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ICT, Language Learning and Intercultural Challenge ———

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Abstract

This article seeks to provide an insight into three phenomena: foreign language education, teaching about racism and anti-racism and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in classroom settings. It also offers an analysis of how such phenomena combined in a specific educational resource, the anti-racist website: <http://www.spanishkid.org>. An experimental application was carried out in seven Spanish high school classrooms in order to investigate the effects of introducing this web-based, anti-racist educational resource in the foreign language classroom. Methods of data gathering include students' questionnaires, teachers' and students' diaries, students' portfolios and teachers' interviews. The findings of the research suggest how a combination of ICT and anti-racism can offer opportunities for challenging commonsense views of racism and ethnicity, and thus offer alternative perceptions and viewpoints on this topic in education.

Keywords: intercultural education, Information and Communication Technologies, foreign language education, antiracism, website resources.

Resumen

El artículo presenta una reflexión fundamentada sobre la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, una formación antirracista y el uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. Se incluye un análisis de cómo dichos aspectos se combinaron y materializaron en la creación de una herramienta educativa, la *website* antirracista: <http://www.spanishkid.org>. Se llevó a cabo una aplicación experimental en siete escuelas de educación secundaria españolas con la finalidad de investigar los efectos de introducir dicha herramienta educativa en el aula de inglés. De los resultados, obtenidos a partir de cuestionarios y diarios de alum-

nos y profesores, portafolios de los alumnos y entrevistas a los profesores, se deduce que una combinación de las técnicas de la información y la comunicación y unos contenidos educativos antirracistas pueden constituir una alternativa en la percepción del tema de racismo y etnicidad en el ámbito educativo.

Palabras clave: educación intercultural, tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, antirracismo, sitios *web*.

1. Introduction: a website description

Educators should, after the presence of computers in schools for more than a decade, have become more used to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and less in awe of its apparent potential. Though there remain some who adopt a millenarian tone when discussing ICT issues (Castells, 2000; Murray, 2005) there is more recognition of the specificity of particular aspects and their limitations. In this article, which focuses upon the use of a specific website for EFL *and* multicultural purposes, we want to make no major claims for the Internet as such. Certainly it has been demonstrated that the use of e-mail in foreign language teaching favours syntactically complex language production (Sotillo, 2000) and that ICT provide opportunities to interact with native speakers at a distance through various tools such as e-mail, chat and discussion boards (Murray, 2005). However, the teaching materials we discuss are in website format for largely pragmatic reasons and not because we think there is some pedagogical magic involved. (We swiftly decided against CD ROM format because of the ongoing distribution implications we knew we would be unable to resource and we liked the idea of universal free accessibility on the Web.) In other words, we think educators should think beyond the naive assumption that because something is available on a computer, or on the Internet, that it will automatically engage learners or that they will learn effectively from it.

This does not seem to be the view reflected in the Scottish Executive statement *Citizens of a Multilingual World*, which says at one point 'ICT wipes away the dust from modern languages and gives them a modern image' (2002). Felix (1999) is very upbeat but, we think, realistic about the potential of the Net, when he suggests:

Teachers could certainly outsource a significant part of their teaching to the Web. (...) the end result can be a well-rounded teaching approach, richer than anything that teachers can hope to put together from their own resources (1999: 31).

and we argue that the website discussed here might provide an example of exactly his point.

Until recently, a great amount of research on foreign language education has been centred on the use of ICT in the language classroom. While recognising the many facets of ICT use such as e-mail exchange, distance learning, learning grammar websites and the many effects of its use - enhancement of writing, pronunciation, focus on form, etc. (Chambers, A. and Davies, G. (eds.), 2005) - the present study attempts to investigate the effects of introducing a pedagogical website based on multicultural issues in the context of several Spanish high school English language classrooms in different parts of Spain. After having piloted the website <http://www.spanishkid.org> qualitative results are presented after a two month experimental application. Our aim was to see the possible effects (and benefits) of introducing an ICT input with a multicultural perspective in the foreign language classroom.

It is worth saying that the site does not consist of authentic material in the sense that it is really written by young people or that the dialogues are *real* young people talking. (Though arguably the sibling British site is more authentic because of its specific research base, and the Swedish site even more so (see Gaine and Weiner, 2005: 75-103). Neither is the website about direct communication. Kitao and Kitao say with some enthusiasm 'the Internet is one resource that can allow students to communicate meaningfully in English' (2001: 1) but this is not an aspect we employ at all, indeed we deliberately avoid it. Our intention was to provide a resource, containing some information and some challenge, and for this we had fixed-term funding. We knew we would have no continuation funding for managing interaction and in Britain at least there is considerable anxiety about setting up any kind of communication involving young people lest it is infiltrated by paedophiles.

Of course it would be a waste of the potential of computers not to include an interactive element, but this is confined to electronic interaction. There are questions to which there are alternative answers, and many alternative choices and pathways for the user through the website. The avoidance of a linear structure on the site allows learners to 'move around' within what is given, to make their own choices in, and sense out of, what they read.

We were conscious, despite enthusiasm about the Internet from many educators, that the 'authentic' materials to be found there were seldom written for young people. 'The Internet began as an English-language phenomenon, and English continues to dominate cyberspace' (Warschauer, 2002, cited by Thurston, 2004: 57) but it is the judgement of the native English speaker of the present authors that most of it is pretty inaccessible even to many young native speakers let alone to second language learners of the same age. Young adolescents often have readings ages lower than their chronological ages, websites are often

designed with small fonts and far too much text on a page to be comfortable for those with weak reading skills. Thurstun states:

There is general agreement that readers scan rather than read in-depth ... Once they have found the information they are looking for they are more likely to read both in-depth and carefully from beginning to end (Thurstun, 2004: 66).

But this applies to relatively skilled and competent readers, not a description that applies to many of our target audience. This contributed to another decision, namely not to build in links to other sites, we were aware that:

There seems to be a negative correlation between the number of links and successful navigation, that links embedded in words do not work so well... and that links outside to other sites can be perplexing if users cannot get back home (Thurstun, 2004: 68).

