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A Country in Focus

Research on English language teaching and learning in Argentina (2007–2013)

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In this article we review research on English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning published in Argentina between 2007 and 2013. This is the first review of a Latin American country in this series. Argentina has a century-long tradition of training EFL teachers but a comparatively shorter though fruitful history of foreign language (FL) research. The article examines 88 articles that appeared in locally published peer-reviewed conference proceedings, academic journals and one edited collection. The contributions cover a wide spectrum of topics that illustrates prominent research interests in the country, such as the role of imagination, emotion and affect in language comprehension and production, intercultural dimensions, FL teacher education and development, content and language integrated learning (CLIL), computer-assisted language learning (CALL), the teaching of English for academic or specific purposes, testing, assessment and evaluation, and materials design and course development. The review includes work by specialists whose research may not be known outside the boundaries of Argentina but who produce high-quality situated research that accounts for the specificity of the local educational setting.

1. Introduction

Language Teaching is almost alone among reputable international journals in taking deliberate, purposeful and orchestrated actions to 'ensure a more democratic and mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge' (Canagarajah 1996b: 435; 2007) between East and West, and between First World and Third World scholars. Canagarajah has written extensively about the

problem of the exclusionary functions of scholarly writing and has pinpointed the weaknesses (perhaps, inability) of the academic publication process to accommodate new and emerging forms of conducting and reporting research (Canagarajah 1996b, 2003, 2006a, 2006 b, 2007; Matsuda et al. 2003).

In the ten years since Porte's (2003) initial review article on Spain, it is striking that Latin American countries have not yet been represented. Beyond *Language Teaching*, voices from several peripheral countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, have arisen in the current English Language Teaching (ELT) and Teaching English as a second or other language (TESOL) contexts, but Latin America is still underrepresented. Hence, the aim of this review article is to make a contribution by describing the case of Argentina.

It covers work published from 2007 to 2013 and focuses only on English, the main FL taught in Argentina. Further reviews may be needed, because although Argentina's main language is Spanish, several minority languages are spoken, such as Levantine Arabic, South Bolivian Quechua, Catalan, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean and Welsh (Lewis 2009), as well as at least 16 indigenous languages (Censabella 1999). In addition to Spanish – used as a first language (L1) and second language (L2) by many speakers of indigenous languages – the most widely taught languages are, in alphabetical order, English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese. These five languages are included in the national curriculum guidelines (*Núcleos de aprendizaje prioritario* (NAP)), and have teacher training programmes, professional development associations, conferences, publications, (international) examinations, and research interests. Other less commonly taught languages such as Hebrew, Armenian, Russian, Chinese and Arabic are taught in schools belonging to different heritage groups, university language centres and heritage community centres, and some have international examinations and professional development activities.

2. Overview

2.1 The Argentine system of education

Argentina was a Spanish colony until the Declaration of Independence in 1816, and Spanish has been the official national language since then. Law 1420, enacted in 1884, established universal, compulsory, non-religious, free primary school education. During the first half of the 19th century, Domingo F. Sarmiento, a key historical figure associated with education in Argentina, set in motion the imposition of a single main culture and language. The aim of education was to replicate the dominant culture (reflecting Europe, particularly France) in the younger generations. Puiggrós (1990) explains that the Argentine educational system was based on a paradigm of education for linguistic and cultural unification and homogenisation in the face of the increasing flow of immigrants from Europe, a paradigm that continued to prevail throughout the 20th century (Puiggrós 1990) and is still perceived as a driving unifying force (Rivas 2005).

In December 2006, a new National Education Law (*Ley Nacional de Educación 26.206*) was enacted. It regulates the right to teach and learn, included in the National Constitution, and

considers education and knowledge as a public good as well as a personal and social right, to be guaranteed by the state. Education became compulsory from age 5 to the completion of secondary school (López Armengol & Persoglia 2009).

2.2 Language education

Complex immigration processes have given rise to communities where a number of FL or L2 languages are spoken. For instance, in Buenos Aires Province (the province with the largest population), a single classroom may include learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, such as indigenous children; descendants of immigrants from neighbouring countries, Peru, Asia (Korea, Taiwan) or Africa; children of homeless farmers or rural workers living in poverty, and children from stigmatised communities such as Gypsies.

In recent years there have been new developments in the field of languages, such as intercultural bilingual programmes, meant to serve the educational needs of indigenous communities, and programmes with Spanish and Portuguese both as L1 and L2 in the north-eastern provinces near Brazil.

2.3 FL education: The case of English

English has been taught in Argentina in two different institutional contexts – the centrally organised secondary school system and the schools of the British community. Secondary education was centrally organised in 1863, and English, French and German were taught as FLs at the first three schools created (López-Barrios & Villanueva de Debat 2011).

In contrast, at British community schools, which were created to provide education to the children of English-speaking settlers in the 19th century (Banfi & Day 2005; Tocalli-Beller 2007), English was the language of instruction, rather than an FL. British influence was very important in Argentina throughout the 19th century. Even though Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English immigrants were outnumbered by Spaniards and Italians, the British community had a major influence on the incipient local economy through its involvement in railways, farms and other businesses (Maersk Nielsen 2003). The cultural influence of the English-speaking community is present today through cultural associations such as the Argentine Associations of English Culture, created in the 1920s with the aim of teaching English and promoting British culture in many of the largest cities. Additionally, the British influenced local customs through sports such as football, rugby, tennis, yachting, polo and golf (Maersk Nielsen 2003). The names of famous sports clubs reflect their British origin (Newell's Old Boys, Boca Juniors, River Plate, Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club, Yacht Club Argentino, among others) (Maersk Nielsen 2003).

In the early 20th century, many private schools, which provided education for children from high-income families, copied the English-Spanish bilingual curriculum of British community schools. At state schools, in contrast, the impact of FL education was low, in particular because secondary school was not compulsory at the time. The status of EFL changed during the 1990s, when federal agreements made English the mandatory FL to be learned by all

children from age 9 (year 4) to the end of compulsory schooling (year 9). The agreement recommended that other FLs should be offered, but the second FL was no longer mandatory (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación 1997). After the creation of the Mercosur (the regional trade and political bloc consisting of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) it was agreed that it would be made mandatory to teach Portuguese in the Spanish-speaking member states and Spanish in Brazil. Before that, French and Italian had been the only second FL options at secondary schools in Argentina. Children from wealthier families are often taught English privately, from age 6, in addition to the mandatory lessons at school. However, children from lower income families only learn English or any other FL at school.

It is important to note that English is a dominant and prestigious FL in Argentina (Maersk Nielsen 2003; Tocalli-Beller 2007; Rajagopalan 2010), partly due to the penetration of the English language and culture during the 19th century described above. Today, even though English is not an official language, it is prevalent in business with foreign countries, language education (it is included in primary and secondary school curricula in most provinces), and tourism. Maersk Nielsen (2003) claims that the use of English in Argentina fulfils several functions. One is the INTERPERSONAL FUNCTION: through the prevalence of English in advertising, consumer goods (brand names of clothes, cars, perfumes, music, food and many other products), businesses, etc. English is associated with auras of prestige, modernity and sophistication. Another is the INSTRUMENTAL FUNCTION: English is used as a medium of instruction at some schools (i.e. bilingual schools), on EFL teacher training courses or EFL professional development courses, in international conferences, etc. A third is the REGULATORY FUNCTION, whereby the law requires all business contracts with foreign companies to be written in Spanish and, when relevant, translated into English. Finally, the INNOVATIVE FUNCTION involves frequent borrowings from English, which then become nativised, for instance in the fields of sports, computers, shopping, and advertising.

It seems that Argentina, like many other nations, has not been immune to what Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1996: 436) refer to as 'the infectious spread of English within a wider language policy framework'. These authors also describe English as 'triumphant', as a result of processes of Americanisation, Europeanisation, and 'McDonaldization' (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1996: 440). 'These developments embody and entail hegemonising processes that tend to render the use of English "natural" and "normal", and to marginalise other languages' (Phillipson 2001: 191). In Argentina, the hegemonising influence of English is reflected mostly in the field of politics and international relations (Borón 2009; Borón &Vlahusic 2009). Borón (2009) argues that this influence has led to the crisis of a model of civilisation which has resulted in social unrest, violence, xenophobia and racism, among other issues. Clearly one key historical event which has contributed to a negative view of the English language in some sectors of the Argentine society is the Malvinas/Falklands War between Argentina and the UK in 1982.

