

UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

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**IMPLEMENTING A LANGUAGE AWARENESS APPROACH TO GRAMMAR
THROUGH TOPICS**

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT

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MEDELLÍN

IMPLEMENTING A LANGUAGE AWARENESS APPROACH TO GRAMMAR THROUGH TOPICS

This paper includes a description of the project “Implementing a Language Awareness Approach to Grammar through Grammar”, which was carried out in my teaching practicum from May 2005 to May 2006 at a public school, as a requirement to receive my B.Ed. Degree in Foreign Languages (English, French).

ABSTRACT

This small action research project evaluated the impact of the implementation of a language awareness (LA) approach to grammar teaching in a Grade 9 class in a public coed school in Bello (Antioquia, Colombia). Results indicate that the fact of including a LA approach to grammar instruction does help the learners acquire a better understanding of how the structures work, and prepares them for future integration of those structures in writing. However, the effectiveness of the approach can be influenced by time constraints, and the fact of students having to adapt to a new way of teaching grammar. Notwithstanding, the use of metalanguage in giving explicit grammar explanations, the learners’ readiness to produce language using the targeted structures and the effectiveness of teaching in getting students to integrate those structures are worthy of further study.

KEY WORDS FOR RETRIEVAL

Language awareness, consciousness-raising, grammar.

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PREFACE

This report presents my action research project on developing students' language awareness to grammar through topics at the public school Institución Educativa Comercial Antonio Roldán Betancur (IECARB), in Bello (Antioquia), from May 2005 to May 2006. I am a pre-service teacher-researcher in the teaching practicum of the Foreign Language Teacher Education program of the School of Languages, at the Universidad de Antioquia, in the tenth semester teaching practicum. My project proposal was based on my teaching practicum in the ninth semester, where I had the opportunity to integrate theory and practice about language awareness, to observe my pedagogical practices in a continuous and systematic way, and to reflect on my professional development.

I decided to work on developing students' language awareness, since I wanted to implement a new approach to teaching grammar at the school and give students a chance to learn it inductively, in context, and through topics. The importance of my study lies in its practicality, validity and applicability in other contexts, given that grammar instruction is one of the most common concerns that foreign language educators in Medellín and the Valle de Aburrá have, and it has been viewed as obsolete in current communicative methodologies. I believe that this project may change people's views about neglecting grammar instruction, and I hope I can contribute to the improvement of English teaching in my community.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

The IECARB, is a coed, public academic-vocational high school in Bello, Antioquia, Colombia, which has 2,460 students. According to its mission, it offers students an integral formation in basic competences of commerce, technology and science, and prepares them for the labor market and tertiary education.

I am teaching a Grade 9 English class with thirty-eight students, three hours a week. My CT holds a B.Ed. Degree in Foreign Languages and has taught English in high schools for fourteen years. I began my first semester of the teaching practicum last year with this same group in Grade 8 and another CT who changed schools last year. Although my proposal is based on what I observed in my first semester of the teaching practicum, I am applying my action strategies this year, with the same class and the new CT.

The students in my class are among fourteen to sixteen years of age, twenty-two are girls and sixteen are boys. All of them are Colombian having Spanish as their native language (is), and they have had limited exposure to English.

The syllabi for English in the practicum center are grammar-based, without a methodology to teach English, and indication of a progressive development of English across grades.

STATEMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

This project has its origins in the incongruence I found between my beliefs about EFL teaching and learning and the proposed syllabus and methodology used by my CT to teach English, based on my observations, and my teaching experience with this class.

Through my class observations, I noticed that my CT's use of English in class was minimal and the structure of her classes was primarily to explain a grammar rule deductively, and ask the students to do writing exercises, and translate passages from English into Spanish. The focus is on usage and not use, and there is not a progressive development of English in the curriculum, meaning that students may study the same vocabulary, functions, and grammar in different grades.

Concerning my class observations, I perceived that my students were not very motivated for the English class. Their behavior was passive in terms of voicing their displeasure about the English class methodology but not proposing activities that they would like to do, and their use of English was minimal. They were not exposed to inductive approaches where their language awareness could be raised, and they did not apply what they were taught in their English Classes.

I also saw some problematic issues concerning the syllabus for Grade 8. For example, the names of the units are written in terms of functions, but the content of them is basically grammar items, and there are no specified topics. As well, it is oriented toward the national standardized test ICFES.¹

Once I began teaching in the first semester of the Teaching Practicum, I designed some lesson plans in which my students and I explored a text with embedded grammar items and they were in charge of discovering and talking about them. Most of the students responded very well and expressed that they like to learn that way. Some students told me after one class that they had really liked it and that they were more motivated (personal communication, June 8, 2005; August 10, 2005; August 16, 2005; September 7, 2005; September 20, 2005). I decided to study the implementation of this approach more systematically. I know that people

¹ Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior

have different learning styles, and that language acquisition should be a more exploratory process, and that is why I decided to take actions towards this. My CT manifested that the project seemed very interesting and that she would like to apply a similar methodology in another group in order to change the way grammar has been taught at the school (CT, personal communication, February 16, 2006). Therefore, I adapted the syllabus (see Appendix F) to enable students to learn through topics. According to my own personal beliefs and my educational preparation about teaching and learning foreign languages, I consider that grammar instruction can be also conducted inductively, in context and through topics. This way, English can become more meaningful to students and they can learn more easily.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does a language awareness approach to grammar contribute to students' acquisition of grammar knowledge needed for communication?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This theoretical review presents the concepts and some theories that support this study. First, I give a definition of grammar and a rationale for teaching it. Second, I define language awareness (LA) within an intensive grammar approach, and provide its rationale, principles, objectives, classroom procedures, and strands of thought concerning explicit and implicit considerations for the classroom. Finally, I present a final consideration of to what extent grammar is needed for communication, and how it can be developed in learners.

