Farrell (2013). It "suggests that language teachers systematically examine their practice by collecting evidence about their own teaching and their students' learning rather than just thinking about what they may be doing in their classes." (p.34)

The purpose of journaling in this action research project was that Minerva recorded her "thoughts, actions, desires, joys, frustrations, questions, etc. that can be critically reflected on later". (p.41)

As the mentor, I also kept track of the activities I did and wrote down some reflections during the process of the project. The purpose of my own reflections was to analyse my role as a mentor and see which activities help or don't help during the implementation of imaginative practices. By having written thoughts of her planning process and having my written thoughts of my feedback, it allowed me to reflect on this processes from both perspectives.

For example, for the second lesson, she was struggling at the beginning with using IE to teach grammar. She told me she would change the topic to WH question words, because she felt her students' needed to study them further. During her planning process I suggested to use the romantic framework instead of the mythic. For me, the topic, or grammar in general, has a lot of room for "humanizing knowledge of language" one of the romantic kind of understanding's basis. (Egan, 2006)

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- Extracts from Minerva's reflective journal

Her reflections allowed me as a mentor to notice that she identified the fact that using a heroic quality for a grammar topic was easier than trying to use mythic tools. I am sure this moment has been crucial for her understanding about the different kinds of understandings in IE.
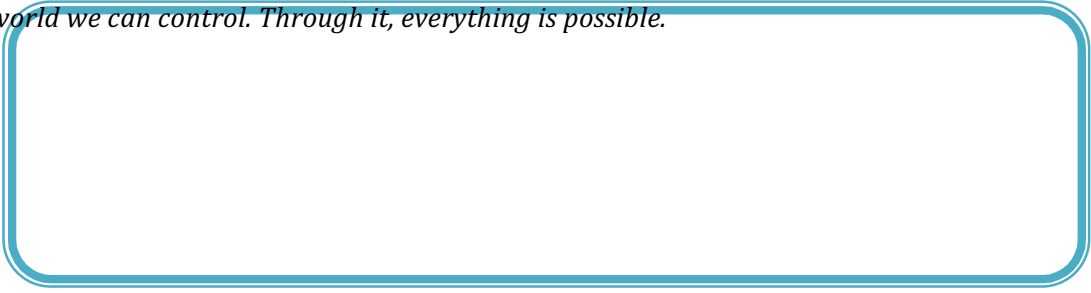
Feedback sessions

I also planned to have feedback sessions over Skype, so we could talk about lesson plan ideas, or any struggles she could have. Even though I had previously established an in-person mentor-mentee relationship, my purpose for these conversational feedback sessions was to continue this trusting relationship that this kind of interaction can give. However, we also used e-mail to discuss several quick issues for her planning. And I also sent her written feedback on her lesson plans.

Theme: Theoretical understanding

Acknowledging that no educational program can be successfully implemented and carried out without a deep understanding of the fundamental principles, I dedicated a space to analyse the participant teacher's journey in this area. In this space, I try to portray the connection/disconnection of Minerva's interpretations through her lesson plans, designed and delivered activities, reflections and questionnaires with the essential concepts and principles of imaginative education.

In the initial questionnaire (See appendix 3) I asked Minerva what role does imagination play in learning? She answered the following:

agination is another world, where everything one thinks and desires is possible.
ch second of the day, and even when we fall asleep, we are at different places,
ing our imaginations, consciously and unconsciously. Everything is possible
nen we imagine; the world with that vision could be anything, anyhow,
ytime…in a world we can control. Through it, everything is possible.

Her answered pushed me to go back to analyse Egan's notion of imagination. (Egan, 1992) For him, imagination has an element of possibility, just as Minerva's answer. "The more flexibly we can think of things as possibly being so, the richer and the more unusual and effective can be the meanings we compose." (1992, p.52) However, Egan connects this element of possibility with "constructing one's sense of any area of knowledge" (p.48). For him, imagining allows us to compose and create meanings.

The part where she mentions "every second of the day…we are using our imaginations" seemed to me to disconnect with IE's main principles, which refers to the need of fostering imagination in the classroom. Truly imaginative thoughts—rich, flexible, unusual, effective—still need knowledge and skills, but are strongly tied with emotional engagement. As teachers, Egan suggests us to consciously involve students' imaginations in our classes and one way of seeing this is noticing learning is pleasurable. "The more energetic and lively the imagination, the more are facts constantly finding themselves in new combinations and taking on new emotional colouring as we use them to think of possibilities, of possible worlds." (Egan, 1992, p.50)

With IE, teaching is based around elementary students' needs, regarding their different learning styles, teaching is delivered in a way that matches students' way of learning, engaging...

classroom setting. Depending on how we feel it is how we will absorb what is around us. In the classroom, each student is different according to their personalities, their interests, and in their emotions. Depending on how they feel, they can process the information/knowledge being presented.