Thus the website is almost completely self-contained, which is to emphasise once again that we make no claim to be utilising many of the features of the Internet. Rather, we aimed to provide a teaching resource, simply 'providing learners with opportunities to engage with others – people and texts' (-Murray, 2005: 41) and being aware that '... interaction (with a computer) unless carefully scaffolded by the teacher, can have the appearance of interaction, while not providing learners with authentic opportunities for negotiating meaning' (Murray, 2005: 42). We also had in mind a warning of Gitsaki and Taylor, that:

Exposure. (...)... is not enough to trigger language acquisition. Students need to be involved in tasks that integrate the use of computers and enhance language acquisition (1999: 47).

The website was initially and primarily designed for the purposes of multicultural learning, not second language acquisition. In fact the original site on which *Spanishkid* and others were modelled, the UK website *Britkid*, turned out to be quite widely used for ESL purposes around the world, rather to the surprise of its author (Chris Gaine). *Spanishkid* has completely parallel versions in Spanish and English, the original intention being to use it in social studies lessons in Spanish, the English version being created to aid accessibility around Europe (-the Dutch, Czech and Swedish versions also have parallel English versions). The involvement of an EFL specialist in the Spanish team added the extra dimension of using the site specifically for EFL learning.

The website's goal is to explore diversity and prejudice to do with race and culture, which it does via created fictionalised characters representing different minorities within Spain. The minorities we chose to represent are firstly the 'historic' indigenous minorities: Catalan, Galician, Basque, Roma and of course the

majority 'Castilian' Spanish. The other characters reflect more recent history and inward migration: a Croatian refugee, a Moroccan, a Gambian and a Peruvian. The format of the site is that users are introduced (if they choose that option) via 'home pages' to each of the characters, their families, their interests and various comments about languages spoken, religious practices, etc. They can meet all the characters, or none, and sooner or later they will come to the substantive part of the site, a series of dialogues set around the characters' fictionalised town. The dialogues involve different combinations of the 'cast', debating stereotyping of various kinds and of various groups, Roma educational aspirations, Islam and race discrimination. The dialogues are written in a style somewhat imitative of spoken language, at a level intended to make them accessible to most twelve year olds and are meant to avoid simple closure, leaving matters open to further discussion at the end of each dialogue. Having said this, there is a clear moral message that racism is unjust and diminishing of everyone involved, even though explicit 'preaching' is avoided.

Motivation comes in different forms. As we have already said, the author of *Britkid* found considerable interest from around the world in using it for EFL learning since it dealt with aspects of the culture and society of the target language. On the other hand, the existence of the Spanish site featuring Spanish minorities like Basques and Catalans as well as immigrant Africans and a refugee from Croatia potentially represents a different kind of motivation: rather than exploring the culture of the target language, it uses English to allow the expression of ideas and argument pertaining to aspects of Spanish identity. In a way, we might as well have used *Britkid*, but our argument is that if one of the inherent aspects of language learning is interculturality (which we will discuss below) then rather than present diversity and cultural difference as exotic and only possessed by the Other in the shape of British people (and Sercu (2005: 96) provides some amusing if salutary examples of this in Belgium), we felt we ought to deal with the interculturality inherent in being Spanish.

We did not know how this would work as regards motivation. For the Basque or Roma EFL learner it might be affirming to learn English through a resource that recognises some of one's history and specific place within Spanish society. For the smaller numbers of refugee learners, or North Africans the same may be true. On the other hand, conceivably for some it could be demotivating and a distraction from language learning to have to use a resource which disrupts simple views of what it is to be Spanish. A British review of research into motivation in secondary schooling suggests (not surprisingly) that greater motivation results when pupils engage with 'tasks they see as being interesting, fun, personally meaningful or relevant in some way' (Smith and al., 2005: 57).

So there are different interpretations of cultural awareness and its implications for EFL teaching and learning. Most of the literature on cultural awareness refers to studies carried out on/about the awareness of the culture of the foreign/target language. These studies are valid as far as they go, since by learning the L2 culture students are also potentially made more aware of their own culture. The perspective we choose in our study is different as the aim is not to learn about the target culture, but for the students to talk, reflect upon, learn about and problematise their own culture and their classmates' cultures, especially when they are different cultures to their own, as the ones represented in the website are. An issue we take up a little later is raised by Sercu:

The term 'intercultural' may also refer to communication between people from different ethnic, social, gendered cultures within the boundaries of the same national language (Sercu, 2000: 116).

This may be a different kind of activity from the commonly conceptualised intercultural learning. Intercultural communicative competence in the context of EFL learning is normally assumed to refer to understanding and appreciating something of the target language's culture; but here we mean intercultural competence in relation to aspects of Spanish identity, using English to reflect on diversity within Spanish society. We think this is probably harder to do. As regards teachers' orientations, Sercu (2005: 92) demonstrates that in Belgium at least MFL teachers saw themselves as primarily engaged in a linguistic exercise, not a cultural one. Indeed in relation to teaching about culture they ranked 'develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other peoples and cultures' second, after 'providing information' about the culture of the target language. She adds:

The topics which textbook investigations have shown to be only rarely and scarcely touched upon in textbooks (Sercu, 2000) are the topics about which teachers appear to be least familiar. These topics include 'values and beliefs', 'different ethnic and social groups', 'youth culture' and 'international relations' (-Sercu, 2005: 94).

Some classic stereotypes of, for instance, the English are reported, including the widespread wearing of bowler hats! (2005: 96).

Sercu also points out that the shift towards teaching intercultural competence makes new demands upon teachers, and the assumption that they have the necessary skills is merely intuitive with little supporting empirical evidence. 'Teachers are supposed to have already left the traditional foreign culture teaching approach far behind and to have moved far in the direction of multicultural and intercultural teaching' (Sercu, 2005: 89).

It may be that the use of *Spanishkid* here does not match these goals, after all, how likely is it that a Basque will communicate in English with a Galician? Might *Spanishkid* contribute to intercultural competence, but not intercultural communicative competence?