The pedagogical aspects of teaching English language in Argentina are in tune with the latest developments in the field. English teachers are in general highly qualified, having completed four- to five-year undergraduate programmes. In the 1990s, FL curricula were product-oriented (i.e. they included competence standards intended to serve as a means of standardisation), whereas nowadays the intercultural dimension is considered pedagogically and educationally relevant although this shift has not yet fully translated into mainstream

ELT. Postgraduate professional development is an integral part of current efforts to transform and revitalise education, based on the underlying assumption that language teachers should develop the knowledge and skills they need in order to prepare learners for the demands of the 21st century. Overall, the quality of EFL teacher training is good. A problem that remains to be addressed is the need to meet the increasing demand of trained EFL teachers as in many areas of the country, especially at state-run schools, the number of certified EFL teachers is dismally low.

3. Research on ELT in Argentina: Global and local influences

Argentina has not escaped the globalisation that characterises the new millennium (Canagarajah 2005) or its impact on research into language acquisition, use, teaching, and learning. This impact can best be seen as an exemplar of what Tilly (2004: 18) calls 'international inequality' in income, schooling, life expectancy, and the internet. Although Tilly does not specifically mention research, it can be included in such inequality, as shown by factors such as resource availability, funding and publishing opportunities, as well as working conditions. Canagarajah (1996a, 2003: 202) aptly describes this inequality in Third World contexts: 'The problem for me was not ignorance of conventions of research processes and reporting, but simply the lack of resources and the conditions of work in Sri Lanka' (Canagarajah 1996a, 2003: 202). Argentina's main reference and source of influence regarding education has traditionally been Europe, which implies predominantly Western rationality and constitutes one of the main filters for research focuses and paradigms. Other filters are the country's internal political and ideological influences (Puiggrós 1990, 1996, 2003; Ochs & Phillips 2004).

Much has been written about research, and what kind of research is important and valued. TESOL professionals (Canagarajah 1995, 2006c; Vavrus 2002) have stressed the importance of individual and local factors in classroom-based or community-based research efforts, with descriptions of how people in peripheral countries experience literacy in English. The fact that Argentina is a peripheral country, taking into account local factors within culturally specific contexts, is a powerful reason to undertake exploratory interpretive studies of Latin American countries, and in particular of Argentina. This kind of research can be described as 'work which seeks UNDERSTANDING of the experience of people involved in education' (Byram 2008: 91, his emphasis), as opposed to work which seeks explanation or change. It addresses the need to 'engage with the reality of language as experienced by users and learners' (Widdowson 2000: 23) and 'to describe what people do and say within local contexts' (Freeman et al. 2007: 29). The purpose of research in classroom settings is to obtain a 'sense of the classroom' (Canagarajah 1995: 592). In Latin America this contrasts with research focusing on quantitative factors and seeking to make generalisations. In an interview published in Porto (2013), Byram captured this tension by stating that the discussion is not only about research *per se*, but about what kind of research is important. With reference to the explanatory and interpretative paradigms, he points out that making the quantitative vs. qualitative distinction is misleading. The real question is what is done with qualitative and quantitative data, as

both can be used for at least two purposes: 'One is to look for causal links between factors in education; and another is to use both kinds of data to try to understand how the people IN education are experiencing it and how THEY think about it or even theorise about it' (Porto 2013: 15). In Argentina, research into FL is mostly interpretative, following research traditions in the humanities – notably literature and cultural studies, and descriptive, in the case of linguistics, and there are a few studies that are explanatory. The fact that FL researchers do not interact much with other disciplines, such as experimental psychology, may account for the lack of studies that use inferential statistics, which are typical of much research into SLA processes. This may be due to the compartmentalised structure of many higher education institutions and the fact that students do not usually take courses outside their school or institute.

Argentina's internal economic, political and ideological influences, among others (Puiggrós 1990, 1996, 2003; Ochs & Phillips 2004), play a role in shaping the field of research in ELT. These influences are mainly financial: 15 years ago, the little financial support available for postgraduate studies abroad was allocated to literature, linguistics and applied linguistics. Moreover, local postgraduate degrees in ELT were almost non-existent at the time. The need for, and relevance of, research on ELT was not widely recognised, in contrast to the widespread popularity of fields such as materials writing, curriculum development and pedagogy/didactics. This led to difficulties in finding a forum in which to carry out research on ELT. Openings were hard to come by, particularly because research niches, mainly at the country's highly prestigious national universities, were severely limited by social and economic conditions such as social unrest and economic instability. In this context, research on ELT required self-funding.

In 1993 the creation of the Teachers-as-Researchers Programme, involving Argentina's national universities and funded by the Ministry of Education, created new opportunities. Since 2005, the humanities and social sciences have gained importance in the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research, CONICET. Nevertheless, due to the strict requirements for entering and remaining in the Teachers-as-Researchers Programme and CONICET, the number of researchers working on ELT is still relatively small.

The research reported in this review article was conducted within the framework described above. Its value, challenges and constraints are also inexorably tied to this framework, and need to be seen and assessed within it.

4. The review: Decisions and criteria

As in other review articles published in *Language Teaching*, we begin with a reflection on the issue of local research as opposed to research by local authors published internationally. We agree with Aronin & Spolsky (2010) that the criterion for selection cannot be exclusively geographical (i.e. research published or presented in national contexts), because we would have to review an overwhelming number of works. Consequently, we decided to consider research whose quality, scope and relevance were consistent with current topics and trends in ELT globally but involved work using local data on local issues and topics. Furthermore,

we exclude from this review any Argentinean authors who publish internationally. Although the relevance of their publications is undeniable, the aim of 'A Country in Focus' is precisely to make locally published research known internationally.

We selected 88 papers dealing specifically with aspects of ELT such as empirical research or the practice of teaching English. Consequently, we disregarded (a) papers focusing on the description and analysis of specific literary works, or monolingual or contrastive descriptions of English whose aim was not specifically pedagogic, and (b) papers describing a theoretical perspective or reporting a given experience or making recommendations. A guiding principle was the degree of rigour of the methodological and theoretical rationales in empirical research, and the degree of description of teaching procedures in accounts of pedagogic experiences, to enable replication. Much valuable research on ELT is published locally in Argentina, conducted primarily at universities and teacher training colleges, under time constraints and often without funding. The bulk of ELT-related research is published in conference proceedings and academic journals. This review includes papers published in the proceedings of 14 conferences, four academic journals and one edited collection. The conferences were organised by: (a) the Argentine Federation of EFL Teacher Associations (FAAPI); (b) a committee of modern language teachers in university and tertiary education (*Jornadas de Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras en el Nivel Superior – JELENS*); (c) the Argentine Linguistics Society (SAL); (d) the 'J. R. Fernández' School of Education in Foreign Languages in Buenos Aires (*Jornadas Internacionales del Instituto de Enseñanza Superior en Lenguas Vivas Juan R. Fernández*); and (e) the Tucumán chapter of the UNESCO Chair/Regional Network for the improvement of education quality and equity in Latin America (Reading and Writing). With regard to the journals, *ARTESOLESP Journal* is published by the English for Specific Purposes Interest Section of ARTESOL (Argentina ESOL) and has appeared regularly since 2011. The other journals are published by state universities. *Nueva Revista de Lenguas Extranjeras (NRLE)* is a publication of the English and French Departments of the School of Philosophy, National University of Cuyo, and is the most long-standing of the three journals reviewed. It has appeared since 1996 as a sequel of *Revista de Lenguas Extranjeras*, which was published between 1970 and 1994. *Contextos de Educación – Revista del Departamento de Ciencias de la Educación* has been published regularly since 1998 by the Education Department of the School of Humanities, National University of Río Cuarto, and covers a wide range of topics, including ELT-related research. Lastly, *Confluencias – Revista de Lenguas Extranjeras* is published by the School of Humanities, National University of Catamarca, with its first issue appearing in 2009. The conference proceedings and journals are peer-reviewed and have editorial committees consisting of nationally renowned specialists. *NRLE* and *Contextos de Educación* include members from international universities (in the USA and Spain).