Throughout this paper, grammar will be defined according to two theoreticians. Weaver (1996, p. 251) states three meanings of grammar: first, as a description of the patterns of language and the patterns themselves; second, as the understanding and use of those patterns; and third, as the study of those patterns. Ur (1996, p. 75) refers to the general definition given to it, as “the way words are put together to make correct sentences”. When considering the teaching of grammar through a LA approach, Ellis (2006) argues that grammar teaching consists of having learners’ attention on a targeted feature so they can understand and produce it. He claims that grammar instruction plays an important role in developing students’ knowledge of a second language if it takes into account the way in which the learners develop their interlanguages. As well, he reports that more attention is paid on the meaning suggested by grammatical forms than on the patterns themselves, since the establishment of connections between form and meaning is basic in language acquisition.

To develop my action strategies, I guided my work by means of an **intensive approach to grammar teaching**, which Ellis (2006) describes as instruction that focuses on one grammatical structure over a period of time, and develops it through several lessons. He claims that studies have shown that intensive grammar teaching can contribute to the learners’ progress toward the acquisition of a structure, and a more accurate use of structures that have been partially acquired.

With reference to the relationships between LA and the existing theories of language teaching, Masuhara (2004) states that there are two main strands: **deductive**, involving teacher explanations of grammar; and **inductive**, including LA, in which the teacher encourages students to discover the grammar.

For the purpose of my study, I will consider only the latter strand, which, according to Carter (2003, p. 64), “refers to the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of

and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language”. The use of a holistic and text-based approach to language is typical in this approach. Likewise, Tomlinson (2003, p. 251) defines LA as “a mental attribute which develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work”. He asserts that a key element of this approach is the fact of having learners discover language for themselves and not taught by the teacher. Finally, Ellis (2004) similarly refers to this approach in terms of consciousness-raising, which he defines as an activity in which the teacher equips learners with an understanding of a determined grammatical feature in order to build up declarative rather than procedural knowledge about it.

In terms of a **rationale** for LA, Hughes (2003) reports that aspects of the Communicative Approach can be developed in a tangible, more holistic, and teacher-friendly framework. These approaches place the learner at the center of the learning process, and value an explicit focus on language structure. Regarding LA **principles**, Hughes (2003) states that students have better learning processes if they are motivated and devote efforts to them. Concerning its **objectives**, Tomlinson (2003) states that LA aims at helping learners to discover the use of language in order to acquire readiness for it. Also, it intends to help learners’ independency and positive attitudes towards language learning in and out of the classroom. Ellis (2004) believes that the aim is simply to help learners know about language, instead of enabling them to perform a structure correctly.

Concerning its **classroom procedures**, LA is first experiential rather than analytical. Learners focus on a specific feature of a text in order to discover and generalize about the use of it, and they test their generalizations by seeking further instances and reconsidering their previous generalizations. Collaboration among teachers, learners, and proficient users of the language is maximized.

In the classroom, the main characteristics of consciousness-raising activities which teachers can follow are presented by Ellis (2004): first, there is a grammar item to focus on and some input that exemplifies it, and learners are encouraged to identify, understand and come up with an explicit rule that explains the feature. If there is misunderstanding or incomplete understanding, more input and explanation can lead to clarification. Finally, learners can be asked to describe the targeted structure.

Ellis (2004) states that consciousness-raising is directed at the formation of explicit knowledge –that which is conscious, learnable, and verbalisable. He asserts that practice in grammar teaching is important for the learners' implicit knowledge that leads to the internalization of language structures, in order to use them in everyday communication. Ellis (2006) reports that this implicit knowledge needs to be made explicit for language use, and he proposes three processes that are involved in the acquisition of implicit knowledge. First, the learner **notices** or discovers a structure in the text. Second, the learner **compares**, this structure with the grammar s/he has already learnt. Third, the learner **integrates** the new structure into her/his mental grammar. Despite the fact that learners may not be developmentally ready to use certain structures freely in communication (Pienemann, reported in Ellis, 2004), Ellis (2004) states the first two processes are not developmentally regulated and involve conscious attention to language. While the third process takes place when the learner is developmentally ready to handle it, conscious-raising results in delayed acquisition.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

To implement and determine the impact of a LA methodology in a Grade 8 EFL public high school class, through topic-based instruction in order to contribute to students' acquisition of grammar knowledge needed for communication.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To identify students' interests and needs regarding topics, language skills, and grammar development.
2. To adapt the Grade 8 EFL grammar-based syllabus to a topic-based one.
3. To contribute to students' acquisition of grammar knowledge needed for communication through a LA approach within topic-based instruction.
4. To raise students' consciousness about the importance of grammar knowledge needed for communication.