Returning to Sercu's point earlier, in relation to the kind of intercultural competence we are trying to engender, we do not subscribe to what Kubota (2004) calls 'liberal multiculturalism', a stance which does not recognise inequality and racism as a component in relationships between 'cultures':

Liberal multiculturalism often celebrates cultural difference (...) however what is celebrated tends to be superficial aspects of culture, such as artefacts, festivals and customs (Kubota, 2004: 35).

This is an approach parodied in the UK with the phrase 'saris, samosas and steel bands', that is to say curriculum content which looks simply at clothing (or 'costume'), exotic spiced food, and folk music. As Kubota goes on to say, 'A focus on racism and other kinds of injustice requires attention to collective, rather than individual oppression' (Kubota, 2004: 37) and this is part of the subject matter of *Spanishkid*.

In this respect we might make a distinction between the terms 'intercultural', 'multicultural', and 'anti-racist'. The first tends to be used within Europe to refer, in the main, to contact, communication and the reduction of barriers between different countries (and languages). In a Europe of increasing integration and hoped-for cooperation, this is clearly important and one might say an important aspect and function of foreign language learning.

For a long time now, foreign language educationalists have considered it a natural pedagogical aim to encourage in learners an interest in, knowledge about and an open attitude towards foreign cultures, peoples and countries. The notion of culture was then largely based on the equivalence of one nation, one culture, one language (Sercu, 2000: 115).

'Multicultural' has more of a North American (e.g. Banks, 2001) and British resonance (e.g. Gaine, 1987; May, 1999), and tends to be employed when referring to diversity and sometimes conflict within one society. As Gaine and others have argued in the UK, however, and as Kubota points out above, the focus upon culture can trivialise and mis-identify the source of conflict as simple ignorance rather than long-established and learned racist beliefs as well as structured economic inequality and the relative advantage and power of some groups over others (see also Hasbrook, 2002). Terms such as 'critical multiculturalism' are used by Kubota and others to critique unquestioning notions of multiculturalism, as is the term 'anti-racist', more often in the UK.

We have said that *Spanishkid* problematises what it is to be Spanish. Kubota argues 'The effort to understand the Other in relation to the Self ... includes good intentions. However, it often imposes an essentialised, idealised or stigmatised identity onto the Other' (2004: 44) and this is a particular trap in devising materials that so depend on representation of the Other for classroom use. It would be foolish to claim certainty that we were successful in this, but the work done to avoid it was considerable (see Gaine and Weiner, 2005, for a detailed account).

In practice most Spanish classrooms are fairly monocultural (5,75% immigrant E.S.O students, MEC, 2005). To most Spanish school pupils the increasing diversity of the Spanish population is not something within their immediate experience, though they may be aware of it as an urban phenomenon. Increasingly in the cities, however, this is becoming more of a first hand experience for more young people (and their teachers) and in time such immediate diversity will be the first-hand experience of more and more Spanish young people. Nevertheless, we would strongly argue that this website is not one designed solely for multicultural city use. In common with its sibling sites in other countries it asserts that exploring identity, inequality and diversity present a challenge to all Spanish people.

2. The evaluation of the website

Given this overall orientation and the content of the website, the way we researched its effectiveness was as follows. A questionnaire was administered (see Appendix 1) to Spanish high school students (see table 1) to try to learn both practical and conceptual information about how the site was used and its impact. As the appendix shows, we used some of the graphics from the site on the questionnaire both to echo its style but also to make the document look less formal.

Apart from basic data about age, sex and ethnic group, we initially sought overall impressions by asking if there was one thing they would change, followed by one thing users liked and one thing they did not like. Since the logic of the site depended significantly upon characterisation and we hoped and anticipated that this would be a key motivating factor, we asked 'which character did you look at and why?' and also what they had learned from this character. We also asked for likes and dislikes about the way the characters were drawn. Turning to the dialogues, the largest element of the site, we needed to know which they had looked at, what they thought about their length, and the students' level of comprehension.

Thinking of more practical aspects of design, we also asked about the pictures of the different places in the imaginary town where the ‘action’ takes place. What we called the ‘Serious Issues pages’ contained more factual, book-like text, so we asked which (if any) were looked at, their perceived level of difficulty, and their preference for these as opposed to the more graphic-rich and informal pages. We asked about navigation too.

Having established whether or not the site ‘worked’ in terms of general interest and gaining users’ attention, most crucially we wanted to know the site’s effect on their thinking about race and diversity, so we asked about one thing they would remember most and one question they might like to ask any of the characters on the website, how they rated the site as a way of learning about racism, diversity and culture and whether it made them want to look at other sites on these issues. The hardest data to access was whether viewing the site had changed any of their ideas.

Seven groups of Spanish high school students (see Table 1) participated in the experience:

4 th E.S.O. Spanish groups	N. of subjects
Group A	23
Group B	17
Group C	22
Group D	23
Group E	20
Group F	21
Group G	24
Total	150

Table 1. Groups and number of subjects participating in the experimental application.

They all studied 4th of E.S.O.(Obligatory Secondary Education) and the experimental application took place in the subject of English as a foreign language (2005). There were four high schools in Mallorca, two in Santiago de Compostela and one in Tarragona, Spain. The schools were chosen at random, and groups were made up of young people also aged 14-16. There were roughly equal numbers of girls and boys in the classes in Palma and Tarragona though the San-

tiago class had mostly girls, and, although we would have preferred more variety, the areas served by the schools were predominantly middle class. All seven schools had intakes which might be termed 'white', that is to say, that contained few or no pupils with overseas backgrounds or origins. They may have contained some Roma pupils, we do not know, and, since it is located in Galicia, the class group in Santiago consisted mainly of the Galician 'indigenous minority' as featured on the website. In terms of self-identification of ethnicity, one child in Mallorca described himself as 'dark'. The seven high school teachers had previous experience in the use of ICT in the classroom, although none of them had introduced multicultural issues in the English language classrooms.

Before the experimental application took place the researchers contacted the English language teachers who were to use the website with their students. The researchers presented the website <http://www.spanishkid.org> to the high school teachers and specified the aims of the research, which were to let students surf through the website and comment on the characters' most relevant aspects and their attitudes towards others.