With regard to conference proceedings, it should be mentioned that FAAPI, the Argentinean Federation of EFL Teacher Associations, was created in 1971 to coordinate the efforts of over 20 local associations of EFL teachers. From the beginning, its member associations have organised an annual conference in a different city every year. Over 40 conferences have been held to date and the conference proceedings have appeared regularly for the past 20 years, first in print and more recently in digital format (CD or online). Recognised local ELT professionals, many with an international profile, form the academic committee in charge of selecting proposals in a double-blind review process.

The Conference of Modern Language Teachers in Tertiary Education (JELENS) hosted its 14th biennial conference in 2013. For the three conferences reported in this review (2007, 2009, 2011), academic committees from different universities in Argentina selected the proposals following a double-blind review procedure.

A third organisation, the Argentine Linguistics Society (SAL), where ELT-related research has gained importance in recent years, organised its first national conference in 1977. Since then, it has held 14 conferences, one of which is particularly relevant to this review. The papers selected are from the 2010 SAL conference (Castel & Cubo de Severino 2010) and were reviewed by over 20 specialists from the National University of Cuyo, where the conference took place. Similar review procedures apply to papers from the other three conference proceedings (Padilla, Douglas & López 2008; Ardissone, Willson & Miñones 2010; Arrabal et al. 2010) selected for this review.

Finally, we included ten contributions from a collection of papers related to different aspects of FL teaching, including ELT, commissioned by SAL and edited by Rezzano & Hlavacka (2013). The papers were also selected in a double-blind review process by committees made up of specialists in different fields of linguistics from several national universities.

There are currently two main journals specialising in EFL-related research: *NRLE* and *ARTESOLESP Journal*, both reported here. A new journal, the *Argentine Journal of Applied Linguistics* (AJAL), published by FAAPI, began last year and is a valuable addition for the Argentine ELT community. In addition to these, a number of journals published by universities and teacher training colleges deal with different fields of the humanities, including ELT. We have selected three of these on the basis of the time frame covered by the review (2007–2013) and the selection criteria discussed above.

5. Analysis of the reviewed research by topic

The following sections analyse the papers, which we classified into a number of topics, including the role of imagination, emotion and affect in language comprehension and production; the intercultural dimension of ELT; FL teacher education and professional development; CLIL and interdisciplinarity; CALL and the use of other multimedia; learner differences; skills development; FL systems; the teaching of English for academic or specific purposes; testing, assessment and evaluation; and materials design and course development. For the sake of brevity, we will refer to EFL teacher education students as TES.

6. The role of imagination, emotion and affect in language comprehension and production

One international line of work to which Argentina can contribute is the significant role of imagination, emotion and affect in language comprehension and production (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey 2002; Sharifian 2003; Sharifian, Rochecouste & Malcolm 2004). Di Nardo, Frigerio & Cadario (2010) and Di Nardo (2013) linked these aspects in their research of L2 writing and the use of visual narratives. Using semiotic visual categories, Di Nardo

et al. (2010) showed how student productions expanded and/or modified the meanings of the visual images that served as prompts. Di Nardo (2013), in a qualitative longitudinal case study, investigated experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings in eight narrative compositions produced by two TES on the basis of visual input over a period of three months. The results indicate the significance of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1994, Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) and its view of language as social semiotics, revealing various aspects of the writing process. Unfortunately, the visual images were not provided in either of these papers, so the descriptions lack specificity. Both studies clearly highlight the importance of the visual and imaginative dimensions of literature and culture, but these aspects are not discussed further.

The connection between language and the cultural, or the intercultural, was put forward by Kramsch (1995) whose paper argues that imagination plays a key role, in particular through the use of literature in the language classroom. Literature allows readers to 'live other lives – by proxy' (Kramsch 1995: 85). In this sense, Di Nardo et al.'s (2010) and Di Nardo's (2013) choice of visual narratives as prompts for their study is relevant. The visual component of these narratives left room for imagination: the students expanded and modified the prompt materials, and as they did so, emotion and affect were revealed as key aspects. Further developments in this line of work would make a valuable contribution to the field.

Similarly, Dalla Costa & Gava (2010) looked at the central role of literature in an action-research project with 39 TES. A questionnaire was administered before and after a classroom intervention to obtain information on the students' abilities and attitudes towards learning English through short stories. This study used introspective tools to highlight the readers' 'specific cultural situation' (Allington & Swann 2009: 220) and consequently deals with 'domains of folk experience' (Widdowson 2006: 96). Important, too, is its focus on literature, for as Widdowson (2003: 89) points out, 'one area of linguistic experience . . . continues to be neglected, namely the imaginative and individual exploration of meaning potential that is characteristic of literature'. Dalla Costa & Gava's (2010), Di Nardo et al.'s (2010) and Di Nardo's (2013) investigations contribute to filling this gap, but further developments in the field would also be welcome.

7. The intercultural dimension of ELT

The connections among language, culture, imagination, literature and affect in language education are acknowledged in the research reviewed. In Byram & Fernández (2007), the research was conducted locally by leading institutional scholar Byram and another highly respected, recently deceased, local researcher. Their study brings together the international and intercultural perspectives involved in FL learning in an empirical investigation of an international teacher exchange programme. Six foreign teachers who visited an Argentinean university were interviewed to explore their views on internationalisation. The interviews were analysed together with narratives, statements and practices, and studied using ethnographic observations and discourse analysis. Results show that the process of internationalisation is reciprocal in that it requires openness and tolerance at both ends. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Byram & Morgan (1994), Byram (1997, 2009), and Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002), among others, who point out that intercultural understanding

depends on attitudes of curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend disbelief and value judgments about other people's beliefs and behaviours.

Ferradas (2007) explores how literatures written in 'World Englishes' contribute to developing intercultural competence by presenting a more diverse view of the English-speaking world and, above all, by empowering students to express their own identity in English. Ferradas argues in favour of the use of Anglo-Argentine texts and travel literature because they help learners reflect on how the discourse of the past may have constructed identity and self-image among Argentines, as well as their views of the other.

8. FL teacher education and professional development

Papers in this section deal with questions related to the initial and continuous development of teacher cognition (Borg 2006). We have identified two major sub-themes: narrative research and research on teacher perceptions, knowledge and practices.

8.1 Narrative research and biographical methods

Pioneering research has been conducted in Argentina by Sarasa's team, which has been using narrative and biographical research on teacher education since 2000. Álvarez, Porta & Sarasa (2010) used biographical interviews to find out what makes a good teacher. Advanced TES were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to identify a good teacher they had had and his/her specific qualities and characteristics. These teachers were subsequently interviewed using a biographical-narrative approach together with evidence of the representations of 'good teachers' and their practices revealed in the questionnaires. These representations involved aspects such as knowledge, wishes, and practices related to teaching. In recent research, Sarasa (2013) used narrative inquiry in a longitudinal study (2007–2011) to analyse TES identity descriptions in texts and biographical narratives after exploring a syllabus unit on Irish Studies. Results show that student texts problematised their identities, exploring the itineraries they wished to follow as students and prospective educators. The research concludes that the narrative inquiry evolved from a pedagogy of life-telling to a pedagogy of life-learning.

In an action-research study using the narrative biographical method, Chiatti, Romanelli & Sordelli (2010) gathered narrative data from 48 TES who wrote a letter to an imaginary prospective student of a phonetics course, telling him/her about the experience of teaching a mini-lesson for the first time in their lives. The analysis revealed the participants' ability to provide reflective comments as well as practical advice. Finally, Bonadeo & Ibánez (2013) identified and analysed TES' evaluations of their educational trajectories, how they narrated their identities as members of their college community, and how they envisaged their profession in their imaginations. This paper used data from a survey, institutional records, workshops and interviews combining quantitative and qualitative methodology. It describes student trajectories and narrative identities, and enquires into their imaginative projections by using Critical Discourse Analysis.

Overall, narrative research in Argentina is well developed. Commendably, current developments have been contextualised at tertiary teacher education institutions, and to some extent at universities, although further work is needed in similar settings. Considering narrative and biographical research highlights the 'specific cultural situation' of particular populations (Allington & Swann 2009: 220), further work nationwide would be particularly valuable.

