

The Individual Grammar approach
to foreign language learning

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*An idiolect-driven model for foreign language
learners in independent settings*

Camilo Andrés Bonilla Carvajal



*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.**

—LUDWIG J. JOHANN WITTGENSTEIN

* The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

To all those polyglots and autonomous language learners around the globe who have taught themselves any foreign language without further assistance.

To the team of anonymous geniuses creators of the L & H Power Translator Pro...

And the Web page Wordreference.com...

.the only teachers I acknowledge in my lonely path to foreign language learning.



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Putting forth and achieving a theory, as any other demanding undertaking, breeds social and intellectual links of solid permanence. It has been almost five years now from the inception of this hypothesis, from the day when that university teacher misguided me: "You gotta simplify what you wanna say in English before you speak, and never translate!" At that precise moment, out of his biased perspective on language learning, the Individual Grammar theory was officially born.

Too many individuals contributed to the realisation of this project, their names would fill books, however the following people deserve special mention:

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To all my heartfelt gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

The Grammar-Translation Lectures: Background and rationale

From 2010 through 2011, the *Semillero Investigativo para Altos Estudios en Traductología y Reconstrucción Idiolectal Aplicadas al Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras: Gramática-Traducción* [Grammar-Translation: Research group for advanced studies in translation theory and idiolect reconstruction applied to foreign language learning¹], decided to organise and present a series of four public lectures (one in April and one in October each year) under the name of Cátedra Gramática-Traducción (Grammar-Translation lectures), at the main auditorium of Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Campus Macarena A. The goal was simple: Given the institutional objective of Universidad Distrital to ensure democratic, ample and open access to knowledge for the citizens of Santafé de Bogotá and Colombia, it would be logical to host a public event which spreads the aims, purpose, and results of the research group for all undergraduate and postgraduate students interested in the fields of language learning and applied linguistics.

The lectures received a positive acclaim from the three-hundred plus students, researchers, and general public that attended. Each of the four presentations were a quadrant of the overall Individual-Grammar research project, as it is presented in this book, and each comprised a public presentation of preliminary results of the study as it was in development at the time.

¹ The Spanish word *semillero* literally means hotbed or seedbed. Its meaning in the scholar setting in Colombia is that of a research group of undergraduate or postgraduate (Master's) students that carries out research as part of their monograph or thesis, while receiving training to conduct future independent studies.

The Grammar-Translation lectures kindled a debate in the student community, and they were also met with harsh criticism by some of the faculty that disagreed with the points made by the presenter. The following structure and themes were as follow:

Title	Date	Time
La “Dramática-Traducción”: Error de apreciación lingüística e histórica. Origen, dinámica e incongruencias de un prejuicio.	Thursday, April 22, 2010	4:00 pm
El maestro ignorante: La escuela debe morir.	Friday, October 22, 2010	10:00 am
Lecciones desde el lecho de Procusto: Sofismas y contradicciones en el orden explicador.	Monday, April 11, 2011	2:00 pm
The Individual Grammar Approach to Foreign Language Learning.	Tuesday, October 11, 2011	2.00 pm

1. *La “Dramática-Traducción”: error de apreciación lingüística e histórica. Origen, dinámica e incongruencias de un prejuicio* [The “Dramatic-Translation”: A Linguistic-Historic Error of Perception. Origins, Dynamics, and Incongruities of a Prejudice]: This initial lecture set the pace and tone of the ensuing presentations. The theoretical background and historic antecedents for the usage of translation in language teaching were given, as well as a rebuttal of the coinage of “Grammar-Translation”, in the absence of sound literature from the nineteenth century that can let us ascertain in the present time the existence of translation as a means to teaching.
2. *El maestro ignorante: la escuela debe morir* [The Ignorant Schoolmaster: The School Must Die]: This lecture took the concepts laid out by Rancière (1991), as derivatives of the universal emancipation defended by French educator and philosopher Joseph Jacotot, to set the epistemological foundations of the Individual Grammar Approach, and of those equally proclaimed by the research group.
3. *Lecciones desde el lecho de Procusto: Sofismas y contradicciones en el orden explicador* [Lessons from the Procrustean Bed: Sophisms and Contradictions in the Explicative Order] The Individual Grammar Approach considers the idiolect and, extensively, the singularity of the individual’s verbal behaviour, to be the doorway to language acquisition. Based on the Greek myth of Procrustes, an allegory is made with the ruling school of thought that has led language teaching for ages, as a socially-built constraint imposed on those that attempt to learn a language.

4. *The Individual Grammar Approach to Foreign Language Learning*: this final lecture was originally given in English, since it also served as the undergraduate thesis oral defence for the author. It contained the majority of the elements present in this research book.

Aims and scope

This aim of this research is to provide empirical evidence that supports the notion of foreign language learning without an a priori curriculum, institutional goals or textbooks' pre-made itineraries; instead, its chief purpose is the systematic completion of a set of protocols geared towards reconstructing learners' idiolect, i.e. each learner will be empowered with the tools to find and use the semantic correspondences in foreign language of the unities of thought comprising his / her idiolect in L1.

To the best of our knowledge, in foreign and second language acquisition literature there is a lack of studies exploring the usage of the communicative repertoire (as defined by Gumperz and Hymes, 1988, p. 408) or the verbal repertoire (as defined by Skinner, 2002a, p. 22; Sridhar 1996, p. 49-50) or the idiolect (as defined by Bloch and Miller 1970) to set out a curriculum, which has been scantily mentioned by some authors such as Pienneman (1984) and Krashen as the (mere possibility of) inner curriculum. In social sciences, certainties rise out of phenomena or doubts, teachers as well as foreign language learners in independent settings can find highly recommendable to narrow down the scope of vocabulary and constructions to be learnt only to those used in one's native tongue. The effectiveness of this hypothesis would not lie on the words we commonly use (a reason relevant enough to pay heed to) but on the contexts of utterance wherefrom our idiolect itself shapes. If we learn how to use the semantic equivalences of those contexts of utterance in foreign language, lexical competence might be guaranteed.

In the first part of this research I will elaborate on the reasons that begot the project with works on relevant literature dealing with key concepts. Thus a literature review that explains and provides readers with clear a delimitation of the theories that support this perspective of learning, and the chosen approach to investigation.

Firstly I explain the prior pilot study for data collection with sophomore university students undergoing the protocols to reconstruct their idiolect, as well as the instruments of data collection in that phase. There is an *instructional design* where I include the description of the setting, description of the learning environment, theory of language, theory of learning, the intervention as a means, the intervention as innovation, instructional objectives, thematic development, methodology, description of the activities during the intervention (learners' roles, idiolect reconstruction consultant's role). In the final part the data analysis is presented, thus following the research question and sub questions, I will contrast the intended purpose of the study with the outcomes, and how they get to give an answer to the main question and

objectives. Formats for data collection will be annexed at the end of this document.

Finally, the conclusions and implications of the study. It is hoped this research opens a new line of enquiry in experimental applied psycholinguistics, and SLA studies, as well as to offer a groundbreaking approach to curricula design. The implications and usage vary depending on the reader, e.g. autonomous learning, syllabus or curriculum design, classroom vocabulary techniques, language teaching for specific purposes etc. Thus it is expected a wide array of options wherfrom teachers and learners may get benefits and applications for this research.

–Camilo Andrés Bonilla Carvajal
Summer, 2016
Newark, Delaware

JUSTIFICATION

There are at least three reasons supporting the need for an experimental study on idiolect reconstruction through translation and self-regulated learning in independent settings.

1. It enables us to understand more deeply the connections between contexts of utterance and learners' actual oral performance in a foreign language.
2. It restores translation to its lost position in language learning, in other words, we assess the whole potential and value of translation as well as that of code switching as valid learning techniques; plus, it directly applies the mediation competence (as proposed by the Common European Framework 2001, p. 22) as a means, and an objective to enhance communication in a foreign language.
3. The usage of learning strategies is a worthwhile commitment whose benefits are beyond any doubt. Here we will measure the direct impact (both affective and cognitive) of learning strategies in independent settings.

These reasons will be brought into practise in conjunction with enough verifiable and reliable data supporting these claims, i.e. that the very centre of curriculum and thematic development must be learners' idiolect, this progression can be reached more easily by means of translation techniques and task planning with learning strategies. The overall study is devised so that it can be replicated in different contexts and population to ensure accuracy and objectivity. This pursue will undoubtedly lead learners to become conscious about learning strategies, empowering them to be autonomous and responsible for their learning process. The protocols of idiolect reconstruction, as well as the development of mediation competence (i.e. translation techniques), will trigger the oral competence rendering passive into active vocabulary. Albeit the global time

of exposition to the techniques, guided by the idiolect reconstruction consultant (from now on consultant-researcher), would not be just six months, learners will receive an invaluable array of resources to take their language learning further.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The entire value of learners' genuine linguistic necessities (mental lexicon or idiolect) has been overlooked in mainstream approaches to foreign language teaching and curriculum design. This is due to a visibly uniform-oriented philosophy which analyses foreign languages as codified systems outward and independent to potential users (i.e. the learners). All of this acquires significance when one considers under a critical light the core of beliefs underpinning curriculum design. From the early Tyler in 1949 with *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, to the most recent researchers (e.g. O'Rourke and Carson 2010), learners current communicative repertoire is absolutely absent, if not clouded by educational purposes, institutional goals or the pursue for high performance in national tests. Forasmuch as there are no two identical idiolects, each one differs in vocabulary, pronunciation, and, to a lesser extent, grammar (Coulthard 2004, p. 432; Lyons 1981, p. 27). The whole notion of idiolect has not yet received attention enough in linguistics due to its limited field of analysis (the individual speaker); and even less treatment in applied linguistics as a means to bring into a tangible shape concepts such as built-in or inner syllabus (Corder 1968), as potential tools for language learning on account of the aforementioned institutional trends of language teaching curricula. A common problem independent learners face at the initial stages is that of being devoid of vocabulary to express orally (Joe 1998: 357). The verbal repertoire of speakers notwithstanding, might be used as a vehicle of expression and construction of a second knowledge (that of the L2). In other words, students' verbal competence in L1 (i.e. idiolect) could represent a new horizon to curricular development if observed as the pivotal basis whereby an inner syllabus could be applied. The main tool —albeit not the only one— to attain such reconstruction from L1 to L2 would be translation

(cf. mediation competence Council of Europe 2001, p. 14), granted the clear insights that it offers to FL students when it comes to elicit inter linguistic, cross cultural and stylistic awareness amongst various languages (Uzawa 1994; Valero Garcés 1996 and Viqueira 1992).

Languages are structurally random, and “[n]o linear syllabus can adequately reflect the nonlinear nature of acquisition.” (Lewis 2000, p. 184) Therefore by following their structural randomness, guided by the vocabulary and expressions found in each learner’s mental lexicon and aided by learning strategies: an actual inner syllabus might be devised. Let us remind that after the communicative shift in language learning design, choice of grammatical points “rely on (hopefully) good guesses as to what is processable and learnable, rather than being related to the learners’ actual state of L2 development. So the factors inside the language learner are excluded in this approach, despite its intended learner-orientation.” (Pienemann 1985, p. 27), it is expected accordingly that present-day research in language learning showed a satisfactory proposal to the much-needed personalization in curriculum design. In all likelihood this is a feasible project by deeming anew the nature and function of spontaneous speech in its everyday context of human interaction as a scaffold to language learning.

No study to date has applied idiolect output to assess the possible usage that speakers’ L1 vocabulary and syntactic internalized patterns might afford to trigger oral production in foreign language as independent learners. On the other hand, the existing evidence on translation as a means to acquire a foreign language is few and far between (cf. Liao 2006; Uzawa 1994), there are hardly few studies on contrastive linguistics applied to foreign language learning (cf. Luque Toro 1990; Krings 1987), and the potential of the L1 could be better understood as an attempt “to develop a ‘postcommunicative’ approach to TEFL for adolescents and adults.” (Atkinson 1987, p. 244).

This lack of grounded studies showing advantages or drawbacks in translation applied to language learning, in conjunction with the promising new line of enquiry of idiolect reconstruction studies, opens a yet unexplored gate to further analyses on mediation competence, meaning re-codification and learners’ inner syllabus development. As world-wide known Spanish linguist Ignacio Bosque (2008 online) defines it, a language is not the external set of rules, but the inner set of patterns speakers follow to express themselves.

El idioma lo llevamos puesto, es patrimonio del individuo y, además, de la sociedad. Es un bien propio y común a la vez. La gramática es una especie de espejo de la mente (...). Yo creo que habría que dar algunos cambios en la forma de enseñar gramática. Creo que se enseña de manera demasiado rutinaria, mecánica, uno suelta nombres o etiquetas como si etiquetara productos en un supermercado. La gente piensa que [la gramática] está afuera, que está ahí como las normas de tráfico. No. Si conseguimos transmitir a los jóvenes que está dentro de cada uno, lo que viene después pasa a ser

estudiarse a uno mismo. Tiene más interés.²

It is the goal of the Individual Grammar Approach to lead independent learners to the realization that studying themselves (linguistically) is the key door to language learning, fluency and oral development.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to put forward a new cognitive-linguistic learning model, relying on insights from experimental psychology to elicit spoken word production during spontaneous speech in independent foreign language learners through an idiolect-driven syllabus, as a valid alternative to the external curriculum traditionally used to teach and quantify learning in classrooms. The proposed approach —Individual Grammar— focuses on the realm of active vocabulary of learners' mental lexicon (idiolect), rendered into foreign language through translation and used on a day-to-day basis assisted by cognitive learning strategies in order to ensure future recall. This study is tested on a three-sphere population, the first step involves the design of a battery of protocols for idiolect reconstruction in the foreign language, secondly a pilot study with first semester university volunteer participants, then a small-scale test of the method with different language learners in stand-alone contexts, and finally a detailed assessment of the extent to which such learners activate free phrase retrieving and active spoken word production in semi-guided oral tasks using confirmatory quantitative verbal analysis. The exploratory results suggest hitherto that the proposed approach shows satisfactory characteristics and that the hypothesized theoretical model for activating communicative skills offers a noticeable improvement in independent language learning. The contend is that these results provide observable evidence for the possibility of applying this theoretical construct of idiolect reconstruction to the field of language learning studies. Lastly it is averred that fostering independent language learning through an idiolect-based syllabus as the protocols presented, can bring forth a more efficient way to learning than traditional teaching methods.

Research questions and research objectives

General question

2 We wear our language, it is a patrimony of the individual and also of society. It is a personal and a common good. Grammar is some kind of mirror for the mind (...). I believe that some changes in the way we teach grammar are needed. I think it is taught in such a routine-like, mechanical way. You just drop names or tags as if you tagged products in the supermarket. People think that [the grammar] is out there, that it is there just like traffic rules. No. If we get to transmit to the young that grammar is inside of each one of us, what comes after that is studying oneself. It is more interesting. (Our translation)

- What is the impact of translation and an idiolect-driven syllabus to elicit spoken word production in independent language learners?

Sub – questions

- How does learners' spoken lexical richness augment in spontaneous speech during the implementation of idiolect reconstruction protocols?
- How does idiolect translation improve free lexical-syntactic retrieving?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this project the notion of translation in foreign language learning is explored under a new light, because translation techniques applied to learning remain nowadays an almost unexplored field. Partly because the benefits of translation in language teaching have been utterly ignored and debased (White et al., 2009, p. 2). This is reinforced by authors such as Krashen (1981); Chaudron (1988, amongst others) that in conjunction with biased attitudes towards L1 in the classroom, have relentlessly stated with no empirical evidence translation is a cause of interference and error fossilization in foreign language learning.

Translation in every foreign language learning process, however, is an inevitable part of the process itself. As Hentschel proves it (2008, p. 18), empirical neurologically-based evidence supports the notion that once the learner enters to puberty, two different cortical areas are used to store language knowledge. It is therefore necessary not to treat them as a sole identity, but as two interconnected realities (Hentschel 2008, p. 20).

...the linguistic forms that L2 learners fail to adopt and to use routinely thereafter in their second language processing are those which, however available as a result of frequency, recency, or context, fall short of intake because of one of associative learning factors of contingency, cue competition, or salience, or because of associative attentional tuning involving interference, overshadowing and blocking, or perceptual learning, all shaped by the L1. (Ellis, 2006, p. 165)

This is also corroborated by the study of Thierry and Wu (2007) on unconscious automatic translation detected as a necessary part of learning, "students think in their native language and they translate to themselves when trying to communicate and interact among their peers, which is an instinctive manner of learning a foreign

language." (Koppe 2007 online). Translation is the device whereby learners can bridge the gap between the foreign language (FL) and their mother tongue L1.

However scarce, some efforts to suggest the possibility of applying the use of dictionary or L1 in the second language classroom have been made e.g. Duff (1989). His approach is close to a very broad notion of translation but this time regarded as a lawful metacognitive contribution, granted that the differences between direct vs. indirect translation (FL > L1 vs. L1 > FL) be clearly understood by both teacher and students (cf. Campbell 1998; to see a comprehensive summary of pros and cons of translation in language learning see: Zojer, 2009). This is also supported and further explored by Sadeghi and Ketabi (2010) in the Critical-Functional Approach whose tenets seize critical-intercultural relations in textual aspects and vocabulary learning in the translation operation. Their approach, as well as Hummel's (2010) on ESL vocabulary retention using translation, forewarns about the differences in professional translation (official documents, letters, literature) and translation applied to foreign language learning. The former focus its attention in the target audience and the final product, the latter is interested in activating comprehension regardless of stylistic nuances (at an early stage). The difference is therefore that the ability to speak a foreign language is not the sole condition to proficiently translate; there is a close relation in both (cf. Lado, 1961, p. 32-3), nevertheless a critical distinction lays in the acute sense to re-construct an original intended meaning in a different linguistic code (Bell 1991).

There are, however, a number of interesting similarities between the language learner and the translator, being the most evident that both are confronted with the task of "making sense"; the translator for a particular audience, the second/foreign language learner for him-or herself. Thus, in a different form and shape, and certainly on a different level, the question of "equivalence" of whatever nature is a problem for both (White et al., 2009, p. 2). When I refer to translation applied to foreign language learning, my intention is clearly not to replace other activities, nor is it to educate professional translators. It is simply to provide independent language learners with a metacognitive tool for building active vocabulary and context-sensitive discourse strategies (see: Hummel 2010; Sadeghi and Ketabi, 2010; White et al., 2009, p. 4). The pursued aim of language learning is to bring about bilingual and intercultural competence, not monolingual encoders (Hentschel 2008: 28), in that sense, renewing studies on translation in foreign language learning become relevant, even more if we consider the current state of discredit in classroom-based practices which creates a methodological inhibition to learners and teachers alike (Ibero 1997, p. 111):

Uno de los múltiples campos de estudio que ofrece la traducción a los investigadores es el de la traducción como vía de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Campo relativamente marginal. Las razones son múltiples: quizás las más importantes se deriven del arraigamiento de esta vía de aprendizaje en una enseñanza tradicional, basada en los medios, necesidades y mentalidades de culturas pasadas tan alejadas de las posibilidades y exigencias que se nos presentan hoy. Por otra parte, se han confundido

los medios específicos del aprendizaje de la traducción con los del aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Y si aún se acepta el que se conciba la traducción pedagógica como recurso posible del aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, la noción misma de traducción aparece muy deformada en esta práctica...³

This traditional proscription suppose a harsh barrier to researchers for finding a disciplinary scope to develop translation as an object of research (Sánchez Iglesias, 2009, p. 23), there are various examples of criminalisation of the usage of L1 in foreign language classrooms, and likewise of contrasting L1 and FL (Cf. Prodromou 2000 online; Deller y Rinvolucri 2002).