PLANNING ACTION

I decided to have a class discussion with students to agree on the kinds of topics that they would like to study during the semester, and to administer a piloted self-assessment grammar questionnaire to students in order to get their perceptions about their grammar needs and knowledge, and their attitudes towards learning grammar, and the new proposed methodology (see Appendix C for reduced version - Self-Assessment Form). I intended to promote LA by teaching grammar inductively through topics with authentic oral and written texts in context,

and **collect** samples of students' work as evidence of their performance (see Appendix G – Performance samples of the students' e-mails). Also, I planned to reflect on my students' performance and this approach, and my personal communication with my students, my CT and my TT by writing class observation or field notes and keeping a teacher journal. I decided to have discussions with my Team Teacher (TT), CT, and students about their perceptions about the methodology during its implementation. The discussions with my TT would be based on **Peer-observations** that focused on the implementation of this methodology with an observation schedule (see Appendix D for reduced version - Observation form). A **Semi-structured interview** with my CT would give me her perceptions about the methodology being implemented. I also realized that my advisor of the teaching practicum seminar would give me important feedback about my instruction during post-observation meetings. These procedures I used to gather data can be seen in my data collection chart (see Appendix B: Data Collection Chart). For the purpose of analyzing data, I planned to use the five stages that Burns (1999) proposes for qualitative, data-driven analysis: **assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes.**

DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIONS

In this section, I explain the actions I took and difficulties encountered in this study. My initial data collection chart had to be modified due to time limitations and constraints in the way the research was carried out. I decided that I did not need semi-structured interviews with my TT, as he gave me interesting and important information after his class observations based on the class observation format. Also, since my CT was not always available to attend our classes and/or stay there from the beginning until the end of the class, I decided to rely on

the information from my TT and advisor. The information that I gathered with the self-assessment questionnaire to students was used for the purpose of planning my instruction. These actions helped me reduce the amount of data I gathered and analyzed.

After I presented my action research proposal to students, I administered the self-assessment questionnaire. All of my students filled it out. The following few weeks, my TT and I designed a proposal for adapting the syllabus for Grade 9. This proposal included topics, functions, and grammar aspects to study English. This tentative syllabus was negotiated with our students in one class session (see Appendix E for part of Grade 9 syllabus proposal – a few units are shown). Students chose fashion, entertainment and technology as the topics to work on during our practicum at the school. After this, by means of discussions with our practicum advisor and by anticipating the time constraints that we could have, we decided to explore only the topic fashion. Our students agreed on this.

Then, we began to plan a series of classes about the topic of fashion. I initially designed a lesson with an inductive approach (including LA) of the grammar aspect –the second conditional- through the chosen topic, which was developed over five classes (see Appendix F: Lesson plan). First, I gave the students a short text about an imaginary situation and asked some of them to read it aloud. Later, I guided them, by means of questions, to discover the common grammar structure: What commonalities do you observe among sentences in this text? Is there a common structure? Which? One of the students, before the others discovered the common pattern, said: “¡Ah! ¡Eso es el condicional!” [Oh! That’s the conditional!] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006). Then, the other students discussed the common structure and gave examples taken from the text. As they mentioned them, I wrote them on the board. When all the examples were in isolation on the board, I asked them to observe and analyze them to see how they were formed. One student said:

“primero está el “if”, luego hay un pronombre” [First, there is ‘if’; then, there is a pronoun] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006). After other students said: “hay un verbo” [There is a verb] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006), I asked them to see how the verb was written. They did not realize that the verb was in the past tense, but I led them to this by showing the verbs in present and in the past, and giving some examples. With respect to the second part of the sentence, some of them said that there was a repetition of the subject and the word “would”. I explained to them what the verb “wear” was and completed their explanations by saying that the complement of that sentence was a group of words related to clothing. I repeated this explanation several times, even in Spanish, and I used various examples, but some students said they had not understood. Thus, a student volunteered to go to the board and use the examples that were written there in order to explain, in Spanish, the formation of the sentences to his classmates. He explained what the rule was and used some metalanguage, for example: sujeto (subject), pronombre (pronoun), verbo (verb), complemento (complement), and condicional (conditional), among others. Then, I checked again for understanding and most of the students said they had understood. One of them said: “Ve, así entendimos más fácil” [You see? Like this we learn more easily!] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006).

After having discovered, analyzed and explained the common structure, I gave my own examples. I wrote the following on the board: If I had money, I would buy a car, If I were you, I would wear jeans, If I won the lottery, I would buy a house. Then, I asked all of them to write an example on their notebooks. When I was reading them, I noticed that many of my students were having trouble using the second part of the structure (I would...). I saw examples like: “If I had money, I would clothes”, or “If I had money, I would to France” (Student, personal communication, March 16, 2006). As I noticed this, I explained again, in

detail, the second part of the structure and I corrected the mistakes that students were making. Then, we constructed a text together as a model as to what the students were going to do. After this, my students wrote and keyed their texts making use of second conditional structures. I monitored how the students did their task and helped with corrections.

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

According to Burns' (1999) stages of data analysis, I coded initially twenty-nine categories of which I considered nineteen for reporting my findings. Out of these final nineteen categories, I was able to classify them under two main areas: implementing the methodology, and others' perceptions about it. My findings were validated with all participants, and no changes were made.