8.2 Teacher perceptions, knowledge and practices

Another group of studies focuses on teacher perceptions, knowledge and practices such as assumptions, beliefs and motivation. Davis (2009) used ethnographic qualitative research in teacher training programmes and showed that it promoted teacher awareness of the implementation of autonomous teaching models on the basis of processes of acquisition of innovative classroom teaching strategies. Similarly, Martín & Castro (2010) discussed critical action research conducted by two teachers at a teacher training school, and described how their teaching practice affected students' knowledge construction. Helale, Requena & San Martín (2011) undertook a study of TES' perceptions of their undergraduate education. The population also included current university teachers and graduates. A survey was administered, which considered: planning, impact of professional practice, strengths of the programme, and role of the supervisor. The results indicated mismatches between the perceptions of teachers and students. Liruso, Villanueva de Debat & Requena (2009), Mulone (2009) and Soto (2012) investigated the relationship between teachers' principles, classroom practice and the underlying pedagogic rationale adopted. The study by Liruso et al. (2009) used classroom observation, teacher reflection logs, ethnographic descriptions and audio/video recordings of lessons. Fifteen teachers were asked to write a retrospective description about one weakness they identified in their lesson, while a researcher observed the class in question and provided an ethnographic description. The results indicated that teacher actions in the classroom could be classified as resulting from internal or external causes, with a slightly higher percentage of internal causes (i.e. those within the control of the teacher). Mulone (2009) used a survey and a free writing task to explore teachers' assumptions regarding the causes of disruptive behaviour in the classroom and what actions may be taken. Teachers in general attribute misbehaviour to social factors beyond the scope of the school. However, the results indicated that teachers believed that such behaviour may be reduced by improving teaching methodology and classroom communication to prevent indiscipline, which was deemed more effective than reacting against indiscipline. Finally, Soto (2012) looked into teacher motivation to internalise and adopt new curriculum specifications in one province in Argentina. The data were collected through a questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that teachers tended to rely on their own experience, beliefs or preferences rather than on the curriculum specifications and that they felt independent enough to do so. Further quantitative research is needed, in particular in other contexts and with larger populations.

Overall, this body of work on teacher perceptions, knowledge and practices is well developed, and its results are useful locally and consistent with current international research

focuses in the field. However, other aspects of teacher perceptions, beliefs and practices remain to be studied. In particular, what seems to be lacking in this field is longitudinal research that may shed light on underlying issues and offer descriptions of the processes that teachers in service and student teachers undergo as they develop in the profession.

9. CLIL and interdisciplinarity

Although CLIL has been around for some time in Argentina, and is prescribed, for instance, in curricular documents for teaching English at primary and secondary schools, its scope tends to be limited to including content from social and natural sciences in the English classroom. Some collaborative project work is being conducted by teachers of English and teachers of other subjects in joint initiatives that give CLIL a genuine interdisciplinary focus.

Barboni, Cendoya & Di Bin (2008) reported on a primary school CLIL project intended to develop multiple literacies by bringing together language, literature, drama, cinema, and information and communication technology (ICT) in the English class. The authors investigated how children understood and produced written, oral and multimedia texts in English using different semiotic systems in a variety of contexts and for different purposes. The analysis of semi-structured interviews with teachers, classroom reports, and students´ portfolios revealed a positive impact on the development of children's multiple literacies. The children tended to integrate several semiotic systems in their work and displayed increasing metalinguistic awareness.

In a pioneering study in Argentina, Sforza (2007) used this interdisciplinary focus in an innovative CLIL framework that explored the conceptions of history that a group of TES had. The participants provided individual written answers to the question 'What is history?' at the beginning and at the end of a 'Culture and Civilization' course that presented diverging conceptions of history. The results indicated that these TES adopted a reflective, critical, procedural approach to the conceptualisation of history, highlighting the contextual, situated, subjective nature of historical knowledge. The study revealed the importance of the development of critical thinking skills in teacher education undergraduate programmes. This line of work, which centres on the use of education, and ELT in particular, to develop socially aware critical thinking skills, originates in Freire's revolutionary views of education based on the notions of transformation, agency, social awareness, citizenship and education as liberation, revealing the influence of one important world model of education in Argentina: Progressive Education (Spring 2009). The main tenets of Progressive Education are education for active citizenship, for social justice and for the protection of local languages, celebrating the students' interests and participation, and empowering them through agency. Unfortunately, Sforza did not highlight these assets of her research, and because she works practically alone on the subject in Argentina, further work is needed.

10. CALL and the use of other multimedia

Several papers deal with CALL and the use of ICTs in different educational contexts. For instance, Arrarás (2010) investigated the effects of online communication on motivation and

language learning. A telecollaborative project involving one secondary school in Argentina and another in the USA was designed (with 16- to 18-year-olds). Although it is a comparative study, it mainly addressed the Argentine perspective. This is an E-Tandem learning project aimed at giving students in both countries the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of the FL they were studying and to learn about each other's culture. The conversations were analysed and coded according to different features of motivation: choice, effort and persistence. Findings indicated that most students were highly motivated and that their motivation differed according to their level of English. Using interview data, the author also explored the participants' specific gains in terms of communication skills, intercultural awareness and learning strategies. The focus on secondary school students is important, because although there are many forums for online communication nowadays, they tend to be restricted to college-level students.[1] The exploration of intercultural awareness is also worth pointing out because it could be argued that without it, the main result of the study is an obvious truth (motivation increases when students have the chance to use the FL in contexts that really need it).

Other studies investigated the use of ICTs, but without the international and intercultural perspectives found in Arrarás (2010). For instance, Gava (2010) and Cardozo & Orta González (2012) described two blended learning experiences among TES. Like Arrarás (2010), Cardozo & Orta González (2012) also focused on student motivation through the use of technology-mediated activities, in this case with a view to fostering autonomous learning, inside and outside the classroom. Based on the ways in which TES used ICTs and developed skills to enhance autonomous learning, the authors showed that blended learning increases motivation. Gava (2010) analysed forum debates through the inductive and descriptive analysis of student interventions, and discussed limitations related to the use of ICTs in a university EFL teacher education programme. The paper concluded that the use of ICTs posed challenges to the communication processes and patterns among teachers and students. Its main contribution is a taxonomy of the types of online collaborative EFL learning.

CALL is also very much present in teacher education, as discussed by Mercado (2009). ICTs have pros and cons for teachers, who need adequate training and knowledge concerning possible applications in the classroom. The paper defined ICT applications, described experiences from a variety of L2 classes, and provided specific pedagogical suggestions. Along similar lines, Arrabal et al. (2010) suggested specific ICT training programmes for teachers, since technology has become increasingly important, and teachers often have less ICT skill and knowledge than their students.

Although major developments are underway in research in this field in Argentina, we suggest that they are limited in two ways. Firstly, they tend to focus on college level, and more research is needed in other contexts such as secondary and primary schools. Secondly, with one exception (Arrarás 2010), they focus on the use of ICTs in Argentinean classrooms without an international or intercultural dimension. Further work is needed in these areas. One future line of work could extend the scope of projects of this kind to include not only the international and intercultural dimension but also citizenship issues within the framework provided by Byram (2010, 2012, 2014).

[1] http://unicollaboration.eu/

11. Learner differences

This section looks at differences between individual learners that influence the FL learning process. Of the multiple learner differences reported in the literature, three have been given special attention in the sources we reviewed: strategies and learner autonomy, motivation, and beliefs and attitudes.

11.1 Strategies and learner autonomy

Most papers on strategies and learner autonomy deal with learner factors. The seven papers reviewed tackled different aspects of learner strategies for learning vocabulary and developing the skills of reading aloud, academic writing, speaking and listening. Six of these studies employed surveys and five a mixed-methods design combining observational data, experimental treatment, or samples of oral production. Two are single case studies involving introspective data.

Two studies deal with vocabulary learning strategies. González de Gatti, Orta González & Schander (2013) investigated the use of vocabulary learning strategies by intermediate and advanced TES. Through non-participant observation, the researchers studied the vocabulary that the students were asked to select from class texts, and the resources they used to look up meanings. They found that students recorded mostly word meaning, grammatical features, details on word use and collocations, but little information on pronunciation, example sentences, or semantic relations. Overall, the results pointed to an unsatisfactory degree of independent vocabulary work. Additionally, a survey was administered to find out about areas of word study. The results indicated a mismatch between what learners were observed to do and what they stated in the survey. No significant difference was found across proficiency levels. Another related study by Chiapello & Valsecchi (2008) elucidated, through introspection, the strategies used by an intermediate TES to infer the meaning of words underlined in a text. The results showed that the participant made use of a variety of lexical inferencing strategies which usually led to successful guesses of the meanings of unknown words.