The chief defect of the now almost universally condemned “Grammar-Translation Method” was that it used bad grammar and bad translation— translation is not a dangerous technique in itself provided its nature is understood, and its use is carefully controlled: and translation is in itself a valuable skill to be imparted to students. (Catford, 1980, p. viii)

There are no grounded studies showing empirically or tested conclusive results of the possible harm of using translation, though. It is consequently a doable starting point to recommend and objectively assess the potential of translation framed into the wider category of learning strategies to enable learners to acquire a foreign language.

Learning strategies are an inevitable component of stand-alone learning (Oxford, 2008, p. 54), and therefore instruction about tactics and strategies should occur more often in language teaching. In independent settings, learning strategies require the learner to be more proactive, and therefore more effective in his\her quest (Oxford, 2008, p. 51), being our focus of attention aimed at building an autonomous learning environment towards sustainable knowledge, learning strategies will play a paramount role.

But before entering into learning strategies, let us start defining autonomy as the deliberated action to overcome lack of time, resources or situational constraints that impedes learners to achieve a desired knowledge or skill. It occurs in an independent setting (stand-alone learning), without external guidance of tutors or teachers, and it is characterized by the initiative to set up and fulfil compromises with oneself. Little (1991, p. 4) defines autonomy as the potential to be responsible for the learning process, acting individually, independently, with critical reflection and through autonomous decision making. This stance is supported by various theories (see Chamot & O’Malley 1996; Cohen et al. 2000; O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990) that aver that effective learners are those not only responsible, but also aware of their own learning processes. In order to achieve this level of awareness, learners must judge

3 One of many study fields offered by translation to researchers, is translation as a way to learn a foreign language. This is a rather marginal field. There are various reasons for this: maybe the most important ones are derived from the embedding of this way of learning in traditional education, whose base were possibilities and needs so distant as today’s. On the other hand, the specific means to learn are confounded with the means of translation. Even when pedagogic translation is accepted as a possible resource to learn a foreign language, this notion of translation is seen as very much misshapen in practice. (Our translation)

and assess the effective potential of learning strategies or tactics, suitable to their situational constraints and resources at their disposal (O’Malley & Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990).

There are plenty of learning strategies where learners might glean knowledge from, depending on the context, level, background and adherence to a particular method or cognitive style (Takač 2008). Regarding this Oxford (2008, p. 42) puts forth a schema with four general categories for independent learning strategies, wherefrom I will restore to the third one: cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are an important aid to process and recall L2 information in both independent and classroom learning. They are essential for processing language information and for integrating it into long-term memory (Oxford 2008, p. 53). Long-term memory plays a major role in sustainable knowledge, and cognitive strategies bring about the path through which meaningful learning and oral proficiency can be attained. Now the syllabus to start out that path is the inner syllabus of every learner, in other words, their verbal repertoire.

I outline the concept of inner syllabus following this repertoire, that is, the individual nature of learning. “One should not forget that the process of language learning is continuous and individual. No two users of a language, whether native speakers or foreign learners have exactly the same competences or develop them in the same way. *Any attempt to establish ‘levels’ of proficiency is to some extent arbitrary, as it is any area of knowledge or skill.*” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 17 emphasis added). Inner syllabus is the set of words, phrases, idioms, syntactic patterns and semantic domains that are to be taught, not taken out of a syllabus designed a priori, unified to different levels, cognitive styles, and learning preferences, but out of the salient verbal behaviour of each individual learner (active vocabulary); in other words their idiolect or inner communicative repertoire. Their individual grammar.

Based in a study by Brown, Johnson (2008, p. 117-20, 344) analyses the possibility that learners have a previously established order of learning in FL, just as they could have it in L1. A kind of “programme inside of the learner’s head”. An inner programme:

Piense por un momento en las posibles implicaciones de este concepto para la enseñanza de idiomas. A la mayoría de los aprendices en la mayor parte de los salones de clase se les impone un programa de estudios desde fuera. El libro de texto o el maestro (y con frecuencia, en última instancia, la Secretaría de Educación) les dice qué morfemas y estructuras gramaticales van a aprender y en qué orden. En otras palabras, se impone a los aprendices un ‘programa de estudios externo’. Pero si los aprendices realmente cuentan con un orden propio de aprendizaje, ¿tiene algún caso imponerles otro orden? ¿Qué caso tiene darles un programa de estudios externo si ya tienen uno interno? Esta emotiva idea ha rondado muchos debates en torno a la enseñanza de idiomas en años recientes y tiende a evocar intensas pasiones... (Johnson, 2008, p. 120)

This is a feasible course of action, given neurologically-based studies showing the little difference from synonym acquisitions (idiolect expansion) and language learning (Mestres Missé, 2007, p. 27). Grammatical processing only presents some differences with age, but few in semantic understanding. Thus adding active vocabulary through translation, as if expanding idiolect richness, seems possible and advisable. My interest is laid upon inner (active) vocabulary extracted from spontaneous speech, because in order to gain an actual insight into subconscious grammar, the spoken language offers a reliable source of data (Napoli and Lee-Schoenfeld, 2010, p. 23). Communicative repertoire, on the other hand, is defined by Gumperz (1977) as “all varieties, dialects or styles used in a particular socially-defined population, and the constraints which govern the choice among them.” The learner-centred (inner) syllabus will focus on this natural choice made by speakers, finding and providing the most suitable translation to re-construct and internalize the idiolect (L1) in the target language (FL) considering the creative and combining capacity of spontaneous communication (see for a larger description Chomsky, 1981, p. 442).

There are no two human beings whose way to express themselves behave likewise, “cada uno elige elementos de expresión diferentes de los que seleccionan los demás. Con ello resulta la pluralidad en las formas de hablar. De esto se sigue que en una familia los miembros puedan reconocerse con facilidad.” (Alcalá, 1981, p. 33). Thus, particular linguistic habits (either phonetic, syntactic or lexical choice) in each individual are defined as idiolect. Learners’ task will be use their own idiolect (by means of spontaneous speech samples) to identify and translate especially the high frequent phrases and vocabulary, and then render them with a proper equivalence suitable to the intended register (cf. Halliday 1964) in the target language.

We restore to idiolect (or verbal repertoire) as the backbone to lay out a language course, because of the randomized structure of verbal emissions, whose hierarchy is determined by the high semantic frequency of lexical choice. In sharp contrast to traditional approaches, we agree with Lewis (2000, p. 184 qtd. in Richards and Rodgers 2005, p. 134) restating that “acquisition is based not on the application of formal rules but on an accumulation of examples from which learners make provisional generalizations. Language production is the product of previously met examples, not formal rules. –No linear syllabus can adequately reflect the nonlinear nature of acquisition.” (emphasis added). For this research idiolects are grammars of finite states whose boundaries are able to be measured synchronically within the lexical richness in spontaneous speech.

The diagram of diachronic and synchronic phenomena in language by Hjelmslev (1976, p. 56) shows that in any language, at a given time (diachronic study) there is a finiteness that allows researchers to study sounds, forms, words and phrases, with their associations and signs (a,b,c,d). Any idiolect is flexible and infinite throughout the life span. However at a given time (the moment of implementation) it is possible

to aver learners' idiolects are finite; having only a measurable number of words, sounds and phrases. That is the moment where the idiolect reconstruction starts. In this design, learners decide and control the order, pace and selection of what they are willing to (or feel confident to) learn, working always inside the scope of their finite (at the moment) idiolects. The Individual Grammar approach thus empowers learners' responsibility and decision through a learner-centred syllabus design based on idiolect, translation and learning strategies.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

The following part deals with key elements comprising the working core of the Individual Grammar Approach. This approach was implemented with the population mentioned below (see *population*) from February 2010 through June 2011. Accordingly, in the first part I explain what the background of learning was like (linguistic and learning profiles of participants), resources, tools as well as logistical and psychological constraints of the subjects of study. In the second part I describe the pedagogical intervention vis-à-vis those fundamental elements of the Individual Grammar Approach, i.e. the philosophy underlying it, the main and specific instructional objectives I sought after, and the thematic development.

Furthermore, I also include the psychological and social issues pertaining to the impact of this approach (see *conclusions*), the influence upon the process of foreign language learning, the criteria of fluency and lexical richness assessment. Finally the seasons' schedule, activities, contents, and further references.

Setting: recruiting participants

For this study, our target population comprised three different groups of learners, the first two groups were part of the pilot study participants, whereas the third one went through the steps of the approach. Learners were recruited from the next scenarios:

1. First year students from a B.A. in English, L1 Spanish.
2. Independent language learners for different languages (voluntary sample).

Each sphere was made up of approximately equal numbers of males and females, all ranging from ages 16 through 27 years of age. All participants had a literate academic background and considerable prior exposure to English, but in the second

sphere (independent language learners) none to the target languages they intended to acquire. The usual place of residence of the whole number of participants at the moment of the study was Bogotá, Colombia.

Intervention

Theory of language

Through talk and other aspects of behavior, individuals display their individuality.

In other words, people express their individuality with everything they do...

—JOHNSTONE (2000, p. 407)

There are at any rate as many definitions of language —and of language learning—as languages in this world. Different conceptions have emerged throughout decades shaping new conceptions on psychological, sociological and physiological factors influencing the highly complex communicative web of language. Restoring to a behaviourist model I here aver the theoretical tenets of language in general (for a deeper analysis see Finegan 2008; Skinner 2002a) and of language learning in independent settings in particular.

Language is made out of arbitrary signs whose meaning is not given after a direct relationship between signifier and signified, but out of a social convention (Belinchón et al., 1992, p. 34). Social convention in language development (Wackernagel, 2009, pp. 37-8), or forces of linguistic market, according to Bourdieu (1982, p. 28). The code we are exposed to during our childhood (L1) is the currency of information exchange whose mastery and permanent use is unavoidable and very much esteemed. This everyday permeation to language allows the human brain to create and strengthen synaptic connections rather swiftly (Pulvermüller 2002). Such connections are the pathways for information to be encoded, spread and retrieved in the fairly complex neural ramifications of Broca and Wernicke's areas (Pulvermüller, 2002, pp. 37, 220). Finally, semiosis is performed according to rules, sometimes arbitrary (sign arbitrariness cf. Alonso et al. 1998), but always openly stated and followed by the members of the verbal community for social convention, that is to say, the diffusion of a given symbol linked to its meaning(s) results in the variations of language.

The combination of both exposure and necessity to convention systems is therefore one of the columns of learning (Skinner 1953, 2002a). Accordingly, necessities and conventions mould linguistic evolution and change. Forasmuch as there are no two communities sharing a system of beliefs, habits, customary social interactions, or hierarchies alike, it is expectable that languages are modelled according to the prevailing

usages and ways of life of the verbal community. A language differs from others since there are two different patterns of habits for social interaction and world description.

To conclude, language is acquired when an individual, out of social pressure, is randomly and repeatedly exposed (for interleaved practice see Taylor and Rohrer, 2010) to verbal stimuli that creates a mental linkage (association) between the symbol, its meaning and the context of utterance. This symbol-meaning relationship is reinforced by the context of utterance wherein the individual learnt / acquired the lexical units expressing his / her unities of thought (which in our case match with the proposed unity of translation by Rabadán, 1991, p. 187).

The equation may roughly be depicted thus:

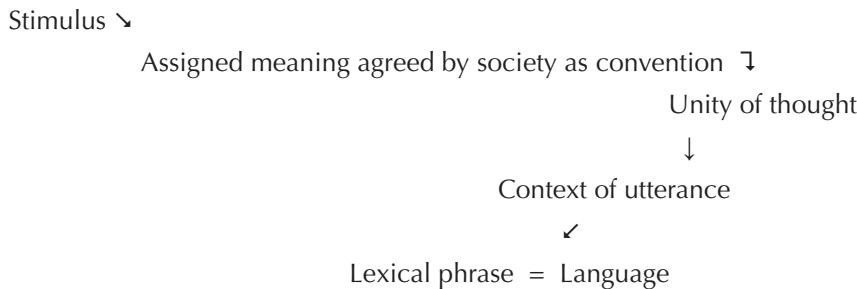


Fig. 2. Theoretical scales of language development (source: original)

A general notion of Individual Grammar

All languages share some common principles of organization and evolution, whose origins date back to Africa (see Atkinson, 2011, p. 346), it has been repeatedly claimed that languages share also common grammatical traits embedded in the minds of human beings; this theory is widely known as Universal Grammar (White, 2003). For this study then, synonyms, hyponymy, hypernym, and code switching are regarded as process of the same nature, i.e. an activation of the human capacity to dive for surface structures that fit the intended meaning required by the deep structure, paying heed to register, domain and tone (for further analysis applied to foreign language learning see Boxer and Cohen, 2004, p. 28). A finite encoded string of symbols (language) can be combined to generate an infinite string of meanings and messages (White 2003) in this study I will test the hypothesis whether this finite mechanism (grammar) might be reconstructed into a foreign language by focusing solely on the closed-loop system of learners' idiolect (the minimum unit of sociolect analysis).

I contend that any foreign language can be acquired on a systematic plan by studying one's own verbal behaviour, re-building it in a foreign language through translations, and accessing it by virtue of learning strategies. For this theory of Individual

Grammar, the language is what should harmonically fit the measures and necessities of learners —like a good coat—. This is achievable by selecting from the language those elements needed for learners to communicate in L1; and not expecting to conform a second language idiolect through wandering about all the massive input crammed in textbooks. Jackets, as languages, ought to be tailored to users' needs, not the other way around.

Language teaching has historically proceeded in a non-natural way. Curriculum design deals primarily with corpora of high frequency and intuition laid according to an arbitrary structuralist approach (from the phoneme to the syllable to the word to the simple sentence to the complex sentence to the paragraph), let us restate the words by Lewis (2000, p. 184 emphasis added) when he objects:

Noticing similarities, differences, restrictions and examples contributes to turning input into intake, although formal description of rules probably does not help —Acquisition is based not on the application of formal rules but on a accumulation of examples from which learners make provisional generalizations. Language production is the product of previously met examples, not formal rules. —*No linear syllabus can adequately reflect the nonlinear nature of acquisition.*

Relation with the research question

The intervention as a means

The entire notion of research should not cloud one of the principal aims of this intervention, i.e. to spark learners' capacity to undertake the total responsibility for their ensuing learning process. As it will be explained hereunder, the Individual Grammar Approach addresses to provide students with metacognitive (spaced and interleaved repetition, visual-contextual associations, interlinear translations) and linguistic tools (translations, phonetic correction, orthography, phraseology, etc.), that enable them to cope with the end-user experience in real communicative scenarios and authentic materials during and after foreign language courses at schools, institutes or college.

This is also a means to enter into cognitive and lexical processing in students to gain a priceless point of view and analysis for deeper assessment of curriculum design, and further exploration of learning strategies in independent settings.

The pedagogical intervention as an innovation

Traditionally, language curriculum design has operated from an outside-in approach, and, as in linguistics, has utterly ignored the nature of individual speakers (Skinner, 2002a, p. 14). It is a difficult feat —though worth trying it— a decentralized approach based on students' actual linguistic and affective needs (for a prior proposal and state of affairs see Rutler and Berlett 1984 qtd. in Richards and Lockhart, 2008, p. 38).

Teachers' role or grammatical notions tend to go at the very centre of course design. A notable scheme of curriculum inception is that of Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 136):

Assessing needs → formulating goals and objectives → developing materials
 → designing an assessment plan → organizing the course → conceptualising context → articulating beliefs → defining the context.

Whose origin are purportedly needs assessment, but in actuality such needs are inferred not from linguistic values but from institutional goals, national policies, standardized test objectives or simply subjective and whimsical preconceptions of in-service teachers. “[A]s we become more realistic about the needs of our students with language learning, we understand that preconceived ideas are no substitute for systematic and open-ended inquiry and research.” (Reis V.P., 1996, p. 34) Real linguistic students' needs are those demanded from their verbal repertoire. Curriculum design ought not to commence with seemingly external needs but with a thorough assessment of the inner lexicon, whose underpinning forces are the contexts of utterance wherein learners live and use language through everyday interaction.

This intervention aims to innovate to the extent to propose the design (from and for learners) of an actual learner-centred curriculum based on their idiolect to attain verbal proficiency within two years.

Instructional objectives

Rationale

A pivotal tenet of the Individual Grammar approach is to contribute with a theoretical and pragmatic vindication of the benefits of translation applied to foreign language learning. It is pursued an immediate reinstatement of this fifth skill (or mediation competence) in language teaching, alongside with the generation of a model for sustainable knowledge through learners' empowerment in long-life, stand-alone language learning, suitable to developing countries —as it is the case with our three population spheres.

Main objective

- Very briefly stated, at the end of this implementation students will be familiar with (and fully capable to utilize) an extensive array of techniques to reconstruct their idiolect in a foreign language by means of translation; plus a considerable group of learning strategies in independent settings.

Specific objectives

- To raise learners' consciousness about metacognitive strategies and autonomous learning in independent settings, dispensing with teachers or tutors' services.

- To master vocabulary and constructions closer to learners' real situational context—leading to meaningful, sustainable learning—, deeming as curricular backbone the own learners' active vocabulary (verbal repertoire).
- In conjunction with the abovementioned objectives, learners will activate communicative skills inside and outside the classroom whilst increasing inspiration to take further their own learning process.

Attaching the main objective

This proposal is a test-hypothesis study. A multi goal strategy is pursued towards an in-depth analysis of how effective translation and an autonomous learning model in the three population spheres will be received. Learners are required to render their idiolect (or mental lexicon Aitchison 2003; Singleton 1999) into the target language by firstly recording it and then transcribing it so that in six months to one year a perceivable enhancement of active vocabulary and spoken word production (oral fluency) in the foreign language might be attained.

Learners will set out an inner syllabus in FL out of their own idiolect in L1. This will be possible through adoption and adaptation of translation techniques and learning strategies to elicit spoken proficiency. Besides, linguistic and cultural awareness are to be enhanced and it will be proven whether those learners who underwent the learning experience attained measurable benefits such as performing complex and conjoined sentences without going through a passive stage while acquiring autonomous and sustainable learning habits.

Topic development

Individual Grammar Approach—as the sole name states it has no meddling in learners' thematic choice. In other words, there is no prior set of vocabulary or constructions to teach to learners, instead, learners bring to the sessions their captures of spontaneous speech (i.e. audio recordings of monologues, oral production tasks, face-to-face or telephone conversations performed by them) or captures of spontaneous writing (printed online chats, sent letters, or diaries they keep) to be translated into the foreign language aided by the idiolect reconstruction consultant (see below teacher's role).

Methodology

Albeit a more profound description of this Individual Grammar Approach is given in the introduction, I will shortly restate here some principles behind the general rationale driving the implementation.

A general law on language learning (in independent settings)

This general law attempts to synthesize in a few, though concise, words the ultimate

goal that independent language learners rout out, together with a clearer depiction of the challenges both learners and teachers normally face in language courses.

Individuals must deliberately shape a force of necessity driving them to alter their daily situational context by generating an artificial linguistic environment with optimal circumstances wherein contingencies of reinforcement are stimulated, leading to augment progressively the global frequency of both verbal salient conditioned emissions and incoming, fully understandable emissions for them.