Acknowledging imaginations as a crucial for learning, suggests new different ways of teaching. Teaching will have to be focused on keeping students' imaginations live and energetic.

Another question in the initial questionnaire was: what role do emotions play in learning? Her answer is the following:

My interpretation of her answer is that she emphasized the emotional lives of students more related to feelings or mood. With her answer, I noticed that her understanding of the IE principle regarding emotional engagement has to be developed further. In IE we recognize that emotions play an important role in the learning process. She gets close to this idea when she says "depending on how we feel is how we will absorb what is around us…" because how we feel in a particular moment will affect our emotions towards something. And this emotion will affect how we connect new information with information that is already meaningful for us. However, emotions role in learning is much more complex than our feelings based in our mood, for example.

Additionally, in several occasions she mentions that IE is based around how students learn and their needs.
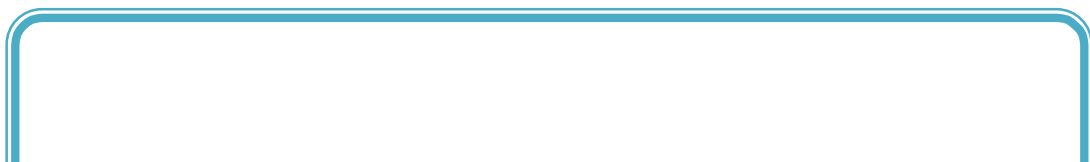
learning environment."

> *"Teach the kids the way they learn every day, use their reality in the classroom, imagination is part of them 24/7."*

My concern with these statements is they seem to be based in progressivist principles about learning, which are not exactly compatible with Egan's ideas about learning. I think Egan's suggestions for teaching within IE are directed towards how students *can* and *should* learn, not exactly how they *naturally* learn. He uses kinds of understandings "to capture both sides of the coin of mental development. Such categories acknowledge a biological base of brain development and focus on transformations of cognition brought about by learning cultural stuff."(Egan, 2002, p.100) The cognitive tools he suggests teachers to use routinely in their classrooms emerged from the recognition of these two sides of mental development.

The analysis of her answers related to IE's principles allowed me to reflect how important teachers' beliefs are when they are trying out new educational ideas. She sees the value on making learning more pleasurable through what IE suggests to do, but it left me wondering if teachers understand IE's fundamental principles and purposes when they implement its practices and what difference can this understanding make.

...learning explained how the elements (from the topic) are related and why they are important."

their tools into practice to enrich my classes for my students, and make them different, more attractive and meaningful."

Theme: English as an Additional Language through Imaginative Education

Another elemental theme within this project is English as an Additional Language through imaginative education, focusing on the Imaginative Literacy Program's principles and theoretical foundations. Because the timeline of this project was quite short, the activities are not enough to analyse the theme in depth. Therefore, I will only focus on the potential of certain cognitive tools of ILP which were used by Minerva, in the context of EAL.

Imaginative education is based on Vygotsky's idea about intellectual tools. "He argued that we make sense of the world by use of mediating intellectual tools that in turn profoundly influence the kind of sense we make". (Egan, 1998, p.29) Egan continued studying these tools' role in learning and called them cognitive tools, which he defines as "aids to thinking developed in human cultural history and learned by people today to enlarge their powers to think and understand". (Egan, 2005, p.219)

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about how depending on their position between letters they make up new

sounds and words. This way, students can see phonics with another lens, not

only identifying different sounds."

For the reasons I explained in the literature review section regarding this theme, I believe a cognitive tools approach to teach English as an Additional Language is worth exploring.

Phonics: mythic, cognitive toolkit of oral language

For one of her lessons, Minerva tried out a phonics topic with her 3rd grade students. She told me she'd use the mythic planning framework, because she had already used it before and felt more comfortable with its toolkit. I agreed, but until later I realized that the connection of phonics in EAL with the mythic kind of understanding was somehow obvious.

The mythic toolkit has to do with oral language and phonics has to do with sounds. Learning an additional language's phonetic system can be quite challenging and sometimes mechanic. At first glance, mythic cognitive tools seem to work fine with phonics, but the connection can be explored further.

In this phonics lesson, the topic was words with er-ore-re. She started out her lesson plan locating the importance of this topic:

IE's planning frameworks allow teachers and students to play more with metalinguistic awareness. However, the potential connection Minerva's lesson plan made me see is regarding patterns and rhythm cognitive tools. Phonics relates

usually comes first and then R. They are both stubborn and inseparable, they don't like

moving a lot. They feel comfortable and safe were they are and they are afraid of changes.