Implementing the methodology

One interesting aspect of implementing the methodology was that I was able to follow all the stages I proposed (based on Ellis' theory, 2004) for fostering students' LA. As reported by Ellis (2006), in intensive grammar instruction those stages take place in several classes that constitute an event and include only one grammar item to be covered. Unfortunately, I was only able to teach a series of lessons that took two and a half weeks with this approach due to various constraints. Some of these constraints were internally and externally driven. Among those external factors, I cite class interruptions and a number of cancelled classes at the school. I consider the personal ones, such as the fact of having a heavy academic schedule at the University, which affected the time I had available to plan my lessons adequately with my

TT. We decided that we would take turns teaching units. Although I was able to design lessons following this methodological approach, my TT shaped his lessons differently. Furthermore, my TT had another focus for his action research project. Due to this, I was only able to gather data for one teaching event, and not over a period of time, which is recommendable for action research.

Regarding the process of developing learners' LA, in the initial stage, the data shows that most of my students were able to notice the existence of the focused grammar item that was exemplified through the input, a written text, which is typical of inductive approaches to grammar instruction. Then, at another stage, some of my students compared that input to their own mental grammar (Ellis, 2004) in both English and Spanish. That was the case of one student, who expressed in the second class, after having presented the input: "Ah! Eso es el condicional!" [That's the conditional!] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006) And another student, who asked my TT in one class: "profe: ¿cómo se dice "me compraría"?" [Teacher, how do you say 'I would buy'?] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006). However, when receiving explicit explanations about the rule, understanding, and articulating it, they struggled to succeed in the task they were performing. It was difficult for them to receive explanations in a different way from what they had been used to. Many of them managed to understand and articulate the rule when one of their classmates explained the targeted feature in the way they were familiar with, which meant using metalanguage. It worked. What is really interesting is that theory suggests not using metalanguage in giving explicit grammar explanations, and, in this case it worked. Another consideration could be the fact that students can collaborate and help each other to understand grammar. Within this approach, it appears that the role of the teacher to explain the grammar rule can be considered for students as well. Given that students may have different proficiency levels in any given

classroom, those who are more proficient and aware of language can share their knowledge and understanding with others. One interpretation would be that the metalanguage which students are used to enabled them to understand the targeted feature. This also reinforces the idea that collaboration among teachers, learners, and proficient users of the language is maximized.

In the process of articulating and integrating the rule, my students made some attempts to do it correctly. For example, one student explained: “primero está el “if”, luego hay un pronombre” [First, there is ‘if’; then, there is a pronoun] (student, personal communication, March 16, 2006), and other students were giving examples like: “If I had money, I would clothes”, or “If I had money, I would to France” (Student, personal communication, March 16, 2006). Then, some clarification was needed to correct the mistakes that they were making, as the theory (Ellis, 2004) suggests. Finally, they were able to produce the grammar item in an authentic language situation with native speakers of English. They used second conditional structures to write email texts to Canadians visiting Colombia (see Appendix G - Performance samples of the students’ emails with this task).

Although Ellis (2004) states that LA aims at helping learners to discover the use of language in order to acquire readiness for it, and to know about language instead of enabling them to perform a structure correctly, my data shows something interesting. Not only were my students able to understand the targeted feature, but they were also able to produce it when I assigned an additional activity.

A final consideration has to do with learners’ developmental readiness. It appears that my students integrated the structure and produced it in a real language situation. Pienemann in his teachability hypothesis (as cited in Ellis, 2004) proposes that “a structure cannot be successfully taught (in the sense that it will be used correctly and spontaneously in

communication) unless the learner is developmentally ready to acquire it". Does this mean that in our case we can talk about successful teaching? Perhaps, giving students more opportunities for them to use this feature in meaningful tasks will enhance their developmental readiness, and help all of them approximate the targeted feature in real language use.

Others' perceptions about the methodology

Positive attitudes

My students, my CT, my TT and my advisor had positive attitudes towards the methodology. Some students said that one of the biggest differences between the old and the new methodology was the use of English most of the time during class periods. Despite adapting to more use of English in the classroom, most students believed they had learnt. Only one said that at the beginning it was difficult to understand what I was teaching. Among the aspects they learnt, they mentioned the following ones: *If I were, I would* (they did not name this structure. They just gave the example); *oraciones imaginarias* (imaginary sentences, *situaciones imaginarias* (imaginary situations). Many students stated that they liked better to use formulas when learning a targeted grammar feature, since they consider them easier and comprehensible (group conference, May 4, 2006).

Students also reported that they learned in a more fun and dynamic way. Hughes (2003) states that learners have better learning processes if they are motivated and make an effort to learn. I think this took place in my classroom. My CT and TT affirmed that having different students reading sentences beginning with the target structure helped students easily grasp it and that the shared reading was a good idea, since it enhanced class participation and