Independent settings

Let us understand our field of action first, namely, independent settings. These special environments have unfortunately received little attention in the mainstream methodologies and approaches (Cf. Larsen-Freeman 2000; Richards and Rodgers 2005) due to the inherent classroom logics, that is, the need for a leading figure embodied in the teacher, an interloper or go-between amidst the learners and the target language. On the contrary in independent language settings the teacher is absent, at least physically because “[t]hese settings include all those that require students to take a degree of responsibility for their learning, and cover self-access, self-directed, resource-based and distance learning environments” (Hurd and Lewis, 2008, p. xii).

History and veritable experience tell us that recognized polyglots through the ages have mainly learnt in independent settings, without the presence of a direct tutor or teacher leading their process⁴. This unique datum would be enough to reconsider and have a second thought about the way foreign language teaching has been carried out. Nevertheless, to expedite this hypothesis I will exclusively adhere to mention independent settings as the scenario that better fits the intended purpose of this approach (for a contrastive analysis with schoolroom-based see Hurd, 2011).

Independent language learning contexts demand a higher cost of motivation for retention (Hurd op. cit.) and motivation derives from observable progress, in the main. Apropos of it, learning strategies have been explored as a means to compensate the lack of teacher-driven learning, (Hurd and Lewis 2008), thus as Oxford (2005)

4 For a detailed overview of this appealing phenomenon of multilingualism outside the school environment see The Polyglot Project (Cartaginese 2010) whose constant argument musters how flawed and hopeless classroom-based language teaching is all over the world. Also the life of Italian cardinal Giuseppe Mezzofanti, conversant in more than 15 languages (Russell 1858); world-class interpreter and translator Kató Lomb, fluent in 16 languages (Lomb 2008); Barry Farber, 25 different languages (Farber 1991); and Steve Kaufmann, confident in 12 foreign languages, including Japanese and Korean starting in his early fifties (Kaufmann 2009). It has not yet received serious coverage and research by universities or scholars the techniques and regimes used in independent settings for accelerated multiple language acquisition. “There is no branch of scholarship which has left fewer traces in literature, or has received a more scanty measure of justice from history. Viewed in the light of a curious but unpractical pursuit, skill in languages is admired for a time, perhaps indeed enjoys an exaggerated popularity; but it passes away like a nine days’ wonder, and seldom finds an exact or permanent record... this interesting chapter is entirely overlooked; nor does it appear to have engaged the attention even of linguists or philologists themselves.” (Russell 1858, p.5)

charts 12 benefits of language learning strategies with or without teacher assistance here is presented the initial profitability of empowering learners with tools *to utilize the language and not about the language*:

Language learning strategies:

1. Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
2. Allow learners to become more self-directed.
3. Expand the role of teachers.
4. Are problem-oriented.
5. Are specific actions taken by the learner.
6. Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
7. Support learning both directly and indirectly.
8. Are not always observable.
9. Are often conscious.
10. Can be taught.
11. Are flexible.
12. Are influenced by a variety of factors.

(Oxford, 2005, p. 9)

In stand-alone language learning “**individuals** must ...” The unit of learning, and the epicentre of language learning, is the individual —not the classroom. This basic notion further expanded in cognitive individual variation (Corr, 2010, p. 4) disavows learning massification (an all-purposes, all-courses method to present contents and to evaluate knowledge) as in traditional dynamics of language teaching. Therefore the **individual** is the main character and the nuclear population towards which this approach is mainly geared.

“**Individuals** must deliberately shape a **force of necessity**...” Let us define *force of necessity* as the absolute urge for the presence of a given entity, state, circumstance or the imminent execution of something in particular. It is an irresistible impulse that might or might not be experienced by outer persuasion, and whose non-fulfilment, elision or opposition is not possible.

This quality or state of being necessary is held by communication. Interacting with other human beings, their meanings or thoughts is paramount to live in society. Due to this pressure of circumstance, using the language rapidly becomes an internalized automatic response no matter how hard or irregular the language is. Interaction is a must (not only with speakers but also with written or aural texts), as well as mutual comprehension and expression of our social being in such an imperious way that it cannot be otherwise.

Languages have already been described as systems of symbolic conventions to codify reality. In order to gain access to that common reality we create a *force of necessity*; not the mere enthusiasm or interest, neither the need as an abstract perception, but the very force that spurs humans on to interact and utter or write coded statements.

Force of necessity is the utmost driving force behind all human behaviour. In order to learn any language in independent settings (i.e. not living in the country where the language is spoken) we need to artificially create a force of necessity so persuasive so as to use the language every day, introducing drastic changes in our verbal behaviour (adding words, phonemes, structures, and idioms of the foreign language), so that code switching to the FL will be an easy task to achieve —in other words, to become bi or multilingual.

Being aware of the actual reasons underpinning language learning (necessity + exposure + usage = changes in verbal behaviour and consequently language competence), we realize that If anyone can master a native(s) language(s), it is merely because s/he has had the need to do so. The environment (...driving them to alter their **daily situational context**...), has asked him / her to master the linguistic conventions to codify reality, and if learners truly wish to master another language, all they have to do is to restructure (alter) the linguistic environment (or **daily situational context**) surrounding them. “Changes in behavior are the result of an individual’s response to events (stimuli) that occur in the environment.” (Skinner 1953) By willingly taking the decision of ranking first the force of necessity to learn a foreign language, alongside with current ICT resources (Information and Communications Technology) and the set of means and infrastructure needed to carry out the fulfilment of a plan (resources logistics and infrastructure see below materials), it is highly feasible to set up a general framework to start the process of foreign language mastery, “the environment can be manipulated. It is true that man’s genetic endowment can be changed only very slowly, but *changes in the environment of the individual have quick and dramatic effects.*” (Skinner 2002b emphasis added)

“...[B]y generating an **artificial linguistic environment** with **optimal circumstances**...” there is no shade of doubt that s/he who *deliberately* hears to podcasts, interviews or music, signs in chatrooms and read articles (all in the FL) on a daily basis is generating an *artificial linguistic environment*; a voluntarily fabricated milieu full of *optimal circumstances* (or favourable chances) to increase the frequency of contact with the language. Such critical frequency is, in other words, the “...**contingencies of reinforcement**...” that stimulates habituation, an external —written or aural stimuli—, operant eliciting responses in the form of —written or verbal— conditioned behaviour.

All of this leads to progressively augment “...**the global frequency** of both **verbal salient conditioned emissions** and **incoming, fully understandable** [verbal] **emissions** for...” language users to activate FL communicative skills.

Conceptual constructs

As a summary of conceptual tenets to guide this approach, we have:

1. *Force of necessity is the utmost driving force behind all human behaviour.* Individuals must shape such force of change to undertake the process of language learning in independent contexts.
2. *Structural randomness is the most accurate course of action to approach a foreign language, because it is the only one that more closely resembles the nonlinear nature of language structure.* (see Lewis, 2000, p. 184) Constant exposure to nonlinear input (e.g. authentic materials) follows the randomized path of interleaved and spaced practice that in actuality enhances oral production and retrieval (Bahrick et al. 1993; Taylor and Rohrer 2010),
3. *The inner curriculum (internal syllabus) consists of continuous translations into a foreign language of all unities of thought comprising our verbal repertoire (idiolect).* interference and transference (semantic, structural and phonemic) are usually associated with negative communication habits in a foreign language (see Porter and Duncan, 1953, p. 61). The reason for an interference to occur however, lies in the actual verbal repertoire of one's mother tongue, whose structures and semantic patterns are arbitrarily re-uttered using L2 terms (Anderson 2003). The idiolect, as a result, could potentially represent a new horizon to curricular development yet to explore —If observed as the pivotal basis whereby an inner syllabus could be applied. The instrument to attain such reconstruction would be the mediation competence.
4. *Context of utterance is a pivotal cue for the brain to retrieve passive vocabulary from the internal lexicon (lexical access).* This validates the applying of translation as an invaluable tool for triggering associative memory and morph-semantic retrieval from passive vocabulary (Geiger, 2008; Meyer, Schvaneveldt and Ruddy, 1972; Taylor and Rohrer, 2010), thanks to the activation of lexical accessibility (Aitchison, 2003) by means of contrasting L1 deep structures with L2 surface structures.
5. *A speaker is said to be fully competent in a foreign language as soon as the active vocabulary from his / her idiolect is completely reconstructed in that language, and when such reconstructed idiolect has been internalized so as to recall and produce it either orally or in writing in a different context to that where it was initially reconstructed.*

Activities for the Pedagogical Intervention

Tools and knowledge to reinforce language learning

Resources, logistics and infrastructure

Learners will be told that in order to build a house they need more than wit and strength. Building a house requires bricks and cement too, and those are the *resources, logistics and infrastructure* that implies undertaking the task. When learning a new foreign language —in independent settings— *resources, logistics and infrastructure* will be also needed. They will be acquainted with just a few:

Resources

In order to speed up their progress they will mostly need to augment the frequency of contact with the foreign language. Learners need to soak up as much audio stream and written data as possible. They must also be exposed to constant waves of input (oral and written), and they also need to make sure that input will become intake (comprehensible input). Not just senseless babbling, but understandable, meaningful incoming data. How many resources are needed for that? Everything at their disposal... However, I will mention three minimum requirements for them:

1. A good, comprehensible, bilingual dictionary.
2. A good, comprehensible (but user friendly), pedagogical grammar.
3. Authentic materials.

A good, comprehensible, bilingual dictionary

In the Internet Era the majority of Indo European languages (and from some other linguistic families) have online dictionaries, and in most cases, available for free. Notwithstanding our dictionary —online or printed— ought to be bilingual, enabling learners not only to understand texts but also to produce them. Ideally we will be restoring to supplementary sources like phrasebooks, lexicons from textbooks or idiomatic translation corpora. The dictionary will have pronunciation symbols next to words, and —if possible— a grammatical appendix.

A good, comprehensible (but friendly), pedagogical grammar

As with the dictionary, students will be required to find a pedagogical English grammar or printed Web resources designed to meet the needs of foreigners trying to learn the language. That means that it will be written in their L1 or in another language different from the language studied itself (as it is the case with some members of the third sphere that have already acquired a second language). Preferably this grammar will have plen-

ty of examples for each concept, and even better if the examples have translations they can contrast with their L1. This grammar will not be too scholar, or linguistically dense for the mavens. They are not getting ready to become university lecturers in philology of the FL, only to be able to understand and produce meaning in it

Authentic materials

In foreign language learning literature there is this wide division between instructional materials, teacher-generated materials and authentic materials. As we are learning independently, only the latter will be needed. Authentic materials, in other words, are natural input: News broadcasts, media, magazines, children's cartoons, music, eavesdropping dialogues while commuting, the kitchen, the kindergarten, ads and banners on the street, brochures, internet, chat, phone conversations, and so forth. Learners will be conscious that those objects or situations that have given them full command of their mother tongue are authentic materials as well. Therefore direct translations (L2 \Rightarrow L1) or audio drills from the foreign language will be exclusively funnelled towards natural, spontaneous, conversations or written data.

Logistics

As learners already know which materials utilize (real newspapers, novels, magazines, radio, television, films, sets of flashcards with real, colloquial vocabulary, etc.), they will also be advised to equip themselves with the proper devices to carry that input everywhere. Learners will be briefed on how to render everyday technology to learn. However, since they all are fully capable persons to adapt technology to such purposes, we will limit to name minimum requirements for them to create an artificial linguistic milieu.

- An Mp3 player or any other portable device to hear audio.
- Weekly or, at best, daily Internet access.
- Authentic texts in foreign language, preferably interviews about non-specialized terminology (in case they cannot access to Internet, otherwise they simply search and download them).
- All the necessary means to acquire authentic or instructional materials, e.g. films, radio, television, etc.

As sessions proceed, learners will learn how to harness these gadgets and resources for our learning goals.

Infrastructure

Learners will finally learn how to eschew some hurdles that if not taken into account could hamper their progress. In other words, they make sure to have a suitable place

to perform the protocols. To create a good rhythm of study it is advantageous to set aside the same room (or table if they can only carry out this at a library), because the same environment brings forth a healthy psychological relationship location – learning, leading them to commit to learning as a project. Learners will be reminded that a quiet place with no distractions (radio, friends, incoming phone calls, television) and if using the internet, just with necessary applications to online dictionaries, a conjugator or the text to read are enough.

Useful alternatives to help learners in their process

Time management

As we have defined it so far, language learning is only successful given that a real force of necessity to use the language is felt. Nevertheless, even when there is a real force of necessity, and all the infrastructure and resources are also there, two main pitfalls to independent language learners are left to be dealt with, namely: procrastination and time management.

Procrastination

Procrastination has a quite interesting name, it stems from the Latin words: pro, meaning: on behalf of, before; in front of, for, according to, and crastinus: tomorrow, next day, future, the following day. "Procrastination is the act of putting off something until a later time, either by not starting a task or by not finishing one you've started." (Davidson, 2004, p. xiv) This definition, however, cannot encompass the full array of feelings and learnt behaviours that take an individual to stagnate in front of the task to do, for when we procrastinate we simply take shelter of an obligation or decision whose failure (sometimes success) scares us. Procrastination is then the behaviour to postpone a task or action to a later time as a mechanism to avoid the anxiety emerging from starting or completing any task, or taking a decision (Fiore, 2006, p. 5). Lingering over minor details, lack of attention, finding reasons not to start (or finish) the task alongside with feelings of stress and / or unwanted burden are clear indicia that something is wrong with the way learners approach to the task.

There are in fact several reasons why learners procrastinate, but that far exceeds the scope of this study. In foreign language learning howbeit, a critical reason behind procrastination is the lack of knowledge or sufficient preparation to carry out the task at hand (Cartaginese 2010; Farber 1991). The average independent learner sets distant, blurry, abstract goals as in a new year's resolutions list: "I will master Japanese", "I will speak Finnish", "I want to learn Portuguese".... Setting long term commitments in isolation is the easiest way to procrastinate and / or to avoid doing something because the seemingly hard objective fades away as learners see no direct relation between what they can do at the moment and the completion of their initial

purpose. People is 70% less dynamic and productive whenever they face a labour without knowing how to complete it (Fiore, 2006, p. 39); the first thing that should be clear to those carrying out a task is how much time is required for its fulfilment. There is an axiom called Parkinson Law that states: "*work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.*" When procrastination looms over, one early symptom is the discommoding feeling of having a huge workload quota to do for one single task. This sole image daunts learners and workers, and it is accordingly necessary to teach and prevent about it.

Learners will learn the term and concept of *timeboxing*. It comes from the division into boxes (units of time) of a monthly schedule. In planning projects like software development or long entrepreneurial commitments, the distance between the starting date and the deadline is divided into sub boxes, each having its own budget and deadline. Thus a larger task is disassembled being easier to be grappled.

The pomodoro technique

In the late eighties, Italian university student Francesco Cirillo found himself too distracted and unmotivated to study that he decided to find out whether he could really get down to study at least for just ten minutes. The first object he chanced upon to measure those ten minutes was a small, tomato-shaped kitchen timer. To his own surprise, he could perfectly focus on one single task if having the timer as a constant reminder of the ongoing duty. The Italian word for tomato is pomodoro, and from thence on the pomodoro technique was created⁵. He soon found that the best amount of time to devote to one single task was only 25 minutes, and it is no coincidence such discovery for beyond 25 minutes the span of attention starts to decay (Westwood 2004). Francesco Cirillo had unwittingly created a way to cut the cake of university chores into chunk-sized, easy-digestible bits. 25 minutes.

To abide by the principles of the pomodoro technique, learners will firstly follow the programmed activities in the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda (see below activities) knowing what to do and how to do something halts procrastination without exceeding the 25 minutes span allocated to each protocol; if they happen to feel distracted, and lack the attention to what they are trying to study, in a new sheet of paper they note down quickly those thoughts, in a few lines, just a short description and promise themselves they will be back to them as soon as the 25 minutes period is over. With that they train their minds to stay focused on one single activity, while reducing the total amount of ideas that crosses one's mind when working on an intellectual activity. Finally, every 25 minutes, they are advised to get up from the desk, change body position, lift arms and stretch their

5 Learners will read the whole story and a detailed description of the technique for free at: <http://www.pomodorotechnique.com/index.html>. The e-book is also available there: Cirillo, Francesco. (2009) The Pomodoro Technique. Lulu.com.

muscles; it is healthy to walk around and think about something different for 5 minutes (e.g. what they have recently written in the piece of paper about pre-occupations or distracting thoughts). This is their break time, a reward if possible (a cup of coffee, small sweets) and then go back to work (for time distribution of these activities see the Agenda below.)

Procrastination and bad study habits are the prime reason why people get low grades or poor performance at school or college (cf. Davidson 2004; Fiore 2006). Learners will be guided in metacognition literature to find more tips on how to study better, how to recall and memorize data, how to stay focus on one single task, etc. As part of this research learning strategies are to be strongly emphasized to students, knowing not only how to learn languages but also to learn how to learn languages. Dealing with procrastination, blocking, lack of motivation, boredom, or frustration is easier when they have the proper tools to do so. In this intervention initial tools are offered, but only those that better fit each learner's cognitive style can be discovered by each one of them. They will be given the freedom to modify the Agenda or to include in it different techniques for learning as they wish.

Activities, materials and purposes

Most learners would consider that their utmost hindrance in language learning is no other but the lack of a methodology to be driven by. The crux of the matter indeed lies on the capacity to know what to do, when to do it and, how to do it. Barring they can devise their own routines to learn a language (and stick to them), without the proper system any learner in independent settings is very likely to get lost in the millions of resources both in libraries and bookstores: phrasebooks, web pages, online chat rooms, Skype, messenger, social net-works, authentic materials and so forth. All of it could encompass a rich array of options to choose from, the only problem with such abundance for the learner is what to pick up and what to do with it.

In the next description of the four Protocols of Idiolect Reconstruction we explain the four simple steps that, if applied with the agenda in the ensuing part, will be the centre of activities for learners following this approach. It must be repeated that each protocol will be completed in 25 minutes with a short break no longer than 5 minutes.

1st Protocol: enquiring listening

Learners listen attentively —and are interested in— native speakers in casual, spontaneous, or natural speech. This could be by listening to interviews, recorded conversations, TV shows or news broadcasts in FL indistinctly. Their pace or diction is irrelevant yet, instead, learners follow each sound, phoneme, word or phrase they can decipher waiting for the exact moment when they spot something they have previously met. A word, or phrase preferably, that will serve as an initial means to

make sense out of the global meaning of the conversation (topic discussed, presented or announced). They not only *hear*, but *listen closely* to the message, feeling how the anchormen news, the interviewee or the vlogger addresses to them, conveying something they cannot simply miss. Every sentence is visualised in its context, allocating it a meaningful image to see whether it fits or not the whole tone of the oral message; i.e. if they understand something as a bad word or a colloquial expression in a formal, religiously-laden interview, they must enquire why would the native speakers say that? Enquiring about what they hear is the key.

It is helpful and strongly recommended for them to have a piece of paper and a pen to mark every word / phrase or whole sentence whose gist they have grasped. Like this:

This will enable them to visualize and track their progress, for instance, if in a 5 minutes interview they get to mark 15 lines (of 1's as in the example), and two weeks later they set a new record of 25, this is a visual (tangible) way to see how much words they are learning to recognize.