They are afraid that if they move, their shapes or traits will change and they won't be the

same. Other letters have shown interest in joining them, but they only accept if they can

stay at the end of words, in the same place they like. Because of this, they have only made

up words like: explorer, number, water, father, computer, summer.

More letters have been interested in joining them so they can form new words, but they

suggest E and R move from where they've always been. This scares them, but they start

accepting to move and accepting other letters to join them. Now they let more vowels in

and they let them change their positions a little, First, they let letter O join them and move

them. Later on, they accepted more vowels. Now, they were making words such as: adore,

more, store, share, are, fire, before.

sounds with spelling, visual with oral and its rules are filled with rhythms and patterns. However, the connection does not end there.

"...the larger trick is attaching the rhythms inherent in languages to the more general peripatetic pattern of everyday life—hope and despair, fear and relief, oppression, resentment, and revolt, youth and age, the rising emotions of comedy and the pity and fear of tragedy and on and on. The elaboration of linguistic rhythms to match the patterns of our lives results in those larger forms we call

narratives." (Egan, 1998, p. 59)

Minerva's narrative in this topic was shaped around the binary opposites of integrate/disintegrate.
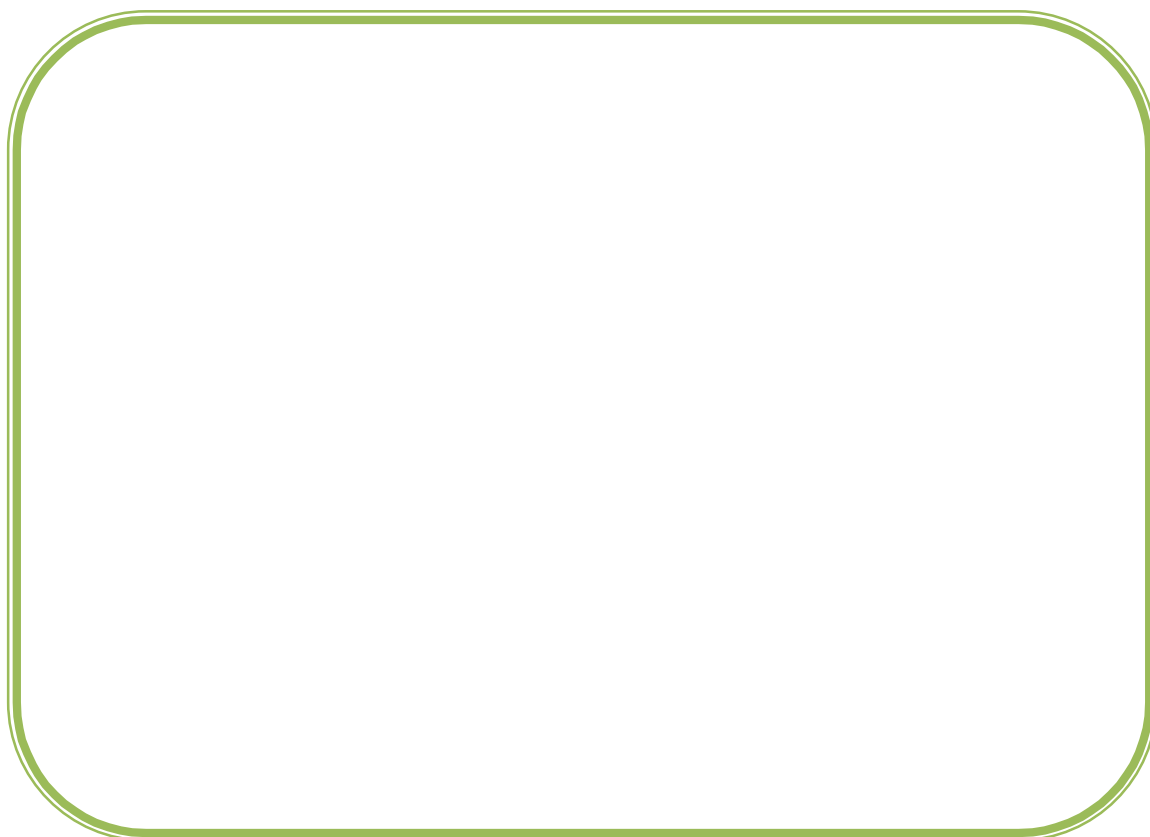
Story:

'relating the story with friendship and to what the school does in Valentine's Day

in words started really helped create the story every word was assigned one job naming

gs, objects, animals, people, actions, containing words, etc. An inherent

their job was to make questions, questions for time actions happen, the place

re things are or actions happen, the process of making, or actions, the form, shape,

earance of people, things in general, the reasons behind everything, etc. These

were assigned to: What, Where, When, How, Why, and Who.

en they heard the news, they were quite reluctant to that job! They didn't think it

exciting!