active learning in students (observation reports March 13 and 16, 2006). I noticed that most of my students wanted to participate when they shared their examples for the model texts. In the student group conference (May 4, 2006), students expressed that they were more motivated with these lessons for numerous reasons: “A uno no le da sueño”, “Compartíamos con el grupo”, “A mí el inglés no me ha gustado, pero uno se ve despierto en estas clases”, “A mí me ha chocado el inglés toda la vida, pero me gustó el tema y la forma en que ustedes explican”, “Antes, la clase era centrada en el profesor; ahora, ustedes le ponen más energía” [We are not sleepy, we shared with the whole group... I had not liked English, but I see myself awake in these classes... I have hated English all my life, but I liked the topic and the way you explained... Before, the class was teacher-centered; now, you are more energetic]. My practicum advisor stated that “there is a sense of motivation one can feel from students when they are showing their interest in participating in the writing of e-mails” (observation report, March 23, 2006). Hughes makes reference to this by arguing that LA approaches place the learner at the center of the learning process. They expressed that: “Trabajar así es para echar cabeza” [Working this way is to think]. Additionally, they consider that the new methodology fosters independent learning: “mirando las estructuras que había ahí uno aprendía solito” [By looking at the structures that the text had, I could learn by myself]. They added aspects like: “a mí me gusta más la metodología de ustedes. Siempre perdía inglés y ahora no” [I always failed the English course and now I do not]. As Tomlinson (2003) states, LA intends to help learners’ independency and positive attitudes towards language learning in and out of the classroom.

Concerning planning and resources with this methodology, in an interview with my CT, she stated that she had observed good planning skills and use of resources with this approach. Both my CT and my students qualified the activities and resources as excellent:

“Nunca habíamos tenido un profe que nos trajera almanques, fotos, fotocopias gratis”, “se les veía preparación porque querían enseñar” [We had never had a teacher who brought calendars, pictures, free copies... One could notice that you had prepared your lessons because you wanted to teach] (group conference, May 4, 2006). My practicum advisor (observation report, March 23, 2006) believed that with this methodology, students have a real purpose to use the language with the targeted feature and he suggests giving them more opportunities for meaningful language use.

Rapport between the teacher and students was also cited as important with this approach. Students believed the rapport between teachers and students had been excellent. They stated: “Es muy bueno tenerle confianza al profe y no miedo”, “Cuando uno participaba”, “Lo alentaban a uno”, “Excelente porque ustedes lo entendían mucho a uno, explicaban con paciencia”, “Yo estaba interesada en hacer los trabajos” [It is very good to trust the teacher and not being afraid of him/her... when one participated, they encouraged us... Excellent, because you understood us, you explained patiently... I was interested in doing the activities] (group conference, May 4, 2006). My CT also agreed that our report with our students was very good (personal communication, May 4, 2006).

Difficulties encountered

Students mentioned that they had had difficulties adapting to the new methodology. My students considered that integrating the targeted structure and using the topic vocabulary as difficult: “organizar bien la oración, poner el vocabulario and pronunciación” [to organize a sentence correctly, to use vocabulary and pronunciation] (Group conference, May 4, 2006). One of my practicum advisor’s recommendations was to build students’ vocabulary, since

they seemed not to be familiar with many clothing vocabulary and they were kind of inventing (observation report, March 23, 2006). In my CT's point of view, she wanted me to design a written test in which we could state what our students' learning was exactly and through which they could prepare for national standardized tests. She further added that, although this methodology was good, it takes a lot of time and students have other immediate needs to cover, especially related to national standardized tests, such as Pruebas Saber (Knowledge Tests) (personal communication, May 4, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Including a LA approach to grammar instruction does help the learners acquire a better understanding of how the structures work and prepares them for future integration of those structures in written ways. However, the approach can have certain limitations, such as time constraints (e.g. time for lessons shortened by events at the school), and the fact of students having to adapt to a new way of teaching grammar.

As a result of my findings, I wonder about the use of metalanguage in giving explicit grammar explanations, the learners' readiness to produce language using the targeted structures and the effectiveness of teaching in getting students to integrate those structures. In my opinion, they are worthy of further study.

In my opinion, doing this research was worthy since it gave me the chance to look at grammar instruction differently and consider its inclusion in a topic based syllabus. I believe that having more time to implement this approach and to gather data with more focused data-gathering instruments would lead to a more comprehensive analysis and continuous reflection

related to the purposes of this action research study. Besides, a more active participation of my CT could have been encouraged.

Retaking what my practicum advisor wrote, “I wonder if what theoreticians say about LA can be applicable in an EFL context as naturally as they seem” (observation report, March 23, 2006). I can state that it was partially possible. However, as this was an initiation to this process for both my students and me, it was not easy and as natural as it seems, but it is a valuable exercise to research one’s practice and look for ways to better contribute to this teaching English as a foreign language in Colombia.

REFLECTIONS

Although this experience was a little hard and time-consuming, exploring and stating my beliefs as a language learner and teacher, confronting theory and practice, applying new proposals to EFL teaching in our context, having peer dialogues and feedback, and sharing with others were outstanding aspects that I would remark after having done my teaching practicum. Having taught in a public school for one year gave me insights, some experience, and the courage to keep on working for education in my society, in which I strongly believe.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: GENERAL PLAN FOR TRABAJO DE GRADO

Universidad de Antioquia – Escuela de Idiomas –
 Trabajo de Grado L2/L3 2005/2
 Adriana Isabel Restrepo Pérez
 Tentative general plan for my Trabajo de Grado

WHEN? (Deadline)	WHAT? (Procedure)
May 22	Preliminary pages
May 22	Acknowledgments
May 22	Table of contents
May 22	Abstract
May 22	Key words for retrieval
February 15	Preface
February 15	Context description
February 17	Research problem (description and evidence)
February 28	Literature review
February 17	General objectives
February 17	Specific objectives
February 10	Action strategies + action plan
April 27	Development of actions
March 21	Data collection techniques
From March 21 to May 22	Data analysis
May 1 st	Data interpretation and findings
May 22	Conclusions, recommendations and questions for further research
May 22	Reflection
May 22	Notes
May 22	References
April 28	Appendices
June 2	Final paper

APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION CHART

RESEARCHER: ADRIANA ISABEL RESTREPO PÉREZ DATE: FEBRUARY 15/2006						
RESEARCH TOPIC: LANGUAGE AWARENESS APPROACH TO GRAMMAR / TEACHING GRAMMAR INDUCTIVELY						
RESEARCH QUESTION: How does a language awareness approach to grammar facilitate the acquisition of grammar knowledge?						
PARTICIPANTS: Grade 9A students, César Augusto Murillo (Team teacher), Cooperating Teacher, Adriana Isabel Restrepo Pérez (researcher).						
Data source	What the data is	How to get the data – techniques	Participants	Who gets the data	Where + When to get the data	How often
People: Grade 9 A students	-Students’ grammar needs. -Students’ grammar knowledge. -Students’ developmental readiness to acquire language awareness. -Students’ interests regarding topics. -Students’ perceptions about the new methodology to grammar teaching.	-Students’ self-assessment on their proficiency in L2 grammar -Group conferences (Johnson, 2005) or classroom discussions (Burns, 1999).	Students Me	Me Me	In class, at the institution. In class, after class, at the institution.	Twice, at the beginning and the end of the process. Once, at the end of the process.
People: César Murillo (team-teacher)	-TT’s perceptions about the new methodology to grammar teaching.	-Peer-observations (Observation checklists – Johnson, 2005) (by César). -Individual semi-structured interviews with the TT (Burns, 1999).	TT Me	TT Me	In class, at the institution. Out of class at the institution, at the university.	Once a week during 6 weeks. Once, at the end of the process
People: Cooperating Teacher	-CT’s perceptions about the new methodology to grammar teaching.	-Peer-observations (Observation checklists – Johnson, 2005) -Individual semi-structured interviews with the CT (Burns, 1999).	CT Me	CT Me	In class, at the institution. Out of class, at the institution.	Once a week during 6 weeks. Once, at the end of the process
Documents	-Students’ products or performances. -The syllabus for Grades 8 & 9. -Students’ grades in English in this course.	-Students products or performances (written texts, transcription of audio recordings or oral class activities). (Johnson, 2005) or Documents (Burns, 1999).	Me	Me	In class. At the institution. Out of class.	Once a week, every two weeks.
Me	-My reflection on my role as a teacher. -My role as a teacher itself. -My interpretations on students’ performances and perceptions about the new methodology.	-My teacher-researcher journal (Teacher diary/journal – Burns, 1999). -Field notes (Johnson, 2005).	Me	Me	In class, after class, at the institution, at the University, at home.	Once a week, during 6 weeks.

PROYECTO: IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE UNA NUEVA METODOLOGÍA PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA GRAMÁTICA DEL INGLÉS

**AUTO-EVALUACIÓN
 ESTUDIANTES 9 A – INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA COMERCIAL
 ANTONIO ROLDÁN BETANCUR**

Nombre: _____ **Fecha:** _____

Apreciado estudiante: esta autoevaluación busca que usted evalúe sus conocimientos reales acerca de la **gramática del inglés**. La información que yo recolecte con este instrumento de investigación será utilizada para la adaptación del programa del curso, la planeación de las clases y para los propósitos del proyecto arriba mencionado, tal como se explicó en la carta de consentimiento a los participantes. La información que usted proporcione en esta autoevaluación no afectará su hoja de vida académica en el Centro de Práctica, no será utilizada con fines evaluativos y será confidencial. Por favor, sea honesto.

Instrucciones: *marque con una X en la columna que mejor refleje su situación, utilizando la siguiente escala: 4-Siempre 3-A veces 2-Rara vez 1-Nunca*

Ítems	4	3	2	1
I. Estrategias para comprender o construir textos orales y escritos a partir de mi conocimiento gramatical				
1. Cuando leo o escucho, identifico estructuras o reglas gramaticales.				
2. Uso mi conocimiento acerca de la gramática para comprender lo que leo y lo que escucho en inglés. Por ejemplo, cuando leímos la historia <i>The Turtle and the Rabbit</i> en clase, usé lo que ya conocía acerca del tiempo presente simple para entender.				
3. Cuando he identificado la estructura gramatical en un texto oral o escrito, yo pienso en cómo la uso.				
4. Uso mi conocimiento de la gramática del español para entender la gramática del inglés.				
5. Trato de utilizar la gramática que he aprendido para hablar y escribir correctamente en inglés.				
6. Cuando estoy hablando o escribiendo en inglés y necesito usar una estructura que no conozco o que no soy capaz de utilizar, uso estructuras más simples que ya conozco, o busco ayuda en mis compañeros y/o profesora.				
III. Actitudes hacia la enseñanza/el aprendizaje de la gramática				
30. Entiendo los términos que mi profesora utiliza en la clase de inglés para darnos explicaciones gramaticales, como <i>adjetivos, sustantivos, verbos, tiempos, pronombres, auxiliares, etc.</i>				
31. ¿Cuáles considero que son mis fortalezas como estudiante en cuanto a la gramática del inglés?				