1111111111111111

This enquiring listening looks for what is known, from thence on, learners start to learn in a meaningful way. They must also be aware of every possible paralinguistic cue in the voices (false starts, ums... uhs... rise or fall of voice tone, whining, laughter, etc.) They make themselves a detective at every new piece of foreign language dialogue, as weeks go by, learners will be required to present in their portfolios (see below *evaluation*) a log of the audio materials they have listened to, with the name (of interview, song or theme of conversation), the length (in minutes and seconds) and the number of hits represented by 111111.

When listening, learners try to identify what they already know. If there is nothing they can grasp yet, then they have a go at deciphering the letters or syllables out of people's speech. As though learners were taking a dictation, recognize phonemes, or words, in the speech string. They mark the right guesses with 1's in a piece of paper and contrast this with the minute ratio —how many hits, how many minutes. They keep this in a portfolio to track their progress, name the sheet with the title of the song, interview, or newscast, add the duration (in minutes) and hits (111111...).

2nd Protocol: verbal distillation

Forasmuch as there are two self-evident facts in developing good conversation

skills in a foreign language: firstly, one needs to train proprioceptive neuro-muscular components (i.e. diaphragm, tongue, lips and those involved in intonation) to be in sync with one's thoughts as one expresses oneself (Damico et al. 2010). Secondly, by doing this, vocabulary and constructions have to constantly be expanded so as to cover all the expressive possibilities one has got in L1 upgrading to fluent speaker. When one starts a task involving physical-cognitive skills (e.g. speaking a language) there are various processes and sub processes that progressively arrange themselves while we carry out the task. Driving a car, playing video games, sewing, or even text messaging are highly neurologically complex activities that go unnoticed but whose requirements to be achieved go not further than speaking a foreign language (cf. Jong et al. 2009). It is all about force of necessity and daily, uninterrupted usage.

Most learners would either whine about not being able to speak (and therefore they neglect to speak out loud), when they have not tried to speak even once or could argue that they have no chance to meet up with native (or at least advanced) speakers; in spite of the head start of Skype or chat rooms, not everyday will a native speaker be online and eager to help learners progress, besides, in our three spheres to start a fluent conversation learners lack the minimum vocabulary (Grundwortschatz). These qualms nonetheless cannot stop them from speaking, that is why exists this second protocol: learners speak when they are alone, in a meaningful way. However let us recall the second fact in developing conversation skills, viz. one has to constantly expand the vocabulary and constructions so as to cover all the expressive possibilities in L1 upgrading to fluent speaker. With this in mind, learners will focus on what they actually ignore (words, constructions, idioms, etc.) while reinforcing the ones they have already acquired. So goes this protocol.

1. Learners ask themselves something (concerning a personal matter, something they have enough knowledge of to talk comfortably free) they can also improvise soliloquies.
2. They try to answer each question (speaking out loud) bilingually, in code-switching. For instance: "I think *ich denke* that she is a good person *dass sie eine gute Person ist* and besides... *und außerdem...* Another example with Latin: Tomorrow early, *Cras mane* I'm going to the University and... *Universitatem ibō que...* Finally the last calibration is recorded and filed to track progress week by week.
3. Understandably, they will be in need of vocabulary or constructions. When this happens, they switch to the L1 to complete the meaning and switch back to the foreign language to finish the answer. The foreign language is used as much as possible, and every word / expression in native tongue they restore to when feeling devoid of vocabulary is written down as is. Once they have answered the question, those words or expressions are looked up in a bilingual dictionary, a translation corpus, or a phrasebook. Learners write the equivalents in foreign

language and re-answer the same question, this time completing what they ignore with the found expressions.

4. It will be necessary to restate and re-answer the same question a number of times before it can be responded comfortably and without interruptions. As calibrations (every time a full answer is given) go by however, learners will see how this becomes easier and more active vocabulary is added to their current speech.

In conclusion, verbal distillation is when a learner sifts trying to get one component out of a mass. This protocol is akin to using a magnet to filter iron from sulphur, the difference is that here they capture (by noting down) what they ignore. Then they force themselves to use that new information —which is based on contexts of utterance of their active vocabulary in L1—, and by so doing learners expand their speech abilities as well as they train each muscle to fine-tune accuracy and fluency in L2.

- Learners ask themselves a question and answer it out loud in the foreign language. Fill their answers with the words or expressions in L1 that they ignore in foreign language. They write the L1 words and expressions previously used and then translate them with a dictionary, a translation corpus, or a phrasebook. Learners write the translations in foreign language, re ask and re answer the same question, this time completing what they did not know with the found expressions. They do so until they can answer confidently.

3rd Protocol: interlinear translations

- Learners choose any text in their foreign language (FL), ideally one neither to long nor to short, and with the given tools to translate it (tools will be supplied by the idiolect reconstruction consultant) they start to read. Learners read the whole excerpt, passage, paragraph or sheet to begin with, then proceed sentence by sentence. They initially spot the verb (either conjugated or as infinitive) and look it up in the dictionary. Once they find one possible meaning —or a good set of definitions—, jot them down below the verb, making sure they write in an interlinear way:

Wenn ich die Elementarsätze nicht *a priori* angeben kann, dann muß es zu offenbarem Unsinn führen,

sie angeben zu wollen. **Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.** Die

to mean

to matter

to be understood as

Logik erfüllt die Welt; die Grenzen der Welt sind auch ihre Grenzen⁶

Now they can see who the main character of what is being said is (in other words,

6 Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (2001) Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Berlin: Akad-Verl, p.82

with the sole verb they can track down who is doing what and how many subjects they have in there). There are tricky languages though; as in this example, German does not allow to clearly identify whether we refer to a wir (we), a simple infinitive (to walk, to dance, etc.) or a Sie (formal you or they). In any case, it is now reduced to three possibilities.

After the verb they go on with nouns, nouns + adjectives or articles + nouns + adjectives (noun phrase), there is where both doer and receiver are hidden.

sie angeben zu wollen. **Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.** Die...
 the boundaries language to mean the boundaries world
 the limits to matter the limits
 to be understood as

Now they understand something along the lines of: boundaries and language mean limits to the world. In this process they have so far 1) the verb, 2) noun phrase (article, adjective and noun) and then they move towards the third step: finding pronouns:

Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt
 the boundaries of my language mean the limits of my world

The meaning is complete. *The boundaries of my language mean (or are) the limits of my world.* A fourth and final step would be that of conjunctions (and, or, neither...), prepositions (in, of, at, under, from...) and adverbs (how, very, few, likewise, although...). Learners will proceed from the hardest and more variable the verb to the simplest and more stable (at any rate in the vast majority of Indo European languages)—adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions—. They undergo no change or declension, nor are they conjugated or inflected in agreement with person or gender. This order also allows them to progressively find the global meaning from the very beginning. As verbs are the nuclei of predicates (i.e. the core of what is being said), they need not to depend excessively in the dictionary when reading, speeding up their fluency and understanding.

Thus, learners will learn that prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs are the easiest and first learnt words in acquiring a foreign language, largely because they are monosyllabic, stable and they are part of what we call a closed-loop category, that is, prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions are finite. They can learn them all by heart in two hours if that is their wish. That category never grow (new words are not added, no one invents a preposition), and likewise goes to pronouns and articles, the only difference is that they do change according to person, number, and in some languages like Latin or German, case. They belong to another closed-loop category where no substantial changes are done, however sometimes they will.

Learners are due to remember this is by no means a strict rule to stick to. If they can grasp the gist of the sentence at a first look, they are encouraged to keep on with the next one and do not follow the 1,2,3,4 order. If, on the contrary, they cannot

understand something (an awkward idiom, a deeply-rooted cultural reference, a word game beyond their reach), they should not bother trying to scrutinize every definition of the lexicon. If what they are facing is a common (and consequently important) construction in the language, it will be back soon in another text where, in a different context, they will get to understand it more clearly.

Now that they have understood the meaning (or at least they can tell the general intention of the writer), and have translated interlinearly the text, this remaining interlinear translation will be printed (two pages in one page) for them to carry it as a graded reader anywhere let us emphasize the fact learners are creating their own materials with this technique. It is suggested to record themselves reading out loud the translated text in FL to be an audio book (again, with topics of their interest) and to improve pronunciation as they listen to themselves. With that they will be activating their already acquired passive vocabulary, while learning collocations and appropriateness in their choice of vocabulary. As they begin to translate the FL text into the L1, they will face questions of style, vocabulary and syntax. That text will shed light on cultural, syntactic, semantic and grammatical differences, enabling them to learn both vocabulary and proper usage as well as giving vocabulary with contexts of utterance.

- Learners copy (or transcribe) a text double spaced in foreign language about a topic from their interest. They translate it interlinearly starting by the verb, the noun phrase (articles, adjectives, nouns), pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and adverbs. The idea is not to follow all the four steps if they can picture the meaning right from the beginning, if not, they proceed as mentioned. Then they record the FL text and store both text and audio as self-made book of interesting, authentic readings.

4th Protocol: idiolect rewriting

This final protocol is the foundation of active vocabulary triggering. Learners take a voice recording device (either a tape recorder or a digital Mp3) and record their naturally-occurring speech, their spoken, casual, everyday speech. They decide whether they prefer to record themselves while improvising a soliloquy, asking and answering questions themselves, having a face-to-face conversation with someone, simply brainstorming ideas, words and constructions (all of them are part of their idiolect) or, most importantly, their own phone calls. They can also pick up naturally occurring data from their personal journals, sent letters or e-mails. What they need is to capture all active vocabulary on sight, which is why this process is called *spontaneous speech capture*.

Now that they have this material transcribed, they proceed to look for the semantic equivalents (i.e. translations) for those words or expressions interlinearly.

Purportedly this is saving right now, I'm not sure whether this is working or not, it does not matter, everything that matters is the way we are speaking. Finally we've got

this way, whereby we can record our own voice, record our own voice we can talk to ourselves, which is, the only thing that I care about. Supposedly this Mp3 has one hour and forty minutes recording length time who cares in the end? If that is the time. I'm so sure I will not need more than half an hour, maybe less. In the end what we' do is nothing but to understand ourselves to see inside of ourselves to know what should be said in a foreign language and with that to express our own thoughts to understand someone else's thoughts either in a written form or in an oral way. That's everything I needed to say and that's the end of everything.

That was a spontaneous speech capture transcribed line after line, what we do next is to translate it. Notwithstanding it should be noted that in these captures, someone else's idiolect might also be part of their rewritings, for instance in case they decide to record a telephone conversation, the person whom they speak to will have sentences and words too, and those data —since they can understand it— is also part of their idiolect (passive vocabulary), and therefore it is worth translating.

Learners arrange their reconstructions in an interlinear way. Thus they produce their own texts procuring themselves an intake reminding their own semantic equivalences of their contexts of utterance. This will be the aspect of interlinear texts, the black text is the reconstructed idiolect in German (target language), the red text beneath it is English (source language):

Angeblich das nimmt jetzt gleich auf, ich bin nicht sicher, ob das wirkt

Purportedly this is-saving right now, I am not sure whether this is-working

oder nicht, das macht nichts, was wichtig ist wie wir sprechen.

or not, it-does-not-matter what matters is how we speak.

Abschließend haben wir diese Art, damit können wir unsere eigene Stimme

Finally we've-got this way whereby we can our own voice,

zu aufnehmen, wir können selbst uns zu reden, was ist das einzige, was mich

record we can to-ourselves talk, which is, the only-thing that I

interessiert. Angeblich hat dieses Mp3 eine Uhr und vierzig Minuten aus

care-about. Supposedly this mp3 has one hour and forty minutes of

Aufnahmzeit am Ende, wen interessiert's?

recording-length-time in-the end, who cares?

These texts, again, are filed as interlinear audio books for the foreign language text is recorded to be listened both as they read the texts, or as they do some daily activities. These translations should ideally be carried out in a small folder or notebook so that they can read and listen to their own reconstructed idiolect wherever they are. With it they can practise pronunciation, intonation, and are reminded all the time (absolute immersion) of the FL expressions from their mental lexicon. This is their personal curriculum.

There are yet other ways to recall these unities of thought rendered into FL than simply reading and listening to them. The first method is to import the translated expressions into a spaced repetition system, such as cardboard-made flash-cards⁷, or software programmes as Anki⁸ Mnemosyne⁹ or Fullrecall¹⁰. It could also be helpful to go to a web browser engine and search for the expressions to see if someone has used it in news or blogs, for example, Abschließend. In the web page [http://www.recyclingmagazin.de/rm/news_detail.asp?ID= 14057](http://www.recyclingmagazin.de/rm/news_detail.asp?ID=14057), there is this sentence: "Abschließend festgelegt habe es sich jedoch nicht..." which roughly means: "However, it was not determined in the end (or finally)..." learners proceed with more unities of thought and they will read them in different contexts leading them to create or reinforce stronger synaptic connections, which ultimately will embed words / expressions in the long-term memory by using the language (reading authentic materials) and not studying it¹¹.

- Learners record themselves speaking, or using their own writings to know their idiolect (mental lexicon), then they translate each phrase into the foreign language and arrange everything as an interlinear text for further reference and to carry it for reading or listening on a day-to-day basis. They also record the foreign language version of their idiolect to assess pronunciation improvement.

Schedule of idiolect reconstruction: A programme

Here I introduce the schedule of reinforcement wherewith learners will follow all the above protocols in a systematically, soft but consistent pace. The presented order can be altered according to their own schedule (meetings, job, university or school, social events, spare time). They can play with these blocks (one of the three phases)

7 This is a well-known method to memorize dates, facts, pictures or words. The student writes a foreign language word in a small cardboard rectangle on one side, and the L1 meaning on the opposite. Then he reviews the cards by the foreign side trying to guess the answer, if he is mistaken in one card, that card is reviewed sooner than those cards which he easily recognize. Stork, Stork. (2003) Vokabellernen: eine Untersuchung zur Effizienz von Vokabellernstrategien. [thesis] Tübingen: Narr, Universität Marburg.

8 <http://ankisrs.net/> If they have got a mobile phone, they can use Anki on the go, and for free.

9 <http://www.mnemosyne-proj.org/>

10 <http://fullrecall.com/>

11 In the first protocol, enquiring listening, they can listen to authentic materials keeping their attention focused on the moment when a unity of thought they had translated appears.

moving or expanding them as much as they want. If in doubt, they could ask the idiolect reconstruction consultant for ideas of how could this fit into their lives, not the other way around.

To meet the deadline of activating communicative skills in four to six months, learners will be required to complete this regime every day. There will be a break day however, whose purpose is to give them time to make up for the uncompleted protocols during the week. Here is a timetable showing the pace they will be studying at is 4 hours a day for five days a week, adding up to 24 hours a week.

If we multiply 24 by the four weeks of each month, we have: $24 \times 4 = 96$. That means 96 hours every month, if multiplied 96 hours by three months (the space of time required to reconstruct one's idiolect with this intensity) that equals $96 \times 3 = 288$ hours. According to a feasible calculation based on the average time that an adult learner would take to find, translate and use in interleaved practice the unities of thought of his / her idiolect, it is expected that through the full accomplishment of this agenda, in conjunction with parallel free exposure to the language, meaning a progressive expansion in the reform of daily situational context (frequency of contact with the foreign language, ideally through authentic materials, theatre, soup operas, newspapers, journals, lectures, chatting, joining in conversation clubs, spontaneously initiated or eavesdropped conversations, etc.), it will be attained a minimum ratio of 12 additional hours or so in three months. As a result we have 300 hours.

As it can be seen, this is a meticulously designed and rigorous programme of activities for idiolect reconstruction that easily adapt to the different learners agenda.

- Given the threshold of 25 minutes per protocol, and once protocols have been explained, learners follow the abovementioned schedule to reinforce the programme's efficacy. It is not essential to complete each protocol in the order here presented, if they feel comfortable working in the evenings, they relocate the first phase at the end of the day and the third one at the beginning. The sequence is not mandatory neither; if they decide to have enquiring listening as their second or fourth protocol and idiolect rewriting as their first, it is accepted. In case they could not faithfully do this on a daily basis, the impact of the implementation would not be affected, just delayed. In such case three months would not be the time to activate communicative competence, perhaps four or even six months. Learners try their best then, to complete the four hour span everyday during three months for the expected results.

Learners' role and development of activities

Learners are expected to complete every step from the idiolect reconstruction agenda. Each session they complete one of the protocols at a time with consultant and / or peer assistance as a model to be fully developed at home. Individual compromise is a must, and to ensure such activities outside the classroom (with the first and second

sphere) learners had to be rewarded with a grade. With the third (nuclear group) sphere, no further stimulus was needed beyond that of partaking in a research and grasping the benefits of semi-directed independent learning.

Learners were also given the opportunity to adapt, modify, delete or add activities to the agenda. They therefore became autonomous monitors of their learning processes, and while in sessions they shared new strategies, study habits or tips for absolute immersion (i.e. when they provide themselves with constant input in their environment throughout the day) with their mates and / or consultant.

There are six stages when they present oral reports of progress or stalemate, two at the beginning of the implementation, two in the middle and two at the end. Learners exchanged impressions and report perceived improvement while using the agenda. These scenarios were seized by the consultant-researcher too, as *refuelling stops* for feedback and correction of the agenda (suppress or addition of elements), and as points for research activities in the implementation as well.

Idiolect reconstruction consultant's role and development of activities

The traditional image of *teacher* or *professor*, that is to say, the chairman/woman stating the rules, curriculum, vocabulary, and expected discipline, or the school-master pointing a grammatical concept, giving time to practise it and asking students to submit an observable evidence of successful internalization through drills (matching columns, fill in the gaps, true or false) or activities (role play, posters exhibition, presentations) is outright replaced in this approach by that of the consultant.

A consultant is the person asked when someone is in need of expert advice, or professional information. The consultant does not impose topics or goals, but rather offers a constant mentorship to the counselled learner (mentee). If learners are exposed to authentic language, and are in a non-stop process of using it (through randomised structures), in all likelihood they will be confronted with interrogations of orthography, pronunciation, vocabulary choice, phraseology or style. The consultant nevertheless, does not merely clear up conflicting grammatical points, instead he / she shows the sources where learners can restore to find the answer to their particular questions, so that in the foreseeable future they will not need any external assistance but only feedback provided by native speakers or patterns they could infer from daily practice.

In agreement with Joseph Jacotot's philosophical principles of self-instruction (see Rancière 1991), the teacher ought not to explain the content, but to offer all necessary tools (online and off line resources) towards the knowledge ensuring mastery of the content. So is the objective with this renewed notion of consultant or advisor in language learning. This role might even be played by a high advanced or native speaker of the language, similarly to some tenets of the Tandem Autonomous Language

Learning Approach (Ojanguren and Hölscher 2006), making little room to teacher dependency which restrains or inhibits autonomy outside the classroom.

To sum up, the researcher-consultant leads learners to use the language on a regular basis, while giving data on tools (lexicons, translation corpora, conjugators, declension paradigms, phrasebooks etc.), offering answers to language doubts and coaching the overall process of stand-alone language learning.

Materials and resources supporting activities development

As it was previously presented in 4.1 (*The Intervention as a Means*), authentic materials are to be the primary source for learning. The Individual Grammar Approach relies not on the analytical *study* of linguistic forms, quite the contrary, it harnesses the daily *use* of the language to achieve mastery and ownership regardless of the number of errors made.