Two studies by Bombelli & Soler (2009) and Giménez & Ghirardotto (2010) focused on the strategies used by post-intermediate TES when reading aloud. Both studies relied on information gathered by a survey that aimed to identify different strategies and how often they were used. Bombelli & Soler (2009) found that subjects used mostly cognitive and metacognitive strategies to similar degrees, with practice and monitoring being the most frequent. Giménez & Ghirardotto (2010) observed one of the subjects in the first study and used introspection to identify the strategies used during the preparation and execution of a reading aloud task. The comparison between the observed behaviour and the survey data revealed greater use of metacognitive strategies.

The other three studies deal with strategies used to develop listening, writing and speaking skills. Dalla Costa & Gava (2007) explored the extent to which intermediate TES perceive that training in listening strategies improves their performance. Self-report surveys applied at the beginning and end of instruction showed that students became aware of the importance of predicting and note-taking as two important listening strategies. Regarding strategies used

by advanced TES in their written production, González de Gatti et al. (2012) carried out a longitudinal mixed-methods study to determine whether training in social/affective and metacognitive strategies fosters learner autonomy and leads to improved written performance. The strategies observed were cooperation through peer feedback and self-monitoring. The annotations made by the subjects while giving peer feedback and self-monitoring were classified into different categories and constituted the variables that determine differences between the pre- and post-test. The results indicated a perceived effectiveness of peer feedback and self-monitoring and an actual improvement in organisation and language, especially at the editing stage of writing. Pico (2007) focused on oral production strategies and perceptions in a mixed-methods cross-sectional study to determine student perceptions related to their own and their peers' oral communication difficulties. The author used data from a survey, and self- and other-assessment data on oral production provided by peers and the teacher, to investigate the use of communication strategies by two advanced TES. The results revealed marked discrepancies between the three assessments and a pedagogical proposal is offered to help overcome the weaknesses observed.

11.2 Motivation

Three papers addressed different aspects of learner motivation, by using surveys to collect data (Mercaich Sartore, Sollier & Soto 2012; Placci, Barbeito & Valsecchi 2012; Tuero et al. 2012). The first study explored the motivations that led 2012 Year 1 TES to enrol in a teacher training programme and sought to establish whether that initial motivation was sustained throughout the first term of the current academic year. The authors addressed two issues that might affect learner motivation: expected entry level (B2 according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001)), and the contents of the English Language course. Student motivation was sustained throughout the first term of the academic year and neither of the aspects under study was found to have a negative effect on motivation.The studies by Placci et al. (2012) and by Tuero et al. (2012) involved university students in non-language subjects taking an academically oriented reading comprehension course and focused on student attitudes towards developing reading skills in English. In the former, the study variable was the academic field: humanities or natural science, while the latter compared attitudes of students taking the course for the first time to attitudes of students retaking the course after failing. Natural science students showed a higher degree of instrumental motivation than humanities students, whereas no significant difference was found between first-timers and second-timers in the second study. The three studies observed the motivational construct in specific courses, so that the trends are largely confined to the context in which they took place.

11.3 Beliefs and attitudes

Two of the studies on beliefs and attitudes focus on secondary school learners. Vartalitis & Portesio (2009) analysed the social representation of English as a school subject, with the participation of fifty students from ten schools, five private and five state-run. The

mixed-methods study employed a free association and a pairing technique to find out about the relevance students attach to learning English. All participants were found to share similar beliefs about English as a school subject, regardless of their social background or the type of school. The study found that, although English is regarded as a useful tool, there are negative attitudes towards it, and teachers are assigned a key role in the learning process. The other school-based study (Belmonte & Romano 2008) inquired into the attitudes to writing of a large group of EFL learners at a private secondary school. The student responses to an attitude survey showed that apprehension with regard to writing was not clearly reflected as nervousness or anxiety, but as avoidance behaviour or lack of motivation to write at all. The third study (Barbeito & Placci 2008) described the results of a survey to measure the beliefs of a group of intermediate TES regarding learning content by reading. Despite their positive beliefs and self-confidence in reading, they were found to have a low level of autonomy regarding reading skills and to assign teachers a strong role as providers of knowledge. A detailed analysis of the responses related to the use of strategies also revealed the application of ineffective reading strategies.

Overall, research on learner differences has so far investigated relevant aspects that contribute to the acquisition of EFL. Similar research with larger populations and in different parts of the country would yield a more complete picture. Further research into motivation and attitudes in other institutional settings is also needed.

12. Skills development

Research classified under this topic comprises the four skills. However, most of the papers selected deal with reading and writing, reflecting the interest of local researchers in this area. Research on listening and speaking is scarce, indicating an area in which more work is needed.

12.1 Reading

Delmas, Insirillo & Otero (2007) investigated reading comprehension at a secondary school by analysing how students constructed the main idea of argumentative and expository texts in one sentence, before and after a course designed with a bimodal methodology, using an experimental design. This methodology involved teacher read-alouds before the students read silently and intensively. The results showed that the number of students experiencing difficulties in writing the main idea for argumentative and expository texts decreased from 84% to 30% after the course.

Lapegna & Herczeg (2009) investigated the role of metalinguistic knowledge in reading comprehension in college students enrolled in an engineering course. The students were asked to translate sentences with noun phrases of the type $[A + N + N]$ and hold a discussion as they did so. These student interactions were recorded and took the form of read-aloud and think-aloud protocols in the native language, Spanish, which were then transcribed and analysed. The findings revealed the students' metalinguistic knowledge at all times in the

process. For instance, they used learning and reading strategies, and solved comprehension problems related to bottom-up as well as top-down concerns.

Williams et al. (2008) presented preliminary results from a longitudinal four-year study of the relationship between the development of executive functions and the process of acquisition of the reading skill in both L1 and L2, considering the relationship between socioeconomic level and cognitive demand. Participants were children (5- to 9-year-olds) from three schools. Preliminary results showed that a higher cognitive demand, i.e. more hours of exposure to the L2, did not correlate with higher levels of achievement in reading comprehension in Spanish.

12.2 Writing

Carillo (2010) analysed the three components of argumentative writing established by the theory of pragmadialectics, i.e. types of points of view, types of argument, and types of argumentation structure, in texts written by TES. The results showed little use of these three components, and a marked preference for views expressed as judgments and argumentative structures involving relations of cause and effect. The author suggested that these results should be taken into account when activities promoting the use of a greater variety of argumentative resources are designed and put into practice.

Pico (2010) hypothesised that improving argumentative writing skills in Spanish (L1), accompanied by contrastive analysis, leads to improvement in English writing skills. Participants were 49 advanced TES. A pre- and post- test was administered, with one control group. The students' essays were analysed using a taxonomy developed by Ken Hyland (2003). The results indicated that the experimental group, which received training in argumentative writing using model texts in Spanish, showed improvements in grammar and vocabulary in their English essays.

Morra and co-workers have been investigating peer editing and correction in EFL writing at university level for almost 20 years. Morra (2009) investigated the impact of peer correction and peer feedback on 84 compositions written by TES. The results indicated that peer feedback led to a marked reduction in errors. This line of research was later broadened in Morra, Romano & Martínez (2011), a study comparing the effect of traditional and electronic feedback provided by the teacher on student compositions. The results indicated almost no effect for the medium (paper vs online). More recently, Morra, Romano, Martínez & Canavosio (2013) elaborated on this earlier study and presented findings based on an analysis using a taxonomy with the following categories: correct revision, incorrect revision, lack of revision, elimination of text with error, correct substitution and incorrect substitution. The results showed the effectiveness of indirect explicit feedback independently of the medium in which that feedback was provided (paper or electronic) as well as enhanced revision when the students were working electronically.

Overall, research on reading and writing in Argentina is strong, well developed and varied. It encompasses different contexts (primary, secondary, teacher training college) and focuses, and is consistent with the variety and breadth of current research in these areas in other parts of the world. However, there are three specific areas that we have not identified in the material reviewed for this article which could be subjects for future research: the cultural

dimension of reading, the connection between reading and writing (Warschauer, Zheng & Park 2013), and the investigation of reading and writing in digital environments (Warschauer, Zheng & Park 2013), which is incidentally addressed by Morra (2011, 2013) with reference to feedback.