32. ¿Como estudiante, qué aspectos de la gramática del inglés debo mejorar?				
			Sí	No
33. ¿Considero que la gramática es importante para aprender inglés? ¿Por qué? _____				
34. ¿Me gusta aprender gramática?				
35. ¿De qué manera me gusta aprender los contenidos gramaticales que el programa del curso propone? a) Por ejemplo, la profesora explica la regla gramatical y luego hago ejercicios tales como traducciones... Sí ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____ b) O... la profesora da un texto en inglés (oral o escrito) y hace preguntas para que descubramos la estructura común... Sí ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____				
			Sí	No
36. a) ¿Considero que estudiar la gramática a través de la metodología mostrada en la sección b de la pregunta anterior me hace más sensible o más consciente de la gramática del inglés? ¿Por qué?				
b) ¿Considero que de esta manera me preparo más para usar la gramática correctamente cuando hablo o escribo en inglés? ¿Por qué?				

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION FORM

Observer: _____

Date and time: _____

Dear colleague: this instrument is intended to give account on how the steps mentioned in the first column in the chart below are developed in grammar events. Take into account that an event can take place in several classes. Please be honest. Thank you!

Instructions: check with an X, in the Yes/No columns, if the agenda proposed for each grammar event, my teaching, and students responses reflect the steps described in the first column. Then, write comments (your perceptions and students' reactions to the event) in the space provided after each item.

Processes to Grammar Consciousness-raising (Ellis, 2004)	Yes	No
1. There is a grammar item to focus attention on. (Space for comments)		
2. Learners are given material which exemplifies the targeted feature. Say what the material is and describe it. _____		
3. Noticing: learners become conscious of the presence of a linguistic feature in the input. Say how. For example, talking about the use of the structure. _____		
4. Comparing: learners compare that linguistic feature with their own mental grammar in the foreign and the mother tongues. _____		
5. Learners are provided with an <i>explicit</i> rule that explains the feature. _____		
6. Learners understand the targeted feature and show this through participation, work, etc. in class. For example, the teacher asks questions and students answer them and give examples to show their comprehension. Besides, students answer comprehension questions without producing English in oral or written ways. Write evidences (my teacher talk, students' responses, etc.) _____		
7. <i>Clarification</i> is provided when misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure take place. It is given through further material and explanation.		
8. Learners articulate the rule describing the grammatical structure (not mandatory, though). Say how. Provide evidence. _____		
9. Integrating: the learners integrate a representation of the new linguistic feature into their mental grammar. This comes when students use the targeted feature. Provide evidence on students' production.		

Additional comments: _____

APPENDIX E: GRADE 9 SYLLABUS PROPOSAL**INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA COMERCIAL ANTONIO ROLDÁN BETANCUR
PROGRAMA DE CURSO – GRADO 9 A**

UNIT	TOPICS	FUNCTIONS	GRAMMAR
6 FASHION	-Clothing -Colors -Music -Weather -Temperatures -Seasons of the year -Television -Vacations	-Asking about and describing clothing -Talking about the weather -Talking about prices -Talking about vacations -Expressing preferences	-Present continuous -Past tense -Weather/time adjectives -Demonstratives
7 ENTERTAINMENT	-Sports -Games -Talents -Night life -Celebrations (special days) -Weekend activities -Television -Music	-Asking for and giving information about future plans -Talking about and naming special days -Talking about talents and abilities -Expressing likes and dislikes	-Can (abilities) -Going to (future) -Future time expressions
8 TECHNOLOGY	-Internet -Gadgets and machines -Phone calls/messages	-Describing gadgets and machines -Describing imaginary machines -Expressing congratulations, suggestions, requests, apologies, invitations, reminders, and offers through e-mail.	-Conditionals

APPENDIX F: LESSON PLAN**THE SECOND CONDITIONAL**

Objective: Students will be able to give suggestions about clothing and to identify and produce second conditional structures. They will be aware of their use and structure.

Events:**1. Presenting my text**

I will give the students the following text, which I wrote:

Imaginary situations

*Last night I dreamt of going to France. I had problems because I did not know what to wear in that country. I investigated and discovered that: If I went to **Grenoble**, where it's very cold, I would wear a coat, scarves, pants, long stockings and boots. If I went to **St. Tropez**, where it's very hot, I would wear mini-skirts, t-shirts, swimming suits, sandals and a cap. If I went to **Montpellier**, where it's warm and there is a university, I would wear jeans, shirts, a jacket, and sneakers. One of my friends, who lives in France, asked me what he could wear in **Medellín**, because he is coming on vacation. This is what I answered: If I were you, I would wear jeans, shirts, sneakers, and jackets when it's cold and the occasion is informal. If the occasion were formal, I would wear a suit, a tie and elegant shoes.*

Students and I will read it aloud (shared reading). I will ask some students to read the text aloud and I will model and correct pronunciation.

2. Discovering the common pattern (whole-class work)

After having read the text, I will guide students, by means of questions, to discover the common grammar structure. For example: what commonalities do you observe among sentences in this text? Is there a common structure? Which? We will talk about its use and formation.

3. Giving examples (whole-class work) – controlled practice

After having discovered the common grammar structure, I will ask the students to give different examples than the ones found in the text. I will also give some.

4. Modeling next activity (Maria’s family trip to Colombia)

When students have already grasped the grammar structure, I will explain to the students the following activity:

Maria’s family is coming from Canada to Colombia in Eastern Week. They will stay here for 6 days. Their itinerary is like this: Medellín, Santafé de Antioquia, Jericó, Ciudad Bolívar (processions), El peñol.