A text-based starting

Learners will use notebooks, pen / pencil and a bilingual dictionary, apart from computer assisted resources such as online conjugators or translation corpora. Since it is explained in the *Agenda*), text-based activities are an inaugural skill in the protocols to ensure orthography and visual aid for learners to internalize vocabulary. The overall approach is intended to elicit the whole array of skills and competences involved in real-life interactions, however at the initial stages learners will work on self-made interlinear texts and authentic audio files (radio broadcasts, interviews, TV shows, pod casts, etc.)

Materials do vary depending on each learner's personal interest at the moment of the intervention. The intended purpose is to show learners that what they would actually do with language in their mother tongue, can (and must) be performed in the foreign language too; as a result, a learner that has just recently discovered a growing interest in History, or a particular singer/celebrity for instance, should work with those texts and audio material on the topic using the very materials native speakers would use for the same matter.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I explain the research questions, type of study, profile of setting and participants, data collection instruments and unit of analysis. It is also exposed the connection between research questions and objectives with the intended research paradigm; plus how data are analysed to offer a new perspective in foreign language learning research funnelled towards idiolect reconstruction.

Research questions and research objectives

General question

- What is the impact of translation and an idiolect-driven syllabus to elicit spoken word production in independent language learners?

Sub – questions

- How does learners' spoken lexical richness augment in spontaneous speech during the implementation of idiolect reconstruction protocols?
- How does idiolect translation improve free lexical-syntactic retrieving?

Objectives

General objective

In this test-hypothesis study, the researcher-consultant will pursue a multi goal strategy, namely: to investigate the effectiveness of implementing a translation and idiolect-driven

learning model, firstly by pilot-studying it in undergraduate first year university students of B.A. in English. The overall objective of this experiment is to set out a new metacognitive approach based on translation of learners' idiolect (built-in syllabus or inner curriculum see Corder 1967; Pienemann 1984, 1985) so that in 6 months to 2 years independent foreign language learners show a perceivable enhancement of active vocabulary and oral fluency in a foreign language.

Specific objectives

- To observe how might an inner curriculum made out of learners' idiolect, in conjunction with the adoption of translation techniques and cognitive learning strategies elicit and permit activation of spoken lexical memory in a foreign language.
- To assess the potential of using direct and indirect translation on learners' idiolect as a means to set up a new student centred curriculum design.
- To determine if those students who underwent a learning experience through our approach attained measurable benefits; and whether they acquired autonomous and sustainable learning habits.

Type of study

This study follows a mixed approach, based on Johnson and Christensen's (2007, p. 35) depiction of such paradigm, because in order to analyse both a cognitive and a psychological issue (word recalling and autonomous learning strategies, sustainable knowledge, autonomy) an approach delving into quantitative, dependent and categorical variables as well as emotional and affective dimensions best suits these purposes. A quantitative approach uses description and cause and effect, as well as it presents numerical data considering objectively hard-to-measure variables, e.g. subjective learners' perceptions of improvement or inaction after idiolect reconstructions and minute to word ratio to gauge fluency can only be presented through a quantitative approach. Although Dörnyei (2007) supports a mixed approach, because its potential to give a broader scope to analyse from different angles the impact of pedagogical implementations (socio affective, linguistic, cognitive, performance, memory, etc.). And a finding that has survived tests from different angles is more valid than one only tested through one single approach (Erzberger and Kelle, 2003), in this study learners' logbooks, and field notes instruments not necessarily from a quantitative approach would also be used geared towards gaining a more accurate insight in learners' reactions and affective responses to the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda.

To conclude with, the Individual Grammar Approach crosswisely studies the impact of a quantitative-qualitative methodology to study language learning hypothetical models under controlled conditions. It is a goal to draw conclusions and suggest new and yet unexplored paths to language learning in an objective way. Objectivity should take into

consideration both sides of learning: “[m]ethods have particular value when we want to examine an issue that is embedded in a complex educational or social context (...). Combining and increasing the number of research strategies used within a particular project would broaden the scope of the investigation and enrich the scholars’ ability to draw conclusions about the problem under study.” (Mertens, 2005 qtd. in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 164)

Profile of participants and settings

The general number of learners are to be divided into the following spheres:

First year students from a B.A. in English

Participants were recruited from a university located at the city centre of Bogotá. There are different branches for each department, being the implementation of this project carried out at the College of Sciences and Education. This second sphere population was a group of first year students from the undergraduate programme Licenciatura en Educación Básica con Énfasis en Inglés (Bachelor in Arts Elementary Education: Major in English). Students normally receive 10 hours a week in English (integration activities following a workbook, games and final projects) throughout 5 years. From this first semester 25 students were taken as voluntary sample to the pilot study. As a researcher-consultant I conducted 2-3 hours sessions with them from August through November 2010 on a weekly basis to follow their application of the battery of protocols.

Independent language learners: mixed backgrounds (voluntary sample)

Granted that the Individual Grammar Approach is primarily intended for rapid foreign language skills activation in independent settings, the researcher-consultant wanted not only to have schooling, or highly educated learning profiles, to be more reliable, it was also relevant to bring into the study the impact of translation, idiolect reconstruction and learning strategies on those that are outside the habit of academic assignments or homework. Thus our third sphere encompasses:

- 2 learners of English
- 2 learners of Spanish (as a foreign language)
- 2 learners of Latin
- 1 learner of German
- 1 learner of Dutch
- 1 learner of French
- 1 learner of Afrikaans

Total = 10 individuals

These learners are not acquiring any of those languages as part of their study programme; in the case of the English and Spanish as a foreign language learners, they are not receiving any formal instruction and only in the case of the Afrikaans and Latin learners, for the rest of this group study, learning a language was a first-time experience.

The researcher-consultant monitored each learner every Friday or Saturday either from telephone, e-mail or personal meetings, from February 2009 through June 2011. This was the longest process and the one more closely the researcher-consultant was allowed to be.

Linguistic background and description of the learning environment

Being the two spheres brought together, we have then a mixed population ranging from 17 to 27 years old (22 medium). There is a set of variables affecting their performance and initial expectations at our battery of protocols and consequently the possible impact of the intervention:

1. Students assigned the entire responsibility for their present low knowledge of English to their previous teachers, the absence of native speakers in their surroundings and the impossibility to pay private classes or an immersion course (low expectancy for external locus of control cf. Phares, 1973).
2. Students received heavily grammar-based classes with little, if any, attention given to production skills (i.e. writing and speaking).
3. By following a textbook and accustomed to await teachers' instructions to commence or carry out a task related to foreign language, it is understandable why most students would approach language learning as a chore or another academic subject instead as the free development of a natural skill outside the classroom. While briefing students in the learning strategies they were to utilize, expectations were lent towards whether they would get a grade for accomplishing the task at hand, and not whether they would be gaining fluency by doing it. Such attitude proves seriously detrimental for the process —deeming language learning as another blockage to dodge in order to make it to the graduation.

In the second sphere the researcher-consultant was confronted with a similar issue. Most freshmen students enter university straight out of school where subjects are treated as obstacles between parental satisfaction, social expectations and students' dreams to get a job. First university semester students took notes in a book and followed schedules believing the sessions were an addendum to their English classes, meaning more activities, homework and grades. Once again the researcher-consultant was compelled to clarify that the nature of his presence there was for scientific purposes, and that by no means they would be required to present assignments or mid-term papers but to apply the techniques and protocols showed to them in the meetings.

As the semester passed by, some members of this sphere lacked off during their process alleging they were overburdened with backlog and assignments due on tight schedules. These duties received a degree of aversive stimuli (see Sundel and Sundel, 2005, p. 120) something our extracurricular protocols could not compete with. Lack of time and the unrelatedness to learners' needs for getting a grade were the main impediments for the full development of the Individual Grammar Programme with this second sphere.

In the second sphere, however, the researcher-consultant found an appealing feature which might unveil the very inception of much of the low performance and abandonment in the processes of language learning, and in the execution of the protocols of idiolect reconstruction in particular. Almost every learner claimed not having the time to complete the full intensity of the protocols per diem. In sharp contrast, each one of the participants showed willingness and enthusiasm for joining the research at the beginning and felt committed to allocate at least two hours a day for completing the protocols, nonetheless, they could hardly do so due to a lack of force of necessity (see below *theory of language*). This overview of the population under study (three spheres of learners), provides us with enough data for aver this investigation covers a wide array of cognitive styles and heterogeneous everyday situational contexts (see below *theory of language*).

Thus I offer the percentages of answers given to the questionnaire of linguistic profiles.

A preliminary population analysis

It is important then to highlight the ensuing facts to outline our experiment subjects:

1. Only a 20% of the second sphere, and a 10% of the first sphere, had little experience learning a foreign language, this could affect the time span needed to elicit metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness.
2. Likewise, a 70% from the first and second spheres had not taken specialized courses or tuition in foreign language learning. This would entail for them an important change in everyday processes linguistic-wise —let us remember the process of foreign language learning is defined here as the deliberate changes an individual makes in his / her everyday situational context to increase contingencies of reinforcement (see *A general law on language learning*).
3. In the third and first sphere a 60-70 % of learners had either acquired a foreign language yet, or have not withdrawn from learning one. This is but a good sign to start a process without low expectations or fear to failure due to past experiences. See in appendix B format.

Data collection instruments and procedures

As part of gathering evidence to reliably observe an activation of learners' mental lexicon in FL during and after the implementation, I have decided to resort to data triangulation in order to examine the question from several angles illuminating aspects of the complex enquiry (see for an at length analysis Barron, 2002, p. 80). Namely, the next six instruments of data collection were thus:

Field Notes: As recommended by (Morrison 1993 qtd. in Cohen et al. 2000), in naturalistic observation field notes provide the researcher with a more holistic view to find not only the salient, quantitative features but also other unobserved interrelations and factors underlying psychological issues affecting learning.

Questionnaire: A previously administered questionnaire is a reliable source in gathering data before and after the process of carrying out an analysis (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010). It gives a clear picture of the expectations and background of a given population.

Learners' journal entries: "...students' journals provide information similar to homework to the teacher, in that teachers can gain a sense of students' daily thoughts, perceptions, and experiences in the classroom" (Mertler and Charles, 2011). This was also a means which allowed the research to gain a closer look into components that have also a bearing on following the protocols.

These next three instruments have been designed by *Semillero Investigativo para Altos Estudios en Traductología y Reconstrucción Idiolectal Aplicadas al Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras: Gramática-Traducción* (Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas) to meet the research criteria:

Diagram of quantitative linear fluency: (See **Appendix A**) The diagram charts learners' words to minute ratio. It will offer a clear measurement to assess active vocabulary in oral performance during and after the implementation.

Tape recorded conversation drills during idiolect transformation protocols (decreasing census of the average of L1 words/phrases used): Decreasing censuses will illustrate vocabulary usage (or lack thereof) throughout idiolect transformation protocols. If learners keep restoring to L1 after various attempts (calibrations) using the conversation drills would prove in.

Learners' interlinear translations (from their idiolect and from texts in foreign language) This is the third and last instrument to calculate L1 interference or absence of discourse strategies in foreign language. Learners transcribe their own idiolect, and then translate it interlinearly, these translations are analysed afterwards to check how progressively they gain accuracy in translations and perceived enhancement of lexical richness (by measuring the degree of literalness in their translations). A free-error clause was the unit of analysis to confirm the extent to which learners gained knowledge in FL from the vocabulary of their idiolects.

The system for gathering and analysing data was done in three stages. To begin with, the intervention and use of protocols as a first phase lasted from February 2009 through June 2011. The first phase involved enrolling learners from the third sphere (independent language learners) through personal references or social proximity with the consultant-researcher. Another criterion for selection was lack of competence with the language they were aiming to learn. With the first sphere (voluntary sample from first semester students of a B.A. in English) learners were chosen and enrolled in the project by presenting to them the idea of improving communicative skills in an extra-curricular English conversation club as part of a research, from the total number of students only 27 decided to join the project.

In the second phase learners from both spheres were given a questionnaire of linguistic profiling to get to know better their interests, needs and expectations about learning a foreign language, as well as identifying their current level of acquaintance with the language. They were also requested to keep a logbook of language learning, as a means to register emotions, expectations, frustrations suggestions or reasons to keep (or dessert) with the project when they were not in a session or in the presence of the consultant-researcher. Lastly, as learners from the first and third sphere were carrying out the protocols in the classroom, the consultant-researcher took field notes to give an account of on-the-spot reactions, responses and performance and adoption of techniques by the learners in the process of protocols' completion.

From the second week of the intervention and until September 2011, every fortnight learners' *interlinear translations* were photocopied and stored for drawing a curve of progression by measuring the decreasing number of mistakes in each translation. Additionally, the *diagram of quantitative linear fluency* was specially designed to quantify the word-minute ratio of conditioned verbal responses learners gave when working (with verbal distillations) in a semantic field framed by closed questions. Once these data were totally collected, the consultant-researcher contrasted and analysed to test the initial hypothesis of verbal enhancement through the Individual Grammar Approach. This final study searched for common patterns, recurring events and probable established categories for reaching grounded conclusions and implications.

Unit of analysis

The type of data that the researcher-consultant looked for was spontaneous learners' speech. The basic unit was recorded conversations and drills, in other words, the transcriptions of 2nd and 4th protocols completed by learners during the sessions. At the learning level these transcriptions represent a clear insight of lexical expansion and risk-taking in usage of more complex expressions. Bearing in mind the research questions, transcriptions are a key element to quantitatively measure lexical-semantic memory activation in spontaneous or semi-guided speech.

The second unit are the adoption of translation techniques (3rd and 4th protocols) by means of analysing written data from learners' translation of their own idiolect. This has considerable effects on the quality of learners' final product. From the obtained samples it is possible to infer the extent to which learners' dealt with false cognates, mistranslations and avoidance. Finally, by seeing closer learners' reactions, adaptation and adoption of the given protocols through journals and field notes, a third unit of analysis is reached to know better the actual impact of the intervention and pragmatic limitations of this study for further replication in different contexts.

DATA ANALYSIS

Once presented the theoretical framework following the constructs in the literature review, I carried out the implementation of the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda with three population spheres. Next I go into analysing the data gathered through field notes, a questionnaire of linguistic profile, learners' journals, the diagram of quantitative linear fluency, learners' interlinear translations and the analysis of lexical richness of type-token ratio. This study was oriented towards measuring both quantitative and qualitatively the impact of translation, self-regulated learning and the idiolect-driven syllabus (agenda) to elicit spoken word production in independent language learners.

In this research the target population comprised two different spheres of learners, participants were recruited from the next scenarios:

1. First year students from a B.A. in English.
2. Independent language learners with mixed learning backgrounds.

Only learners from the second sphere followed the agenda —with different degrees of continuity and commitment—, with the minimum amount of accumulated hours to ensure results. In order to assess in depth the impact of the Individual Grammar Approach, only the second sphere was selected as sample ($n = 10$) for this study. Nevertheless, first sphere learners (first year university students) represented a valid population for pilot testing the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda. The intervention with them was not longer than six months wherein some participants reported benefits from using the protocols. They kept journals from which one of the conclusions of this study, force of necessity, is drawn (see **conclusions** and **implications**). Finally, the approach for data analysis adopted in this study was mixed approach and data triangulation (cf. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 254).

Questionnaire of linguistic profile

As we saw in *A preliminary population analysis* (see page), by analysing the questionnaire previously administered to learners from the two spheres before the implementation, there are facts that shape the linguistic and cognitive profile of participants, allowing us to gain an insight in their skills and constraints; briefly reiterated:

3. Only a 20 % of the second sphere, and a 10 % of the first sphere, had little experience learning a foreign language, this could affect the time span needed to elicit metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness.
4. Likewise, a 70 % from the first and second spheres had not taken specialized courses or tuition in foreign language learning. This would entail for them an important change in everyday processes linguistic-wise —let us remember the process of foreign language learning is defined here as the deliberate changes an individual makes in his / her everyday situational context to increase contingencies of reinforcement (see *A general law of language learning*)
5. In the first sphere a 60-70 % of learners had either acquired a foreign language yet, or have not withdrawn from learning one. This is but a good sign to start a process without low expectations or fear to failure due to past experiences. See the formats in appendix B.

The method to analyse data was moulded according to the instruments of data collection. Since the intention was to provide a fuller and richer understanding of the phenomenon (research questions), obtaining and comparing sources (triangulation) suit better to this mixed approach of research. The first three instruments (questionnaire of linguistic profile, field notes and learners' journals) will be studied firstly naming key ideas and concepts, and then organizing them into categories to find relationships (patterns) aiming to present data as a reliable foundation to answer the research questions:

Field notes

Throughout the completion of protocols of idiolect reconstruction in the sessions, the researcher-consultant took notes describing learners' reactions to the drills, as well as their problems completing them. Weariness, frustration, insecurity, attention deficit and other issues were registered in the notes for later analysis.

Learners' journals entries

As for the protocols completed by learners on their own (without the consultant's presence) they were asked to keep a journal by their side every time they completed a protocol at office or home. It was used as a feedback for the consultant to fine-tune or adapt the protocols to learners' necessities and preferences. However journal entries also

offered a reliable source of data on learners' emotional dimension about learning. This will be used too as an element to obtain a deeper knowledge of the humane side of language learning aiming to answer the research questions (i.e. the impact of the approach.)

The next three quantitative instruments of data collection (i.e. diagram of quantitative linear fluency, learners' interlinear translations, analysis of lexical richness in decreasing census) were computed and compared weekly to see whether a lexical-semantic growth occurred to learners after the implementation.

Diagram of quantitative linear fluency

Learners' semi-spontaneous speech in foreign language was recorded during guided conversations about themes they have good knowledge about (e.g. What did you do yesterday? What's your favourite kind of music? What are your reasons for learning this foreign language?), this is tape recorded during 50 seconds and then transcribed. Two comparative axis show the number of seconds and the number of words the learner gets to produce, such ratio is charted at the beginning (two weeks) during and before the end of the implementation to see results.

Learners were recorded and results compared always inside the same semantic field. In other words, their fluency was measured while they answered the same question requiring them to use the same scope of vocabulary in order to follow lexical growth always within a unique pattern.

Learners' interlinear translations

At a first phase learners were asked to capture their spontaneous speech, either orally or in a written form by means of tape-recording themselves in casual face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, voice chat or monologues. Personal diaries, chatroom interactions, text-messaging, social networking messages (e.g. Facebook's wall commentaries, Twitter or commentaries written on You Tube videos, etc.) since they all belong to their lexical repertoire—in which their unities of thought are seen in action in natural contexts of utterance— this comprised the content upon which an inner curriculum was built.

Learners transcribed and printed their oral recorded interactions together with the written interactions (both double spaced). They were then required to translate beneath each word their idiolect into the foreign language. A quantitative analysis of errors (grammatical, stylistic, vocabulary or orthography) was carried out every fortnight. Learners from the first and second sphere (learners of English) and the learner of Latin in the third sphere, were monitored and advised in English and Latin grammar and orthography as part of the regular classes conducted by the consultant-researcher during the implementation. Besides all three population spheres were coached in translation techniques, tone, register, domain, deverbalisation and finding semantic equivalences to translate their idiolect into a foreign language.

- The total number of errors (at a morphosyntactic level) will be counted and shown with a graphical representation (histogram) of the continuous progression of reduction of errors in writing through the implementation.