The procedure with the students was as follows: a number of sessions took place which each lasted between approximately three and four hours. The first session was devoted to working with students in the computer rooms. Students were shown how to navigate through the website and scan through various texts. In the seven high schools there were not enough computers for all students in the class, which meant that students had to share a computer. The second session involved students doing a preparatory task by answering a set of questions about their own culture, language, traditions, customs and attitudes towards their own culture and people from other cultures (see Appendix 2). After a whole group discussion about their knowledge of their own culture and other cultures and their attitudes, the website <http://www.spanishkid.org> was presented to them. In the third session, students navigated and skimmed individually through the website and chose the character they liked the best. In the fourth session, students who had chosen the same character got together in groups and discussed about immigration and different cultures. None of the students had seen the website before and had some specific direction at first and more support in later lessons by being given some direction about where to go on the site. After every session students wrote a diary about their reactions to the material and class activities. Finally, a post-questionnaire was administered to students and teachers.

Globally, the experimental application lasted for two months. Students worked with the website in class a total of two hours per week, although most students devoted more time to finish some of the activities at home. This activity

could be included as part of the syllabus of the English language curriculum as students were asked to write a project every semester on a different cultural topic. The aim of the classroom project for the semester was to reflect about cultural issues in general with a focus on reading and writing skills. The portfolio with all the activities and the diaries counted for the students' final grade.

Our total sources of evidence are thus: students' portfolios, students' classroom diaries, teachers' classroom diaries, students' questionnaires on multicultural content use in the English language classroom, teachers' post-questionnaires on multicultural content use in the English language classroom and interview with the High school teachers.

The results of the questionnaires that we are now going to present were analysed in two different stages. At a first stage a total of 54 questionnaires were studied and at a second stage a total of 150 questionnaires were studied, including the original 54.

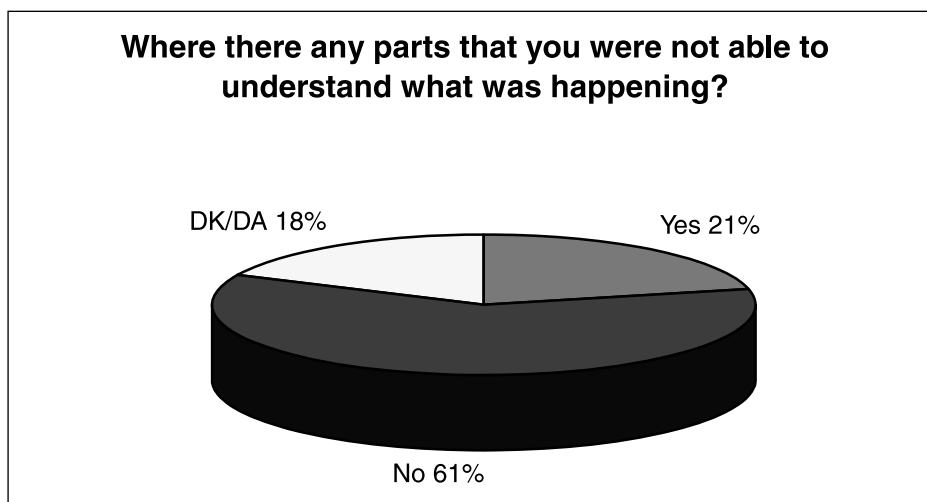
Of the 150 respondents, 32% were 15 years old, 25 % were 16 and 17% were 14 years old. There was a slight gender imbalance with 56% being girls. Reflecting the majority of schools in Spain, most students were Christian (93%), 2% were Muslims, 1% were Buddhists, and 1 % described themselves as atheists. 91% were European, 4% were South American, 3% were African, 1% were Arabic, and 1% were Asian.

As regards design and navigation features, while 25% of the students had no specifically negative comment, of the rest, dislikes were varied. 26 % of the students answered that they did not like the structure and organisation of the site and 25% made technical comments such as wishing for more movement and interaction and photographs, instead of drawings, or would have preferred a different page layout. (It is hard to draw further conclusions from this last group of comments: wishing for a different layout could mean many different things).

There were not major difficulties with readability, 61% of students commenting that there were not parts they were unable to understand and signalling that the level of difficulty was not too high, although 21% reported some difficulties (see Graph 1). Contrary to what we expected, while the dialogues were easier to read than the 'Serious Issues' pages there was not a strong preference for the former (31%) compared to the latter (27%). Some found some words too difficult on the 'Serious Issues' pages asserting that they had not initially understood 'but if you stop a bit you end up understanding'.

However, only about a third of the students looked at the 'Serious Issues' pages, specifically *Truths* (14%), *Education and Diversity* (7%), *Languages in Spain*

(6%), *Religions in Spain* (4%), *The Evolution of Migration in Spain* (3%) and *Islamophobia* (2%). For no reason we are able to establish, some students were particularly interested in Roma issues.

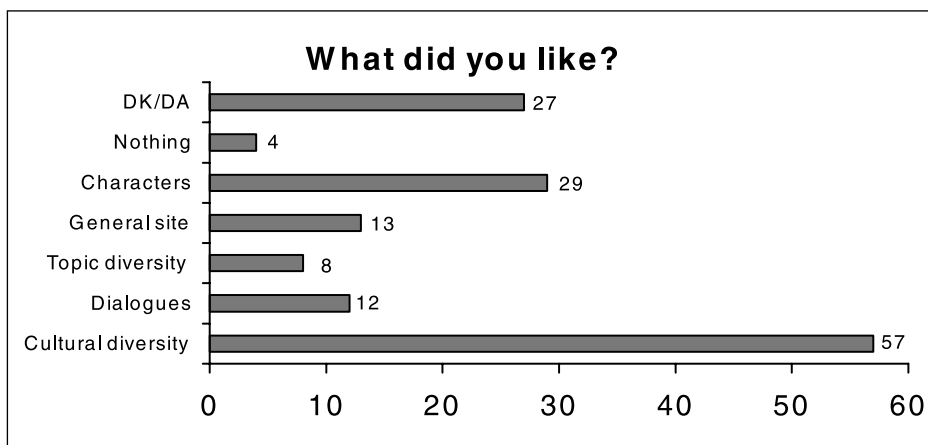


Graph 1. *Spanishkid* questionnaire responses concerning website level of readability.