13. FL systems

This topic includes research on how FL systems are learned in relation to the development of linguistic competence (acquisition of vocabulary, grammar and phonology) and pragmatic competence (development of interlanguage pragmatics).

13.1 Vocabulary

Three of the studies on the development of lexical competence inquired into the incidental vs. deliberate learning of vocabulary through extensive reading (Bosch, Breppe & Aguirre 2009; Gómez Laich & Tuero 2009; Leiva & Rojas 2009). The first involved intermediate TES and the second, advanced TES. The aim was to determine whether students who underwent an extensive reading programme in the previous years outperformed those who did not, with regard to their knowledge of vocabulary. A slight advantage was found in the experimental group in both cases. The instruments included different types of vocabulary tasks: gap-filling centred on collocations, connectors and discourse markers in the first study, and text-related activities in the second. The third study involved pre-intermediate TES, the aim being to test gains in word knowledge resulting from two types of reading instruction: reading only and reading plus vocabulary learning activities, or form-focused instruction (FFI) (see Laufer 2005). A vocabulary test designed after the Vocabulary Knowledge Test (Paribakht & Wesche 1997, cited in Gómez Laich & Tuero 2009) was used as pre- and post-test. This study also found an advantage for the experimental group and lends further support to the hypothesis that intensive reading plus FFI improves lexical competence.

An experimental study by Insirillo & Adem (2011) and a descriptive study by Tuero & Suárez (2009) looked into other aspects of vocabulary acquisition. The former tests the hypothesis of whether bimodal-type reading instruction involving simultaneous listening and reading affects recognition and/or immediate retention of lexical items. Elementary level students of non-language subjects in a reading comprehension course took part in the study and were divided into experimental and control groups. The pre- and post-test consisted of recognising words from a text through different recognition tasks. The experimental group recognised more words than the control group, which validates the hypothesis that phonological memory aids in the immediate retention of vocabulary items. The second study, anchored in error analysis, concentrated on difficulties encountered by 30 advanced TES when producing lexical and grammatical collocations. The difficulties were operationalised as (a) cause of the mistake as INTERLINGUAL (L1 interference) or INTRALINGUAL (the result of incomplete knowledge of L2 phraseological restrictions) and (b) the type of collocation (lexical

or grammatical). The corpus consisted of 30 argumentative essays in which mistakes were identified according to these two sets of difficulties. Results showed a considerable degree of erroneous collocations over correct ones, with more intralingual difficulties than interlingual mistakes. Students were found to resort to L1 transfer to make up for their incomplete knowledge of L2, especially in lexical collocation.

13.2 Grammar

Research into the development of L2 grammar has employed different designs: experimental (Trigo 2010; Zinkgräf, Castro & García Álvarez 2011), correlational (Oliva 2007), and descriptive (Tuero & Gómez Laich 2008; Rodríguez & Zinkgräf 2009; Castro et al. 2013). The topics focused on different features of verb structures that are difficult for Spanish speakers to acquire: third person singular marker (e.g. *learns*) (Trigo 2010), passive constructions (Rodríguez & Zinkgräf 2009; Zinkgräf et al. 2011; Castro et al. 2013), inaccusative verbs (e.g. *arrive, appear* or *leave*) (Rodríguez & Zinkgräf 2009), and the distinction between tense and aspect involving present and past, simple and perfect (Oliva 2007). These studies showed the effects of different variables: firstly, the kind of corrective feedback provided (implicit vs explicit) (Trigo 2010), secondly, the kind of task (a) mistake detection and correction vs. written personal narrative (Oliva 2007) and (b) summary of a literary text vs personal narrative (Tuero & Gómez Laich 2008), and thirdly, the kind of pedagogic procedure used (input manipulation using input flood and input enhancement/no manipulated input) (Zinkgräf et al. 2011). The subjects in these studies were mostly TES of intermediate (Oliva 2007; Tuero & Gómez Laich 2008) and advanced proficiency (Zinkgräf et al. 2011; Castro et al. 2013). Trigo (2007) studied elementary level learners at a private language school and Rodríguez & Zinkgräf (2009) analysed 9-year-olds at a primary school in an intensive EFL programme.

The results showed the following trends, which further support similar studies conducted in other settings. Trigo (2010) reported that explicit feedback in the form of metalinguistic information improved the use of the 3rd person singular marker more than implicit feedback in the form of recasts. On the other hand, the type of task variable indicated more accurate use of tense and aspect in a text production task than in an error correction test in Oliva's (2007) study, suggesting that the type of knowledge (explicit or implicit) interacts with the task, leading to variable outcomes. The task factor also accounted for the accuracy of the students' writing of summaries as compared to the free writing task in the study by Tuero & Gómez Laich (2008), wherein subjects produced more target-like output in the former. Rodríguez & Zinkgräf (2009) reported interlanguage variability in schoolchildren, who produced erroneous instances of passive voice and accusative verb constructions. The presence of some correct constructions showed that the learners' interlanguage was undergoing a restructuring process. Zinkgräf et al. (2011) conducted a study on advanced students and reported that learners exposed to input enhancement produced more, and more complex, passive constructions than students in the control group. In a related study, Castro et al. (2013) focused on the same constructions by analysing the impact of peer interaction through the study of language-related episodes. The communication and learning strategies used in the interactions of three advanced TES showed that subjects directed their own and their classmates' attention

to the errors made while negotiating the meaning of their message in order to make it comprehensible.

13.3 Phonology

The five papers reviewed are framed within different research designs: descriptive (Leánez & Waasaf 2008; Soler et al. 2013), correlational (Acosta de Galindo & Pérez de Nieto 2008; Ghirardotto & Giménez 2009) and experimental (Luchini 2013).

The descriptive study by Leánez & Waasaf (2008) used an error analysis approach, with the production of weak forms as the core of the inquiry. A perception test and a production test were used to investigate whether focused instruction aimed at helping a group of intermediate TES cope with the use of weak forms improved their oral performance after a period of instruction. The results validated the hypothesis of greater difficulties in the perception and production of weak forms than of strong forms. The findings of this study are consistent with those in the study by Soler et al. (2013), who focused on the attention that teachers give to pronunciation with regard to macro level features such as general intelligibility or fluency and micro level features such as weak forms in student assessment. Six instructors evaluated the oral performance of 30 advanced TES. It was found that students produced micro level features far less proficiently than macro level features: fluency, intelligibility and communicative efficiency were rated best, whereas the production of consonant and vowel sounds received the lowest ratings.

The correlational studies considered two different variables: status of the target language for the listener (foreign language or mother tongue) and task type. Acosta de Galindo & Pérez de Nieto (2008) studied the difference in perception of meanings conveyed by prosodic features such as pitch, loudness, tempo and rhythm between non-native (a group of intermediate-level TES) and native speakers of English. The task consisted of listening to a story and identifying meanings using a Likert scale. Students and native speakers were found to have a similar degree of comprehension of the meanings conveyed by prosodic features. These findings built the foundation for a future stage of the research: determining the degree to which students apply the features studied when reading an English text aloud. Ghirardotto & Giménez (2009) elucidated the relationship between oral task type and the degree of accuracy in the realisation of some phonological features by a group of intermediate-level TES. The task conditions were a controlled task (reading aloud) and a free task (an oral summary). The results indicated better performance in the controlled task than in the freer task, thus validating the hypothesis that the type of task places different demands on cognitive resources such as attention to form versus meaning.

Luchini (2013) conducted an experimental study to test the focus-on-form approach (FonF) to the teaching of pronunciation in the context of an EFL teacher education programme. The paper reported that there are numerous accounts of FonF in grammar and vocabulary teaching, but that the approach has been under-applied to pronunciation. It focused on the teaching of two suprasegmental features (rhythm and accent placement) to a group of intermediate-level TES, using an experimental group working with a 'communicative component' and a control group undertaking more traditional learning tasks. There was

significant improvement in both rhythm and accent placement in the inter-group comparison. Unfortunately, the nature and quality of the activities used in the experimental group are not described in sufficient detail.

