ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Schema activation through pre-reading activities: teaching proverbs in L2

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ABSTRACT

Although educators are aware that the use of pre-reading activities can prompt schemata and therefore enhance the reading process in a foreign language (e.g., Aebersold; Field, 2007; Johnson, 1982; Langer, 1981), planning an effective pre-reading activity may pose a challenge. In this article, we discuss how students' schemata on proverbs can be activated through pre-reading activities by promoting text structure awareness (e.g., Grabe; Stoller, 2011) and exploring cultural aspects embedded in proverbs in their first(s) language(s). This study proposes a pre-reading activity for the teaching of proverbs in a Portuguese as a foreign language class in a multilingual context, in which minimal interference from the teacher is required and dialogical interaction among students is promoted. The activity was applied in an intermediate class of Portuguese learners in an American university. The pre-reading activity was designed in order to help students establish a well-grounded basis before they encounter proverbs in Portuguese, from both formal and content perspectives. This study also analyzes the students' feedback, collected in an online survey. The analysis shows an overwhelmingly positive response to the pre-reading activity.

Keywords: Schema theory; Pre-reading activities; Proverbs in L2; Portuguese as a foreign language.

A ativação da schemata através de atividades de pré-leitura: ensinando provérbios em L2

RESUMO

Embora os educadores estejam conscientes de que o uso de atividades de pré-leitura podem ativar a schemata dos alunos e, portanto, melhorar o processo de leitura numa língua estrangeira (por exemplo, Aebersold, Field, 2007, Johnson,1982; Langer, 1981), o planejamento de uma atividade de pré-leitura eficaz pode representar um desafio. Neste artigo, discutimos como as schematas dos alunos sobre os provérbios podem ser ativadas através de atividades de pré-leitura, promovendo a sensibilização da estrutura textual (por exemplo, Grabe; Stoller, 2011) e explorando aspectos culturais incorporados em provérbios em sua(s) primeira(s) língua(s). Este estudo propõe uma atividade de pré-leitura para o ensino de provérbios em língua portuguesa como língua adicional num contexto multilingue, no qual é exigida uma interferência mínima do professor e se promove a interação dialógica entre os alunos. A atividade foi aplicada numa turma intermédia de alunos de português em uma universidade americana. A atividade de pré-leitura foi projetada para ajudar os alunos a estabelecer bases bem fundamentadas antes de encontrarem provérbios em português, tanto em perspectivas formais como de conteúdo. Este estudo também analisa o feedback dos alunos, coletados em uma pesquisa online. A análise mostra uma resposta esmagadoramente positiva à atividade de pré-leitura.

Palavras-chave: Teoria da schemata; Atividades de pré-leitura; Provérbios em L2; Português como língua adiciona.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Learning proverbs can pose challenges for second language (L2) learners, since proverbs involve a specific linguistic style and are heavily culturally contextualized. Teaching proverbs in a L2 classroom, on the other hand, can be beneficial; for instance, it promotes insights and understanding of the foreign culture, and it gives learners a more holistic perspective of the target culture (Brosh, 2013). As stated by Funk (2016), the teaching of proverbs in a Portuguese as a foreign language (PFL) class has the potential to create an environment for free speech and to answer the students' desire to know more about the people who speak Portuguese as a first language and their way of thinking.

Reading is an interactive process between the text and the reader, in which L2 learner's perceptions and assumptions have an effect. The reader's background knowledge, for instance, can promote or restrain the understanding of a text (e.g., Dalby, 2010). Therefore, what learners bring to class is an important aspect to be considered in second language teaching.

The construction and activation of schemata, we argue, are dynamic processes that can be realized through interaction among learners, in which the teacher is a guide but does not direct the outcome. Following this assumption, this article proposes a pre-reading activity on the teaching of proverbs in a PFL class as a possible way to help teachers deal with the challenges of learning proverbs in Portuguese. Even though different scholars have employed different types of pre-reading activities (e.g., pronunciation practice, vocabulary study, grammar explanation [e.g., Ajideh, 2006]; class discussion [e.g., Madaoui, 2013]; prediction [e.g., Grabe, 1991]; semantic mapping [e.g., Vacca & Vacca, 1993], among other types), suggestions of pre-reading activities for the teaching of proverbs in a multilingual context is still a new area. This article proposes a different approach from the traditional approaches in pre-reading activities in L2 classes since it involves proverbs, which, in general, may not be taken into consideration for a pre-reading activity in L2, and it involves the application of previous languages learned by the students. This pre-reading activity aims to help learners of PFL activate, reconstruct, and reshape relevant schemata through spontaneous interactions and through the negotiation of ideas. It is expected that the activity will promote the comprehension of proverbs in Portuguese, since learners can connect their background knowledge on proverbs and culture to the new text. In addition, the pre-reading activity aims to motivate L2 learners, increase cultural awareness, promote cultural understanding, and increase students' sense of ownership of the learning process.