Given our aims we were obviously interested to see what these students liked best about the website (see Graph 2). In general terms, 38% of students appreciated being introduced to material about cultural diversity which they found ‘interesting’ and ‘useful’, and they also like learning something about different cultures and languages. 20% of students focused on the characterisation and the individuality of the characters, 8% affirmed that they liked the general appearance and idea of the website, 8% liked the dialogues and 5% liked the range of issues covered. It should also be taken into consideration that there was a group of 18% who did not answer this question at all and 2% who said they did not like anything. We have no way of telling if this dislike was related to readability, to the graphics, to navigation, to a general dislike of English lessons, or – of course – to discomfort with or hostility to the subject matter.

We were intrigued to see that on the question of the preferred character, Burama, the Gambian boy, was chosen by 24% of students and more than any other character, though he was not necessarily the sole choice. Some indicated their choice was because he was black, or in one case, because he ‘had a friend like him’, most of this group also mentioned him as what they would remember

most about the site. Some were curious to know if Burama wanted to be white, while several noted other aspects of his life and displayed some curiosity about his former life in Africa. The initial choice is made via a line-up of all the characters, but it is sheer guesswork whether or not there is something in the way the character is drawn which the students found more appealing. 13% of students chose Ivan, the only blond, blue-eyed character (and a refugee), ostensibly 'because he is nice and friendly' (some female students mentioning later that they would like to know if he had a girlfriend....). 13% of students chose Lucía the Roma girl and 12%, (all from the Santiago schools) chose Maruxa the Galician character, because they were themselves Galician. The other characters most viewed were Josep from Catalonia (5%), Mohamed from Morocco (4%) and Edurne from the Basque country (3%).



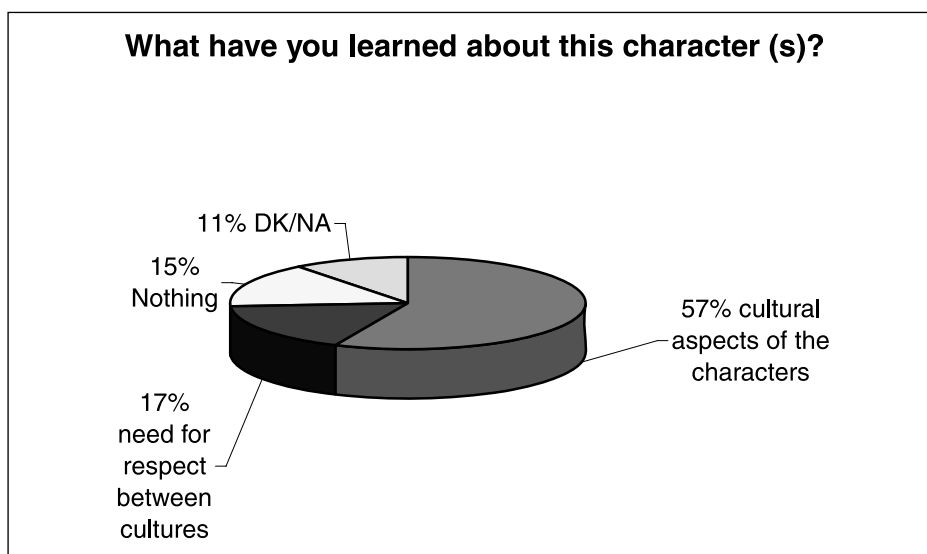
Graph 2. *Spanishkid* questionnaire responses on the attractiveness of the website features.

Some identified specific topics that were of interest, such as the ones related to immigration in certain regions. Several responses suggested choices based simply on page layout.

To the question of which story-lines were most popular, responses were mainly in terms of the locations where stories took place rather than the content, a set of responses that therefore tells us little (19% of students preferred the amusement park, for instance). There were some inconclusive hints about what took people's interest: 10% seemed to prefer the dialogues, 5% the family, 'my gang' and 'my religion' information accessible from the characters' home pages, while

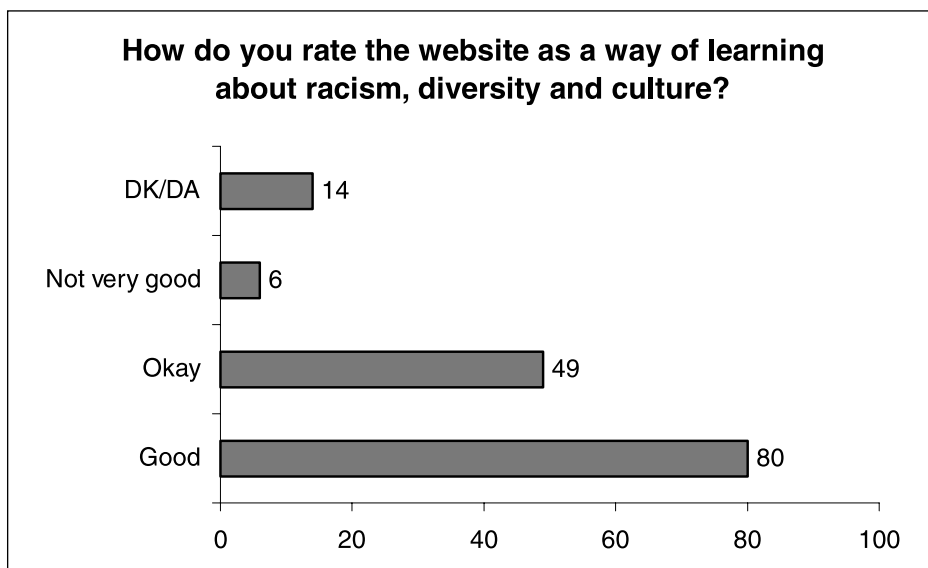
the rest were fairly evenly divided between commenting on a character or topic that was tackled. 23% said they did not read any of the dialogues and 20% did not know which they had read, which leads us to assume that the students may have looked at other parts of the site, or that they were not able to identify the bits they had read with the word 'story' that we used in the questionnaire.

There was clear evidence in the way the replies were phrased, that the characters, at least for the purposes of the exercise, were perceived as realistic. 20% of students asserted that they had worked with and were interested in all the website characters. To the question 'what did you learn from this character?' 57 % of students considered that they had learned about important issues such as personal and cultural aspects (see Graph 3). They claimed they had generally learnt much from the characters, some referring to information about cultures, habits, food and customs and concluding that they themselves might not be so different from the characters. Burama, the Gambian character, was again mentioned more than the others, with some reference to his interest in sport and to former hard times in his life. Someone noted the pride with which the Galician girl regarded her region, while some others claimed that they had learned something about racism or discrimination through 'working' with a character.



Graph 3. *Spanishkid* questionnaire responses concerning learning from the characters.

Overall the evaluation of these 150 high school students was positive, but hardly overwhelmingly (see Graph 4). 54% considered that it was a good means to learn about racism, diversity and culture. 33% considered that it was ‘okay’ for this, in contrast with 9% who thought that for this purpose the site was ‘not very good.’ 17% thought they had learned about the need to respect different groups of people (see Graph 4).



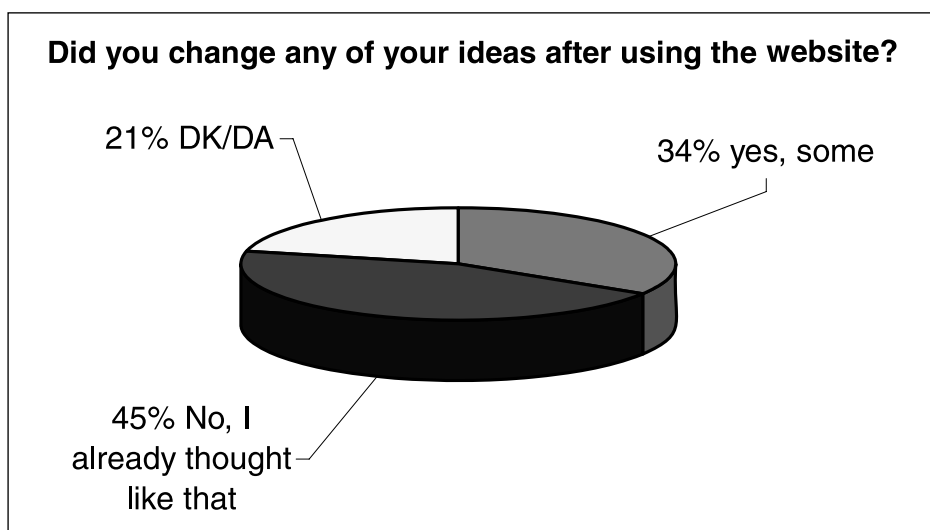
Graph 4. *Spanishkid* questionnaire responses concerning website as mode of learning.

Coming to our crucial question, whether it changed any attitudes or ideas (see Table 2), there were several possible permutations, depending on which of the two starting points (in bold) best describes a student’s view of themselves:

A I do not think I had any racist ideas in the first place	A1 The site has changed my ideas and now I am <i>more</i> racist		A3 I have not changed my (non-racist) ideas
B I had some racist ideas before I looked at the site	B1 The site has changed my ideas and now I am <i>more</i> racist	B2 The site has changed my ideas and now I am <i>less</i> racist	B3 I have not changed my (racist) ideas

Table 2. Summary of different orientations to a change in attitudes.

This chart is a highly simplified summary of a range of possible orientations (which might include, for instance ‘I didn’t think I had any racist ideas before I looked at the site’) but there is a limit to the quality of data one can gather from a classroom questionnaire. With hindsight, we might have designed the questionnaire to tease out more of these permutations, but as it stands the results indicate that 34% affirm having changed their attitudes and ideas after using the website (see Graph 5). Because they do not state otherwise (in a strictly anonymous questionnaire) we would like to think these belong in the B2 cell, but while this is hardly a provable inference some individual comments support it: ‘I changed my attitudes on racism’; ‘I am more understanding’. Some wrote ‘we are all equal’ and others that they had learned not to be abusive because of race and that they had thought more on the topic. 45% explicitly said, one way or another, that they had not changed their minds and they belonged in the A3 cell.



Graph 5. *Spanishkid* questionnaire responses concerning changed attitudes.

We have some supportive evidence for these optimistic hopes from the teacher interviews. Group A’s teacher (aged 40, and female) expressed the view that the site was easy for the pupils to use, interesting as an initial starting point and effective in raising the issues of racism and diversity. Group B’s (aged 37, and female) commented that it had made a very positive impact on the ethos of the class with regard to racism, though several had indicated that the issues were rat-

her remote to them. Group C's teacher (aged 45, male) found the website a good information source for himself also, and was planning to use it the following year. The teacher for group D (aged 25, female) expressed the view that 'the pupils found the site easy to use, it was okay as an activity to deal with cultural issues in English lessons. We talked about other cultures, racism and minorities. It is good for practising English language. I found it a good information resource for myself.' The group E teacher (aged 64, male) observed that most students had found the website easy to use and that it was very attractive, new-looking and unusual, with the web format being an advantage rather than a barrier. And finally, the teacher of group F (female, 51) felt it was a good introduction to the topic of diversity, that it was effective in teaching about racism and had a positive impact upon both class ethos and improved relationships within the class.

3. Concluding remarks

In this article we have tried to show that the Internet is a powerful, exciting and difficult medium, an arena available to many voices. Using it as an educational anti-racist medium has raised a large number of technical, financial, educational, ethical and intercultural dilemmas, to which there are no simple resolutions. This article airs some pitfalls and dilemmas in the course of describing and analysing a project which tried to link the history, geography, internal divisions, self-images, religious traditions, political frameworks and migration patterns of Spain. The outcome of the project was the site <http://www.spanishkid.org>, which includes fictionalised characters, representative of the Spanish situation regarding immigration, and dialogues on the most relevant experiences, attitudes, feelings and behaviours they might experience. It was our belief that the website could be exploited as a teaching tool to learn a foreign language and reflect about a multicultural society.

Nevertheless, research indicates that the dynamics of teaching about 'race' and racism are fraught with difficulty (Hällgren, 2006). There is not always an obvious part of the curriculum in which to address the issue, and frequently group dynamics and the authority of the teacher can become confused with the objectives, so that what should be a learning experience becomes conflictual. Given the cultural and media politics of racism there is a constant dilemma for teachers about what kind of position or stand to take, or whether to attempt 'neutrality'. There is a great deal of skill involved in engaging both the hearts and minds of young people, or developing a fruitful interaction of the intellect and the emotions.

British studies (Gaine, 2000; Jones, 1999) suggest curriculum change in this regard comes about painfully and slowly. In particular, any anti-racist

efforts in largely 'white' areas also have to cope with the problem of abstraction: the issue is abstract in that there are relatively few first-hand victims of racism to provide individuals and institutions with a motive for change. Allied to this is the real problem of giving a voice to minorities and creating the possibility of a dialogue.

Thus, it was our attempt to employ an innovative web-based pedagogy (Hinostroza and Mellar, 2001) concerning racism and anti-racism and the outcomes of the specific set of evaluations carried out in a foreign language classroom Spanish context suggest the following:

- First, the main response of young people to the site was positive, in particular, in terms of visually engagement and attention-maintenance (Brown, 2003).
- Second, the device of raising issues through characterisation and unresolved dialogues seemed to work in the sense of raising and discussing difficult issues in a safe space (Simina and Hamel, 2005). Most importantly, the site raised the issue of racism in ways which made it intelligible to young people and which they felt able to relate to.
- Finally, the web-based resource has had a positive effect on students. We agree with Hughes, Mcavina and King: "It is clear that what language teachers already know about designing learning materials also applies to creating web-based resources. Interesting, varied content (...) information about the culture of the country as well as the language, go a long way towards providing a good learning experience for students" (Hughes, Mcavina and King, 2004: 100). The website has also generated appreciation and positive curiosity about diversity, and it has been demonstrated to be a useful source teachers would trust and would want to use in their classrooms.

We hope that this teaching practice encourages future developments in employing innovative web-based pedagogies concerning racism and anti-racism.

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Internet web-pages

Britkid (1998)

<http://www.britkid.org>

Spanishkid (2003)

<http://www.spanishkid.org>

APPENDIX 1: STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

what you think of

Spanishkid

1 Things about you

Your age boy/girl Ethnic or racial group

2 From what you have seen of the website, please tell us

a) One thing you would change

b) One thing you like

c) One thing you don't like

3 The characters

a) Which character did you look at and why?

b) What did you learn from this character?

c) Is there anything you liked or didn't like about the characters' pictures?



JOSEP



LUCIA



MARIANA



MOHAMED



IVAN



EDURNE



EUKARA



ISABEL



URTI

4 The stories

a) Which story did you look at?

b) Did you think it was (PLEASE RING ONE) too long too short about right

c) Are there parts where you didn't understand what was being discussed?



d) Were some words too difficult? (PLEASE RING ONE) none some lots

e) Any comments about the pictures of where the stories happened?

.....

5 The serious issues pages

a) If you looked at any of these, which ones?

.....

b) Were some words too difficult? (PLEASE RING ONE) none some lots

c) Which did you prefer, **these** or the **other kinds of pages**? (PLEASE RING ONE)



6 Finding your way around the website

a) Do you have any ideas to make it easier or clearer to use?

.....

7 Your ideas

a) Can you say one thing you'll remember most from the website?

b) Or one question you'd like to ask any of the characters on the website?

.....

c) How do you rate the site as a way of learning about racism, diversity & culture?
 (PLEASE RING ONE) good okay not very good

d) Does it make you want to look **yes maybe no** at other sites on these issues? (PLEASE RING ONE)

e) Has it changed any of your attitudes or ideas?

.....

f) Do you have any other comments?

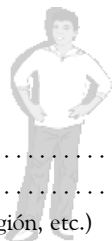
.....

THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!!!!!!!!!!

¿QUÉ OPINAS DE DIVERSIDAD JUVENIL?

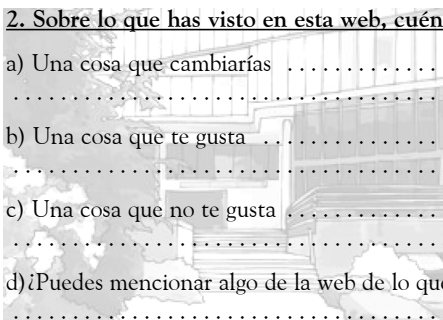
1 Cosas sobre ti

- a) Tu edad
- b) Hombre / Mujer
- c) Etnicidad o cultura
- d) Religión
- e) Lugar de nacimiento (país, región, etc.)
- f) Lugar de residencia (país, región, etc.)
- g) Si eres estudiante, nombre y dirección de tu Centro educativo (opcional)



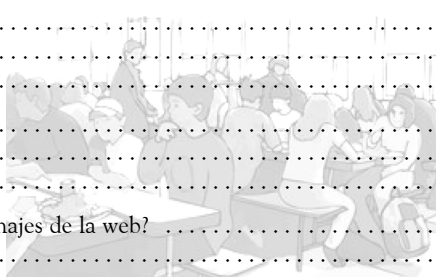
2. Sobre lo que has visto en esta web, cuéntanos...

- a) Una cosa que cambiarías
- b) Una cosa que te gusta
- c) Una cosa que no te gusta
- d) ¿Puedes mencionar algo de la web de lo que más te acordarás?



3. Los personajes

- a) ¿Qué personaje(s) has mirado y por qué?
- b) ¿Qué has aprendido sobre este personaje(s)?
- c) ¿Qué te gustaría preguntar a alguno de los personajes de la web?
- d) ¿Hay algo que te haya gustado o no de los dibujos de los personajes?





4. “Navegando” por la web...

a) ¿Puedes darnos alguna idea para que la utilización de esta web sea más clara o sencilla?

.....

.....

.....

5. Los diálogos

a) ¿Qué diálogo(s) has mirado?

.....

.....

.....

b) Consideras que, en general, los diálogos son... (POR FAVOR, SEÑALA UNA OPCIÓN)

muy largos muy cortos normales

c) ¿Hay partes en las que no entiendes bien lo que está comentando?