13.4 Interlanguage pragmatics

Two papers described aspects of the pragmatic competence in EFL teachers and advanced TES (Bayona & López Aranguren 2009; Guerra 2013). The first studied pragmatic competence in a distance learning course for professional development based on a Yahoo group for EFL teachers and advanced TES. The focus was on the realisation of requests and the expression of anxiety in computer-mediated communication (CMC). The study of a corpus of 484 emails addressed to the tutors to inquire about academic or administrative matters showed that the participants transferred their pragmatic competence from face-to-face interaction to CMC successfully. The authors described a bicultural component in the texts, for example in the use of L1 thanking conventions, and highlighted the use of paralinguistic elements (emoticons) to mitigate the effect of a strong request. Causes are suggested for the expression of anxiety in CMC, although the realisation of this language function remains unaddressed.

On a different note, Guerra (2013) analysed the expression of modality in letters of complaint written by 20 advanced TES. The study focused on the frequency of use of hedges and boosters as discourse markers as well as related morphosyntactic and lexical resources such as modal verbs, adjectives or adverbs with similar functions. Boosters were found to far outnumber hedges. The author also looked at the data qualitatively by classifying the moves present in the texts according to a scale showing degrees of severity of the complaints and relating them to the use of modality markers, concluding that a lack of awareness regarding the appropriacy of modality markers may threaten effective communication. This leads to significant pedagogic implications for pragmatic competence.

The studies on the learning of the FL systems reviewed tend to be quantitative in nature, so experimental and descriptive studies outnumber correlational studies. Mixed methods would be helpful because they allow an interpretation of the phenomena under study from the students' perceptions of their learning processes.

In conclusion, the studies on the acquisition of the FL systems cover a number of topics that are relevant to the difficulties of Spanish speakers learning English, but concentrate heavily on intermediate levels and above, omitting a number of learning difficulties typical of elementary levels. Studies need to look into contexts other than higher education, where the bulk of research activity into ELT is conducted.

14. Teaching English for academic and specific purposes and related topics

Research on English for specific purposes (ESP) and English for academic purposes (EAP) is probably one of the oldest fields of study in Argentina, with a significant amount of work

currently underway. The fact that many of the articles we have reviewed focus on ESP and EAP is partly explained by the explicit support provided by most Argentine universities in this area, based on the students' need to read textbooks and research articles (hereinafter RA) in English.

Qualitative ESP research by Aguirre & Reinoso Franchino (2008) using Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Martin 1993, Halliday 1994) confirmed that knowledge of specialised ESP lexis helped RA reading comprehension, but that it needed to be supplemented by more general contextual knowledge of the discipline concerned. Similarly, Allemand & Tejeda (2008) used Systemic Functional Linguistics for a small corpus-based study that showed the importance of previous contextual knowledge not only for comprehension, but also for production of RAs in agricultural science, an important field of study in Argentina. Muñoz (2008) also offered a corpus-based study for the analysis of the rhetorical structure of a small number of agricultural science RA abstracts published in international journals. The methodological framework is based on Swales's (1990) concept of the communicative category MOVE. The study showed that, although abstracts in the field of agriculture generally represented the contents typically included in the RA, they did not necessarily follow the MOVE structure and argumentation of other research papers in the hard sciences.

Further research by Aguirre, Mandatori & Ovejero (2009) stressed the importance of raising student awareness of the rhetoric typical of RAs, namely on how findings are supported by previous contributions to the subject. Significant aspects of the reader/writer/scientific community relations were analysed for their contribution to successful reader/writer negotiations. References such as quotations, summaries and generalisations, and the verbs used in those cases were examined in a corpus of scientific RAs. Another relevant paper on the structure of academic discourse is Pérez de Pereyra & Aguilar de Espinosa (2009), which focused on the problem–solution pattern in order to improve reading comprehension skills. By means of a diagnostic pre-test the researchers assessed that very few agricultural science students were able to recognise a problem–solution pattern without prior instruction. They designed an instructional sequence in which they systematised and characterised a range of options adopted by different authors for organising and presenting this pattern.

Swales's work on RAs, which has been very influential in ESP/EAP teaching in Argentina, is once again reflected in a paper by Panza (2011) discussing results from a lexical analysis that determines the lexemes present in different moves in the discussion section of RAs from the field of medicine. The study revealed some of the non-technical lexical words that characterise Swales's moves using a corpus of discussion sections from articles on medical research published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2005 and 2006. The results are of relevance for the design of reading comprehension courses.

Cardinali (2011) published another interesting study examining the use of stance (-ly) adverbs in two corpora of RAs produced by native and non-native speakers of English. The study took the perspective of genre analysis, contrastive interlanguage analysis and corpus linguistics to identify instances of overuse, underuse and incorrect use of such stance adverbs which affect the quality and idiomaticity of RAs in English. The differences were significant for the use of EPISTEMIC and ATTITUDE adverbs, where non-native researchers over-used

cognate adverbs frequently used in Spanish, such as *usually* and *definitely*, and under-used non-cognate adverbs such as *likely*.

González, Gandolfo & Nerguizian (2011) analysed the difficulties related to the acquisition and the processing of causal, consecutive and contrastive connectors by undergraduate students while reading academic texts, confirming findings on the word frequency effect: although explicitly taught in academic courses, connectors such as *however* and *nevertheless* were acquired much more slowly than more common connectors such as *so*, *but*, and *because*. Interestingly, processing difficulties seemed to be relatively independent of the general language level of students. Cieri et al. (2011) analysed oral aspects of academic English, in particular lectures, concerning how social context influences linguistic choices which are, in turn, shaped by the communicative and cultural purposes and expectations of a given discourse community. They examined the macrostructure, lexis, grammar and prosody of lectures in English in different fields of study both from the 'hard' and 'softer' sciences, which led to the design of an interactive CD for self-access and autonomous learning.

Not surprisingly, most of the research in ESP/EAP is firmly anchored in written language, more specifically in reading, albeit sometimes with a view towards literary genres. For example, the paper by Boiero et al. (2011) analysed the effects of integrating literary and scientific discourse in ESP courses. It explored the potential contributions of literary language to the comprehension of basic scientific concepts, as a way of enhancing the ability to make new connections among different domains. The positive impact of the integration of literary and scientific discourse on language acquisition was documented according to the grades on the three exams required to pass these ESP courses.

Reading and writing skills are systematically considered by González, Insirilo & Otero (2011), González (2011), and González et al. (2013). This set of papers presents extensive, detailed empirical research on the difficulties students at the University of Buenos Aires experience when they have to translate academic texts from English into Spanish. The papers present an interesting characterisation of these difficulties and discuss whether they are the result of inadequate reading or writing skills, or both. Two types of problem were found to be of special relevance in the wordings in Spanish: (a) macro level problems related to whether the ideas in the original text in English were interpreted correctly as being restricted and descriptive, or general and abstract, and (b) micro level problems related to cohesion, punctuation, lexis and redundancy. The analyses showed that students experience both types of problem, some concerned with selecting relevant information and establishing relationships between ideas, and others with writing problems in their mother tongue.

In addition, there are a number of EAP/ESP papers related to CALL. MacCormack, Fernández & Remondino (2011) analysed the advantages of using hypermedial reading web-based courseware in ESP courses to enhance learning. They found that using such software promoted more meaningful learning mainly through knowledge building processes and the development of reflective thinking. However, the results of an action research project by Domínguez, Laurenti & Mallo (2011), which analysed the different types of interaction in an online ESP reading course, showed that the inclusion of forums, blogs and chats did not necessarily promote active language learning. Diaz & Quiroga (2011) also explored learner factors, focusing on which of them enhanced L2 engineering students' language learning in

ESP reading classes. An outstanding factor was found to be greater autonomy in the use of newly acquired specialised knowledge.

We began this section on teaching ESP/EAP by mentioning the importance of agricultural science at Argentinean universities. The last paper we mention is also related to agriculture, and involves some aspects of CALL. Belmonte et al. (2011) discussed a technologically mediated pedagogical intervention to teach agricultural science students the characteristics of the hypothetical-real textual pattern in academic discourse, and more notably the use of epistemic modality. The research is firmly grounded in a corpus of scientific agricultural articles consisting of approximately 200,000 words. This corpus was analysed both manually and by means of the software WordSmith Tools, to determine the frequency of occurrence of selected lexical elements and to verify their function as signalling devices for detecting the hypothetical–real textual pattern, and their collocation patterns. Of particular interest is their analysis of pedagogical applications, which included presentation classes and practice activities based on the analysis of two abstracts related to the students' knowledge domain. The presentation and practice included re-reading and awareness-raising activities aimed at identifying and understanding the hypothetical–real textual pattern.