The pre-reading activity on proverbs was given to an intermediate PFL class in an American university. Student feedback on the activity was obtained through an anonymous online survey. We argue that the activation of schemata through pre-reading activities can be a dynamic process, which has the potential to develop, change, and enrich students' schemata, as they interact, negotiate, and construct knowledge together in the classroom.

This article begins with a brief review of literature on schema activation and pre-reading activities, followed by a discussion on proverbs in the L2 contexts. Then the procedure for the pre-reading activity for the teaching of

proverbs in a PFL class is presented, followed by the analysis of the students' feedback. Considerations for future research are also addressed.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Understanding the reading process is an important tool for teachers since it gives them direction on how to structure their teaching (Haggblom, 2006). A number of studies on L2 reading (e.g., Goodman, 1976) have shown that meaning does not only come from the text itself, but also from the reader, giving her/him an important role in reading comprehension. The reading process is therefore the result of the interaction between the reader and the text, in which readers try to match their background knowledge with the new information that comes from the text. Various types of knowledge stored in the readers' mind (e.g., language and knowledge of the world and past experiences) can be understood as schemata (Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977). Cook (1997) defined schemata as a "mental representation of a typical instance which helps people to make sense of the world more quickly because people assimilate new experiences by activating relevant schema in their minds" (p. 86). Since we all have different experiences, it is assumed that the nature of schema differs among individuals (Devi, 2010). Our individual schemata, therefore, depend on our background experiences and our cognitive processes, which are constantly being revised as we enter in contact with new information and experiences.

Research on schema theory has greatly helped the understanding of reading. Carrell (1985) has identified two types of schemata: formal and content. Formal schemata consist of language knowledge, such as vocabulary, grammar, register, text organization, rhetorical structures, text genres and particular textual features. Unfamiliarity with the kind of genre, for instance, may cause difficulties for L2 readers (e.g., Gibbons, 2002). Content schemata refer to knowledge of the world, including the topic of the text. If the reader is familiar with the structure of the text (e.g., genre) and with the content information of the text, it is expected that the reader will find the text easier to understand.

Studies on pre-reading activities (e.g., Johnson, 1982; Langer, 1981) have demonstrated the positive effects of activating readers' background knowledge through pre-reading activities in order to promote better understanding of texts. Through activities conducted prior to reading (e.g., skimming, scanning, contextualization, predictions), the teacher can build and promote the activation of the student schemata on concepts contained in the new text.

Aebersold and Field (2007) state that contextualization of the topic of the text can be one of the functions of pre-reading activities in which students build up expectations by inferring what the text content is about. The authors argue that those students who have background knowledge on specific topics will use this knowledge to make predictions about the text to be read.

As an instructor of English as a second language (ESL) for intermediate level, Ajideh (2003) invited students to give their impressions and thoughts on the pre-reading strategies addressed during the academic term. Based on students commentaries, the author concluded that schema-based pre-reading

activities not only help students understand the purposes of the reading, but also help them build a knowledge-base necessary for dealing with the content and structure of the text.

In more recent research, Mihara (2011) presents the results of a study carried out with Japanese university students. One of the goals was to examine the effects of two pre-reading strategies, vocabulary pre-teaching and comprehension question presentation. The results indicate that vocabulary pre-teaching is less effective as a pre-reading strategy because students tend to use dictionaries and, many times, fail to make connections between the context and the words. On the other hand, the presentation of the comprehension questions prior to the reading seems to help the students contextualize the topic of the text.

Our reading habits may be shaped by our cultural orientation, despite idiosyncrasies (Al-Issa, 2006). If our schema is culturally specific and it is not part of the readers' background, his or her content schema might fail (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983) when they encounter texts heavily embedded in cultural norms. Since proverbs are intimately linked to culture, the role of schemata is expected to be congruous with the teaching of proverbs in a L2 context.