She could even expand on the story and emphasize the fact that E becomes silent when it is last. This way, by personifying the letters, as characters in the story, she can reach students' emotional and imaginative lives.

In her reflections, she says:

y wanted the action, the adventures! … Time went by, all the words were assigned working on their specific jobs. What, Where, When, How, Why, and Who were ally doing a good job! They really did help to communicate, but mostly, to ask for rmation needed and that was unknown. For example: if people needed to know time of a kid's party: when is David's party? place of the party: where is David's party? These words would come out and save day! They were later named as the WH-questions!

oic qualities: Responsibility and perseverance

Grammar: romantic, cognitive toolkit of literacy

For the grammar topic, Minerva told me she was struggling to start the lesson plan. I suggested she tried out the romantic planning framework because of its tools using literacy skills and understanding. The topic was WH questions, or question words such as what, who, and where. Even though this was not the topic she planned to do first, she thought it would help to explore IE practices with a topic she had struggled before.

This particular grammar topic allows the exploration of the humanizing of knowledge. To learn grammar, particularly from an additional language, students have to acquire reading skills first. In this narrative, she's emphasizing each question word's meaning by personifying its traits throughout the story. Also, she's highlighting or "heroizing" the fact that these words have a unique role and responsibility which allows us to know more about the world and about what we don't know.

I am focusing mainly on her narratives and how she shaped these topics' content because I think it is what she explored more in depth. Also, when teachers use any of IE's planning frameworks, they will notice with practice that cognitive tools often overlap. A story will usually use metaphors or humor, for example. However, particularly in an EAL context, cognitive tools can be explored separately for different purposes. For example, using jokes or poems can enhance students' understanding of a specific grammar or phonics rule. These tools can also be used to highlight these rules' exceptions. Learning English can be frustrating because of all the rules and exceptions to these rules, but using these cognitive tools can help students make sense of this additional language in a different way.

Conclusions

Mentoring on a distance was definitely a challenge during this action research project. However, Minerva's wonderful attitude made it easier. For this project I had the chance to explore my main and current interests in education: implementation and teacher support, imaginative education's unique implications in the implementation process and imaginative education's potential in English as an additional language instruction.

Mentoring as an approach to implement imaginative education practices can support teachers during an initial stage and during the following stages when imaginative education is being fully implemented. This approach requires gradual implementation of its practices due to the complexity of its underlying principles. Egan challenges old and current views on education and suggests this new idea, which implies gains and losses for teachers who want to try it out, and they need support and mediation through this process. The five step guide to implement imaginative literacy practices sets out an idyllic process for teachers new to it, but an additional resource could be an elaboration of a mentoring guide for imaginative educators. Very often, when we learn something, we forget how we learnt it and the process we went through to learn it. These guidelines could support IE experts, who might use these principles routinely in their classrooms and wants to introduce other teachers to IE.

Regarding English learning as an additional language, due to its richness and usability throughout the world, imagination's development is crucial. The cognitive toolkits of oral language and literacy explored throughout this action

research project with Minerva, have shown to be quite relevant for additional language instruction. Putting imagination at the center of learning an additional language would enhance students' understanding in a significant way, allowing them to explore a different culture and language in a much more authentic manner., Countries were English is a native language, have much more experience in teaching it successfully, of course, but in countries like Mexico, where English teaching and learning is not doing so well, students and teachers would benefit significantly if we make room for imagination to develop.

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Action Plan

EDUC 904-G032 Fieldwork III
Carolina López
February 15th, 2015

Action Plan for AR Project: Implementing Imaginative Education with a focus on teaching English as an Additional Language in a Mexican context through mentoring.

Research Question: Could mentoring be an effective approach to implementation for a teacher in a Mexican context, who wants to try out teaching EAL through Imaginative Education? And what specific features of IE make it an effective approach to teach EAL?

Specific aims:

- To enhance the teacher's confidence when using IE and to cultivate a deeper understanding of IE's principles through its practice.
- To gain sensibility and experience by developing a role as a mentor for implementing IE in a Mexican context.
- To identify unique features when implementing IE, either critical or helpful practices through mentoring, that could be applicable for any IE program's implementation process.
- To enhance students' motivation when learning EAL through the use of cognitive tools, therefore engaging their imaginations and emotions.
- Analyse how IE cognitive tools can be used effectively to teach EAL, taking into consideration that learning a foreign language is different than learning a native language.

