



# TOP GRADE



## EDITORIAL BOARD

---

Eliana Garzón - Head of the Project  
Cristian Soler - Coordinator of Edition  
Yeraldine Aldana - Assessor

Paula Alejandra Londoño  
Camilo Andrés Méndez  
Nataly Camargo Pineda  
Guillermo Jeréz Bohórquez  
Andrea Vera García  
Alber Josué Forero

## DESIGN

---

Juan Camilo Garzón-PAET

## TOP GRADE JOURNAL

---

ISSN: 2500-8021 (EN LÍNEA)

Biannual Publication

Number 1. April (27-04-2016)

Licenciatura en Educación Básica con Énfasis en Inglés

Facultad de Ciencias y Educación

Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas

Bogotá, Colombia

All rights reserved ©

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

EDITORIAL .....	4
THE DILETTANTE'S BOOKSHELF.....	5
Lost in words .....	6
<i>Lina Bermeo</i>	
El río .....	10
<i>Jairo Hernández</i>	
Matices de la angustia .....	12
<i>David Castro</i>	
A glimpse of heaven .....	15
<i>Dayana Sandoval</i>	
State of misery .....	17
<i>Juan Sebastián Jiménez</i>	
Shadow raven .....	19
<i>Calypso</i>	
La Luna .....	21
<i>Michael Benitez</i>	
Rutinas .....	22
<i>Nidia Andrea Martín</i>	
THE MAGNIFYING GLASS .....	25
Interaction and Social Background during an FLA Process in the Preoperational Stage.....	26
<i>Katherine Briceño &amp; Andrea Jula</i>	
English Teaching to Deaf People through New Literacies Strengthen by Arts.....	32
<i>Karen Cruz &amp; Carol Rosas</i>	
TMG Collage.....	34
<i>Camilo Méndez &amp; Paula Londoño</i>	
ON THE GO.....	37
Venus of Freedom.....	38
<i>Francisco Rodríguez &amp; Shannon Casallas</i>	
Delving into “El Inquilinato”.....	42
<i>Paula Londoño &amp; Alber Josué Forero</i>	

---

# EDITORIAL

---

Top Grade is an electronic student journal that belongs to the Bachelor of Education in English Language (LEBEI) at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. It was born in 2006 as an academic research journal and on its initial period some articles were published on internet as blog entries. Eight years later, there was a new interest in re-opening it. A group of students and a teacher of a literature workshop course had the idea of resuming the journal, attempting to provide it with a more artistic spirit. They therefore took it upon themselves to reinvent their idea of a journal and worked on it in the shadows. In 2015, another idea of reopening Top Grade was undertaken by some other LEBEI students; they were moved by the purpose of fostering the publication of written works that can let the university community know about students' interests and good deeds in formative teaching inquiry. With the remarkable support of a newcomer teacher of English literature as well as with the collaboration of a research teacher of LEBEI, they all started working on this idea of journal, and now they would like to present to their readers the primary product of a team work represented in this first issue.

Top Grade Journal Editorial Board consists of a group of students from sixth to tenth semesters and three LEBEI teachers. They have worked together to make this journal an artistic, research, and cultural communication channel that attempts to mirror the students' productions as an account of their talents, interests, motivations, and knowledge.

Top Grade Journal is designed to provide a space in order to capture their voices in the form of texts

and illustrations. The journal is focused on literature, research, and culture. So, for each one of those main topics, you will be able to see a variety of students' works in the sections of The Dilettante's Bookshelf, TMG: The Magnifying Glass, and On the Go.

The section entitled "The Dilettante's Bookshelf" is devoted to literary creation. In this section you will find poetry and short stories, both in English and Spanish. On the other hand, the section "TMG: The Magnifying Glass" revolves around English Language Teaching research. In this section you will find short research articles about Language Education, as well as a collage which contains pieces of information about research projects that important teachers around the world are developing. Finally, the section "On the Go" is intended to portray the university community life, specifically some of the projects and activities in which students are enrolled in.

The Editorial Board of Top Grade Journal is glad to open its pages to the university community. We give special thanks to Cristian Soler, Anderson Forero, and Juan Garzón for their support, commitment, and guidance in this enterprise. Likewise, we thank those who believed in this project to the extent to send their manuscripts and illustrations; as well as all the teachers, administrators, and people who allowed us to make this first issue possible. This number seeks to become the first step to consolidate this journal as the LEBEI students' journal, to prepare the path for future issues, and to welcome new ideas.



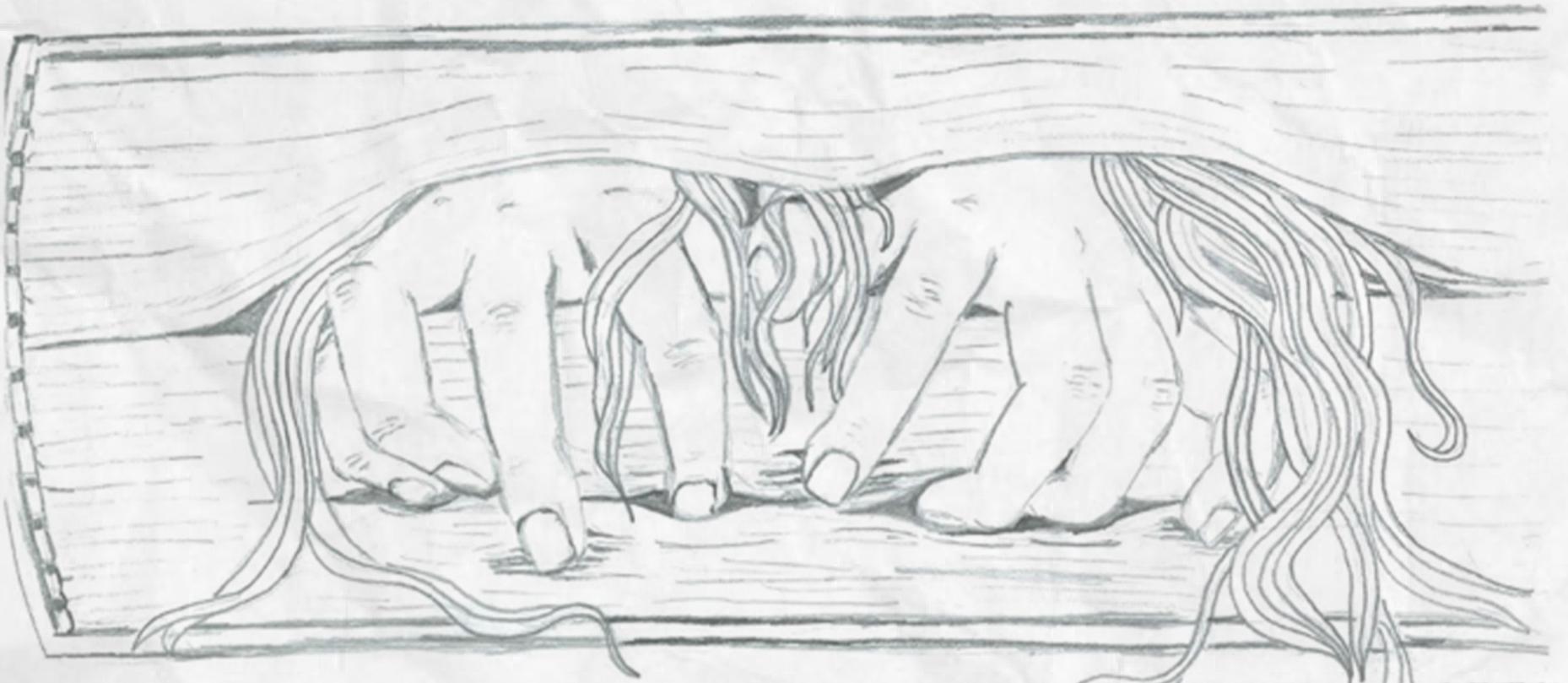
**TOP GRADE**

---

---

THE DILETTANTE'S  
BOOKSHELF

---



# LOST IN WORDS



Image by: Milena Garzón - LEBEI

I won't tell what I was reading, I won't tell who wrote it or when it was published. I won't tell names, places or specific events of the plot. This is not about that. This is about me and what it did to me, what it still does to me. What I will tell for sure is how I found it, how IT found me and where it took me.

I read it for five days in a row. I employed every single moment that I was not sleeping to do so. I skipped eating, bathing, and other daily duties; sometimes because I got so carried away that I lost track of time, some others because I willingly neglected them. It all started one of those common afternoons at the library. After returning some books, I wandered around the vast illuminated halls of the library. I just liked to smell the weirdly intoxicating scent of old books, waiting for the moment in which the library lady asked me to leave for it was closing time. While roving around, I thought I heard a soft clinking coming from the section besides me, across the tall bookshelf I had on my left. I walked towards it but there was not a soul there. The tinkling was fading when I saw a book laying on the floor just a few steps away from me. I picked it up to leave it in one of the tables so that the library lady could stock it in his place later. While I was doing it, I heard a fly buzz. I looked around but saw no fly. Before putting it on the table, I stopped to appreciate the greenish leather cover of the book. It felt smooth and supple. I didn't even stop to check out the title, I just wanted to see how it was on the inside. Before any remarkable sight impression was noticed, the smell came. Oh, the smell, the smell that came out of it. Was it vanilla? I closed it abruptly as I heard the library lady approaching and an interrupted cry escaped out of it. It was not loud; it was more like a soft voice dying.

"We are closing, time to go," she said monotonically.  
"Sure, just a sec" I said, as I left the book on the table.