In sum, research on EAP/ESP has been thriving in Argentina because of the status of English as a lingua franca in academic communities, hence the need to provide students with reading skills that will enable them to access international publications. This is reflected by the work on reading being done at many universities. Particularly relevant is the analytical focus adopted for studying important aspects of academic discourses, such as specialised lexis, recurrent grammatical patterns, and rhetorical structures. While the results of research on EAP/ESP are both enlightening and pedagogically applicable, there remains a growing need for more work on writing skills. An interesting path that is being explored in several universities is examining in more subject-specific contexts the kinds of writing skills needed for Spanish speakers to be able to publish in international journals in English.

15. Testing, assessment and evaluation

Research on the acquisition of FL systems is often associated with a broad category including all forms of educational testing, evaluation and assessment. One of the studies reviewed dealt with classroom assessment, while the other two dealt with the evaluation of curricula and educational programmes. Dalla Costa, Gava & Romano (2009) provided an interesting example, assessing the relevance of oral presentations in English language courses for training teachers and translators. The study explored the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the evaluation of these presentations. The teachers completed feedback questionnaires and the students completed self-assessment questionnaires on general structure, voice projection, body language, strengths and weaknesses of the presentation, grammar problems, vocabulary and pronunciation. Interestingly, there was little correspondence between teacher and student perceptions because they assessed the students' communicative performance with different degrees of specificity.

Brizuela & Fernández (2009) compared the English curriculum at selected secondary schools with the proficiency level expected of students beginning an EFL study programme

offered by the School of Humanities at a national university in northern Argentina. The study analysed a corpus of 325 proficiency tests, and found that the three main problem areas were: (1) the nature and scope of contents taught, (2) the degree of student acquisition of those contents, and (3) student competence at the start of university studies. Similarly, Caielli & Rodríguez Sammartino (2009) addressed increased educational opportunities at state-run primary schools in Buenos Aires Province. The study analysed questionnaires on the perceived value of English, which were answered by children, parents, teachers and directors as a basis for designing a new curriculum. Results showed that English was perceived as a highly valued second language that should be included earlier on, at primary levels of schooling, and not only – as is generally the case – at secondary levels.

This focus on different types of assessment for improving educational opportunities is a particularly valuable field of study that suggests many new avenues of research. Problems related to specific learning disabilities, or the nature and extent of student involvement in peer or self-assessment, may usefully be taken up in the future.

16. Materials design and course development

The five articles that analyse materials do so from the perspective of (a) coursebook contents (Davis et al. 2008; Lauría de Gentile, Helale & San Martín 2011), (b) development of reading skills (Puchmüller, Fattori Domínguez & Noriega 2013), (c) use of graphic devices (Liruso, Bollati & Requena 2012), and (d) genre analysis (Boccia et al. 2010). The papers focusing on textbook contents looked at similar textbook features from different perspectives. Davis et al. (2008) applied Critical Discourse Analysis to look at how two textbooks currently used at state-run secondary schools portrayed their characters and the English-speaking world. They claimed that EFL textbooks depicted the dreams, hopes and values of certain social groups at the expense of other less advantaged ones, discriminating on the basis of race, gender and social class. Overall, textbook narratives were mostly about white, middle-class teenagers, usually in the UK or USA. The characters and situations portrayed were far removed from the urban working class learners who used these books, and conveyed an idealised image of the target language communities. The portrayal of these communities in five global and local elementary EFL textbooks was the focus of the contribution by Lauría de Gentile et al. (2011), who explored the cultural issues dealt with in the reading texts, the supporting images, and the text-related tasks. The textbooks were found to differ in the treatment of the target culture and the links made with the learners' cultural identity, offering few opportunities for learners to develop intercultural awareness.

Taking a pedagogic perspective, Puchmüller et al. (2013) analysed the development of reading skills in 13 EFL textbooks used at secondary schools over the past 50 years. The analysis shows how the treatment of reading skills has evolved over time, from viewing readers as passive–receptive in the older books to an interactive view of the reading process in the more recent ones. This evolution may cast light on the practices proposed by EFL textbooks for developing reading skills and may inform materials writers with a view to designing effective reading tasks. Additionally, practising teachers may also profit from these findings as they

may raise practitioners' awareness of good practice in the development of reading. Similar implications are suggested in the studies by Liruso et al. (2012) and Boccia et al. (2010). The former analysed the charts, images and framing devices in six beginner, intermediate and advanced EFL textbooks. Following a functional multimodal approach, the authors described the features that affected the way EFL textbooks communicated with and engaged learners, potentially influencing their willingness to work with the textbook and their attitudes towards the L2 culture. The second study analysed the genre 'letters of complaint' in a selection of EFL textbooks, according to Systemic Functional Linguistics categories (Halliday 1994; Martin & Rose 2003, 2008). It compared texts produced for textbooks to authentic texts in order to explore the degree to which the former included the linguistic and contextual features of texts written by competent users of English for authentic communication. The authors observed differences in the realisation of interpersonal meanings such as attitude, but concluded that the texts in the books were adequate models of text structure.

The two papers on materials and course design focused on primary school learners and students in a course on English for occupational purposes (EOP). In the first, Barboza, Bognanno & Cad (2011) described an experience in developing EFL materials for state-run primary schools. The process began with a needs analysis among practising teachers, which revealed major limitations of the materials currently in use related to learner factors and contextual factors. The authors further discussed the situation of English in the primary school curriculum in the context of a gradual shift to an all-day school schedule and the fact that the teachers in charge had limited proficiency in English. In line with contemporary pedagogy, materials for this context should portray textbook characters reflecting the diversity in classrooms at state-run schools and the situations in which they engage should convey values such as solidarity or acceptance of otherness. The authors also reported on the monitoring and adjustments made. In the second study, Mayol & Villalba (2008) described a customised course on EOP for pilots, focusing on the challenges of writing materials for a highly specific group of learners. Prior to the three-month course, a needs analysis was carried out and content-based instruction was selected as the pedagogical approach that would provide a suitable response to the identified needs of the 12 participants. The effectiveness of the course was evaluated through a task in which participants had to simulate communication with an air traffic controller.

Research in materials development shows a multiplicity of topics, contexts and approaches. Teaching EFL at state-run schools would profit from further analysis and evaluation of materials used in that context, and especially from the development of materials incorporating the use of ICTs. This would be very welcome because it would contribute to improving the quality of ELT in schools, through the implementation of teacher development programmes to suit the needs of practising teachers.

Conclusions

This review article shows that research in ELT in Argentina is broad and varied, and in tune with current international developments in the different specific fields. Given the existing

limitations and difficulties in undertaking research described at the beginning, we believe that this is to be commended. We have also identified several areas in which further work is needed.

Overall, research in Argentina has been conducted mainly in two contexts involving, on the one hand, university students majoring in ELT education, translation or English Studies, and on the other, university students from different areas of research who attend courses in English for academic or specific purposes. Regarding the latter, EAP/ESP has traditionally focused on reading skills, complemented in recent years by a focus on writing skills. This new focus addresses the need of many young Argentine researchers who have to publish in high profile international journals in order for their findings to be shared with the international scientific community. To attain this objective, research writing seminars in English with specially designed materials is a demand that needs to be satisfied. The research into the writing of RAs in different fields of knowledge reported in this article clearly provides a foundation for writing seminars with specially designed materials that respond to the growing need for high quality publications.

Another area where there has been comparatively little research is in mainstream EFL classrooms in schools or language schools. This is particularly important and urgent, given the great effort made in ELT in state-run schools and the need to find out the real needs of students and teachers alike. The needs, preferences, backgrounds, and learning and teaching styles of students and teachers vary widely in Argentina, and are often not taken into account in the teaching materials. In this regard, efforts could be made to prompt courses of action leading to the production of contextualised textbooks that would make the teaching and learning of an FL in general, and of English in particular, a more meaningful task. Another interesting area where research is beginning to develop is in different forms of assessment to improve standards and afford equal opportunities in FL education for students at state schools.

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Given space limitations, titles are given in the original language only. Readers interested in their English translations should contact one of the authors using the email addresses on the first page of this paper.

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