Analysis of lexical richness – Type-Token Ratio model

This method for data analysis was employed with full-length recorded conversations in the foreign language. This has an already well stated and confirmed validity in applied linguistics (Read 2000), as well as in word frequency distribution studies (Baayen 2001). This is also validated by different studies on bilinguals' lexical improvement and vocabulary learning. "The best known quantitative measure for samples of written texts or speech is the type-token ratio (TTR)." (Daller, Van Hout and Treffers-Daller, 2003, p. 199).

Nevertheless it has been highlighted the constraints of the type-token ratio methodology amongst which the most notable one is the dependency of its reliability on text length (Daller, Van Hout and Treffers-Daller, 2003, p. 199). As texts under analysis increase, type words tend to decrease, leading to lose accuracy when computing lexical richness (Schmitt, 2010, p. 213). This study used Mean Segmental Type-Token Ratio (MSTTR), in order to avoid the length of text effect on type-token frequency (Richards and Malvern 2002). This is controlled by framing all elicited verbal responses within a semantic field (i.e. a question), knowing that if a learner is asked: what do you see in the picture? (while showing him/her a sunny landscape), s/he would hardly use vocabulary from a different semantic scope to answer, e.g.: political unrest, bailout, literacy, deception, snow, etc., since they are not pertinent to the question; instead the learner will convey a message inside the desired semantic field: trees, mountains, river, sun, birds, sky, light, warm, etc. The analysis will only consider time spans from 50 seconds up to 1:10 minutes per answer. This will limit the number of words used during the protocols.

Next on, specific samples from each instrument, the categories, patterns and results of the study are presented to offer a detailed view of the conclusions of the implementation and the hypothesis.

In the first part of data analysis, the research question is answered from its sub questions, alongside with diagrams illustrating the recurrent patterns and categories of learners' response to the approach. Explanatory notes are given at the end of each figure. This holds likewise for samples of each instrument of data collection answering the research questions and supporting the hypothesis.

General Question

What is the impact of translation and an idiolect-driven syllabus to elicit spoken word production in independent language learners?

| **Recurrent patterns**

|
|

Sub question

How does learners' spoken lexical richness augment in spontaneous speech during the implementation of idiolect reconstruction protocols?

Recurrent patterns

|
|

Sub question 2

How does translation and learning strategies improve free lexical-syntactic retrieving?

I can express full ideas: After the fifth week during the protocols' completion with the consultant (field notes), however short their vocabulary, learners could join lexical items to convey full ideas. In journals they also manifested positive feelings for being able to produce meaning in exact terms.

I can remember words: Learners reported word retrieval while speaking in their native tongue, as a consequence of translating and seeing the correspondences of their high-frequency expressions. Likewise this led them to translate more swiftly their idiolect.

I use words / sentences without memorizing them: Learners highlighted the small amount of repetition (with the reduction of attrition) and rote memorization by working within the semantic field of their idiolects.

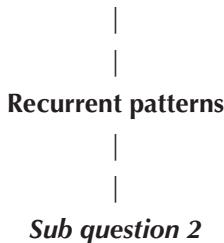
Category 1:

I use what I need to use: The protocols of idiolect reconstruction allowed learners to speed up the activation of oral communicative skills by narrowing down the lexical-semantic field only to their mental lexicon (i.e. idiolect).

Sub category:

Finding equivalent FL expressions on-the-spot to get across a message: Learners reported that fluency (word production) augmented in spontaneous speech, both during the verbal distillations, and when trying to speak the language by themselves as a result of knowing vocabulary and expressions closer to their immediate needs and usage.

What is the impact of translation and an idiolect-driven syllabus to elicit spoken word production in independent language learners?



How does translation and learning strategies improve free lexical-syntactic retrieving?

Seeking out equivalences not only in dictionaries but also in translation corpora or memories of translation: Learners adopted the online and off-line data bases and translation resources the consultant-researcher had presented to them. They gained mastery of proper usage rather quickly when translating their idiolects.

Using spaced repetition techniques and contextual (verbal or visual) associations, as well as continuous reading and listening to their idiolects: Learners incorporated spaced repetition software in their mobile phones and / or personal computers, together with mnemonic techniques (verbal-visual associations) while reading their idiolect translations.

Lexical-syntactic retrieving is ensured through monologue production on a daily basis: Learners reported they managed to start out monologues while commuting, jogging or doing daily activities as a way to reinforce (and enjoy) learnt vocabulary. This became easier as weeks went by due to the high level of repeated words in everyday communication.

Category 2:

Improving by learning how to learn: Before completing the protocols of idiolect reconstruction, learners were coached on translation techniques and learning strate-

gies. Test subjects reported in their journals this previous training had a marked positive effect in their success when completing the protocols and overall performance.

Category 3:

Learning by constantly using the language: Although error avoidance was present from the very beginning, learners soon understood they had to regularly (daily, if possible) **use** the language (not merely study it), even if that meant error emergence. They realized errors are in fact an opportunity to learn.

Sub category:

Lack of time and absence of time management skills as critical drawbacks: Learners claimed lack of time as the chief hindrance for not completing the full battery of protocols. When they were reminded about techniques to manage time, they averred not being capable of controlling their schedules due to external commitments. This is a major concern for independent language learners willing to engage in autonomous, systematic language learning regimes.

Quantitative linear fluency (see appendix a for the model)

We recorded learners semi-spontaneous speech, choosing semantic fields close to their everyday life, work, and social relationships (i.e. questions about personal information), as part of the verbal distillation exercise (protocol N° 2), these questions were recorded after the first two weeks, after the seven weeks later and at the end of the implementation.

The words learners used to convey the answer in each recording of 50.0 seconds were transcribed, and later computed as an indicator of performance and lexical retrieving. The longer the pauses, false starts and silence the harder the accessibility to mental lexicon. The next table shows the progress acquired before, during and after the usage of the idiolect reconstruction agenda.

	Beginning (2 weeks)	Middle (12 weeks)	Ending (24 weeks)
English	19	61	94
English	12	48	80
Spanish	25	66	97
Spanish	30	67	101
Latin	15	51	89
Latin	13	54	90
German	22	70	115
Dutch	11	42	67
French	25	80	96
Afrikaans	16	34	62
What did you Do yesterday?	Tell me something Interesting about yourself	What's your favourite kind of music	What's your favourite kind of music

Words used at every stage of the intervention (50.0 ss. each recording)

The semantic fields (topic questions) were the same for all participants, albeit different questions were asked at each stage. The numbers in columns represent the number of words uttered (following a logical, coherent structure) in each answer required. Pseudo words and half uttered words were not counted. However clear, there are some variables that should be also considered: Not all languages use the same amount of words to express the same meaning, e.g.:

Latin: Heri mea matre sororeque computatrum loquebar = 6 words

Spanish: Ayer hablé con mi mamá y mi hermana del computador = 10 words

English: Yesterday I talked to my mom and sister about the computer = 11 words

German: Gestern habe ich mit meiner Mutter und Schwester über dem Rechner gesprochen = 12 words

Every language has different number of words to convey the same message, in this example Latin takes exactly half the words of German to express an identical meaning. And that also applies to semantic fields (not every question demands the same amount of words). This ought not cloud the understanding of progress, that is, all languages in the above table should not be cross compared one another, but everyone with itself, knowing that if in the first stage the learner used 15 words, and in the last 89, that is a progress in terms of acquired quantitative fluency within his / her target language.

Interlinear translations

As mentioned before, based on translations of learners' transcribed interactions, a calculation of their orthographic, morphosyntactic error-free clauses and error-free verb forms was made to see progression or stalemate throughout the intervention. Texts under analysis were no longer than 2.000 characters each. Translated texts were analysed every fortnight. In the case of languages like German, French, Afrikaans, and Dutch, native speakers were asked to check the errors, as for Latin, advanced learners. These proofreaders were contacted through the web pages: www.correctmytext.com/ and www.conversationexchange.com/

It could be seen how all languages presented a constant decreasing pattern of errors. This is due to the number of repeated words in texts. Learners' task was enormously facilitated due to the rather reduced scope of vocabulary to translate (their own conversational idiolect, the inner syllabus). Lexical coverage of spoken discourse takes only around 2.000 to 5.000 word families (see for details and discussion Adolphs and Schmitt 2003; Hirsh and Nation 1992) and this was easily done during the 24 weeks, owing to in a 1.5 spaced text, with font size .12 Arial, around 355 + words fit. If learners translated approximately one page a day, after 14 days (two weeks = 14 pages) they had covered ca. 4970 words. This far exceeds the vocabulary needed to start a conversation equal to a B1 level (Common European Framework). Learners soon found, repeated, translated and internalized high-frequency phrases such as: I think, I am, this is not, Let's do this, in my opinion, in other words, excuse me?, etc., because they all are inside contexts of utterance belonging to their general daily situational context. Learners reported the second or third time they encountered these expressions in their idiolect, it did not take the effort of looking them up in translation corpora or dictionaries —they simply knew them already—; thus working within the scope of conversations, after the seventh week learners' errors started to dramatically decrease also meaning more acquired passive vocabulary.

As with the diagram of quantitative linear fluency, Spanish as a foreign language learners had the fastest degree of augmenting error-free clauses and error-free verb forms, due to constant exposure (aural immersion 24/7) and everyday need of using oral and written Spanish. On the other hand, Latin learners had little progress with respect to errors reduction, however the progress in the language was perceived due to the proximity of their L1 (Spanish) to Latin.¹² The Afrikaans learner had also good percentage of decrease in errors, but this was also affected by his previous knowledge of Dutch (that has mutual intelligibility with Afrikaans).

Statistically, all learners presented a perceivable enhancement of mediation competence in translation, orthography and morphosyntactic accuracy. As a general measure they had a mean of 10.0 errors less every control revision. And a total of 60 - 70 errors (every 2000 words) less after the intervention. This results suggest that:

12 More than 90% of Spanish words derive directly from Latin roots. (Cf. Resnick 1991)

1. Working within the limited scope of conversations (oral idiolect) allow learners to a rapid progression in terms of writing skills, building vocabulary and phraseology.
2. It takes around two weeks of translation on a daily basis —regardless of the linguistic family of the language, Germanic or Romance— to see an improvement of vocabulary and syntax knowledge by means of translating one's idiolect.
3. Learners presented a rather reduced degree of errors since the earlier weeks, in spite of not being advanced learners. This was possible with the usage of offline and online aids (translation software, translation corpora and memories of translation, as well as techniques like synonymy and paraphrase), which indicates that a previous work on metalinguistic knowledge and translation planning leads to better results from the onstage in language learning.
4. Therefore a syllabus based on learners' idiolect seems to be a feasible course of action to elicit written production, metalinguistic awareness, and vocabulary enhancement. On top of that, vocabulary closer to learners' immediate daily situational context is more significant and consequently easier to recall. As they are exposed every day to use and hear expressions, idioms and words, those semantic equivalences are less difficult to be retrieved and used when translating.

Analysis of lexical richness

For the purpose of this study, answering the research question with a positive or negative statement is simply not enough to give a proper account of activation of spoken word production. Nor is it merely counting the number of words in the speech line within 50 seconds. Notwithstanding spoken fluency is not a clear-cut notion to be assessed in SLA studies (Riggenbach 2000). With captures of spontaneous speech, and the number of words learners could use, there is a solid quantitative evidence of progress, however good, we have yet to see how the actual substance of such speech is aiming towards progress.

Test subjects from the third sphere were recorded when speaking during the control sessions with the consultant-researcher. In semi-spontaneous speech they were elicited to activate monologic production. I followed the fluency measure model of lexical richness proposed by Yuan and Ellis (2003) and Richards and Malvern (2002).

A qualitative measure of fluency

Fluency was measured with the lexical richness type-token ratio model (for an in-depth discussion and analysis of this model see Daller, van Hout and Treffers-Daller, 2003). In this model the total number of words of a text are recorded and transcribed conversation tagged as tokens, i.e. total running words, and types: the total number of words not repeated. Types are then divided by tokens and the result multiplied by 100.

Semantics fields were controlled by recording and analysing only one question with one answer that exhausted the topic. Questions differed over the control sessions but always were within the range of knowledge of participants. The name of each language represents each learner. The numbers with decimals are percentages of lexical richness in an oral answer.

	After 4 weeks	After 10 weeks	After 15 weeks	After 19 weeks	After 24 weeks
English	49,4	50,1	51,9	78,8	79,0
English	44,7	55,3	56,6	61,0	65,8
Spanish	82,5	80,2	83,0	84,1	90,3
Spanish	81,1	82,4	87,1	89,9	92,7
Latin	15,2	14,0	20,5	23,3	30,3
Latin	13,5	15,2	17,3	23,1	26,7
German	36,7	45,5	53,0	57,7	65,5
Dutch	33,4	36,3	42,0	44,3	55,5
French	45,7	54,3	56,8	66,2	71,1
Afrikaans	19,2	26,9	27,8	38,9	53,3

Type-token ratio to assess lexical richness in monologic production

The above table shows a considerable lexical growth throughout the weeks learners' followed the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda. These indexes of progression should not be cross compared between languages, but seen in isolation, for even the slower lexical richness increase always go up. Independent variables in the case of Spanish learners (living in Bogotá, a Spanish speaking city) and the easier access to 24 internet access, plus a surrounding environment requiring them to constantly express themselves orally, explain the quicker enhancement in terms of lexical development. But even contrasted with Afrikaans and Latin learners (languages with a higher level of grammatical difference with Spanish and with scarce resources to ensure constant exposure), learners also presented an important percentage of growth:

Latin learner 1 = 15,2 % \Rightarrow 30,3 %

Latin learner 2 = 13,5 % \Rightarrow 26,7 %

Afrikaans learner = 19,2 % \Rightarrow 53,3 %

The demonstrated improvement, and spoken word production activation by translating their idiolect and following the protocols (enquiring listening, verbal distillation) leads to conclude that granted the resources and the **force of necessity** (see Conclusions) to translate and use equivalences from the mental lexicon as a reduced scope (syllabus) for starting to use a language, oral skills can be rapidly

activated as a consequence of using the correspondences in FL of the unities of thought comprising the communicative repertoire in L1.

Sub-question 1

How does learners' spoken lexical richness augment in spontaneous speech during the implementation of idiolect reconstruction protocols?

The Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda required learners to improvise monologues on closed questions, as well as answer to questions posed by the consultant-researcher during the control sessions. Journal entries from the weeks 2-12 from 9 out of 10 learners show a positive reaction to the results obtained from the protocols. As it was asserted above, key concepts (categories) in learners journals towards the increase of spoken production in spontaneous speech are summarized thus:

1. I can express full ideas
2. I use what I need to use
3. I can remember words
4. I use words / sentences without memorizing them

Undoubtedly, learners received positively the empowering effects of choosing what to learn, when to learn and how to learn by themselves. Learners were not demanded to practice a specific set of vocabulary out of the scope of their verbal repertoires, nor were they pressured with exams, or deadlines for final project submissions. This decision-making potential was—in their accounts and informal conversation with the consultant-researcher—a pivotal element for stress-free development, and as a consequence, completion of the protocols. These statements of the positive effects of stimulated initiative in language learning are supported by the study of Knowles (1975, p. 14)

[T]here is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners)... They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation.

As well as by Noels et al. (2003) with Self-Determination Theory (SDT). In their own words, intrinsic motivation is the key element in pursuing self-realization and stand-alone commitments. When there is no external reinforcement (external stimulus) like notes, grades or a reward-and-punishment system, autonomous, goal-oriented learning emerges. To support these assertions Pink (2011), relying on state-of-the-art research about motivation and humane drive to accomplish results in peak performance, summarize that by boosting the levels of intrinsic motivation (satisfaction with oneself for the duty, instead of due to the hope to receive a reward or avoid punishment) both in learning and working environments results are improved under any condition. This freedom of choice led learners to find enjoyable the task of proto-

cols completion, meaning they willingly devoted time to its realization as a personal commitment and accordingly results were more tangible.

The side-learning on translation techniques and learning how to learn were also a source of richer communicative repertoire. Learners had, besides bilingual dictionaries, access to translation corpora and memories of translation. When finding and later using equivalences from the huge corpus available, lexical richness enhancement, use of synonyms, hypernym and hyponym is observed in their spontaneous speech beyond the 29 % in all cases.

When translating idiolects into the foreign language, as well as with 50.0 seconds questions in FL, learners decreased the use of L1 and the errors augmenting the general census of FL production. This was due to the closed scope to translate (idiolect) enabling learners to find quite often the same conversational expressions, which results in turning them into speech formulae, components of speech that take less time to be produced granted that only when speakers try a new combination, real-time oral proficiency is delayed by the grammatical analysis that demands more time than the routine, highly used phrases. Formulaic sequences are processed quicker and more efficiently because such memorized particles are easier to recognize as a single unit than creatively generated phrases, in spite of cluster various words in one phraseological meaning (Pawley and Syder, 1983). This is also supported by Conklin and Schmitt's (2008, p. 72) study that supports "formulaic sequences have a processing advantage over creatively generated language. The fact that the results also held for non-natives indicates that it is possible for learners to enjoy the same type of processing advantage as natives." (for a longer description of how native-like fluency is aided by lexical constituents see Nattinger and DeCarrico, 2005)

Sub-question 2

How does idiolect translation improve free lexical-syntactic retrieving?

One of the categories that cropped up in various journal entries was the scarce need for rote learning (vocabulary or verbal paradigms). This process called free lexical-syntactic retrieving deals with active memory, and lexical accessibility. As Schank (1982) notes it in his study, past events are reminded once the active memory is triggered through earlier events and experiences. In a nutshell Schank's model avers that previous situations (context-bound stimuli) determine reactions (conditioned responses) to similar situations. The expectations people have when going to a hotel, a restaurant, a hospital or the cinema are moulded after the history of reinforcement (radical behaviourism) in the private experience. These moulds are not arbitrary, but established by social convention (the way one behaves in certain environments or conditions), and automatically triggered by the stimulus; thus verbal behaviour and lexical accessibility can be understood likewise.

This hypothesis is better summarized by Bartlett's (1932, p. 41) approach of schemas emphasizing the role of memory in building up a repository of past experiences to which

new behaviour is called-for. In that sense the notion of memory is the knowledge activation whenever one chooses his/her demeanour following previous experiences where that demeanour met social expectations (see also Mandler 1985). The same applies to verbal behaviour, lexical decision is affected by both the frequency of lexis (words that are more or less used in an idiolect) and the contextual cues wherein those lexis will be used (for a study on the effects of frequency in lexical decision see Embick et al. 2001).

Translating one's idiolect improves free lexical-syntactic retrieving because L1 speech is framed by previous experiences and socially-accepted verbal expectations. This verbal expectations were divided into unities of thought to translate, whose rendering in FL lead them to become meaningful vocabulary closer to learners environment —easier to articulate with previous knowledge (the already learnt idiolect—. These translated unities of thought (inner syllabus) were consolidated through daily spontaneous (or elicited) speech and as a result lexical-syntactic retrieving was achieved.

Verbal behaviour in the operant conditioning model is studied as a form of associative learning, this learning according to Geiger (2008) is contextually modulated so far as learnt behaviours such as reinstatement of extinguished fears. The aim of her study was the role of autonomic and declarative memory systems in fear reinstatement in humans, and neural correlates of fear reinstatement, however the results prove sound to support the posed contextually-modulated verbal behaviour learning hypotheses.