3. PROVERBS AS TEXT IN L2

As defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 1), "text is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole." For them, a unified whole refers to texture, which gives the text unity. Texture distinguishes a text from a non-text, and it depends on the interaction between coherence (e.g., the cultural context) and cohesion (how elements of the text are linked together). Although Halliday and Hasan (1976) recognized that distinguishing a sequence of disconnected sentences and a unified text is a question of degree, they argued that, in order to be considered a text, a text needs to have certain internal features (e.g., the interpretation of one element of the text by referring to another). In this article, we consider proverbs as texts since they possess these dimensions of language, which interact in a meaningful way.

The teaching of proverbs has been investigated in second language learning, since it can pose difficulties in this realm, even for those who are advanced learners (e.g., Cieslicka, 2002). According to Fuyin (2003), it is not easy for Chinese advanced learners of English to learn culturally loaded proverbs in English. In her study, she argues in favor of conceptual metaphors and images to learn proverbs. In Fuyin's study, there were three groups of participants; each group learned proverbs through a different method. Group 1 was provided only with proverbs and their figurative meaning. Group 2 was provided with the proverbs, their figurative meaning, and the motivational conceptual metaphor[1]. Group 3 was provided with the same method used in group 2, in addition to images. The results of a one-week delayed test

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[1] In a nutshell, conceptual metaphor refers to the mapping of the source domain (e.g., literal entities in our lives – Ex. a journey) and the target domain (the conceptual domain that we try to understand and from which we draw metaphorical expressions – Ex. love, life). Some examples of conceptual metaphors are *love is a journey; life is a journey.* Conceptual Metaphor Theory was first extensively discussed in *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

on the meaning of proverbs showed that the conceptual metaphor group 2 scored significantly higher than group 1, and that the image group 3 scored significantly higher than group 2. She argues, for instance, that through conceptual metaphors, learners can group proverbs together and "explore the source-to-target domain information, which motivates the understanding of the idioms and proverbs" (p. 225), thus facilitating learning.

Despite the undeniable cross-linguistic differences in proverbs, some scholars have argued that proverbs have universal dimensions. Moreno (2005) did an interesting study in which she analyzed proverbs in English and Spanish. She shows that they not only reflect cultural beliefs specific to each culture, but also share a common underlying schema of cognition. Moreno explains that "what is universal about proverbs is the cognitive mechanisms speakers use in order to produce, understand, and transmit them" (p. 45). For instance, most of the proverbs investigated by Moreno in the two languages are composed by means of the same mental mechanisms: metaphor and metonymy.

If proverbs express cognitive mechanisms that are cross-linguistically similar, we could expect our L2 learners to be well-equipped to understand proverbs, at least to a certain extent. Moreno (2005) argues that if we encounter proverbs that do not have their equivalent in our culture, we would be able to interpret them "because of their universal underlying mental mechanisms" (p. 46). However, other studies have shown that even native speakers do not completely agree when are asked to identify proverbs. Funk (n.d.) conducted a study with 30 native speakers of Portuguese in which they were asked to identify a list of proverbs. None of the participants identified all the most known proverbs or recognized the examples. Funk argues that more studies on proverbs are needed in order to help PFL teachers identify types of proverbs that can be feasible for students to understand from those that could be more challenging in PFL classes.

Since proverbs reflect social values that are culturally bounded, one might assume that, in order to fully understand proverbs, L2 learners would need to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the background knowledge and values of that specific culture. On the other hand, we could expect that L2 learners could learn specific cultural values through proverbs. Brosh (2013) shows that, after being exposed to proverbs in Arabic language classrooms, L2 students' enriched their knowledge of the Arabic culture and enhanced their intercultural competence, establishing societal appreciation. Brosh advocates the use of proverbs as an important tool in L2 classrooms to increase cultural sensitivity, openness, and awareness of the "other", among other benefits.

Nevertheless, the transfer of hypothesizing skills and knowledge can occur from the first language to the L2. The assumption that learners would transfer their knowledge, however, does not always hold (Hoey, 2001). Hoey suggests that learners need to "develop appropriate hypothesis-forming skills" (p. 31) and learn to process "accurate recognition of the signals and their significance for the texts development" (p. 32). For instance, they might not have fully developed such skills in their L1, or they might not be aware that they possess certain knowledge.