When I tell this to students, I will show pictures with some notes, like this (then, I will stick them on the walls):

Maria’s nephew: His name is Kent . He is 19 years old. He is a student.	Kent’s Picture
Maria’s niece: Her name is Nadia Maria . She is 17 years old. She is a student.	Nadia’s picture
Maria’s sister: Her name is Nadine . She is 40 years old. She is a musician.	Nadine’s picture
Maria’s mother: Her name is Ada . She is 80 years old. She is a retired nurse. Maria’s father: His name is Allan . He is 80 years old. He is a retired professor.	Family’s picture

The purpose of having those pieces of information about Maria’s family is to let students know those people’s age, gender and profession and think about the type of clothing they like to wear.

I will also put a poster on the wall with Maria’s family’s itinerary, for students to know what kind of clothes people can wear in these places, like this:

Maria’s family’s itinerary: Place: Medellín Weather: warm Place: Santafé de Antioquia Weather: hot Place: Jericó Weather: cold Place: Ciudad Bolívar Weather: warm Place: El Peñol Weather: hot
--

After this, I will ask students the following question:

***According to the places, what would you wear if you went there?
Suggest the kinds of clothes that they would wear in all those places.***

5. Writing a text (whole-class work) – controlled practice

In order to have students answer this question and model the way they can write their own texts, as a whole-class activity, we will write a brief text on the board.

6. Students' performance – guided practice

At the end of the event, students will write e-mails to Maria's family, suggesting what kind of clothes they would wear according to their personal information and the places they are going to visit. They will also ask them the following question: ***If I went/were to Canada, what would I have to wear?***

Students will make use of second conditional structures to write the text. The teacher will monitor how students do their task.

APPENDIX G – PERFORMANCE SAMPLES OF THE STUDENTS' EMAILS

Sample text 1:

*Our names are Juan and Cristian.
If we went to Medellín, we would wear sweatpants.
If we went to Santafé de Antioquia, we would wear t-shirt, short, sneaker and caps.
If we went to Ciudad Bolívar, we would wear pant, shirt and pajamas.
If we went to El Peñol, we would wear sweatpants, sweater, sneakers and caps.*

Sample text 2:

*hello! we are Cristian Ortiz and Camilo Mesa, we are students, how are you? we hope you are OK.
we know you are coming on vacations to Colombia.
we want to give you some suggestion for your trip.
If you went to Medellin, you would wear a blouse , bluejeans, a hat , socks and shoes. Because Medellin is warm.
If you went to sta fe de Antioquia you would wear a t-shirt , a cap, a skirt, sneakers or sandals. Because stsfé de Antioquia is very hot.
If you went to Jericó, you would wear a jacket, a scarf, boots, gloves, and a raincoat. Because Jericó is very cold and rainy.
If you went to Caudate Bolivar, you would wear a dress, a shirt, a skirt, jeans, , and shoes. Because Ciudad Bolivar is warm.
If you went to El Peñol , you would wear a t-shirt, a mini skirt, sandals, and a hat. Because El Peñol is hot.*

Sample text 3:

*Hello! KENT
We are Mateo Ortiz and Manuel Rua, we recommend you that If you went to Medellin, you would wear: t-shirts, shorts, jeans, snickers, socks and pants.

If you went to Santa Fe de Antioquia, you would wear: shorts, cap, sweatpants and t-shirts. Because is Sata Fe de Antioquia is very hot. If you went to Jericó, you would wear: ski cap, jackets, boots and mittens. If you went to Ciudad Bolivar, you would wear the some as in Medellin.*

If you went to El Peñol, you would wear the some as in Santa Fe de Antioquia.

We hope you have a good trip your and all those that will come...We yearn that they are taken very good impression he/she gives all the places that will visit in this wonderful country... Welcome and happy trip.

Sample text 4:

*hello nadine mi name is maite
if i went to medellin and ciudad bolivar,i would wear dressand sandals because the medellin and ciudad bolivar is warm.
if i went to santa fe de antioquia and el peñol,swimming suits and skirts because santa fe de antioquia and el peñol is hot.
if i went to jerico,i would wear sweatpants,sweatshirt,sweater,socks,shoes and gloves because el peñol is cold.*

Sample text 5:

*hello! nadine
we are jennifer carolina velez and astrid jhuliet haramillo, we are 14 years old, we study at institucion educativa comercial antonio roldan betancur in bello-columbia.
If we went to medellin, we would wear jeans, skirts, blouses, dresses, t-shirts, shorts, sandals, boots, sack and shoes.because medellin is warm.

If we went to santa fe de antioquia, we would wear blouses, skirts, dresses, shorts, sandals,earrings, rings and bracelets. because santa fe de antioquia is hot.
If we went to jerico, we would wear sweartshirts, sweatpants, socks, sneakers,t-shirts, gloves, jeans, scarves, ski caps and raincoats. because jerico is cold.
If we went to ciudad bolivar, we would wear jeans, sneakers, skirts, blouses, dresses and sandals. because ciudad bolivar is warm.
If we went to el peñol, we would wear jeans, skirts, dresses, ski caps, sneakers, t-shirts, blouses, sandals and pajamas. because el peñol is warm. Bye*