In Geiger's first experiment with human subjects, fear reinstatement had a strong dependency correlation degree with delivered contextual reminder cues. "These findings suggest that autonomic and declarative responses are modulated by contextual cues in humans, and are consistent with research on fear reinstatement in laboratory animals." (Geiger, 2008, p. 1) Correspondingly, experiment 2 indicates that functional network activation in the front and medial temporal regions of the brain are contingent on emotive meaning of environmental (context-bound) cues. This validates the hypothesis of learned behaviour as a demeanour waiting to be activated by due environmental cues. Granted the results of lexical richness and words / seconds ratio above, it can be poised on firm ground that as learners rewrote their own idiolect (context-bound verbal behaviour), the daily situational context in which they reside aids to facilitate the FL equivalents of that reconstructed idiolect, meaning that their everyday contextual cues have a high probability to remind them of the foreign language vocabulary recently learnt.

However the good results, it remains yet to be seen whether the rapid pace of learning (activation of oral communicative skills in six months from zero level) would be maintained by learners without the external reinforcement of partaking of an experiment. Learners' journal entries as well as consultant-researcher's field notes show a slight difficulty in completing all the intended protocols at home. Learners also reported (**lack of time** category) having little if any time at their disposal to devote to the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda apart from the control sessions. This opens a new enquiry to be dealt with in the conclusions and implications of this research.

CONCLUSIONS

This investigation was led by the research question: *What is the impact of translation and an idiolect-driven syllabus to elicit spoken word production in independent language learners?*

The proposed idiolect-driven syllabus consisted of a set of activities (protocols: a regime of study) at home and during the sessions with the consultant-researcher, intended for learners to systematically capture their oral (transcribed) and written everyday interactions in L1 to be translated. These activities, idiolect capture and translation, are framed in the regime of study named *The Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda*, which is the central component (the techniques) of the stand-alone language learning model proposed as *The Individual Grammar Approach*.

Learners found the task of collecting and transcribing their own idiolects simple and straightforward; the prior time management training they had in the sessions with the idiolect reconstruction consultant came in handy. According to their journal entries timeboxing capture and translating tasks into 25-minutes activities reduced attrition and improved concentration. Translation (as mediation competence) raised linguistic and cultural awareness about meanings intended to be understood by a target population (foreign speakers). On the other hand, centring the vocabulary on learners' idiolect, means centring the focus of attention on expressions of highest frequency and meaningful vocabulary —considering the definition of new knowledge joint and processed with previous knowledge in meaningful verbal learning, see Ausubel (1963)—. Spoken word production improved in terms of word / minute ratio and lexical richness. Learners' translations also support this view, on account of the progressive reduction of morphosyntactic errors and vocabulary choice.

The word count average was increased (improving quantitative fluency) due to the spaced-repetition of speech formulæ (or lexical items) from learners' very idiolect in L1. They soon learnt them alongside with their context of utterance (in L1) strengthening the cognitive-semantic relation that allowed them to retrieve the expressions subsequently as a desirable verbal behaviour. Languages rely on ready-made constructions (phrases) (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 2005) suitable to contexts of utterance. Working with expressions bound to context of utterance from learners' daily situational context induced high probable word combinations (lexical items) to be relatively easy to incorporate into learners' mental lexicon for later use.

The initial hypothesis of idiolect as a finite mechanism whose reconstruction with translation was a feasible means to activate spoken word production in independent language learners is partially confirmed. Experimental group (third sphere population) completed a considerable portion of the Idiolect Reconstruction Agenda and yet, they had an appreciable rank of oral performance and accuracy in translations. Therefore a first generalization can be drawn that under semi-controlled conditions learners received proper metacognitive and linguistic tools to discover and use the building blocks of oral skills. Nonetheless granted the higher level of responsibility needed in the Individual Grammar Approach, it is yet to be answered whether learners' performance is not due to internal factors (locus of inner control, self-esteem, resources or force of necessity) and not entirely because the inherent distribution of time and activities of the Agenda.

Thus, to know precisely whether all sorts of learners would have the same (or better) levels of commitment to complete the protocols on their own, leading to activate oral communication skills would need further examination. Additionally, present results are only preliminary since more research is a must considering larger groups or populations, having all the different variables isolated, so that their connections and hierarchies of influence to oral activation in independent settings can be established.

This study was conducted with a well-defined learning environment (independent language learners) and in a specific span of time. Albeit it goes far beyond the scope of the research questions the psychological constraints that led to the first population sphere to be ruled out from this study for not completing the minimum hours of attendance to sessions. Arguably a longer term testing with the same population spheres would authenticate the above results, however learner's psychological profiles escape the conceptual breadth of this research, deviating it farther from its original interest. Taking these data into account, I therefore share the opinion of Segalowitz (2003, p. 402) that "future research will have to determine which dimensions of psychological similarity (e.g. whether the learners' intentions, feelings, etc., are important, or whether only linguistic contexts are important) are relevant..." this is all but an appealing field to Second Language Learning studies because a better insight of learners' limitations to access autonomy and self-determination can thus be gained.

One final consideration needs to be addressed concerning this psychological constraint of learners' intrinsic motivation in language learning. Reported lack of time and absence of time management skills as critical drawbacks were a constant feature of all journals as reasons adduced to be the chief cause not to complete the protocols. The *General law on language learning* (see page 49) intended to hypothetically reduce the necessary steps anyone should take when learning a foreign language in independent settings.

Individuals must deliberately shape a **force of necessity** driving them to alter their daily situational context by generating an artificial linguistic environment with optimal circumstances wherein contingencies of reinforcement are stimulated, leading to augment progressively the global frequency of both verbal salient conditioned emissions and incoming, fully understandable emissions for them.

Force of necessity, in opposition to mere necessity, has been defined as "...the absolute urge for the presence of a given entity, state, circumstance or the imminent execution of something in particular." This is different from the sole necessity forasmuch as all learners from the three spheres claimed to have the volition, interest, motivation and necessity to learn each language, but only third sphere learners could embark on the personal task of completing the protocols. It would be advisable to follow up with a subsequent study on eliciting force of necessities in language learners, attribution and self-determination theory and perceived competence. It is advisable for attribution theory defines the motivating (or discouraging) attribution given unconsciously by people to past events in their lives to the potential outcome of future undertakings (Richards and Schmidt 2010, p. 39). This attribution is what behaviourism refers to as reinforcement history, i.e. previous events shape oncoming behaviour. At the risk of speculating, learners with external locus of control (attributing failure or success to external factors such as the teacher, the method or the language cf. Phares 1973) enrolling in a stand-alone language learning programme would have a higher rate of withdraw (as the statistics reflect it with first and second sphere learners), conversely, learners with a positive reinforcement history of success (or other factors related to it such as self-image, self-esteem and perceived competence) could perfectly match with this agenda.

As we can see there are a myriad of psycho-social elements playing a critical role in language learning, such as attribution theory, perceived competence, intrinsic motivation and locus of control. It is neither the purpose nor the goal of this research to offer an account of all the independent variables affecting performance, but it is highly advisable for teachers, curriculum designers and programme administrators to pay heed to these components when outlining syllabi, textbooks or figures of drop-out rates in language programmes.

As for the rest of the general law, Skinner's model of contingencies of reinforcement suppose a new frame to set goals in language learning and at-home immersion:

Contingencies of reinforcement are:

1. The response itself (output).
2. The environment where the response is more likely to occur (context of utterance).
3. The reinforcement stimulus responsible for the learning and maintenance of the response (intake).
4. Intake \Rightarrow context of utterance \Rightarrow output.

As Guthrie states it, learning consists of the linkage between any stimulus present at any moment and the on-going behaviour at the moment. Whenever a conditioned response is given when stimuli are present, the future presence of such stimuli would provoke that response (Guthrie, 1933, p. 365). Traditional education uses extrinsic reinforcement to generate forces of necessity (i.e. to ensure the continuity of students). Education should head for the generation of intrinsic reinforcements (self-reinforcement or self-determination) through helping learners to find their own forces of necessity to use the foreign language. Such reinforcements should be direct (experienced by the individual) and not vicarious. They should also be natural, having a higher probability of being present in the environment when the right response is produced, instead of artificial (as in grades or notes like the token economy of schools).

On the other hand, a learner-centred, idiolect-driven programme where learners find and work with their mental lexicons is an open opportunity to bring forth a much-needed change in learning models. There is an evident lack of grounded, researched and tested techniques to offer to independent language learners, that courses and guru-led methodologies abound leaving little room to individuals (even at schools, universities or language institutes students) willing to pursue communicative proficiency on their own. The Individual Grammar Approach represents an innovative point of departure to achieve that goal, only further studies and replication of this study could offer enhanced comprehension on this difficult topic of autonomous language learning.

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In this section some recommendations are made for language programmes to improve and adopt the Individual Grammar Approach in order to boost FL learners' comprehensibility and fluency development. As it is obvious, independent language learners must make many environmental adjustments to be surrounded by contingencies of reinforcement and reasons to use the language. Such adjustments are to be made once the force of necessity to utilise the language is already present on them, having said this, I do not advocate a unique or stiff perspective on stand-alone learning not even from a sheer linguistic standpoint.

Pedagogical implications

This investigation supports future pedagogical and / or andragogical research and implementations. It is proposed that new school, university and institute language courses might largely benefit from adopting an authentic learner-centred approach, based on actual learners' doubts when translating or trying to find equivalences to perform communicative acts, rather than previous pre-packed, imported and imposed curricula.

Idiolect reconstruction is also a breakthrough way to raise metalinguistic awareness and to unveil to all learners their own unities of thought ruling spontaneous speech. This is yet an experimental attempt to prove real-time, everyday speech represents the *par excellence* sample to built upon a course eliciting spoken word production in short time without external aversive stimuli.

At the end of the implementation, learners had a written and virtual data base of all the transcriptions and translations of their idiolects. Phraseology from these specific population (with their correspondences) might be recycled and used with future

learners in need of a specific equivalent term in FL. Even with online translation memories (such as Google's translator toolkit) all learners in a course may upload their equivalences to be shared, and use those of their classmates.

Metacognition and self-regulation are likewise a cornerstone for the Individual Grammar Approach. Language policy makers and educators the world over should strengthen the fostering of autonomy as a necessary measure to ensure life-long sustainable knowledge in learning. There is strong evidence of how learners profit from it, "students reporting a greater use of metacognitive strategies also reported more motivational intensity, with some evidence of a self-determination continuum evident in the response patterns." (Vandergrift, 2005, p. 70)

Evidently, these implications must be firstly back-tested by further learner language analysis and especially the extent to which its flexibility allows to suit pedagogical, traditional classroom-based language teaching. In addition, the conclusive results here presented have to be developed with groups of learners treated as independent language learners, and even in those cases, if possible, an L1-based approach to translation techniques and the process of idiolect reconstruction is highly desirable.

Limitations of this study

Psychological constraints such as lack of force of necessity and procrastination did not allow the consultant-researcher to obtain more accurate data on the real impact of a two-years usage of the agenda. The languages chose to be learnt were somehow close to learners' L1; another study would have to confirm whether results vary in learning a language not from the Indo-European family, like Chinese, Hungarian, Finnish or Basque, and conversely if learners from different linguistic backgrounds experience difficulty apart from the evident morph-syntactic distance of languages. Plus it would be advisable a longitudinal study to test retention and lexical-syntactic retrieving in longer spans of time to confirm the capacity of reminding vocabulary when working with the mental lexicon.

The third population sphere was comprised by highly literate people, with university or similar qualifications and a previous interest in language learning. Another study would have to analyse the reception of the agenda from less privileged learners and in different socio-economical contexts. First and second spheres were not considered in the final part of the project for the reasons above stated, that limited the number of results to analyse and process, and it seems to indicate that within university or school environments the expectations of getting grades in reward of completing the tasks is a counterproductive factor hindering autonomy and self-regulation in learners.

Further research

The Individual Grammar Approach is the first of a series of experiments on idiolect reconstruction studies, a future line of enquiry that might derive from this research

focusing on reception skills (aural and visual input) to enrich a reconstructed idiolect; cross-cultural equivalences when translating idiolects; laboratory or on-field conditions to assess the time it takes to reconstruct one's idiolect as well as self-regulation in independent language learning, techniques and tools to learners when beginning to study a foreign language on their own.

The idiolect Reconstruction Agenda is not a yet-finished product ready to implement. Its design has demanded four years and a half, and still there are parts to trim and more experiments to test its potential under different conditions. Nevertheless the notion of force of necessity needs to be carefully considered for it belongs to the affective dimension, a variable that exerts great influence in final outcomes of language learning. A provisional draft towards understanding the reasons learners have for inaction, would start by offering sourced data supported on motivation literature, procrastination and attention deficit; next on, four situations are proposed as provisional behaviourist reasons to be completed and expanded in additional investigations:

Lack of force of necessity:

1. If I **don't do it**, nothing changes, therefore I don't do it.
2. If I **do it**, there is a change, therefore I do it.
3. If I **don't do it**, there's an immediate (short-term) negative consequence for me, therefore I do it.
4. If I **do it**, there is an immediate (or short-term) positive consequence for me, therefore I do it.

There seems to be more reasons for inaction than for action *in se*. Learning a foreign language in independent settings is a personal commitment whose completion or discontinuation (in most cases) does not affect the course of life. This could yield the realization that generating an inner force of necessity —without falling in external aversive stimuli, generalized in the ideological state apparatus of education (see Althusser, 1971, p. 127)— is a hard-to-reach goal, only possible as a life-long conditioning within the structure of established social practices. Education systems around the globe exert the power of forces of necessity by imposing token economies (grades, notes, promotions) in a reward-punishment tension in which little self-commitment can be elicited. The Individual Grammar Approach attempts to trigger a shift paradigm through the positive confirmation of our initial hypotheses:

1. Learning takes place not at schools or classrooms but wherever the mind of the learner is.
2. Learning a language is not so much the process of learning an external grammar but rather the process of learning oneself.

3. Foreign language learning must be a state of mind beyond the principle of authority.
4. The idiolect should be the centre of syllabus design granted that it is potentially the shortest way to activate communicative competence.
5. A speaker is said to be fully competent in a foreign language as soon as his / her idiolect is completely reconstructed in that language, and when the reconstructed idiolect has been internalized so as to recall and produce it either orally or in writing in a different context to that where it was initially reconstructed.
6. In foreign language learning inwards... is the only way onwards.

GLOSSARY

The definitions given hereunder are by no means comprehensive conceptualizations of the terms in their broadest sense by applied linguists. They are offered to non-experienced readers to clarify concepts and unify criteria pertaining to the usage in this research. For a thorough set of definitions see Richards and Schmidt's Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics (2010 Pearson Education Limited).

advisor *n*

another term for consultant

agenda *n*

another term for schedule. In this research, the suggested distribution of time and activities (see protocols) for learners to activate communicative competence within a well-defined time frame. The agenda includes also recovery sessions and breaks between protocols.

built-in syllabus *n*

see below inner curriculum

classroom-based *n*

in opposition to stand-alone learning, in classroom-based programmes teachers impose the pace, timetable, order of learning, materials, activities and criteria to evaluate. The individual grammar approach deviates from traditional classroom-based learning in taking knowledge beyond the physical and mental boundaries of school, universities or language institutes to give it to learners regardless their situation.

calibration *n*

when in a verbal distillation a question is repeated and the answer is given by the

learner. A question can go through as many calibrations as needed until it is satisfactorily answered in the foreign language without resorting to code switching.

code switching *n*

when a learner changes the language or interface s/he uses in verbal distillations so that his/her task gets easier by organizing in advance the speech. For instance, when distilling in German: “yo pienso... ich denke que ella es una buena persona... dass sie eine gute Person ist, y además... und außerdem... Another example with Latin: “Tomorrow early... *Cras mane...* I’m going to the University and... *Universitatem ibō atque...*” As calibrations go, learners’ verbal behaviour in L1 is replaced with the answer in the target foreign language.

cognitive learning strategies *n*

techniques used to improve learning dealing with memory, and strategic action. Learners are invited to *learn how to learn* by following techniques (tips) in remembering vocabulary or declensions / conjugations paradigms. Richards and Schmidt (2010: 361) summarise three important cognitive strategies, namely: planning, deciding and evaluating. These are part of metacognitive, social and resource management strategies.

communicative repertoire *n*

A sociolinguistic notion explored by Gumperz and Hymes (1988: 408) whose treatment in this research is equivalent to verbal repertoire or idiolect. However the communicative repertoire goes beyond words (collocations, syntax) and it could also include paralinguistic cues and cultural sensitivity.

conditioned verbal response *n*

when learners are asked something about a particular topic. This is in opposition to spontaneous speech, for a topic to develop is set in advance by means of a question. As learners answer the question they exhaust the vocabulary learnt for that semantic field as part of a verbal distillation.

consultant *n* (**idiolect reconstruction** ~ || ~ **researcher**)

the individual grammar approach does not impose the authoritative figure of a teacher or master, instead it offers to learners someone expert coaching them in learning strategies and idiolect reconstruction. This person is *consulted* only when doubts arise out of the very linguistic usage, and not seen in regular classes lecturing about grammar. In this study the person in charge of consulting was also the researcher, that is why he is sometimes referred to as consultant-researcher.

context of utterance *n*

it is the physical, logical, semantic and environmental situation where a word or lexical phrase more probably belongs to. If someone says good morning at 6 o’clock in the afternoon, the addressee would immediately detect that the utterance does not match the context. This context can also be grammatical, as when in a language as in

Spanish someone says: “*Este... esta persona*” At the beginning of the sentence s/he wanted to refer to an student (*el estudiante*) but changed his / her mind in the middle of it and used *persona*, being a feminine noun. However the first context of utterance required him/her to use the pronoun *este* in agreement with a masculine noun; contexts of utterance are those contextual cues that consciously or unconsciously affect vocabulary choice to adapt to the context itself. By learning through translation and idiolect reconstruction learners acquire not only the forms but also the contexts of utterance where those words are more probably heard / used.

see also contextual cues

contingency *n* || *pl-* **ies** (~ of reinforcement)

contingencies of reinforcement are those contingent elements that elicit desired verbal behaviour in speakers. They are summarized and applied to foreign language learning models thus: 1) The response itself (output). 2) The environment where the response is more likely to occur (context of utterance). 3) The reinforcement stimulus responsible for the acquisition and maintenance of the response (intake).

corpus *n* || *pl-* **ora** (translation ~)

a collection of already made translations or sentences, generally in a specific domain (business, medical, legal) used as a common source to improve or speed up the work of translators.

clues *n* (contextual ~)

As it is seen in the study by Geiger (2008), much of declarative memory relies on contextual cues, that is, the logical and / or physical elements present in the environment, or discourse, that evoke, or induce speakers to use a given vocabulary, register, domain or tone. This is explored through interlinear translations and idiolect reconstruction.

see above context of utterance

curriculum *n* || *pl-* **a**

Albeit the concept of curriculum is rather wide and complex, comprising several components —cultural, social, grammatical, phonological, objectives as well as assessment criteria and teaching procedures—, in this study, curriculum is reduced to its core element: vocabulary. In any language course the itinerary for learners include at its bottom the function or situation of words that learners are expected to master once the course is over. This set of vocabulary could be metonymically tagged as curriculum. In the Individual Grammar Approach the verbal repertoire, or mental lexicon of learners is that core of their own inner curriculum.