The failure to activate a particular content schema (e.g., failure to recall information about some cultural aspect due to L2 learners' unfamiliarity

with the text) might trigger distorted information. For instance, L2 learners might inaccurately insert ideas that come from their own culture to the new text as a way to "overcompensate for the absent schemata" (Al-Issa, 2006, p. 42). Pre-reading activities can be a way to help L2 learners overcome this challenge (e.g., Koh, 1986; Williams, 1987). In the next section, discussions about pre-reading activities and how they are relevant to the teaching of proverbs in PFL class are presented.

4. PRE-READING ACTIVITY ON PROVERBS

Although learners' performance might be influenced by variables beyond L2 classroom instruction (e.g., attitudes toward reading in general) and therefore might be beyond the teachers' control, research on reading in a second language has contributed to reading instruction. Research has shown that when learners are explicitly trained to be able to recognize the text structure, they become better readers. For instance, explicit teaching and training on top-level rhetorical organization of texts facilitates ESL learners' reading comprehension (Carrell, 1985, p. 741). Since patterns of organization "frame text information in certain ways" (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 143), being able to recognize the type of structure in which proverbs are organized could help learners reach the proper expectations of the ideas in the new text.

Text structure awareness can be developed in pre-reading activities. In the case of proverbs, teachers can direct learners to perceive how proverbs are organized and lead them to find out if they have some regularity. Some studies have shown that there is a common underlying structure in proverbs, such as the binary structure, verbs in the third person and rhythm (Grzybeck, 2004; Mexias-Simon, 2011). Learners can also explore the rhetorical characteristics of proverbs, such as analogy, ambiguity, contradiction, and enthymeme[2] (e.g., Whaley, 1993). Developing this type of awareness helps learners raise effective hypotheses about proverbs in the target language.

In addition to language, culture is also important in understanding proverbs. As Zhao (2013) points out, proverbs include both linguistic and cultural issues. She defines proverbs as "idiomatic expressions on sentence level, which are culture-bounded" (p. 399). In her study, Zhao does a contrastive analysis of social proverbs in Chinese and English, revealing differences between the deep structures of Chinese and Western cultures. For instance, in analyzing how people perceive their relationships with others, Zhao shows that Chinese proverbs value collective culture, whereas English proverbs stress individualism and competitiveness (p. 397). Since proverbs are expressions of moral standards and cultural philosophies, it is expected that L2 learners will express a certain sense of strangeness when learning proverbs in a target language. Therefore, a pre-reading activity for a PFL class on proverbs can have the potential to explore the learners' knowledge and resources, and help them feel more comfortable in dealing with cultural differences.

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[2] An enthymeme is a syllogism with one part of the argument missing (either one of the premises or the conclusion is unstated).

5. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study (Nunan, 2008; Dörnyei, 2011; Griffe, 2012) focuses on the pre-reading activity, which was developed based on the theoretical background discussed in previous sections. The activity was implemented in an intermediate Portuguese as a foreign language class in an American university. One of the authors of this article was the instructor of the group participating in this study.

A total of 24 students in the PFL class participated in the pre-reading activity. They were either Americans who spoke English as their L1 and Spanish as their L2, or they were Mexican-Americans who spoke Spanish as their L1 and English as their L2 (i.e., either born in Mexico and raised in the US or born in the US from Mexican families). They were undergraduate students (ages between 19-22) and were enrolled in an intermediate class of Portuguese. They were students who had majored in Spanish and needed a third language in order to graduate. They spoke English and Spanish in their daily lives; for instance, when attending Spanish and English language classes at the university or when they interacted with their families and communities. 17 of students answered an anonymous online question in English inquiring them about their perception of the activity. The procedures for the implementation of the pre-reading activity, followed by discussions of the students' responses provided by the survey and an analysis of the activity are addressed in the next sections.

6. PROCEDURES

The pre-reading activity on proverbs was developed by one of the authors of the present article, and implemented in PFL classes in an American university. Although this activity is designed for university students who are bilingual in English and Spanish, it can be easily adapted to any foreign language class or multilingual context. The procedures for the pre-reading activity are described in detail in Table 1. The general goals of the pre-reading activity on Portuguese proverbs are the following:
- activate the appropriate schemata;
- develop text structure awareness;
- explore cultural content in proverbs;
- motivate learners;
- help learners make connections between old and new information;
- lead learners to become more independent learners, and consequently, agents of their learning process;
- share and build knowledge in the classroom by promoting interaction among learners and their peers in a relaxed and non-threatening environment;
- improve cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.