Did she hear the cry? I don't think so, she would have mentioned it. Wait a second. The bells, the buzz, the cry...That sounds familiar, too familiar indeed. The books I just left! Their words were echoing in my head

rather their sounds were. My imagination was over the top. How come I didn't hear those sounds at my house? Well I did when I read the poems but not like today. There is a difference between hearing things in your head while reading and hearing them for real, isn't it? The cry came out of that book, I'm sure of it. Was it all because of that greenish book? While I was walking towards the lockers, I noticed that my locker card was gone. It must have slipped out of my jean's back pocket when I leaned down to pick up that book. I rushed back in the storage place running into the library lady. Before she could tell me anything I said:

"My locker card, it slipped out of my pocket. I think it's near by the lit section where I was earlier".

"Ok, don't take too long" she said without a drop of interest in her voice. Then she walked away towards the counter.

When I got to the place where the book was, I saw my locker card there. Then looked at the table and the book was there. No bells, nor buzzes, nor cries this time. Just a soft tickle running all over my palm when I took it, I wanted to see if the library lady could still charge it to the system so I could take it home, but when I got to the counter she wasn't there. I called for her:

"Hello, hello?" No one came. I called her two more times but nobody answered. I even knocked with my card against the counter and still no sign of the lady. I really had to go. Mom and dad were waiting outside for me, and we had to go to Jill's play. "Can I just take it with me? Somehow, leaving it there was not an option. Would it be so bad if I take it?" I thought. There was no time for second-guessing so I walked towards the door not stopping at the sensors. No alarm was activated as I passed with the book. How lucky! I got my stuff out of the locker, put the book inside my bag and ran to the parking lot to meet my parents. Nobody was chasing me but I run as if my life depended on it. When I got in the car my dad scolded me for we were running very late. I could feel my heart in my throat; it took a while till my

whole system calmed down from that adrenaline rush.

I had just stolen a book like in that other story I read a long time ago. Well, not exactly like that. To begin with, Bastian was at a bookstore, not a library. He was there hiding from some bullies, or was it because from the rain? Both, I guess. Yet, there are some similarities. For example, we both starved and froze while reading it, we both got confined not to be bothered, we both felt the calling of the book. The great difference lies in the outcome of reading it. He, for instance, went to Fantastica and had great adventures, while me, well... I'm still stuck in here, hoping that one day dad will stop hating me.

Now let's take a look to what it did to me. That day, going to Jill's play, dad let me drive and mom seated at the back of the car holding my bag. My driver license was brand-new. I had not much experience on the streets but dad wanted to fix that by letting me drive for short trips. He used to say I had such a focused mind while driving – but what did he knew by then? The roads were clear; the sunlight was dying on the horizon.

All I heard was smooth jazz playing on the radio, and a soft tap, a rhythmical beat, a bumping beat. It did not come out of the radio, I'm sure. The beat was increasing and it was pressing my ears. I shrugged my shoulders and shook my head in discomfort, I looked through the driving mirror and my mom was holding my book. "What the hell are you doing with it? It's mine!" I barked. Immediately, I took my eyes from the road and looked back, my eyes were burning with anger: "Let it go," I shouted. Then I took my hands from the wheel and snatched the book away from her hands. When I realized what I had done, it was too late; no breaks would have worked then.

The way back home was much better for I was not driving and I got to hold the book in my bare hands to start reading it finally. Time seemed to have frozen for it was still dusk. Was it the same dusk? Was it the same afternoon when I found the book? I don't know, all I know is that the first chapter was exquisite (despite of the funeral I was feeling in my brain). Since then, I could not take my eyes away from those pages, I had to keep reading.

My back got curled up in an awkward arch position (even when I'm not reading it's still shaped like that). The bruises haven't disappeared yet, and I still feel a funeral in my head –though when I read the book the pain tames. At first, I went down to the kitchen for supplies, but hunger vanished gradually. I got confined in my room and sunk into the pleasure of reading, but Jill would enter sometimes to bother.

"You must eat Abbey, if not for yourself, for me, for dad." I felt the concern in her voice and took pity from it. Jill has that power of making me do things I don't want to by softening her voice just like mom used to.

The day was dying before my eyes. I spent hours and hours huddled up in my bed holding the book tightly. No matter how many blankets I had on me, the shivers would never stop. The cold was a buster only when I was not reading it. My fingers used to snug once in a while, and a cold cramp started building up from their tips, traveling up to the commissures of my elbow where my radius and my ulna met my humerus –that made me stretch my arms from time to time.

I think it was the fourth day since I found the book when I realized my room was whiter than it used to. I wouldn't be surprised if Jill entered and painted it while I was reading. I wouldn't have noticed her presence for two reasons: first, the reading eclipsed all that happened in the outside world; second, Jill moves like a cat. Though, I did notice the nurse. I don't know when Jill hired her, but she came every evening and gave me some tea that put me to sleep immediately. They were drugging me to force me to sleep. I resented them for depriving me from my reading but then I remembered, I could not sleep any other way.

Daylight woke me up; I sat on my bed opening the book. I know I had a few pages left and that would be it. As I approached to the end, I heard bells. I heard the tolling of iron bells! The moaning and tolling of iron bells. My shaky hands could barely hold the book; my chest was thrown into turmoil, my pulse run frantically. Was I finishing the book or was it finishing me? Oh, my god!

My heart was beating too fast, too fast... this is it.  
Then silence...

I read the entire book; no more words came after that. I lie on my bed as my breathing eased up, my system eased slowly, my heart didn't burst after all. I close my eyes to savor it. I'm still in here. Life is as dull as before it. I have to return the book to the library but since it is too early...  
"Hi sweetie." Oh, Jill is in my room, I didn't notice when she stepped in. She really moves like a cat.

"Oh, hi Jill!"  
"Did I wake you?" she says apologetically.  
"No, no. I was just thinking that I have to return this book to the library, I've just finished it and it's been a week since I borrowed it, it's time to return it or they'll give me a fine."

"Oh honey, remember we tried to return it and they said it's not theirs? It's not in the system. Besides, you've had that book for a month or so."

"But I found it there. And... no. It was last week." I growl.  
"Honey, remember we talked about this? This is like the fourth time you've read that book. Every time you finish it, you ask me to return it and then you want it back, badly. If you really don't want it here with you, I can take it with me or we can throw it away."  
"No, no. I guess I can read it again." It's true. When I don't have it, it calls me, bringing alive some vivid imagery from other stories I've read. Not having it is worse than having it.

"Ok. It's time to take your meds."  
"No, not today. Today I'm fine" I say calmly.  
"You have to."  
"No, I don't." I snarl.

"Oh Abbey, don't make me call the nurse." She gives me that impassive but yet soft look, extending two white tiny pills and a small cup with water. I roll my eyes at her, but I take them just to stop the argument. Damn Jill and her mothering tone! As soon as she leaves, I'll throw them up. I don't want that shit on my body, it makes me dizzy. It is enough with being confined here.

I look at the greenish book lying on my bed. It's better if she takes it home. He'll read it too and then he'll finally understand what happened in the car, and then he'll stop hating me. He might even come and visit.

"Jill, you know what? Take it with you, give it to dad. I don't want it anymore."

"For Christ's sake, Abbey! We've been here before. Don't do this. If I take it, you'll ask for it tomorrow. Besides, he won't read it and he won't come. Not for now. Just keep the damn book or throw it once and for all!" That is new. Jill is yelling at me.

"Jeez Jill, calm down. And it's supposed I'm the crazy one?"  
The rest of her visit we talk about TV shows we watched when we were kids. Then she brushes my hair as if I was a little girl again. I let her do it because she seems pleased to do so, and it's also soothing. The visit time is over. I stand next to the door of the room as she walks down the hall. There he comes, Dr. Stevens. They stop and talk. I can hear Jill whispering something at him:

"Dr. Stevens, It has started again. I know she gets violent when she doesn't have that book, but every time I visit her is the same story. She doesn't even talk about mom, or asks about how is dad doing. She doesn't know how long it's been since it happened."

"I understand your concern Jill. Frankly, I don't know how she got it again. Nurse Willis took it last week when she was asleep. I'll take care of it once and for all. She has to start accepting reality and that book is not helping her."

"Thanks Dr. Stevens, see you next week. Call me if anything happens."

"Of course Jill, you take care of yourself and your dad, we'll deal with Abbey."

Damn! This two won't give me a break. I have to hide it better this time. Nurse Willis is persistent. I have to read it again before they take it away from me. Luckily, this will be the last time I'll read it. It won't haunt me anymore with all those vivid allusions. The last time it nearly killed me. Perhaps this time it will.

A child's drawing on a yellow background. In the center, a person is drawn with their arms outstretched horizontally. The person has a dark, rounded head and a dark, rectangular body. Below the person, there are several fish drawn in a simple, sketchy style. The fish are scattered around the person, some above and some below. The drawing is done in dark ink or paint. The overall scene suggests a person swimming or floating in water, surrounded by fish.

# EL RÍO

El río que huele a muerto y el muerto que duerme en el río, unidos soñando: uno en blanquearle los huesos y el otro con un cielo sagrado en el que no se sangra, pero lleno de heridas, eterno y seco.

¿Acaso nadie le dijo que ese es el paraíso prometido y ese deshacerse, descomponerse y dislocarse sobre las rocas era el descanso eterno?

El barro recorriéndole los pulmones, el agua siempre helada y los peces que le nadan en la panza se le tragan esa paz aguada y fétida, que de a pocos se le lleva la carne y le desaloja el alma.