Research plan

→Timeline for Action Research

Dates	Expected Activities
January 19th - January 21st	o Identifying the topic and start writing AR initial sketch proposal. o Introduce project and invite participants to take part in the project. *(Minerva –teacher and Maria Eugenia—Principal)* o Ask for background and context information, such as the school's philosophy and Minerva's educational philosophy. o Provide follow-up resources about IE to Minerva, such as examples of lesson plans and a video of Magdalena Merbilháa's conference in Mexico about the foundations of IE.
January 27th - February 8th	o Planning activities: Set up logistics with Minerva, such as selecting one of her groups, selecting the subject (English as an Additional Language), revising which unit was next in her curriculum. o First Skype follow-up session to talk about unit planning and data collection.
February 3rd – March 15th	o Start writing reflective journal entries (researcher) after follow-up sessions, after Minerva's lesson implementations, about Minerva's lesson plans and students' work, etcetera.
February 9th	o Revise, adequate and translate consent forms for Minerva, and her students and their parents. o Send them to Maria Eugenia, the principal, so she can approve them

	and send them out.
February 14th - February 15th	o First lesson plan design, followed up by a feedback session. o Topic of lesson plan: Phonics, words with ER. Type of planning: mythic framework.
February 16th - February 20th	o Pre-implementation questionnaires to Minerva and to students.
February 18th	o First lesson implementation
February 18th - March 15th	o Teacher reflection journal entries/ once a week- four in total, expected.
February 20, 25, 27 **March 4,6,11 & 13**	o Dates for next lessons' implementation
February 15, 22 **March 1, 8, 15**	o Dates for follow-up Skype sessions
March 16th	o Post- unit implementation questionnaire to teacher and students.
By March 18th	o Have all data collected, included students' work from the unit implemented.
March 19th - March 23rd	o Reflect on findings and outcomes, analyse data further.
March 24th – April 7th	o Start writing the final report.

→**Data collection**

o Pre and post implementation questionnaires (teacher/students)

I will design a pre-implementation reflective questionnaire for the teacher, aiming to provoke further realization of her actual practice. This questionnaire will focus on her perspectives about Imaginative Education, her expectations for

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participating in the project and her emotional engagement with the subject she is teaching. I intend to create a reflective start point before implementing the lessons, which will also serve as data to reflect on once she finishes the unit, also by creating a post-implementation reflective questionnaire to analyse her own learning process.

For the students, I am intending to design an equivalent of a reflective questionnaire, focused on the students' attitudes towards learning English, and see if these attitudes somehow change with the swift in Minerva's teaching approach. I also intend to have these questionnaires revised by my group of Critical Friends and ask for their feedback.

- o IE lesson plans/unit:

The teacher will work with one (4 week long) unit, which allows her to implement IE practices within the regular curriculum. The curriculum units are normally divided in vocabulary, phonics and grammar. And the topics of this unit for which she will create an IE unit are the following:

- ➢ Vocabulary: Family members and places
- ➢ Grammar: going to
- ➢ Phonics: er, ear, ore

The idea is to shape these three themes in a whole IE unit based on a mythic understanding framework, for which I will provide guidance and feedback at least once a week.

By collecting her IE unit designs, I intend to be able to analyse her comprehension of basic IE principles, and the uses she gives to the selected cognitive tools to teach EAL.

- o Reflective journal

Each week she will write an entry for her reflective journal, focusing on analyzing and debriefing how the lesson went, how she felt, her doubts and concerns, the successes, and how she noticed her students' responses.

The aim is to analyse her perspective about implementing IE and her perspective about her students' responses.

o   Follow up-sessions notes

Our follow-up sessions via skype are mainly to continue establishing a trusting relationship, which allows her to ask questions, express doubts or concerns in a more "natural way"—substituting real face-to-face interaction.

I will collect my notes from these sessions for the general data analysis.

o   Evidence of students' work

Minerva and I agreed that she will send me evidence of her students' work, depending on the activities. Mainly, she will collect and send me pictures and/or videos of students' work and if possible, of classes' parts, as I won't be able to make on-site observations.

→**Implementation through mentoring**

I selected a mentoring approach for the implementation process in this project. This approach will allow me to take into account the teacher's learning process and allow her to have ownership of her learning. It is not telling her what to do, and giving her instructions, but having rich on-going conversations that can guide and support her practice. Also, one of the aims of using this approach is "to help in resolving problems which arise during the implementation of innovative educational practices" (Fragoulis, 2013) (Fragoulis, 2014, p.52)

I expect that the proposed AR project activities such as weekly follow-up sessions, lesson/unit plan feedback, and reflective journal entries will support a mentoring approach to implementation.