daily situational context *n*

this is the set of live experiences, social and physical scenarios, people, settings, and situations that learners face day-to-day. These situations are framed in an interface

that is usually the L1 in independent settings. The exposure to it shapes verbal behaviour and if learners alter their daily situational context augmenting the frequency of contact with the foreign language their probabilities of altering their verbal behaviour (from an L1 interface to a FL) increase as well.

desired verbal behaviour *adj.*

when learners produce speech in foreign language their verbal behaviour is altered aimed to gain mastery of the FL forms, therefore it is a desired response.

see also conditioned response.

deverbalization *n*

when learners grasp only the meaning without explicit reference to words, e.g. the sign of a hand meaning STOP in a street, or someone covering her mouth as if about to throw up; all those situations convey something but none of those examples have words. This is part of the translation process because learners should not translate words but meanings; this is possible once the intention of the speaker is grasped and reformulated with faithful transmission of the message, though not of the words, rhetoric strategies or the original syntax.

diachronic *adj.*

when a linguistic analysis is made over time. If a person's idiolect is analysed diachronically, her linguistic expansion will tend to become endless; if on the other hand, such analysis is made synchronically, vocabulary size could be measured with a finite threshold. In the individual grammar approach since idiolects are captured and translated at one point in time, the finiteness of vocabulary allow the learner to extract a concrete inner curriculum.

enquiring listening *n*

the first protocol of idiolect reconstruction, it is aimed at centring learners' attention when listening to authentic materials to which they do not know yet.

see protocols, agenda.

equivalence *n*

in translation theory there are many approaches to the notion of equivalence, Eugene Nida's dynamic vs. formal equivalence is one that better resembles the perspective taken in this research. There is a source text and a target text, if a learner wants to say *¿Qué horas son?* (what time is it?) he could attempt a formal equivalence or word-for-word translation resulting in *what hours are?* With the translation corpora and other sources provided by the consultant, learners could find the dynamic equivalences of: *Could you tell me the time? What time is it? What is the time?* In short, learners are encouraged not to find words in a dictionary but semantic equivalences of intended meanings in FL.

force of necessity *n*

the absolute urge for the presence of a given entity, state, circumstance or the imminent execution of something in particular. It is an irresistible impulse that might or might not be experienced by outer persuasion, and whose non-fulfilment, elision or opposition is not possible. This is a central concept of this research because without force of necessity autonomous learning in independent settings cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

Grundwortschatz *n (der)*

this is the German word for “basic vocabulary.” It is important as concept to establish a basic (in the sense of *base*, not necessarily of *simple*) number of words to activate communicative competence. It is given the German expression for its meaning *ground-word-treasure*, stating a ground of words (a minimum) upon which is possible to build fluency.

high-frequency *n (~ lexical phrases || ~ words)*

the number of repeated or more used lexical phrases / words in an idiolect. Learners found easier to speed up the pace of their translations because focusing on their idiolects the range of repeated words increases than in a normal, published text. Lexical phrases / words found twice or thrice in a text take less time to translate than new ones. This natural spaced repetition lexical exposure was easier for learners to internalize and recall vocabulary.

idiolect *n*

It is the minimum unit of analysis in sociolinguistics, the idiolect represents the individual variation of language in terms of vocabulary choice, phonology or even rhetorical strategies. The idiolect is a wider unit in contrast to mental lexicon, because it entails cultural, phonological, and paralinguistic elements beyond vocabulary.

|| ~ **-driven syllabus** the constitution of a curriculum based entirely on spontaneous conversations from learners’ idiolect. || ~ **reconstruction** the process wherewith learners capture, translate into FL and use their own idiolects to build a new FL idiolect

|| ~ **rewriting** the fourth protocol of idiolect reconstruction. Once learners have recorded their spontaneous speech and transcribed it interlinearly, they proceed to rewrite it in the foreign language in order to later exercise with it. || ~ **finiteness** in a synchronic study of a person’s vocabulary size, the number of words s/he produces would be finite. Idiolects are flexible and can add or suppress words throughout time, however this finiteness allows learners to, at least theoretically, see a clear horizon of hours needed to reconstruct the idiolect in order to gain mastery in FL. This notion makes more meaningful and goal oriented learning than traditional endless curricula with unclear quantitative end points of learning.

immersion *n (absolute ~ || at-home ~)*

the process through which a learner deliberately alters his/her daily situational

context in order to augment the frequency of contact with the language. When a learner surrounds him/herself with aural and visual input 24/7, and manages to devote a considerable amount of time to use the language, it is said s/he is increasing the contingencies of reinforcement that induce a desired change in his/her verbal behaviour, in order words, foreign language mastery.

independent learning *n*

it is an opposite concept to classroom-based learning, for in independent learning the individual is the one that becomes responsible for the decisions, selection of the content, time management, setting goals and assessment criteria. Independent learning might take place anywhere and the pace is also a personal decision of each learner depending on his / her cognitive style. || **settings** physical or social settings where learning takes place without the presence of a teacher or tutor. It could even include self-access centres at some universities and schools, but mostly it refers to the spaces designed by learners to make contact with or use the language, e.g. living room, libraries, public places, bus, metro, office, etc. It is important to highlight this concept because it is contrary to classroom based learning as a social and physical scenario, there are neither imposed schedules, nor classroom rules or hierarchies of control. All of this is what is named optimal environment in the general law of language learning

Individual Grammar Approach (The ~ Programme)

The Individual Grammar Approach, (sometimes the Individual Grammar Programme) is the theory of foreign language learning as well as the set of activities, and principles proposed in this study. This approach seeks to increase achievement in independent settings by reducing the scope of vocabulary to that of learners' idiolect, reconstructed as a new foreign-language idiolect with the aid of translation and cognitive learning strategies. see also agenda, inner curriculum, protocols

inner curriculum *n*

also named built-in syllabus by authors such as Corder (1967) and Pienemann (1984, 1985), it is the theoretical concept of trying to devise a curriculum following learners' natural order of acquisition. This order is not imposed by external sources (i.e. curriculum designers) but naturally endowed to them, as in their L1. The individual grammar approach attempts to follow this order through learners' linguistic necessities found in their spontaneous speech in L1.

interface *n*

it is the name given to describe the code or language a verbal community uses. The name makes a distinction from code or language in that it refers to the interface that software multimedia environments use. A central concept of the individual grammar approach is that learners should alter their daily situational context in order to increase the frequency of contact with the foreign language. This could also be explained in terms of changing the interface of their daily

situational context, as in a software programme, just as it is intended with the absolute immersion.

interlinear translations *n*

the third protocol of idiolect reconstruction, it requires learners to take authentic texts in FL of their interest, and try to translate them into L1 interlinearly, meaning a word beneath each word, or as close as possible. These texts will be stored and regularly re-read for spaced repetition of vocabulary from topics that are meaningful to them.

lexical accessibility *n*

the mental lexicon is divided into passive and active vocabulary, whose activation is called lexical accessibility (Aitchison 2003). Neurolinguistic studies have tried to measure and identify the rates and means to enhance morph-syntactic recall from the mental lexicon in a process called accessibility (see Meyer, Schvaneveldt and Ruddy 1972). In the individual grammar approach learners acquire a passive vocabulary by means of translations from FL into L1 or from their idiolects in L1 to the FL. This translated vocabularies are to be activated through spaced repetition and the protocols of idiolect reconstruction. || ~ **phrases (chunks items)** and

linguistic background *n*

learners' mother tongue, upbringing and daily situational context are all elements playing a decisive role in errors prediction and time required for language learning success. A person trying to learn a foreign language from a different linguistic family, as a French speaker learning Vietnamese, with no previous exposure to the language, from a monolingual family, with little re- sources for Vietnamese and being this her first foreign language to learn is said to have a low linguistic background, meaning she would find more difficulties in learning Vietnamese than an Italian / Portuguese speaker in a multilingual environment with resources and aiming to learn Spanish. || ~ **necessities** it is usually confounded with needs analysis in SLA theory, however in this research learners' linguistic necessities are those demanded by his idiolect, that is, what his daily situational context has made of him, in terms of linguistic constants and high-frequency words in L1, will be deemed as the linguistic necessities to be catered for in this programme.

mental lexicon *n*

"...the individual stored procedural knowledge of words and syntax in speech ." (Aitchison 2003; Singleton 1999). This is the centre of inner curriculum in this research because in spontaneous speech in FL learners mould the discourse according to their mental schemata in the L1. This has led to transference and interference to be regarded as source of errors, although this verbal repertoire (Skinner 2002a, p. 22) could also be seized as an itinerary for learners to construct a new FL idiolect, as it is proposed in this research.

morphosyntactic recall *n*

see above lexical accessibility.

optimal environment *n*

see above independent settings.

procrastination *n*

the habit of postponing a task or action to a later time as a mechanism to avoid the anxiety emerging from starting or completing the task, or taking a decision (Fiore 2006, p. 5). Lingering over minor details, lack of attention, finding reasons not to start (or finish) the task alongside with feelings of stress and / or unwanted burden are clear indicia that something is wrong with the way learners approach to the task. This is an usual psychological factor that hinders performance and it was found in this study that it also affected maintenance of protocols completion.

production *n* (**oral** ~ | | **written** ~)

the act of producing verbal or written output in FL. The activation of this process is called lexical accessibility and it also includes the proper linguistic adequacy, and correction although in this research meaning is considered above form. If learners manage to get across a message in translating their idiolects or in spontaneous speech, even with errors, then production is considered to be achieved. || **spoken word** ~ another term for oral production, however it underscores the word-minute ratio deemed in this study as sample of fluency.

protocols *n* (**battery of** ~)

the set of activities of geared towards reconstructing learners idiolect in independent settings. This include the four protocols: enquiring listening, verbal distillations, interlinear translations and idiolect rewriting. The whole cycle is aimed at eliciting spoken word production, listening comprehension and reading fluency. || **idiolect reconstruction** ~ the process of capturing (voice recording or taking texts made by learners themselves) and for translation into the foreign language in order to build an inner curriculum.

re-building *n* (**idiolect** ~)

another term for idiolect reconstruction.

reinforcer *n*

the stimulus that provokes (and reinforces) a behavioural desired response through repetition. || ~ **history** the number of events that have led a speaker to develop competence, e.g. the number of hours, quality of input, interaction with native speakers or positive situations that induce him to use the language || ~ **schedule** the timetable that distributes, organizes and manages the appearance and frequency of reinforcements to elicit the desired verbal responses. In this study that role was played by the agenda of idiolect reconstruction .

researcher-consultant *n*

see above consultant

retrieving *n*

another term for morphosyntactic recall.

schedule *n*

another term for agenda

self-regulation *n*

the use of metacognition, learning strategies and decision making in autonomous, self-regulated learning. The individual grammar approach encourages this type of self-directed approach; the agenda of idiolect reconstruction, as well as the entire set of beliefs where upon is built, fosters this kind of learning.

see above independent learning

semantic correspondence *n*

see above equivalence

semantic field *n* (also ~ domain)

words related to a semantic concept. When learners are required to describe a photograph or are asked about something in the protocol of verbal distillations, they use the semantic field of that precise field. For instance, to the question: *what do you see in the picture?* (while showing him/her a sunny landscape), s/he would hardly use vocabulary from a different semantic scope to answer, e.g.: *political unrest, bailout, literacy, deception, snow*, etc., since they are not pertinent to the question; instead the learner will convey a message inside the semantic field: trees, mountains, river, sun, birds, sky, light, warm, etc.

semi-directed conversations *n* (**semi-controlled** ~ | | **semi-guided** ~ | | **semi-spontaneous** ~)

as part of the second protocol of idiolect reconstruction, learners are asked about several topics where the consultant can or cannot re-formulate questions to them. This type of conversations follow the natural order of an interview but are semi controlled so that communicative competence be achieved.

synchronic *adj.*

when a linguistic analysis is made at one specific point at a time. If a person's idiolect is analysed synchronically her vocabulary would be finite, that is, with a given number of words.

spaced repetition *n*

sometimes named *spacing effect* in learning psychology, it seizes the strengthening of synapses connections through the systematic presentation of data at intervals of time. Studies such as Taylor and Rohrer's (2010) on inter-leaved practice support

the notion that intervals of time in learning are more effective in recall than blocked presentation of items. This is seized in the agenda by giving recovery seasons and by following the natural structural randomness of languages, instead of presenting thematic blocks of units, as in traditional classroom-based textbooks and programmes.

spontaneous speech capture *n*

the process of recording real, naturally-occurring speech. This could be done by recording phone calls, conversations, or even improvising soliloquies. Learners are also invited to follow this process with *spontaneous writing capture*, where the source of data are previously sent e-mails, letters or any sort of written interactions. See also inner curriculum

stand-alone learning *n*

another term for independent learning

sustainable knowledge *n*

the individual grammar approach fosters a perspective of life-long learning through techniques (see protocols) designed for learners to expand knowledge beyond the initial stages of learning the language. Multilingualism is thus ensured through easy-to-do and affordable techniques so that knowledge can be sustained longer after the beginning of the programme.

translation *n*

the process of rendering the meaning from one linguistic code into another. This is especially developed as mediation competence according to the Common European Framework in the individual grammar programme to raise learners' linguistic and cultural awareness. Translation is the key linguistic technique for idiolect reconstruction and guarantee sustainable knowledge.

unity(ies) of thought *n*

they are the unit of translation taken in this approach and perfectly match with the proposed unity of translation by Rabadán (1991: 187). Unities of thought are neither words nor sentences but phrases with meaning. The criterion to divide unities of thought is all the possible components in which a larger sentence could be divided without losing the meaning. In the sentence:

That's everything I needed to say and that's the end of everything.

Could be divided to a minimum extent, but always keeping a meaning out of it,

1. That's everything I needed to say
2. and that's the end of everything

Nobody, on the contrary, would understand a division such as:

1. That's
2. everything I

3. needed to

4. say

What learners require then is the minimum unit wherewith they can start to look for equivalents in a dictionary, a phrasebook or a translation corpus.

verbal behaviour (AmE *behavior*) *n*

the oral or written production in FL either conditioned by controlling variables or not. In this study Skinner's (2002a) model of contingencies of reinforcement is adopted as the structure to change learners' verbal behaviour. It is stated that their verbal behaviour is set in a L1 interface from which changing their environment would shift to a desired verbal behaviour (or reconstructed idiolect) in FL. It should be noted however that the schedule of reinforcement does not offer all the variables (such as discriminative stimuli) of the theory by Skinner.

verbal distillations *n*

the second protocol of idiolect reconstruction; it requires learners to answer a question in their native tongue, record, transcribe and translate it, for later rehearsal through repeating the same question and the answer, firstly in code-switching, (known as calibration) and next only in the foreign language. The idea is to work within a well-defined semantic field so that after a few repetitions spoken word production is achieved. This protocol introduces active vocabulary into learners' mental lexicon by having them using the semantic fields in a semi guided conversation.

verbal repertoire *n*

see above mental lexicon

visual associations *n*

a mnemonic cognitive strategy oriented towards improving retrieving in word production and recognition. It is sometimes called *ridiculous associations* because words or phrases are linked to far-fetched images that generate stronger impressions, leading to easier recall.

vocabulary *n*

active ~ the words and phrases a speaker uses in oral and written production.

|| **passive** ~ the words and phrases a speaker recognizes in a text or when listening someone speaking the language.

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APPENDIX A

Quantitative model of linear fluency (foreign language)

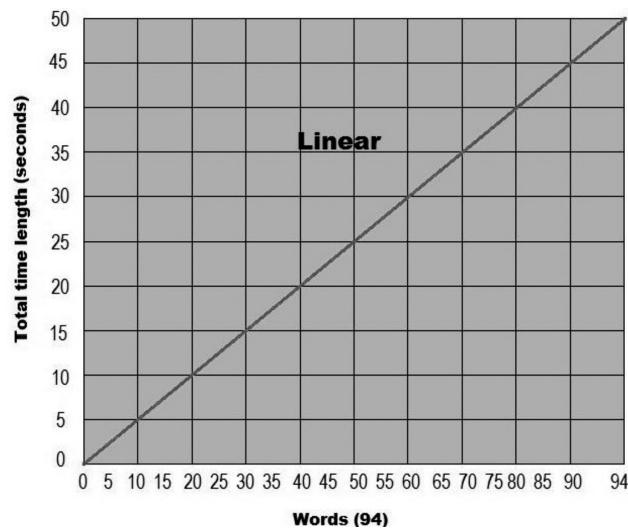


Figure 1.0. Quantitative model of linear fluency (foreign language).

50 seconds X 94 words

Ratio = 1.88 words / second

APPENDIX B

Cuestionario de perfil lingüístico

Fecha _____ / _____ / _____

Hora _____

*Por favor escriba legiblemente, si necesita dar más información solicite al asesor una hoja adicional.

Nombre completo: _____

Edad: _____ Sexo: M F

Último grado de escolaridad: _____

¿Cursa estudios actualmente? Nombre de la institución: _____

Nombre del programa / carrera: _____

¿Tiene Ud. conocimientos en alguna lengua extranjera (LE)? Si No

¿Ha tomado cursos de LE?: _____

¿Tiene padres o familiares hablantes de alguna LE?: _____

¿Ha aprendido autónomamente alguna LE?: _____

¿Aproximadamente cuántas horas al día invierte en practicar la LE?: _____

¿Aproximadamente cuántas horas al día estaría dispuesto en invertir en practicar autónomamente esta nueva LE? : _____

¿Observa Ud. películas, noticias, música, en la LE que ahora desea aprender?: _____

¿Aproximadamente cuántas horas al día? _____

¿Usó alguna metodología en particular? (puede utilizar una hoja aparte):

¿Ha abandonado o aplazado el aprendizaje de alguna LE?: _____

De ser así, ¿qué motivó esa decisión?: _____

¿Ha viajado o residido en el exterior? Si No País(es) _____

Número de días / semanas / meses /años: _____

¿Ha tenido tutores particulares, cursos de inmersión?: _____

¿Puede recordar qué notas obtenía en el colegio / instituto / universidad en LE?: _____

¿Puede recordar qué énfasis manejaba su colegio / instituto / universidad al enseñar LE? (gramática, conversación, lectura, etc?): _____

¿Podría dar un valor aproximado de 0 a 100 de sus destrezas actuales en lengua(s) extranjera(s)?:

Hablado %: _____

Traducción %: _____

Escrito %: _____

Lectura %: _____

Escucha %: _____

¿Por qué tiene interés en hablar esta nueva LE?: _____

¿Lee novelas o escribe Ud. (narrativa, poesía, escritura creativa) habitualmente?:

Si No

¿Con qué regularidad?: _____

¿Tiene contacto con hablantes nativos de la LE que ahora piensa aprender?: _____

Muchas gracias por su tiempo, si desea añadir información adicional por favor no dude en hacerlo.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Bonilla Carvajal holds a doctoral degree in applied linguistics from Universidad Antonio Nebrija in Madrid, and currently belongs to the laboratory of experimental psycholinguistics at the University of Delaware, as a visiting scholar in the Ph.D in linguistics. He is also a member of the research group *Educación para el Bilingüismo y el Multilingüismo* from Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia.

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The present book was his undergraduate thesis, which earned him an “honourable mention” by unanimous decision, being the first student in achieving such an award in the Licenciatura en Educación Básica con Énfasis en Inglés at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.



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