De repente, en esa soledad líquida la corriente le trae el toque de otra mano despedazada. El muerto que ahora sueña con un infierno ardiendo, vislumbra los mil cuer-

pos que llueven del cielo fluvial y sabe de los mil demonios que los mandan a nadar. No está solo en el reposo del patíbulo. Pela los dientes porque no hay nada más inútil que bajo el agua llorar.

Pero en la superficie, el río siempre está en calma y las canoas saben del cementerio por el que se desplazan. El canibalismo se ha acostumbrado a ser mediado por los peces y las aguas tienen ese sabor a más allá mutilado. Así le sabe la muerte al desaparecido que se encuentra en el río. Le nutre sus células podridas con el barro y las petrifica para hacer su tumba. Se hace piedra para descansar mientras el río lo baña de olvido.

---

# MATICES DE LA ANGUSTIA

---

### *Silvia decide buscarlo*

Cinco años atrás se habían reunido en un café de Bogotá. Aquel día ella le informó que se casaría con el argentino, que le rogaba no buscarla más; que ahora sí, oficialmente, todo había acabado. Eugenio se sintió destrozado pero fue tal el desajuste de su interior que no supo cómo llorar. Se despidieron en la parada del bus, seguros los dos, de que un universo totalmente nuevo les dictaría los pasos.

Ahora, cuando el argentino había perdido la guerra contra el tiempo, Silvia, con una hija de cuatro años agarrada de su mano y en uno de esos fuertes arranques de sinceridad que la poseían, regresaba al país y levantaba el teléfono en busca de Eugenio. —Tengo algo importante que decirte —fue su único argumento al reconocer la voz de un hombre cansado.

La serenidad de Eugenio la dejó consternada. Le pidió que se reunieran en un viejo restaurante conocido por los dos y él solo supo decir que no había ningún problema en ello, que allí estaría. ¿Qué razón tenía para regresar, para alborotar cenizas confundidas con la mugre de los años? La mujer solo tenía un propósito: comprobar si su destino -aunque se había desviado- seguía estando junto al hombre que le enseñó las cosas más sutiles de la vida. Sentía una confianza extraña, creía ser la dueña de una fracción del corazón de Eugenio. Cuando colgó el teléfono, la hermosa sonrisa de una viuda recuperada se describió en su rostro.

### *Pensamientos de Eugenio en la mañana del reencuentro*

Si llego al restaurante antes de tiempo no voy a entrar a esperarla (sin duda es un acierto que ella haya reservado la mesa que está frente al ventanal). No puedo entrar a esperarla porque las posibilidades de que ella nunca llegue son muchas. Y claro, en estos tiempos de tensa soledad no puedo darme el lujo de sentarme a envejecer en espera de una mujer.

Anoche soñé lo que puede considerarse el anticipo categórico de tal desgracia. En mi sueño yo entraba al restaurante, sonriente y entusiasmado y me sentaba a la mesa reservada sobre la cual había dos copas vacías. Las copas me imprimieron una semilla de desconfianza que me borró la sonrisa. Miraba hacia fuera y era tal la soledad de la calle que pensé que el mundo entero había desaparecido. Asustado, giré la cabeza y reparé en que

no había nadie en ninguna otra mesa. Logré calmarme un poco cuando vi al camarero junto a la cocina del lugar. Levanté entonces la mano para pedirle que viniera pero él, haciendo un gesto de decepción, se dio la vuelta y escapó. Me levanté y fui en su búsqueda, abrí sin escrúpulos la puerta de la cocina, pero allí un silencio absurdo y la ausencia de cualquier olor aumentaron la angustia que ya se estaba apoderando de mí. El camarero no estaba en ningún lado. Salí de nuevo a la sala. La oscuridad que se había tomado el restaurante y la calle me perturbó de tal manera que salí corriendo. Al llegar a la primera esquina reparé en que ella nunca había llegado.

Me desperté espantado, no tanto por la ausencia de la mujer como por la inercia que el mundo adaptaba cuando yo me veía defraudado. Creo que tal anticipación es suficiente para tomar la resolución de no entrar a esperarla. Pero no puedo desconocer otras posibilidades -que bien se sabe pueden ser infinitas-: Si llego al restaurante y la encuentro esperándome, me mostraré apenado. ¿Cuál sería el motivo? Mi sueño.

Sentiría vergüenza de mis deseos reprimidos. No podría mirarla a los ojos sin sentirme un canalla. Arruinaría nuestro reencuentro y mi vida se acongojaría como hace cinco años, cuando la vi por última vez. (Quien quiera juzgarme como un paranoico de turno, desconocerá sin duda los matices más delicados del amor). Es por eso que debo proponer una última posibilidad: no llego nunca. Me quedo aquí, sin esperar nada, sin atormentarme, sin jugar a que todo ha sido olvidado, confiando en que ella también haya soñado algo revelador y comprenda que nuestra mentira, esa necesidad de jugar a herirnos el alma, no solo se apodera de nosotros sino que deforma el mundo de tal manera que nos da miedo habitarlo.

### *El ventanal del restaurante*

Silvia llegó temprano. Los cambios en la fachada del restaurante la sorprendieron. Definitivamente la vida había cambiado. Solo un aspecto la hizo sentir en su elemento: el enorme ventanal en donde varias veces se reunió con Eugenio, con amigos o incluso con la familia para celebrar algún acontecimiento importante, seguía ahí; firme, elegante, dejando ver desde adentro el panorama del mundo. Aunque Eugenio no había llegado, ella entró

y se sentó. Diez minutos después, pidió un té de manzanilla.

Desde adentro, la calle se veía más gris que de costumbre. Los peatones, que años atrás pasaban con la cabeza en alto, ahora caminaban con el cerebro sumergido en sus teléfonos celulares. No se veía ningún ave en el árbol del frente. El mundo tenía una pincelada de angustia encima. Fue entonces cuando la mujer se dejó intimidar por la superstición: ¿Acaso su destino no estaba junto a Eugenio? No, eso no podía ser. Su seguridad regresó y aunque sus manos empezaron a tiritar levemente, volvió a sonreír plena de algo como la confianza.

Mientras atacaba los nervios con cada sorbo, recordó cuántas veces había dejado plantado al susodicho en su vida anterior. Reconoció que había sido injusta, que sus caprichos eran tan hirientes como regulares. Fue entonces cuando contempló la posibilidad de que él nunca llegara. Tuvo suerte de haberlo encontrado luego de volver al país, justo en la misma casa donde por primera vez hicieron el amor. Tuvo suerte de que la voz de Eugenio, aún esperara al otro lado del teléfono. Veinte minutos después, cuando las flores del té yacían desvaídas al fondo de la taza, le dio un último vistazo al ventanal, suspiró y se levantó dispuesta a sitiarse al hombre.

#### *Palabras más...*

Tres golpes en la puerta acabaron con las reflexiones de Eugenio. El hombre volvió en sí, se levantó y abrió como quien se asoma al abismo con curiosidad en vez de miedo. Ahí estaba ella, el rostro un tanto maltratado por el tiempo, por los hechos; el pelo desgastado, la delgadez entronando la forma, la mirada cautiva... —Me alegra verte —dijo ella.

Eugenio apenas parpadeó. Su cabeza se llenó de imágenes de todos los calibres; la ira, la alegría y la vergüenza se cruzaron por su pensamiento como pájaros de distintas especies volando desesperados. — ¿Qué haces aquí? —se atrevió a decir antes que los pájaros chocaran.

Silvia sonrió. Le preguntó si podía pasar y se sentó como si nada, impresionada por todo lo que veía en el lugar. Era como si el espacio estuviera rediseñado para no generar recuerdos. Había cambiado el color, todos los objetos le eran desconocidos, ya no se sentía ese leve olor a canela y páginas viejas que antes imprimía júbilo al

espíritu de quien respiraba. —Tomás murió. Ahora solo estamos mi hija y yo —dijo la mujer y el corazón de Eugenio empezó a sacudirse—. Otra la vez la vida me trae a ti, Eugenio.

El hombre apretó sus manos. Todo el universo se posó en sus espaldas. Silvia, la única mujer que había amado en su vida, la misma que lo había destruido cinco años atrás para escapar al lado de un extranjero desconocido, estaba ahí, transformada en madre, en viuda; sin guardar el más mínimo grado de vergüenza, pidiéndole que olvidara. Se levantó con furia, caminó hasta la puerta, la abrió y le lanzó una mirada cruda a la mujer. Ella, sin perder la sonrisa, se fue acercando hasta él, le puso una mano sobre el rostro, le hizo una caricia lentísima y empezó a llevar su beso hasta los labios de Eugenio, que no se movía un milímetro. Tuvo que ser otra la medida del tiempo en ese instante. De repente, el espacio cobró el aspecto del pasado, todo era como antes, Eugenio cerró los ojos y recordó. Pero téngase mucho cuidado, recordó con la intensidad que solo tienen los dolores más sinceros del alma.

#### *El Recuerdo*

Si alguien lograra acercarse lo suficiente, podría ver y no es exagerado decir que podría escuchar el temblor de la piel de Silvia cuando los dedos de Eugenio surcan su vientre. El tiempo se deja ir a una velocidad que impide saber a ciencia cierta si el amor comienza o termina. La voz de Silvia se puede oír clara aunque ella no diga una palabra: su gemido pone alerta a los dedos de Eugenio que descienden hasta una parte del infierno en donde el pecado se transforma en la paz más pura, una paz que a veces se confunde con la más cruel de las violencias, solo por el hecho de estar consumida por el vértigo del deseo. El temblor aumenta, se apodera de los dos cuerpos y la torpeza se funde en las gotas de sed que la sábana soporta con cada tropiezo, con cada golpe. Se contrae el mundo cuando Dios matiza el amor en un suspiro...