→**Data analysis**

I expect to analyse the data collected by:

- Considering the variety of data collection instruments including teacher and the students' voices in the interpretation of findings, in order to have a broad and authentic interpretation, not only with my own perspective.

- Including my own voice throughout the analysis and then in the report, including the reflection of my own journal entries regarding my role as a mentor during the implementation process.
- Comparing and contrasting the development of her ideas in designing the lessons in the unit, from the start to the end of the project, including her emotional engagement and identifying her comprehension of IE principles.

→Relevance and significance of findings

As mentioned above within the specific aims, this project will explore the potential benefits of a mentoring approach to implement educational programs that have Imaginative Education as a theoretical framework.
Even though the purpose of an Action Research project is not the generalization of findings, I intend that this particular project will provide valuable insight for educators in similar circumstances and within similar contexts. (Koshy, 2010)

In the school Nuevos Horizontes (*New Horizons*), where this action research project is taking place, findings will be relevant for all colleagues, given the fact that the school principal is interested in knowing more about Imaginative Education and possibly fully implementing one of its programs, Learning in Depth.

Furthermore, due to the emerging Regional Imaginative Education Network in Mexico, and its potential growth, this project can also provide relevant information and findings for educators' professional development in this particular context.

Lastly, to expand on the applicability of Kieran Egan's Imaginative Literacy Program, focusing on the use of cognitive tools for teaching and learning English as an Additional Language.

Appendix 2

Guide for providing feedback on lesson/unit planning

Based on an Imaginative Education's Mythic Planning Framework

Emotional engagement	o Is there a personal emotional connection with the topic? o What emotional significance did the teacher identified in the topic?
Observations:	
Using the story form	o Is the story shaping knowledge towards establishing emotional meaning? How? o What kind of story is being used for this lesson? Are the elements of language being personified? Is it shaped around a literacy adventure? Are there any invented characters? o Is the story allowing a connection of students with knowledge? How?
Observations:	
Incorporating vivid images	o Are there any mental and vivid images being evoked? How will these images be evoked? o Are these images aiding memory and understanding of the topic? o Is there an emotional component to the image? o Are the images tied to specific concepts?

	o Do students have an opportunity to create their own images?
Observations:	
Binary opposites	o Are the binary opposites selected to shape the lesson expanding upon understanding of the topics? o Are these opposites being mediated throughout the lesson/unit? How? o Is there enough dramatic tension in these opposites that could easily grab students' imaginations? o Is the dramatic tension resolved throughout the story's ending?
Observations:	
Use of metaphors	o Are metaphors being included in the lesson/unit? o How are metaphors enhancing students' comprehension of English as an additional language, specifically with the units' topics? o Are there any metaphors used within the story? o Are metaphors being addressed directly or indirectly? o Is there any space in the lesson/unit for exploring, recognizing, generating and manipulating metaphors in the target language?

Observations:	
Jokes	o Are there any humorous elements in the lesson/unit that may enhance students' engagement and understanding of the topic? o Does the topic allow further exploration of jokes and humor that can encourage students' metalinguistic awareness?
Observations:	
Rhyme and rhythm	o Are there any activities/techniques based on rhyme and rhythm in the lesson being used to teach phonics, vocabulary or grammar? o Or are there any opportunities for students' to experience these topics through rhyme and rhythm? o How are rhymes and rhythms aiding and enhancing students' understanding of the topics?
Observations:	
Living knowledge	o Is the content shaped in such a way that relates to students' lifeworlds, including their *imaginative* worlds? (p.55, teaching literacy)
Observations:	

Conclusion	o How will students be asked to express their understanding? o Are students being asked to express their understanding through cognitive tools?
Observations:	

Resource:

Egan, K. (2006). *Teaching literacy: engaging the imagination of new readers and writers.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Appendix 3

Note: The following questionnaire aims to locate the teacher's starting point as a participant in this AR project, fostering reflective practice and emotional engagement. Since the teacher has already some basic knowledge about Imaginative Education, there are some questions specific to IE. However, the purpose is not to assess her knowledge on the theory, but to analyze her interaction with it, and her perception of it so far.

1) Is there something you can easily remember from your years as a student (a subject, a particular topic, a teacher? If so, what do you remember and why?

Something I recall vividly as a student is when I studied high school in Mesa, Arizona. By that time I didn't quite understand English and I could barely communicate in this language. All my classes where obviously 100% in English, which was a huge challenge for me, and even a reason for feeling fear because I could understand or interact in the different classes. One particular class was History, and the teacher was quite intimidating. But the thing I remember more vividly about his class is that we acted out certain scenes from world history in the classroom, we used to play a lot. One of the scenes was the World War II, in which we turned our desks upside down and made big paper balls to play our parts. Considering I didn't speak English in a way that allowed me to communicate effectively, this way, I could understand many things, and now I kind of understand why. He made history classes engaging, not by doing the `typical` activities, such as reading and answering dull questionnaires (like I used to do in middle-school).