.....

.....

.....

d) ¿Hay palabras muy difíciles? (POR FAVOR, SEÑALA UNA OPCIÓN)

ninguna algunas muchas

e) ¿Tienes algún comentario / sugerencia sobre los dibujos de los lugares donde se desarrollan los diálogos?

.....

.....

6. Las páginas de “Temas Serios”

a) Si has mirado alguna de éstas, ¿cuál/es?

.....

.....

.....

b) ¿Hay palabras muy difíciles? (POR FAVOR, SEÑALA UNA OPCIÓN)

ninguna algunas muchas

c) ¿Prefieres **este tipo** de páginas (de “Temas Serios”) u **otras** (p.ej., las de los diálogos, presentación y datos de cada personaje, presentación de los familiares, etc.)? (POR FAVOR, SEÑALA LO QUE CORRESPONDA)

7. Tus ideas

a) ¿Cómo puntuarías esta web como medio para aprender sobre racismo, diversidad y cultura?
(POR FAVOR, SEÑALA UNA OPCIÓN) **buena normal no muy buena**

b) Al haber navegado por esta web, ¿te apetece ahora mirar otras webs también de temática anti-racista o intercultural? (POR FAVOR, SEÑALA UNA OPCIÓN) **sí quizás no**

c) ¿Han cambiado algunas de tus actitudes o ideas después de utilizar esta web?

.....
.....
.....

d) ¿Te gustaría comentar algo más?

.....
.....
.....

¡Muchísimas gracias por tu colaboración!

APPENDIX 2: ACTIVITY

TASK:

Preparatory activities:

- What can you explain/tell us about your own culture? You may talk about your language, friends (what do you usually do with your friends?), customs, traditions.
- What do you know about other cultures? Do you know about your classmates' cultures? Are they different to yours? What is different? What is similar?

Activity:

- We'll meet some friends on the website who come from different places. On your own, surf through all the characters' presentations:



Hola amics, què tal? Hi there, what's up? This is Josep. Josep is a Catalan name. I was born in Catalonia and I am a 'culé', i.e. a Barcelona (-Barça) football team supporter.



Hi! My name is Lucía. I like my name (I hope you like it too!). Did you know that it means "the light"? It's funny because my skin is olive and my hair completely black! My friends (I'll introduce them to you later) call me "Luci".



Hola, hola! Hi, hi! Yes, I'm Maruxa, Maru for my friends. Call me whichever you like! Guess where I'm from.... Yes, if you're Spanish it's very easy to know that with my name I'm from Galicia. But there again I could be from anywhere, since with people moving around a lot their names don't always reflect their origin or nationality. By the way, there is another 'Galicia', but that one is in Poland. Did you know that...



Hello! My name is Mohamed. I was born in Morocco and came to Spain when I was five. I speak Arabic because my parents are keen that I don't lose my roots. I also speak French and I can write it quite well too, because I study it at school. I bet my family surprises you!



Hi there! My name is Ivan. It's quite a common name in Croatia but not so well known in Spain. Eventually I would love to study Medicine; can I try it out on you? Say aaaaaahhhhhhh - now let your eyes follow this pendulum... Don't worry, just joking, just joking!



¡Hola a todos y a todas! Hi everybody! Edurne is my name. It's not a common name in Spain (well, nowhere). It's a typical Basque name. Both my parents are from the Basque Country, from the city of Bilbao in fact. My grandfather on my mother's side, who died some year ago, was Andalusian. But let's don't get sad, because there are many good things in life, and I would like to tell you what I think about a number of them.



Hi! My name is Burama. I know that it's not a name like any Spanish name, but it isn't difficult to pronounce though! If you say it ten times, you'll get used to it, and it will be a name like any other. Although I was very young when I came to Spain, I remember that one of the things that shocked me most, (apart from the fact that it was not as hot as where I was born), was the number of cars and people rushing everywhere. Now it's even worse!



Hola, ¿cómo estás? Hi! How are you? My name is Isabel, but you can call me Isa. You choose! There are Isabels all over Spain and in many other Spanish-speaking countries, so my name doesn't tell you whereabouts I come from in Spain (like it does with Maruxa, Josep or Edurne). I'm also a mixture: my dad is Castilian (from Toledo) and my mother Andalusian (from Granada). This means that I may also have Jews and/or Muslims somewhere in my background. If you look at Toledo's and Granada's past you'll understand why I say that.



Hola! Hi! My name is Urpi. It's an Andine name meaning 'dove'. Well, since my skin is olive and my hair's black (or dark brown), obviously not a white dove! Haha! But my name does say something about me...I'm always daydreaming, so my mind 'flies like a dove'...(all over the place sometimes!) I'm like Luci in a way, a very idealistic person...

- Choose one or two characters that you like the best.
- Get in groups with students who have chosen the same character. Every group works with a different character. Together surf through this character. After reading all the character's aspects: family, language, religion, food, hassles, gang, write a summary of what you found most relevant within every section.
- Read the three dialogues of the character chosen and in groups discuss and answer the following questions: What does he/she talk about? Do you agree with him/her? What are his/her attitudes towards others? How does he/she feel?

- Answer the following questions related to the content included in the different sections of the character and the three dialogues: What have you learned and reflected about other cultures? What have you learned and reflected about your own culture? Have your views or your opinion towards others changed?

NATURE OF THE ARTICLES

Computational Linguistics
Foreign Language Teaching and Learning
Forensic Linguistics
Language for Specific Purposes
Language Planning
Second Language Acquisition
Speech Pathologies
Translation

FORMAT OF THE ARTICLES

1. Contributions should be written in English, using the software package Word. Three printouts of the article and a diskette should be provided. Title of the paper and name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the author should be included on a separate sheet. Submissions by e-mail attachment are also accepted.
2. Articles should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages (12 pt Times New Roman) including an abstract of 10 lines at the beginning and five keywords, in English and a translation in French, German or Spanish. Please do not include footnotes.
3. References should be given in the following format:
Blakemore, D. 1987. *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Richards, C. 1985. "Inferential pragmatics and the literary text". *Journal of Pragmatics* 9: 261-285.
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