#### *...Palabras menos*

Eugenio voltea la cabeza, fija sus ojos furibundos en los ojos de Silvia -que ahora ha perdido su sonrisa de viuda- y ganando la guerra contra su alma le dice:—Lárgate.

THE DILETTANTE'S BOOKSHELF

---

---

# A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN

---



In the middle of the dark night, you could see her sorrowful eyes. That poor woman, walking without a soul while her life just passed before her eyes, pouring tears as a way to scream, and carrying with the pieces of a past she could not forget. The wind was whispering the most painful song of all, and caressing her hair in such a way that for a moment all the emptiness in her stomach turned into a thousand butterflies. She faced her destiny with the shadows as the only witnesses of her pain, as a warrior, even though the scars she had all over her body kept bleeding memories and regrets, opening wounds that tried to take her down, and a ruthless misery trying to get under her skin.

The fog just made things worse; she could not catch her breath, she was lost and desperate, and the echo of her soreness was messing with her head. She walked for miles and miles before she could find the first door, behind it she found an old mirror; the mirror of the truth. This was not an ordinary mirror - she was not an ordinary woman - and it only reflected the true self of the person in front of it. When she stood there, the only thing that remained were her eyes; big brown eyes with huge pupils and a sense of emptiness that could not be put in words. People said: "Eyes are the window to the soul" I never thought I would see such a painful image. Everything was quiet and she stood there a little bit longer. A few tears later she noticed the deep black of her pupils, that huge and endless black hole in which all her secrets were hidden. Suddenly she had nothing, not even herself.

And I could not do anything; I was just standing behind her, holding her with my broken wings and wiping the tears of her face. I was praying for a miracle. Suddenly, a storm appeared and everything went black; I lost her in the darkness, then she opened the second door, the ocean.

Deep clear waters waiting for her, for her sins. She was lying there, in the middle of the ocean facing the sky and the massive solitude, looking for an explanation or a sign that could help her understand her past and her possible future, wondering where the finish line would be, and if there was a point of no return. From where I was it was difficult to see if there is such thing as heaven and ocean. For me they were one, a giant paradise, or in that moment for her, a mighty hell. Swimming against the tide, tired and hopeless she found a small boat but the more she swam, the further the boat went, and with it her chance of freedom. She was drowning and I could not bear it. I had to take her with me.

The smell of wet wood woke her up along with a deafening noise, a familiar one, her father's voice. She had a huge smi-

le on her face, even brighter than the day I met her. Her eyes were full of joy and she ran into his arms as if there was not a better place in the world. I guess that it is a way to express what humans call love. They found each other in a hug, the seconds it lasted felt like hours for them, and then everything was so quiet that the only noise in the room was the beat of their hearts, and the tick-tock of a clock. She knew it was time to let him go.

She refused to do it, to live without him, but the clock was not going to stop. It was almost dawn, we were running out of time and even though I think I felt her pain for a moment, even though I wanted to help her and put her out of her misery, it was not my fight. The only options were either to stay caught up in that moment or to move on and find out what was at the end of that giant door. Finally, she left him behind even knowing the misery she would have to carry with her. A wound appeared above her chest, one as big and profound as her sorrow, a bleeding. I could not stop, and probably the hardest thing I have done in years.

It was time. I carried her in my arms, an empty body, a bleeding soul and a hopeless heart. I was losing her, after all the battles I was the one surrendering. We walked for a long road where the pouring rain and a cold wind were the witnesses, until we arrived to that huge door whiter than any other she had ever seen, surrounded by a peaceful forest and a phone waiting for her. I put her on the phone and the voice at the other side just made her vanish. I knew that the end was coming; I knew it was me the one he had chosen to walk her down that road. Suddenly she was not just a check on the list, she was different, she changed me.

I could not believe I was holding the hands of the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, a true warrior without any open wound, without sorrow, just a stunning young lady with big bright eyes and hope in her face. She held my hand while she was walking on a road full of roses preparing herself for her last dance. At least that is how I chose to remember her.

She will never know how much pain I carried for her. She will never know I was the one collecting all her tears, her fears, and I will never know how to deal with all this guilt and desolation she left with her departure.

There was nothing else to do. He held her in his arms and the wind played a beautiful melody, every breath was less painful, and every move turned off the brightness of her eyes. He took away her fears, her emptiness, and like a light, she disappeared before my eyes. Now people talk about her, about the woman in the arms of death.

THE DILETTANTE'S BOOKSHELF

---

---

# STATE OF MISERY

---

Can you see the pretty light beyond our eyes?  
So tell me why, all my life I had to lie.  
I know that I am blue like your old favorite song,  
So please sing it to me now that I feel alone.

In the past its words made us cry,  
But I heard that you knew how to fight.  
So, can you show me how to be strong?  
Because I cried all the way home.

I asked to the moon: "Do you see any light in me?  
Why am I so scared to speak?"  
She told me that my fears won't let me be free;  
So I threw them out so I could start to live.

One day I will write to you a love song,  
Telling you about my new flawless hometown.  
And I won't be your sad song anymore,  
Because all my fears will leave my eternal and pretty  
soul.

For now, don't make me cry, don't make me sad.  
The way back home is hard and I don't know why.  
So let's laugh about their boring lies,  
Because we know that this world is not for broken  
minds.

THE DILETTANTE'S BOOKSHELF

---

---

# SHADOW RAVEN

---

---

Image by: Laura Beltrán Arias - LEBEI

I faint and fall behind the mirror,  
The wind blows softly in my face  
And I cannot get off the ground.

I open my eyes with the little strength I have.  
I take a mirror and I'm terrified,  
The repugnance of myself makes me sick;  
I see my wings unfortunately destroyed.

All the thrills from my nightmares came true,  
And the blue nightingale is now a black raven.  
It does not find peace under the light of the brilliant sun,  
And now it prefers to hide in the darkest corner of the city.

The morning is coming,  
And I walk along the streets looking\* for company.  
I enter to a cold and old theater to see  
The danger of this puppet show in which we are immersed.

I feel alone,  
I'm such a fool, wallowing on my own misery.

All I hear in this place  
Is the melancholy of my thoughts  
And a woman at the end of the room,  
Crying in silence.

I see her and remember her face,  
She's the one who falls with me into my own hell.  
I cannot help her. She cannot help me.  
We are just two lost spirits,  
Watching how each other is consumed by pain, rage,  
and life itself.

We painted our days in black,  
A color for desperate hearts,  
With sad melodies on our ears  
And black angels hanging on her door.  
Waiting for the night to come and carry us  
Where we could travel with the stars,  
And there be free, one more time.

---

# LA LUNA

---

Vagina dulce de muchacha  
Que usa como toalla higiénica poemas.

---

# RUTINAS

---

Quien conoce mis pasos, juega, los desvía,  
los vacíos piden desaparecer,  
sumergirse en el aire, cardumen de mares silentes,  
pero regresan punzantes en la voz de la ausencia.

El sol se hace tierra,  
es hora de colgar las sobras del cansancio,  
y entrar en el sonido de las presencias que me habitan  
y esgrimen sus espacios llevando ofrendas en velos de carne.



---

# THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

---

---

# INTERACTION AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND DURING AN FLA PROCESS IN THE PREOPERATIONAL STAGE

---

## ABSTRACT

The effect of interaction and social background on a First Language Acquisition (FLA) process seems to be significant in the preoperational stage (4-6 years old). Through participant observation, we inquired into a child's FLA process. We noticed how the behavioristic techniques may increase the way how children learn to a certain extent. Also, we identified the overall role of the mother and specially her language as an overriding input for children to understand and develop language use patterns. Different activities were proposed to analyze the child's cognitive skills and her expression manners. Lastly, we found that the socio-affective environment plays a central role into language development.

## KEY WORDS

First Language acquisition, Preoperational stage, Socio-affective background, Interaction.

## RESUMEN

El efecto de la interacción y el medio social en el proceso de adquisición de primera lengua parece ser significativo en la etapa pre operacional de desarrollo (4-6 años). A través de la observación participativa, indagamos acerca del desarrollo de la lengua materna en una niña como participante. Logramos notar cómo la técnica conductista puede hasta cierto punto influir en el

aprendizaje. Igualmente, reconocemos el rol de la madre y especialmente su lenguaje hacia la niña como un aducto relevante para la comprensión y desarrollo de la lengua. Se realizaron diferentes actividades con el fin de analizar las habilidades cognitivas y maneras de expresión de la participante. Como resultado, concluimos que el escenario socio-afectivo juega un papel decisivo en el desarrollo del lenguaje.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Adquisición de primera lengua, Estadio pre-operacional, Antecedentes socio-afectivos, Interacción.

## INTRODUCTION

Along this article, some important aspects about FLA (First Language Acquisition) in children are examined. The analysis is carried out considering stages, characteristics, and factors which are involved in this process. In this article, we aim at studying how different issues might be at stake in regards to FLA and after all, we make some reflections about literacy development in children. The child selected was observed for about four hours during three days. The observation was made in the morning and took place in the child's house. In that period of time, we were able to observe and analyze her input, output and interaction. Additionally, we noticed the impact the environment had on this child's FLA process. In synthesis, we could identify the developmental stage in which the child was.