2) What role does imagination play in learning?

Imagination is another world, where everything one thinks and desires is possible. Each second of the day, and even when we fall asleep, we are at different places, using our imaginations, consciously and unconsciously. Everything is possible when we imagine; the world with that vision could be anything, anyhow, anytime...in a world we can control. Through it, everything is possible.

3) What role do emotions play in learning?

Emotions are a part of human beings; they are a vital part of each of us. We are able to learn at every moment in a regular day; learning does not only happen in a classroom setting. Depending on how we feel it is how we will absorb what is around us. In the classroom, each student is different according to their personalities, their interests, and in their emotions. Depending on how they feel, they can process the information/knowledge being presented.

4) Could you identify a heroic quality for the subject you are teaching? Which one would be and why? Is there something specific about the subject that awakens your curiosity and interest?

A heroic quality I can identify is responsibility. Teaching a subject, whatever it is, carries a great responsibility. As teachers we represent a role-model and in part, a provider of

knowledge, and being this the case of teaching a second language, responsibility is even greater since the purpose is not that students memorize and produce, but learning that language is practical and useful, and making sure there is motivation, disposition and pleasure towards learning the language.

5) What do you think Imaginative Education as an approach has to offer to you?

Teaching and learning an additional language is not easy, and if we add that learning is not meaningful, is even more difficult. With IE, teaching is based around elementary students' needs, regarding their different learning styles, teaching is delivered in a way that matches students' way of learning, engaging their imaginations and looking at the world their way. With this theory, learning becomes meaningful and fun, like it hasn't been done before in a squared, full of restrictions, molding students into one unique learning style. Additionally, in this case (learning an additional language, which is quite hard) with IE one can conciliate learning of different elements of the language in a non-conventional and significant way.

6) What would you like to accomplish with your participation in this project?

I would like to have more efficiency using this theory in practice, with the purpose of applying its different tools with my other groups and subjects, just like with vocabulary, grammar and phonics. Also, I would like to put it into practice more frequently. And finally, I would like to learn about the other kinds of understanding and how to put their tools into practice to enrich my classes for my students, and make them different, more attractive and meaningful.

Appendix 4

Post-implementation questionnaire for teacher   **March, 2015**

1. From your experience with IE so far, how has it impacted your teaching practice
   and interaction with students?
   Applying this theory has showed me a different way in how I can teach a topic, in a
   way that is interesting for kids. With this theory there is no chance to be monotonous,
   we can get students attention with attractive stories and activities.

2. What aspects of IE are in accordance with your educational philosophy? Is there
   anything you struggle with? From your experience with IE thus far has anything
   surprised you?
   Learning should be fun and should be directed towards how students learn, taking
   into consideration at all times the different learning styles that surround the learning
   environment. This theory challenges all the concepts of how education should be or
   has been like during so many years. It is about considering how students are, what
   they feel, how they learn, if this is not taken into consideration, then education is
   pointless.
   I have been struggling with monotony, and that is one thing that has caused me to
   question myself about what new or different things I am doing in the classroom, and
   good thing is that with this theory I have had the opportunity to do so, and to
   continue challenging myself to keep trying and implementing different things.
   What surprised me was the fact that we as adults tend to forget that we are
   educating kids (in this case). As kids, they have a tremendous capacity to imagine
   and on this part is where I got surprised, when planning and implementing I realized
   that this is a great way (including stories) on how to teach. Teach the kids the way
   they learn every day, use their reality to use it in the classroom, imagination is part of
   them 24/7.

3. Which cognitive tools were easier for you to use? Which ones did you struggle
   with? Why?
   It was easier for me to work with mythical understanding. Every time I had to plan it
   was very easy to find the importance of the topic, how the emotions were related and
   how curiosity could be awaken. It wasn't that easy but at some point it got easier to
   create the stories. It was a bit struggling to find a variety of activities and the
   opposites, or at least to find an explanation or a justification for them.

4. How would you explain to other teachers—your colleagues—the approach you
   used to teach English?
   I used a story to wake up the curiosity of my students about the topic. On this story I
   explained how the elements (from the topic) are related and why they are important.
   Kids use a lot of their imagination to understand real life. Also, with this story, kids
   can discover the values or heroic characteristics that relate the elements of the topic.
   It is also important to discuss this with the students, to see what they understood and
   how they can relate the story with real life. After this, different activities are applied,

but not the usual activities but activities like games, songs, rhymes, jokes, tools that are used in our everyday life that sometimes we forget learning happens when this process is meaningful for them.