In addition, the study of proverbs in L2 can help students to be better equipped when they interact with native speakers, since proverbs are employed by speakers in their conversations to express social intentions (Luyten, 1988). For instance, proverbs could be an explanation, an advice, a way to reprehend, or an indirect way to express feelings, among other

social intentions (Mieder, 1977). Proverbs are also part of the folklore since they represent oral knowledge that is passed from generation to generation (Xatara & Succi, 2008). Proverbs are, therefore, rich sources for national references and can help students successfully interact in various social contexts.

Table 1: Pre-reading activity procedures on proverbs in a Portuguese as a foreign language class. All the steps described below were conducted in the target language Portuguese, except when students read the proverbs in Spanish and in English.

1	**Writing the proverbs**	Divide the board in two parts (you also can use two big pieces of paper). On one part of the board, write "Espanhol," and on the other side, write "Inglês." Ask students to come up to the board and write as many proverbs as they can in each language. At this moment, the instructor steps back and allows students to work. If the students do not know what a proverb is, they ask the class for help. Allow students to learn from each other and explore what they can bring to class[3]. Figure 1 shows the proverbs written by the PFL students in one of our classes.
2	**Discussing the proverbs**	When you feel the students have finished, ask them to read the proverbs in Spanish and English. If the meaning of the proverb is not clear, students can explain to the class and give examples of situations in which they can use it. Guide the discussion, but allow students to work on their own.
3	**Exploring cultural aspects**	On another part of the board (or using another big piece of paper), write "Espanhol" in one column and "Inglês" in another column. Ask students to say what cultural aspects they have noticed in the proverbs in Spanish and in English. If students need some initial help, the instructor can ask questions in order to help them become aware of the cultural aspects embedded in the proverbs (e.g., *Qual é a coisa mais importante nessa cultura? Qual é a opinião deles com relação a dinheiro, amizade, família, etc.?*). Write the responses on the board. The instructor should avoid giving direct answers. Let students reshape their knowledge by negotiating among themselves and working on what they already know; this helps them become more autonomous learners.
4	**Exploring linguistic aspects**	Next, along with the students, explore the linguistic and textual aspects they have noticed in both the English and Spanish proverbs, including structural and rhetorical features (e.g., binary structure, verbs in the third person, rhythm, and so forth). This helps students acquire text structure awareness. Allow students to come up with their own observations and answers. Write their responses on the board.
5	**Assessment**	Ask the students for their opinion about the activity. This assessment can be done orally or in writing. Examples of questions for reflection are *O que você aprendeu? O que você achou dessa atividade? Que parte você mais gostou/menos gostou? Por quê?* Optionally, their responses can be shared in groups and in the class. The assessment helps them consolidate what they have learned and understand the ways in which the activity has helped them learn Portuguese.

At the end of the pre-reading activity on proverbs, students received their new text on Portuguese proverbs. Please see the Portuguese text on proverbs in **Appendix A**.

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[3] The instructor may choose to sit in the back of the classroom as a way to allow students to take over the class. Moving to the back of the classroom is a symbolic gesture of removing oneself from a position of authority.
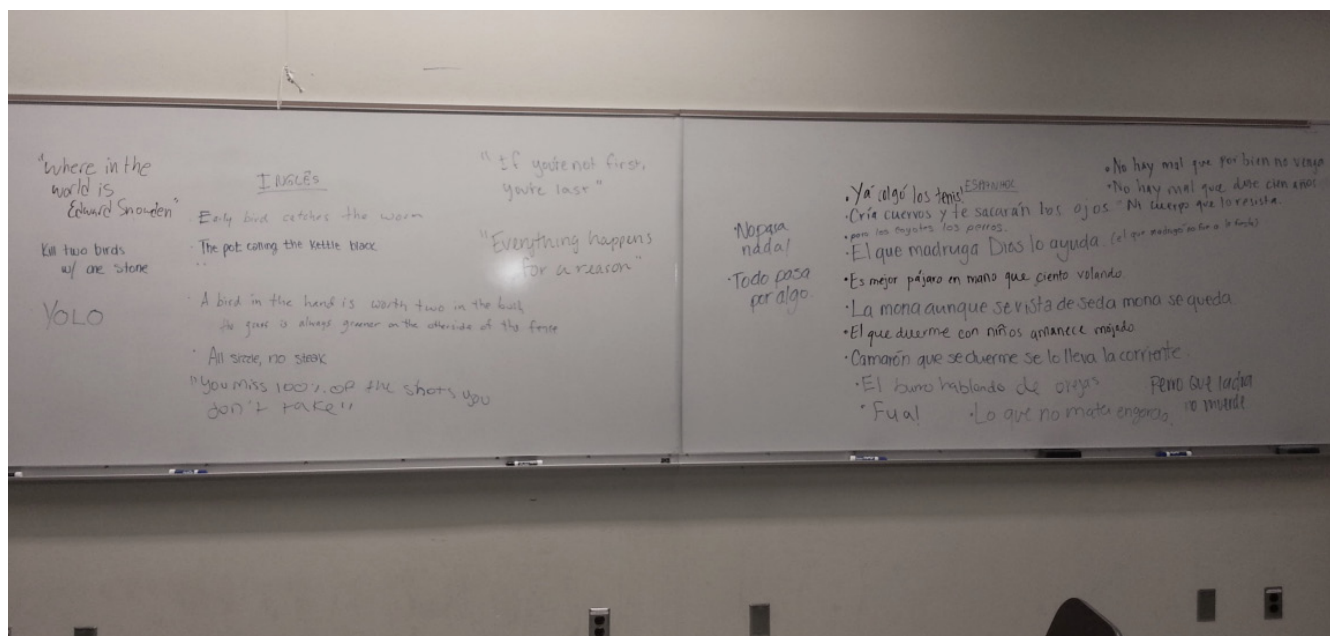
Figure 1: Picture taken of proverbs written in English and Spanish on the classroom board by intermediate learners of Portuguese as a foreign language in an American university as part of the pre-reading activity on proverbs.

7. DISCUSSION

After the pre-reading activity was implemented, students were asked to respond to an anonymous online survey in English, in which they gave their opinion about the pre-reading activity. Students' participation in the survey was voluntary. They were asked to answer the following open question: *Give your opinion about the proverb activities and justify it please.* (This question was part of an online survey about various activities applied in class during that semester.) 17 students (out of 24) answered the survey. Students expressed an overwhelmingly positive view of the activity. Below, some of the students' responses are reported:

1. "*This activity was a lot of fun.*"
2. "*Helpful in the comparison of languages and cultures.*"
3. "*Incredibly Fun!!! One of my favorite parts of the class.*"
4. "*Fun and helpful.*"
5. "*It was nice to know more about the culture of the different countries.*"
6. "*Yes, I liked it. It helped me understand not just Portuguese proverbs but American and Latin also.*"
7. "*It was good to compare proverbs in Spanish and English.*"
8. "*Very interesting as well.*"
9. "*A good way to take a peek into Brazilian culture.*"
10. "*It was fun seeing so many of them and interesting when you try to analyze them as a whole.*"
11. "*I like seeing that many proverbs are similar in different languages, but they still have something that ties them to their country of origin.*"
12. "*Yes, it also adds a fun dynamic to the classroom.*"

Based on the instructor's observations of the pre-reading activity implementation and student feedback, the schemata seem to have been activated and reshaped in various moments during the pre-reading activity. Carrell (1988) argues that pre-reading activities should both build new background knowledge as well as activate the existing one. Through the discussions and the students' answers on the survey, students have demonstrated that they have generated new information based on their own knowledge as they interact with each other such as when students discussed the meaning of the proverbs among themselves and explained to their peers the appropriate context in which such proverbs could be used (e.g., students' responses 6 and 10). Sometimes the students disagreed with the proverbs written on the board as a coherent representation of their culture. At other times, there was some disagreement related to the actual meaning of the proverbs. For instance, some students debated on the possible meanings of the English proverb *the pot calling the kettle black*. Disagreement on proverbs as a faithful representation of their culture was especially interesting, since it gives the instructor opportunities to expand the discussion, showing that in each culture there is diversity and variability, moving away from stereotypes or clichéd statements. Along with the activation of the appropriate schemata, these discussions helped learners improve their cultural awareness and sensitivity to multiculturalism (e.g., Brosh, 2013), as demonstrated by students' responses 5 and 6.

Some students began to argue whether some sentences on the board were really proverbs (e.g., in English, *Where in the world is Edward Snowden?*; in Spanish, *No pasa nada, Fua!*). After a brief discussion of the possible features that characterize proverbs, the students came to an agreement that these sentences were not really proverbs (e.g., they do not have metaphorical meaning). These discussions were particularly interesting, since research has shown that, even among native speakers, there have been disagreements in identifying proverbs (e.g., Funk, 2016). On the other hand, these discussions can help students to activate their formal schemata in a more explicit way and to reorganize the textual knowledge of proverbs as genre (e.g., student's response 11). It is expected that familiarity with the genre (e.g., Carrell, 1985; Gibbons, 2002) will help students to understand the main reading passage. These discussions, therefore, have an important role in helping the pre-reading activity on proverbs to reach its goal, that is, to activate the necessary schemata that will help students understand proverbs in Portuguese.

This class activity was not only enriching (e.g., teacher and students learn from each other), it also promoted a relaxing and comfortable environment for learning. Students felt confident and enthusiastic because they had to write proverbs in their first languages (e.g., students' responses 1, 3 and 12). Students tended to feel more empowered because they were sharing their own knowledge. Through interactions, students expanded aspects of their learning in which ideas were co-constructed (Marchenkova, 2005). As students explored the cultural knowledge incorporated in proverbs, they became involved in an interactive communication, transforming learning into a dialogical process.

Much research is still needed in this area. For instance, despite the positive responses of the students toward the pre-reading activity on proverbs,

it would be interesting to know to what extent the pre-reading activity contributes to the learning beyond the students' perceptions and instructors' observations. For instance, using a control and an experimental group, and having students participate in pre- and post-tests, would give the researcher the opportunity to control variables that could affect the results (e.g., how much the students knew about proverbs before the pre-reading activity and the level of students' proficiency in Spanish and/or English). Furthermore, it would provide a more objective way to analyze learners' outcomes as well as provide instructors additional ways to identify what needs to be changed or developed.

8. CONCLUSION

Since reading consists of many different socioculturally situated reading practices based on learners' experiences (GEE, 2000), it would be beneficial to PFL teachers to find ways to help L2 learners access relevant knowledge to the text. How to efficiently activate students' schemata, however, might be a challenge for teachers. As claimed by Landry (2002), "educators should become aware of ways to tap potential knowledge gained by learners who are already familiar with another language." The pre-reading activity on the teaching of proverbs in a PFL context, suggested in this article, aims to contribute to overcoming this challenge. With very little teacher intervention and through lots of class discussion, students could access and reshape formal and content knowledge of proverbs. Pre-reading activities have the potential to help students activate the appropriate schemata, which will help them learn Portuguese proverbs in a PFL class. By creating a community in class in which learners share and learn from each other, and by exploring learners' previous knowledge of proverbs in their first language (or previous learned languages), PFL teachers allow learners to create a safe bridge to the learning of proverbs in Portuguese. The result is an enriching, instructive, and dynamic environment for PFL learning.

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APPENDIX A

PROVÉRBIOS da língua portuguesa

1. Casa de ferreiro, espeto de pau.

2. Água mole em pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura.

3. De grão em grão, a galinha enche o papo.

4. Um dia é da caça, outro do caçador.

5. Quem ri por último, ri melhor.

6. Para bom entendedor, meia palavra basta.

7. Cavalo dado não se olha os dentes.

8. Quem não tem cão, caça com gato.

9. Quem ama o feio, bonito lhe parece.

10. Quanto mais eu rezo, mais assombração me aparece.

11. Você colhe o que planta.

1. Que expressões você usaria nas seguintes situações:

 a) Ganhei uma bolsa, mas não é de marca. É feito na China! _____

 b) Sou professora de português. Meu marido é americano e seu português é bem básico. _____

 c) Ela gastou o dinheiro todo com roupas. Agora não tem dinheiro para os estudos. _____

 d) A melhor pizza é aquela caseira, que a gente mesmo prepara a massa. Mas, como eu nunca tenho tempo de cozinhar, eu compro a pizza pronta mesmo. _____

 e) Madoff foi muito rico e influente. Mas, robou milhões de dólares e agora está na cadeia. _____

 f) Acho estatística muito difícil, mas se eu continuar insistindo e estudando bastante, um dia eu aprendo! _____

 g) Eu tento evitar problemas, mas eles sempre aparecem! _____

 h) O sonho de meu pai era comprar uma casa. Ele juntou dinheiro por cinco anos, quando finalmente pode realizar seu sonho. _____

2. Aspectos culturais são geralmente encontrados nos provérbios. Baseado nos provérbios deste handout, quais são os aspectos culturais da sociedade brasileira (e.g., o que é mais importante para os brasileiros; o que eles valorizam mais, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

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