During the observation, we tried to interact with this participant in order to understand her linguistic and socio-affective characteristics. That is why, we suggested her different activities and we made an effort to support her confidence. In doing so, our participant behaved and used language as naturally as possible. In particular, we implemented games and pictures as main materials.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

During the observation process, we had to take into account some theories, concepts and different perspectives which could be useful to interpret the data gathered. These theoretical categories worked as a basis, showing us what characteristics the child should display considering her first language acquisition process. We will apply them in further lines by constructing an informed analysis. The authors that were considered for data interpretation were selected before and after obtaining information on the child's age, abilities, environment, and overall performance in L1. Considering the fact that language and how the humans acquire it has been a topic of interest for many psychologists and linguists, in here the process a child follows to communicate and interact with others in FLA has been understood from different viewpoints.

One of them, relevant for this study, is provided by Pinker (1994). According to this author, the First Language Acquisition process is spontaneously and unconsciously developed by the child. Thus, formal instruction might not be necessary and the child's environment background plays an important role in FLA. Within this, children gradually internalize ways of expression previously observed in interactions with other adults.

First language acquisition has been taken from different perspectives, particularly from behavioristic, nativist, and functional approaches. Despite the fact that each explanation is different from one another, every single approach points out important aspects we have considered as our theoretical starting point in this study.

### BEHAVIORISTIC APPROACHES

Skinner was the forefather in regards to this approach. It

was explained through "classical conditioning", which is a concept defined through categories such as stimulus, response and reinforcement of a given behavior.

#### *Classical conditioning*

The term was created by Pavlov, who in 1903 carried out some experiments which helped him to determine the "stimuli-response" mechanism. This one in turn might be one of the most common resources in children education. This consists of affording a reward, a prize or a punishment sometimes to reinforce a particular behavior. In the case of children education, those prizes or punishments are not necessarily physical, but psychological and related to personal likes, praise, and even gestures of approval as affective tools to communicate.

#### *THE MEDIATION THEORY*

Certain types of learning occur in so far as a link between a stimulus and a response appears. The Mediation theory and others similar to it are associated with behavioristic views. According to Skinner (1957), depending on the way how the child understands, interprets, uptakes, and uses the language, we could determine how suitable the received input was.

### NATIVIST APPROACH

The child has a genetic capacity that predisposes him or her to a systematic perception of surrounding language. The child is able to understand the world through interaction, and it works as a scaffolding tool in FLA. Thereby, some aspects or skills are developed such as meaning, abstractness, and creativity. Children may not simply copy the language that they hear around them. Indeed, children infer rules by discovering. Thus, they can apply those rules in other situations to produce sentences that they have never heard before (Brown, 1994.)

#### *Generalization*

From four to six years old children develop complex syntactic constructions to make up their communication needs (Berko, 1958). This process takes place within the preoperational stage (Piaget, 1955). In this stage, many concepts and grammatical constructions are supported in children, but it usually depends on the child's social

exposure and interaction. As a result, the lack of these conditions causes a delay in social skills development.

### FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES

The functional approach is focused on a child's acquisition of communicative skills. Allis (2002) suggests that the chief manner to understand language is through interaction. It works as a means to be familiarized with the world and know how to act in a specific context. There are some relevant aspects from the "functional approach" in the child's FLA process; these comprise cognition, social interaction, competence, performance, and judging ability.

Bloom (1976) affirms that language is linked to meaning. This can be different from one person to another, depending on the given backgrounds and the divergent world understandings. Cognitive frameworks construction and their connection may facilitate language development (Hummel, 2014.)

#### *Social Interaction and Language Development*

This aspect highlights language as a means to communicate ideas, emotions, and feelings through interaction. For interacting, more than two people seem necessary (Brown, 1994). In addition, Cole (2008) points out the importance of parents' role into language development in a child. *Competence and performance*

Competence is defined as the child's knowledge of the language, in terms of grammar rules and vocabulary acquired through listening and reading (Brown, 1994). On the other hand, performance refers to how a child uses the language based on the knowledge acquired and stored as his/her competence.

#### *Judging competence*

The child has the ability to distinguish a correct and an incorrect language use. The child is able to recognize the appropriate way to express something, because he/she has already acquired the knowledge or he/she is inferring it (Brown, 1994).

### PIAGET'S THEORY

Language and how it works in our brain has been one of the most studied aspects in the psychological field. Piaget (1955) studied how this process was developed. This author states humans go through four "stages" divided according to the child's age: Sensorimotor, Preoperational, Concrete Operational and Formal Operational stages. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the Preoperational stage which is theoretically addressed as follows:

#### *Preoperational stage*

This stage occurs between the ages 2 and 7 years old, and the child who is going through it presents some key features. One of them is centration, defined as the tendency to focus on only one aspect of a situation at one time. Another one is egocentrism, referred to the child's inability to see a situation from another person's point of view (Piaget, 1955.)

#### *Symbolic Representation:*

In 1970, Piaget defined it as the ability to make one thing –a word or an object– stand for something other than itself.

#### *Socio – cultural theory*

Finally, we add this theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) as complementary to the cognitive variant of Piaget's constructivist perspective. This author states that the environment and the amount of interaction is a relevant aspect in an FLA process as a way of learning from others who act as support on the early stages for the child to reach an independent stage. That process is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

### METHOD

This case study is framed within the qualitative research paradigm. That is why we will describe our participant's language performance and interpret it in qualitative terms. Our data collection technique was a semi-structured participant observation, assisted by field notes, in order to describe the child's behavior and interaction with the

environment in terms of how the participant perceives the world and expresses her thoughts through language.

The setting we selected to observe the child was her house, because of viability and in order to contribute to the child's confidence. This place had some materials and tools which helped us to develop the activities designed.

The subject is a six-year-old girl who was observed for four hours during three days. In regards to her personality, our field notes during the observational period shed light on some traits. We were able to see that she is an active girl, who likes asking about everything; hence, she can be labeled as a curious girl. At the beginning of the process, she was a little bit shy but collaborative, so we explained to her what we were going to do. We mentioned key words as "games", "colors", and "tales" to encourage her to participate.

The activities we carried out were intended to identify how some FLA theoretical foundations were evidenced in the child's behaviors and, particularly, in her language use when interacting. One of the activities we implemented consisted of reading a story where there were some pictures instead of words. Here, she was filling the gaps in the story. That activity was intended to explore the subject's comprehension and interpretation of the story. Likewise, we examined her language use in terms of tenses and distinctions between "singular" and "plural" nouns. The subject was involved in different outdoors activities, and since she plays the violin, we considered it might have a positive effect on her cognitive skills; for instance, long term memory and concentration.

## RESULTS

The results may suggest that the child is within the preoperational stage. Indeed, the subject displays certain features which characterized this stage. First, the symbolical thought was identified when she was able to associate a picture with a meaning. Along these lines, egocentrism was evident when we applied the three

mountain task activity, and in the way she expressed about herself. Centration was also apparent when she told us a story about an event in which she got a trauma. Her expression allowed us to notice how a bad experience can have an impact on a child. Experiences in and with the world constitute a key factor in the overall child's development.

As participant observers, we noticed how behavioristic perspectives may work in a child, owing to our participant's attitude before doing each activity. In all situations, she looked at her mother who gave her a physical stimulus or endorsement and thus, she did the activity. In other words, this child seemed to have received some beforehand conditioning (Pavlov, 1903) through her mother's body language that produced a definite behavior as a result.

The child used a set of vocabulary to tell a story. The grammar structures employed showed us how she learnt from the environment by means of exposure and interaction with adults (Cole, 2008). In fact, these factors seemed to implicitly lead the child to the expression of ideas appropriately.

The functional dimension in the child's language and skills took place when she interpreted some signs and gave them a meaning. It showed how she understood the world and how a child acquires the social and conventional rules culturally established in a natural and unconscious way. Another aspect connected with the functional language role, is how social interaction stands for an important aspect in a child's language development. In this case, the mother's relevant role is evident due to the amount of time she spends every day with the child and the consequent effect of her input could be perceived in the child's self-expression.

The assumption we made about what the child already knew (competence) and what the child was able to do (performance), linguistically speaking, was approached while the participant was completing a fairytale with

some pictures. In that activity, we read a story to her. At this point, the child showed comprehension on the plot and she was able to interpret and follow the story in order to identify tenses and the situation told. This is connected with the child's speech production. Through this activity, we could also observe how ZPD took place. At first, we had to provide her with models (a teaching and learning aid), but our intervention was gradually reducing. She needed a short instructional time to do it by herself. A learner's independence in FLA may also be the result of the child's affective traits and his/her cognitive potential. The fairytale was "La Princesa Ana" (Guerro, 2012).

The participant was also asked: "Which is the right way to say: La calor" or El calor?" and she answered: "m::: I think the answer is El calor. ". The girl was able to identify what was the wrong and right way to say something without having declarative knowledge around the form actually used. This could occur because of her ability to make connections between previous and new knowledge that leads to inference.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the influence of the environment on children's language development through observation. We found that the child incorporated easily different expressions used by her mother. The girl looked at her mother waiting for an approval answer; this fact could be related with Chomsky's analogy in which children may not have a deliberate thought to do something. This analogy could be perceived in a child's early age and while the child is growing up, he/she distinguishes her/his mother's voice, in this case the girl just needed her mother's gesture, for approval as above mentioned.

Another important aspect concerning data gathered is the behavioristic model. According to Skinner's viewpoint, the child's behavior has a classical conditioning that works through reinforcement, either positive or negative. In this study, there is a positive reinforce-

ment because some things or habits which are avoided by the girl are not taken away. Instead, prizes are given to the child by her parents as a motivation which is useful in order to increase her interest in learning.

Moreover, the way how the language is used by the person who cares for the girl most of the time must be taken into account. The participant's mother seems to play a major role in her language development and affective traits. Common idioms are used by her mother in daily speech and she interacts with the child as less rude as possible to create a positive bond with her daughter.

### *Piaget's theory*

This theory determines which stage the child is, based on four developmental stages (Piaget, as cited in Wood, Smith and Grossniklaus, 2011). The participant in this study may be in the Preoperational stage. The most visible characteristics of this child were: egocentrism and symbolic thought which are reflected on her learning process and the role she plays in her family.

Vygotsky (1931) discusses the role of others in learning through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It refers to the amount of assistance the child needs in order to carry out an activity. Although the girl needed a minimum of instruction from us to do the activities, family support and especially her mother's contributed to this participant's evident independence throughout the tasks performed.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, we could assert that in an FLA process the amount of interaction between the child and his/her mother, along with certain behavioristic techniques, are relevant for the child's expression on the world through verbal and non-verbal language. Inside this process, socio-affective factors play an important role for conditioning the child's communicative skills and behaviors.

## REFERENCES

- Brown, D. (1994). First Language acquisition. Principles of language learning and teaching. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., pp. 20-42.
- Cole, M. (2008). The importance of parental involvement in language acquisition and activities and techniques to enhance the home-school connection. Independent Studies and Capstones. Paper 347. Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences, Washington University School of Medicine. Retrieved from: [http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1297&context=pacs\\_capstones](http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1297&context=pacs_capstones)
- Hummel, K. (2014). First Language Acquisition. Introducing Second Language Acquisition: Perspectives and Practices., p. 6-25.
- Papalia, D. Wendkos, S. (2009). Skinner B.F. Skinner y el condicionamiento operante Psicología del desarrollo. Mc Graw Hill . (p.75-79). Retrieved from: <http://biblio3.url.edu.gt/Libros/2012/est-Psico/4.pdf>
- Piaget, J. (1955). The Construction of Reality in the Child. Basic Books. Retrieved from: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/piaget2.htm>
- Pinker, S. (1994). The language instinct. Pelican: London. Retrieved from: [http://monoskop.org/images/2/20/Pinker\\_Steven\\_The\\_language\\_instinct\\_1995.Pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/2/20/Pinker_Steven_The_language_instinct_1995.Pdf)
- Wood, K., Smith, H. Grossniklaus, D. (2011). Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development. Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching and technology. Retrieved from <http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/psych406-5.3.2.pdf>

---

# ENGLISH TEACHING TO DEAF PEOPLE THROUGH NEW LITERACIES STRENGTHENED BY ARTS

---

## **ABSTRACT:**

This project has been created to improve a teaching-learning strategy in a context of people with special needs. In this case, deaf people in the “Árbol de Vida” Foundation in Bogotá. The main purpose of New Literacies Project is to change the perspective of inclusive education, creating new ways of teaching and innovating through an active research process which involves the triad of Language-Inclusion-Arts. Firstly, we work with the concept of language as a systemic functional linguistic, based on M. A. K. Halliday theory; secondly, the inclusion/exclusion perspective from a social point of view; and finally, the art perspective as a representation of the self and the world, taken as a result and at the same time as a mean to achieve the foreign language objectives.

## **RESUMEN**

Este proyecto ha sido creado para fortalecer una estrategia de enseñanza-aprendizaje en el contexto de las personas con necesidades educativas especiales; en este caso, el enfoque es en personas Sordas de la Fundación “Árbol de Vida” en Bogotá. El propósito principal del proyecto New Literacies es cambiar la perspectiva de la inclusión en la educación, creando nuevas formas de enseñar e innovar a través de un proceso activo de investigación, el cual involucra la triada Lenguaje-Inclusión-Arte. En primer plano, trabajamos con el concepto del lenguaje, entendiendo lingüística como semiótica social, siguiendo la teoría de Halliday; luego, la perspectiva inclusión/exclusión desde un punto de vista social; y finalmente,

la perspectiva de arte como una representación del ser y del mundo, tomada como resultado y al mismo tiempo como medio para alcanzar los objetivos de la lengua extranjera.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The project has been designed as a proposal to create, develop, and apply a teaching-learning strategy which enables third language (English) learning for the community in Bogotá; having in mind the lack of possibilities that this population has in our educational system, especially the access to Colombian sign language courses or Spanish language courses. We decided to go beyond and to offer an opportunity to those who manage the Colombian sign language (mother tongue) and Spanish language (second language) to learn English (foreign language), using arts as a means to strengthen the content of communication by bringing to the hearing community the genuine thoughts of deaf people from their real context. With this we were able to show that a linguistic code is not a barrier to have a good quality of life and to be recognized as a person who has values, abilities, beliefs and all those aspects that make us members of this globalized society.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

The project has been developed through a pedagogical intervention, which is focused on teaching the basic writing and reading skills of English as a foreign language, through the use of tales, poems, famous artworks

and art activities that are openly related to the contents of reading or writing processes.

Some art activities that have been developed were guided by the collaboration of some professional artists in drawing and painting. With these activities we allowed the students to feel confident with themselves in arts and English learning, opening their minds to creativity and mixing their interests with their ideals and duties. It is important to take into consideration the fact that art has been used in language teaching since ancient times, going back to the most primitive but meaningful ways of learning, and being able to relate several concepts and its representations (words, images, signs, among others). In this way, learning a new language is based on actions and expressions of the self, not imposing new words, but creating a whole new context, applying new terms to daily situations that students live.

To achieve those, the use of materials takes a relevant place into the project. Each one has a different language target, but when all the materials and all the tasks are developed, they reach one big objective, that is: foreign language learning. From the beginning of the course the students have been working with different kinds of texts; from short poems and simple tales, to more structured paragraphs and documents that are taken from an art point of view. We used several tools to conceive a best perspective of English language, and to check reading and writing understanding. Materials like paint, dough, paper, colors, pencils, and other arts and crafts supplies, are used to print the ideas and to show language comprehension and expression.

From an artistic perspective, materials like aqua painting, works of art, photos, images, worksheets, and more structured materials that go beyond art supplies –like direct interactions with graphic art such as visits to museums and videos– were used. All these supplies help to emphasize the language objectives and at the same time allow the self-representation of a person in an artistic way, going beyond signs and words; self-representation that stresses thoughts, ideas, or paradigms of a deaf person trying to show to the hearing community that it can be heard too but with a different system.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The project is intended for the participants to achieve an A1 level of English, according to the Common European Framework, using art as a learning tool that articulates their daily life with a foreign language; also,

providing them with a wide view of the world and considering their personal and professional interests and needs. On the other hand, it also intends to foster artwork as self-representation; especially when, in the case of deaf people, their art creations are very detailed and quite complex to a hearing viewer, because of the meaningful features that appear in their artwork, which deals with the structure of their mother tongue (Colombian sign language.)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Research has showed the lack of chances that deaf people in Bogotá have to apply to different courses that enrich their professional training. According to the participants' experience there is not a place in Bogotá where they can learn English, in spite of their interest in the foreign language.

The art experience of the students contributes to their personal development and enhances them to face society in a different way, building an alternate communication that empowers them out of the inclusion/exclusion paradigm.

## REFERENCES

- Cisneros, M. & Silva, O. (2007) Aproximación a las perspectivas teóricas que explican el lenguaje. Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira: Pereira, Colombia
- Foschia, Fiamma. (2013). La imagen reflejada como reflejo social. Ensayos Sobre la Imagen, Facultad de Diseño y Comunicación. Universidad de Palermo. (P. 35 – 37) Retrieved from: [http://fido.palermo.edu/servicios\\_dyc/publicacionesdc/archivos/473\\_libro.pdf](http://fido.palermo.edu/servicios_dyc/publicacionesdc/archivos/473_libro.pdf)
- Foucault, M. (2002) Vigilar y Castigar. Siglo XXI Editores: Argentina
- Foucault, M. (2004). Abnormal. Collège de France Course Lectures: United States.
- Halliday, M. & Hasan, R. (1987). Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3586740>
- Halliday, M. (1975). Explorations in the Functions of Language. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166818>
- Halliday, M. (1978). Language as social semiotic. The social interpretation of language and meaning. Arnold: London
- Vigotsky, L.S. (2006) La tragedia de Hamlet: la psicología del arte. Fund. Infancia y Aprendizaje.

# TMG COLLAGE

---

In last ASOCOP's annual conference, held at Universidad EAFIT at Medellín, some recognized teacher-researchers were asked to participate in our research section TMG by answering to: What are you researching now, and what for? Let's see what their answers were:



**JOSÉ ÁLVAREZ**

Ph.D. - Universidad del Valle

---

I am currently doing research on language social networking sites for learning (SNSLL) such as Livemocha or Busuu. The study draws on multimodal social semiotics departing from the idea that these new interfaces are multimodal by nature and overall that all communication is multimodal by nature. Our main purpose is to look for other options to offer more opportunities for exposure to language beyond the language classroom.



**MARIANA SERRA**

English Teacher

---

I am doing research on the effectiveness of Praise-Question- Encourage (P-Q-E) commenting guidelines during teacher-written feedback on EFL learners' rewrites. This research project is being carried out in a public educational institution. The present study is aimed to answer the following research questions:

- Does teacher feedback which emphasizes content over form help learners improve their rewrites?
- Are Praise-Question-Encourage (P-Q-E) commenting guidelines during teacher-written feedback effective on EFL learners' rewrites?
- Do learners apply teacher comments when rewriting their drafts?



## PETER SAYER

Ph.D. University of Texas at San Antonio

---

My area is researching the national English program for public primary schools in Mexico. I've been involved with several projects to do an "impact study" of the program to document how the students are learning English, but also to look at the broader impacts of the program on students' across the curriculum and their use of English outside of school. I've also been connecting this work, with language policy, and the implications of the Mexican program more generally, since many developing countries are implementing similar programs, such as Colombia's Programa Nacional de Ingles.



## BRIAN MEADOWS

Assistant Professor in San Martino School  
of Education at Fairleigh Dickinson University

---

The thing I'm researching now is how people define cultural groups in the classroom, the teachers and the students. I'm doing that because I think usually when people talk about culture in the classroom they depend on nationalizing cultures and I think the national unit is limiting, reduces a lot of complexity down this thing, I think we can do much better, I think we should provide students better complex representations of the world.



## GARY BARKHUIZEN

Head of School - School of Cultures,  
Languages and Linguistics University of Auckland

---

I am examining the construct of second language (imagined) identity and how it changes in study abroad contexts. To do so, I draw on data from a large-scale narrative-based study of Hong Kong students participating in study abroad programs (Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott & Brown, 2013)

In the large study, three dimensions of second language identity were found: (1) Identity-related aspects of second language proficiency, (2) linguistic self-concept, and (3) second language-mediated aspects of personal development.



---

ON THE GO

---

---

# VENUS OF FREEDOM

---

Thomas: She taught me the most valuable thing in the world.

Vanda: And what did she teach you?

Thomas: That nothing is more sensual than pain. That nothing is more exciting than degradation.

---

# “VENUS IN FUR”

A MOVIE BY ROMAN POLANSKI (2013)

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: FRENCH

---

“Venus in Fur” suggests a role play based on the exploration of human sexuality. First, in order to contextualize readers and ourselves into the storyline, we attempt to present briefly the artistic context in which the original play was written, breaking boundaries regarding art history and redefining sexuality. Second, we will talk about the most relevant moments where the role play between the main characters within the film directed by Roman Polanski, in terms of understanding their sexuality. Third, we will explore the concept of sexual freedom in the story and nowadays. Finally, we agree with Masoch on the role play within the story as a reflection and invitation to explore in reality a free sexuality. In this text we propose the idea that the film “Venus in Fur” questions human sexuality by establishing human beings as erotic entities. It does not ask about the dichotomy between women and men. On the contrary, from the original work written by Masoch, we find a challenge against the taboos surrounding sexuality.

“Venus in Fur”, directed by Roman Polanski (2013), invites the viewers to take part in an experience in which erotic senses and the intellect delight this narrative. We consider eroticism as a motif in art history, and by recreating the historical context in which Masoch writes “Venus in Fur” (1870) we are allowed to locate the work

in a rebellious era when a blossoming art was developed in central Europe. Thus, during the first decades of the twentieth century literary writers such as Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Ausländer, and Kirschner, wrote poems, short stories, and novels in which eroticism is revealed in images and stories where female characters are passionate and powerful. Furthermore, Klimt, Schiele, and Kokoschka used painting to manifest aesthetic conceptions of femininity in the early twentieth century. And finally, we must mention that cinema, since its blooms in the early twentieth century, was marked by the emergence of vanguards to portray females with moral ambiguity and strength. Characters in movies such as “Metropolis” (Lang, 1927), “Joan of Arc” (Dreyer, 1928), and “El Perro Andaluz” (Buñuel, 1929) reflect on that emergence. In short, we could mention dozens of artists from different fields who promoted this new idea of a female sexuality; nonetheless, the topic should not be limited, but explored in the art by means of a new conception of free sexuality.

Masoch uses the Venus as an inspiration; after all, this is the goddess of love, beauty, sex, fertility, prosperity, and desire. This goddess represents the ambition and the pinnacle of human sexuality by releasing and incarnating the deepest desires of human beings. Imagining

this goddess covered in furs makes her human, available, reachable, and willing to be discovered and experienced by all means, with fixations in several kinds of fetishes. This Venus is mentioned first in Masoch's novel within a dream of a young man who suffers the disadvantages of love. This young man then, looking for comfort in a friend meetst with a story about other young man: Severin, who finds himself begging to be dominated by a young woman, Wanda. At the beginning, she refuses this task (humiliating another human being for pleasure. It might sound strange to some of us since we cannot find pleasure out of it, but others might find this as "suprasensual"), but after a brief study about the many advantages this agreement could bring to her life, she accepts. After a couple of complicated situations Wanda turns herself to a new man whom she desires, and Severin finds himself losing all desire to be dominated by her (probably because she loses her role as the majesty of his desires and becomes a slave of someone else's.)

This story opens up the spectrum regarding what is considered "normal sexuality" and brings from another point of view to our minds the idea of a sexuality that allows the submission by own will and the exploration of sensuality, eroticism, and pleasure. Not to mention that by the time this novel was written, males were seen as the ones with power during sex acts and females the ones who obeyed. There is no intention whatsoever in beginning a polarized discussion about male chauvinism and feminism in past and present times, but to consider how one individual, no matter if it is a man or a woman, can be driven by someone else's longings and lose complete control in order to find satisfaction while experiencing a free sexuality.

However, the reading that Polanski presents of Masoch's work is not built from the victimization of characters. Rather, the work is based on how the encounter of Thomas and Wanda offers the possibility to experience a new facet of their own existences. To illustrate this idea we describe how Thomas and Wanda become a narrative. At first, we are presented with Thomas ( a serious and experienced writer who has adapted Masoch's work into a

play), his mobile phone in hand talking to his girlfriend about the tedium produced by the audition of thirty-five bad actresses, and disturbingly saying that if he put on a dress, he would be a better Wanda. Throughout the film, Thomas assumes the role of Severin. However, the character that troubles him is Wanda (the strong and sexy actress involved in a dense air of mystery who inexplicably displays every now and then an extended knowledge of the novel and the play itself), with her talent and skill to play Wanda while in control and domain of Severin and himself.

Both characters then start a smooth dance around the theater to settle into their characters: Thomas is Severin and Wanda is Wanda. At this point, the inextricable role play takes place leaving the viewer wondering when Thomas and Wanda are playing a character and when they are being honest about their own lives, impulses, desires, fantasies, and fears. How distant is the adaptation of Masoch's work from reality? Does Thomas want to be dominated? Does Wanda enjoy having power over her male counterpart? Who is in charge of the situation?

Because from the beginning Wanda is against the play and the book for its sadomasochism and pornographic essence and thematic, Thomas defends the story appealing to true love: by knowing the deepest and darkest secrets of a lover you can provide understanding and freedom. The breaking point is the acceptance of sexuality as part of human beings and how the individuals must embrace it as it is in order to find happiness and comfort in their existence.

Following Polanski's adaptation, Wanda takes over the story and goes deeper into the play. She is not anymore the innocent one. Wanda who does not understand how by humiliating a man she could take pleasure out of it, is in charge of the situation and her performance borders the sexual tension between Thomas and herself constantly. As they move along in the play, it is almost impossible not to think and wander in the idea of them being involved too much in the story, since Thomas on



Image by: Karen Andrea Silva - LEBEI

his performance of Severin shows his willingness to be dominated by his female counterpart.

Let us make a brief description of Thomas' desire. Thomas is a writer and director who pursues to adapt a novel, which is part of art history, because he thinks that real love between men and women is presented to the public in general on it. Aiming to understand the complexity of this feeling, Thomas feels comfortable with his script and tries to find the perfect woman who can be able to perform the character of Wanda. Then by accident, he finds her coming in, to the empty theater when he is about to leave, almost like a faded hope of finding perfection among dirt. So, he tests Vanda in order to assess her skills and obedience as an actress, having as a result an outstanding performance that follows his guidelines. In correspondence with Masoch's story, both, Thomas and Severin, must allow the female character to guide and command them. This fact allows Thomas to taste a bit of freedom, following his own intuition and passion and letting himself to get lost in Severin's character, taking his body and mind, exploring his feelings, intellectual inquiries and, of course, a sexuality that entails the craving for denigration.

Now we have Vanda leading the story and pleasing Thomas with her performance that turns out to be cruel and relentless as Wanda and him, in exchange, seem to be pleased and happy with it, incarnating a slave with no willingness but just desires of being punished and humili-

liated. This part turns out to give the viewer an insight to whom we consider to be the real Thomas. A pretentious being that denies Vanda's thoughts about his real sexuality being expressed in the novel: *Venus in Furs*. As many men and women who enjoy lascivious sexual experiences and sadomasochist practices before and during the intercourse, Thomas is afraid of facing this truth because there is shame on it since it is not considered as "normal" to the eyes of society. Nevertheless, when he finds in private someone willing to gain control, allowing him to find pleasure in the pain generated to him, a new door is opened with it, infinite possibilities to explore the complexities of sexuality.

"*Venus in Fur*" faces us with our own time and context; this movie points out taboos and boundaries which have been part of our society from past to present times. For instance, despite the current speech about equality and sexual freedom in many scenarios, we can see how self-censorship makes human beings avoid an authentic expression of their sexuality. The alternative view proposed in this specific art work is based on putting a mirror where spectators can explore their own sexual stories and fantasies. As a result, when viewers have the chance to explore this story about sexual freedom, starting from their own fears, desires, taboos, dreams, feelings, and ideas, they are able to discover themselves as erotic and sexual subjects willing to explore and experiment sexuality without restrictions.

---

# DELVING INTO “EL INQUILINATO”

---

Life, social criticism, art and friendship, in the shape of theatre opened us their doors during two Saturdays, letting us know the details of an interesting and sometimes hidden world: artists' world; particularly, this one rooted in one of the halls from Casa Jaime Garzón in Egipto Neighborhood, Bogotá. There, the seed-group of an alternative theatre festival called ESE: El Otro festival unveils the nuances of its members' theatrical learning experiences as university students -some of them from Universidad Distrital-, as well as some professionals in other careers. After taking some classes, these young people decided to constitute the seed group under the direction of Givier Urbano, a performing arts master and graduate of our Universidad Distrital who displays an extensive experience in theatre.

Once we entered the place where the group was gathered, our beliefs about this group, integrated by ten people, were demystified. It was not a wide group. Nor they were rehearsing an elitist, foreign theatrical play as Romeo and Juliet. Neither were they congregated in a conventional scenario. Rather, this group of ten people rehearsed a piece of our Colombian culture in a small hall within the white walls of a community house. Their excitement to commence the rehearsal caught our attention, but not as much as that moment when we realized that laughing and chatting ended and were re-

placed by silence and concentration. This young people group started focusing their minds when their bodies followed the rhythm of claps, counting, breathing paces, etc. and everybody assumed the leading role when they all yelled a partner's name. We felt we were witnessing a ritual previous to the acting time that embraced their minds and set them in a parallel reality they all constructed together some time ago.

Apparently, there was something in common that inspired them to share place and time over a year ago. Determined as they were to move the process forward, and us to know more about it, we invited them to tell us their insights on theatre and the impact the seed-group has generated on their lives. Their initial answer was a smile and a proposal of organizing a round-table to start with the conversation. Later, their particular experiences, that have led them to make theatre an invaluable part of their existence, just flowed...

All this process began when this young people group met each other in a drama workshop at Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño. “No todos van a quedar, el profesor decía” Sandra, Laura and Milena expressed openly. Discipline, commitment and strong desires to lose internal fears, and to learn how to “get into other lives” (as they call it), encouraged them to continue and to meta-



morphose the drama group, on their own initiative, into the seed-group, which is intertwined with the different projects namely, MESTIZO and ESE: El otro festival.

Indeed, for the next version of the abovementioned festival, the group is rehearsing the play entitled “El Inquilinato” (The tenement house). This play will be performed for the first time on December, 2015. Since it was the nitty-gritty of the rehearsal sessions on the days we interacted with the group, we wanted to know how they constructed the characters of the play. In this respect, the round-table talk highlighted teacher Givier’s essential guidance in this process, mostly for the flow of ideas that may divert the characters from the original mindset and roles.

Carlos, who plays the role of Euclides, a womanizer and furtive man, explained that he evoked his own personal experiences and feelings to provide the character with close links that can make him feel the acting. On the other hand, Nicole acknowledged the lack of a certain model when building her character: Camila, a revolutionary student who considers violence as the mandatory resource to generate real changes in society. In this sense, although Nicole is a student of a public university, she affirmed that her academic and social environment is often made up by passive and namby-pamby people. For this reason, her character has meant a great challenge,

for she is compelled to leave the comfort zone.

An insightful idea about how to construct a character was shared by Sandra, who plays the role of Gertrudis: by following the teacher’s piece of advice she decided to build Gertrudis’ personality based on a real middle-class-Colombian woman from Villavicencio. Energetically, she told us how this woman represents the prejudices, customs, and a lifestyle of a courageous mother of five children that surprises everybody with her joviality to face trouble everyday. The interpretation of Gertrudis by Sandra provides real samples of the woman behind them both through phrases she uses in the character’s speech such as “Bueno. bueno. Agüita pa’ estas flores”- as the archetypal woman asking for aguardiente. Definitely, we witnessed that Gertrudis has made Sandra challenge her creativity.

Other ideas regarding the construction of the characters were shared by Alejandro, Milena, Laura and Sebastián. The former represents Carla, a homosexual guy. He explained us that he gained inspiration from the Colombian actor Ramiro Meneses and his way of playing a similar role previously. The latter performs Magdalena role, a prostitute that intrigues everybody with the secrets kept in her bedroom. She stated that she has needed to learn the “caleño” accent and exploit that sensuality, which



is sometimes deeply hidden. On the other hand, Laura confessed she had to learn how to live in constant conflict and solitude to act out as Carmen. Finally, Sebastián, who plays the role of Ezequiel, a character full of masks and a frustrated poet, has learned about peasant wisdom in order to find the way to connect this male character to the rural culture –as he wants to do the performance in the scenario- to win the heart of the audience.

As a result of a friendly verbal swap, the members of the group concluded that the role of the theatrical experience, in the seed-group of ESE: El Otro Festival, is highly relevant for them, insofar as it has permitted them: to explore the artistic dimension, especially for those who are novice at theatre; to achieve an emotional balance between their professional and personal self; to establish strong social bonds with new people; and to take a break from their routine.

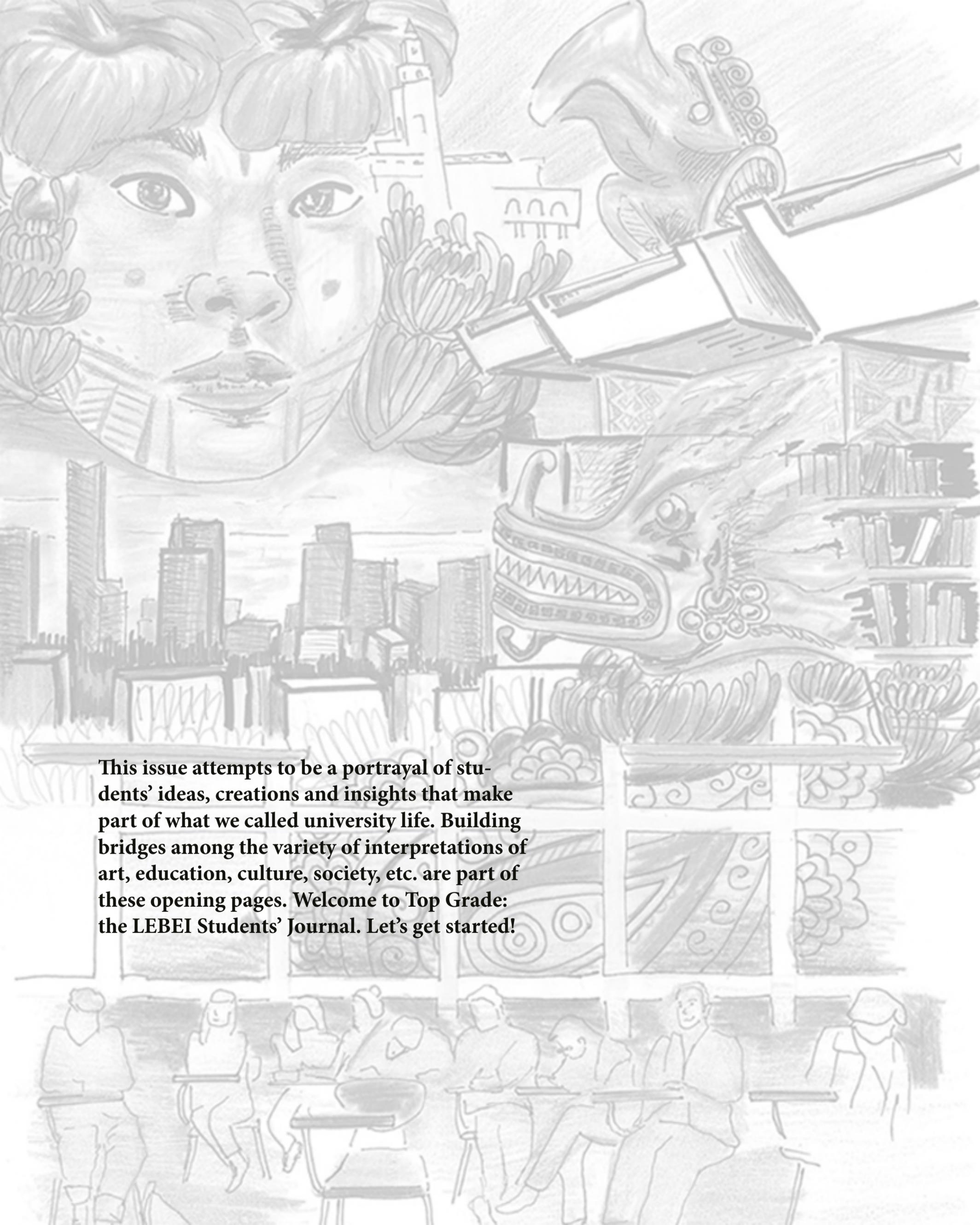
Before our round-table time was about to finish, we decided to inquire about the objectives of the seed-group. To this, the members of the group asserted that their major objective is to reflect social conflicts, which is materialized when provoking doubts in the audience. Thus, they feel the need to create a mirror of reality by adapting and

disguising common sociocultural attitudes and imaginaries, impregnating it with a spark of comedy and drama. The seed-group, as well as ESE: El Otro Festival and MESTIZO, the three projects led by teacher Urbano, are projected to inform its audience throughout a didactic and funny style on the post-conflict in our Colombian context, being the theatrical a potential pedagogical means to do so.

Life, social criticism, art and friendship, in the shape of theatre, said to us goodbye not without making us feel proud of the alternate activities in which youth, especially students of our Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas are enrolled. It is interesting to see that our role as social servers transcends the academy. This brief but enriching experience with the seed-group extends us a tacit invitation: to come up with creative ways to contribute in order to build up a better society by exploiting our talents, and to foster the construction of collectives around our interests.

You can find more information about ESE: El Otro Festival and MESTIZO in its official web page: <http://mestizoitc.wix.com/eseelotrofestival>





**This issue attempts to be a portrayal of students' ideas, creations and insights that make part of what we called university life. Building bridges among the variety of interpretations of art, education, culture, society, etc. are part of these opening pages. Welcome to Top Grade: the LEBEI Students' Journal. Let's get started!**