5. Did the mentoring process help you in the development of your understanding of IE and its implementation in your classroom? How?
   Yes indeed. At the beginning it was a little difficult, since I needed to refresh my mind about all the details. Later, Carolina was able to send me more information and answered any inquiry that I had. I received all the help needed.

6. Has the mentoring process helped you connect the ideas you first learned in the summer workshop with your own practice? In what ways?
   Yes. In the workshop it was just an introduction which was very clear to process, but it is different when you are part of it, in this case, having the opportunity to experiment and apply this knowledge in my classroom, helped me connect and now practice what I learnt in the workshop. At the beginning seemed difficult and a lot of work, but after trying for several times, it has become something simple and logical.

7. Do you consider writing a reflective journal helpful to your practice when implementing IE? How?
   Yes! It helps to keep notes of everything (good, bad, helpful, not helpful, any ideas) that can be used for the following works and implementations of the theory. Also, it helps you reflect on what things could have been done differently.

8. Is there anything you would suggest the mentor do or change when working with other teachers to implement IE in their classrooms? (*i.e.; support, resources, time*)
   I found everything perfect! There was enough support, the mentor always showed an excellent support, the resources where always present and the time was fine.

9. Did you meet your goals within this project? Are there any further goals that emerged during the project's development?
   I did meet my goals, although I would want to try more things not only with third grade but with fifth and sixth graders. Those are the goals that emerged during this project.

10. Do you have any doubts, concerns or questions about planning and/or delivering a lesson through an IE approach?
    My concerns so far are learning more about the other areas and implementing other types of understanding, not only the mythical. It would be interesting to increase the levels of complexity for the students and for myself.

11. What has been the most meaningful experience you have had implementing IE thus far?

Appendix 5

Minerva's reflective journal sample

Phonetics Planning (er, ore, re)
Reflection

Before figuring out what was the planning going to be, it was quite struggling to find the idea and how to connect it with everything.

After sometime thinking, the ideas started flowing, how to connect the sounds er, ore, and re seemed easier. The three have something in common, e and r, and with the relation between them, the story started to come together.

Since it was February, and Valentine's Day was celebrated, it helped the story to have more meaning and although the opposites were not clear at the beginning, relating the story with friendship made it clear at the end.

Once the story was told, the students really understood the message, and by asking questions at the end, they provided good answers. That proved me that relating the story with friendship and to what the school does in Valentine's Day (twin for a day) really helped the story to have a more fundamental and meaningful message that students can relate to.

The activities weren't satisfactory enough, they seemed good when planning, like the first one, where they combine letters to create new words, although they enjoyed it, they had fun, but I think something was missing once I watched the activity being carried out in the classroom. I think I spent quite more time than expected on this activity that didn't let me fulfill the other one.

The other activity, which involved the poem, although it was carried out, after finishing with this planning, I thought that the activity planned for the poem was a little bit more challenging and thought that it was going to be difficult for the students to achieve it, so another way to do it came up, but wasn't done.

What I liked about this planning was the story, how all the elements were connected (sounds, values, opposites and Valentine's Day) and how students responded to it, providing great comments and thoughts.

It didn't satisfy me the only one activity, although students enjoyed it and

contributed efficiently to it.

Grammar Planning (Wh- questions)
Reflection

Planning for sounds seem easier than everything else, grammar seemed quite more difficult, but in this case, it wasn't that hard.

This grammar wasn't part of the unit, but I considered it important since it's used every day and sometimes there appears to be confusion because students don't know or don't differentiate the function of each wh-question.

This time, the story was not really difficult to create; actually this planning was easier, regarding the connection of the elements.

In this planning, an element of the romantic understanding was included (a heroic value) which was easy to come up with.

In the classroom, before telling the story, we brainstormed which words we can use to ask questions, before giving them the topic. Only a few mentioned wh-questions. When they saw all of the wh-questions that were going to be seen in the class, there was not clarity regarding the function of each one, which in a way was good, I think.

There was a really good response to the story and the relation of the elements with the story and the heroic values, which were responsibility and perseverance.

Two activities were carried out, and I think they worked fine, although more activities could have been added. The activity involving the pictures demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of the functions of each wh-question. In the last activity, find someone who, they did enjoy it, and they could interact with a lot of their classmates.

I got a better feeling with this planning than with the previous one. With this one I saw a lack of more different activities that for later purposes can be done.

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Appendix 6

Minerva's students during the imaginative grammar lesson: