Title	Bumping into classroom walls: How to win the timed race of language learning in the university classroom
Author(s)	Alderete Diez, Pilar
Publication Date	2014
Publication Information	Pilar Alderete Diez (2014) 'Bumping into Classroom Walls: How To Win The Timed Race of Language Learning In The University Classroom' In: Third-level Education and Second Language Learning: Promoting Self-directed Learning in new Technological and Educational Contexts. UK : Peter Lang.
Publisher	Peter Lang
Link to publisher's version	http://dx.doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0685-9
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/6625
DOI	http://dx.doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0685-9

Bumping into Classroom Walls: How to Win the Timed Race of Language Learning In the University Classroom.

Dr. Pilar Alderete Diez, NUI Galway (Spanish).

Abstract

Departing from student-led evaluations of Spanish classrooms in a university in Canada in 2003, this chapter focuses on the conditions that space and time impose on our contemporary university classrooms. In the evaluations, students indicated the use of space and time in their universities as one of the main factors that lead to failure in language learning. In their journals and interviews, they gave specific examples of the impact of spatial and time constraints on their learning of Spanish and they claimed that there was an imminent need for a review of the notions of space and time in order to tackle the issue of language learning in higher education.

This chapter attempts such a review by describing the physical characteristics of standard classrooms in our public university settings and by presenting an analysis of the constraints that the organization of space and time imposes on language learning in an aim to offer solutions to overcome these obstacles. It also looks at class timetables and semesterization in third level European institutions by offering a sample from a university in Ireland and in Spain in order to understand how their classrooms are organized. Through analyzing a series of open-ended surveys at the same higher education institutions, it points towards the promotion of space-time awareness and examines the scope available both for language teachers and students to manage these two variables. It investigates the influence of virtual spaces for language learning (social networks and open source materials) in order to cope with time and space constraints and to support our students in their race to attain their goals in language learning.

The study of the contextual aspects of a classroom is not new. Egon Brunkswick (1956) developed a model for studying environmental perceptions, based on the ideas of ecological validity, use of cues and friendliness of classrooms (Douglas and Gifford, 2010: 296- 297). However, the issue of space in language teaching and learning still needs further research (Oblinger, 2004: 14.1-2). This chapter aims to provide an overview of how space and time influence language learning in higher education. It focuses on an Irish and a Spanish university, by looking at student perceptions of visibility, space and time, obtained via a short questionnaire. It discusses some of the findings of the academic literature concerned with space issues and engagement; and gives examples of the concerns of language teachers in terms of space and time in our university classrooms. The last part of this chapter focuses on the solutions offered by virtual learning environments (VLEs) to space/time constraints faced by teachers and learners.

The term 'space' here refers to all the physical aspects that characterize our institutions: campus, class venues, VLEs and so on. The physical distribution of a space informs our teaching practice and most classrooms have been designed for one-way delivery (Jamieson, 2003: 21). In higher education, most teachers can choose the content or the methodology of learning activities; yet we treat the buildings and timetables as unchangeable and undeserving of scholarly research (Coate, 2014). Space issues have been the concern of campus designers, but there is a lack of research on how space impacts teaching in higher education, as the Joint Informations Systems Committee (JISC, 2001) report shows.

The theme of this chapter was inspired by the research conducted at a Canadian University with students of first and second year Spanish. The LSUC (Learning Spanish in the University Classroom) project isolated the main issues in classroom language learning from a student perspective. The issue of classroom space ranked high in their responses to questionnaires, journals and interviews. They talked about the physical constraints imposed by classroom structures, sizes, furniture, seating arrangements, temperature, air quality and visuals. They also noticed that power derives from the distribution of space and of people inside the classroom. They were also concerned with time issues such as class duration, frequency and scheduling of lectures, but the term 'time', in this chapter, generally refers to four aspects of time:

class duration, distribution of time within a class, academic calendars and individual outside-the-classroom study time.

The LSUC project implemented some of the changes suggested by these students, having an immediate positive effect in classroom atmosphere. These changes were student-initiated so they improved student engagement in the classroom. Their input resulted in a series of recommendations:

1. 15 – 20 students from diverse origins, gender and age groups.
2. Circular structure or equivalent more conducive to interaction and avoids back/front row power dynamics.
3. The teacher should be visible and audible to everyone in the teacher-controlled activities.
4. Students taking turns to speak should be audible to everyone.
5. Natural light should shine in the room and no obstacles such as pillars in the classroom.
6. Ventilated room with fresh air and a comfortable temperature.
7. The board needs to be visible from all points of the classroom and the notes clear.
8. The classes in the afternoon worked better.
9. Levels of attention in the last 20 minutes of the class seemed to wane.

Whether we can use their observations for other language classrooms will depend on other contextual features such as student background and university structures, but they help focus our attention on more material aspects of a language class.

The LSUC project provided a forum for the discussion of student concerns about learning experiences and promoted interaction between students. The exploration of all kinds of spaces that we use in our institutions (formal, social, silent, writing, interactive, reflective and digital) (Temple, 2007: 12-13) can help develop an awareness of how to organize these spaces to promote engagement.

Spaces of Language Teaching and Learning in Contemporary University Campuses

Public universities generally take the shape of a campus with iconic and utilitarian buildings located in a specific city (physical) within a geographical community and as an academic community (social) for teaching, learning and research purposes (mental). The adjectives in brackets correspond with the three dimensions of space postulated in 1974 by Henri Lefebvre (1991: 11). These aspects of space influence student attraction as recent marketing surveys have shown. Further research is needed in order to understand how the physical, social and mental aspects of a concrete institution influence learning, and specifically language learning. One of the aims of this chapter is to encourage further lines of spatial research.

In spite of the fact that the manipulation of our environment has been a tool used to influence human behaviour (Moos, 1986: 4), educational research has ignored space management, especially in language teaching. Paul Temple suggests that space is an under-researched topic, mainly because of the difficulty of defining specific methodologies (2007: 10). One of the most striking contradictions in language learning is the fact that immersion programmes hold the winning reputation as optimum learning experiences. These programmes owe their success to the unlimited exposure of the student to a place structured through their target language (TL). Not all immersion experiences have had a positive effect in language learning (Mclaughlin, 2000), but it is important to realize that the creation of TL spaces in our higher education institutions may foster TL interaction within our university campuses.

Michel Focault (1984) advocated for the need for universities to develop as 'heterotopias'. Heterotopias are countersites, present in every society, with specific functions, juxtaposed to other places, related to slices of time, with a discreet system of access and exit. Taking into account the new physical features in our universities, it is obvious that the social - not this heterotopic critical - function of university life has been highlighted in recent decades. In an effort to acknowledge the neglected social side of learning, the design of our buildings may have overcompensated, disintegrating their focus on learning. The need for public universities to mirror the 'real' world has transpired into building policies. For instance, in the university in which I work, there is a small café in every building, one college bar and a gym with special rates for campus-users. Kelly Coate (2014) warns against a careless attitude towards drawing distinctions between the space of the university and the space

outside. The main distinction between these spaces on campus and in the city is their rates.

Language teachers understand classrooms and universities as places for learning in order to prepare the student to use their interlanguage in the 'real' world, where they will acquire the desired native-speaker competence. Teachers view the classroom as a space for trial and error. The communicative approach attempts to tear down the walls of the classroom allowing the TL to invade this space and mimic the TL worlds outside; but it abuses repetitive role-plays, which fail to reflect the rich reality of real TL spaces. The question of how to create interactive spaces that are meaningful to language learning remains unresolved.

According to Lefebvre, 'social space is a social product' (1991: 26). In other words, it is not the building that creates the activity but the activity that transforms the space. Consequently, a cafeteria could be a site of learning and of social interaction; interaction being the key word in language learning. Interactionist approaches emphasize the idea that meaningful language exchange is a necessary condition for language learning (Leo Van lier; Bernard Spolsky; Vivian Cook). Bonny Norton Peirce and Kelleen Toohey maintain that the study of the context that surrounds language interaction between people should not be left aside (2002: 283). As an activity developed in a specific area emphasizes one function over another, the transformation of the spaces available on campus is associated with the activities that campus-users make of them. The physical aspects of these sites aid in the transformation, but the key may be occupying these social spaces with learning activities. Some teachers have offered a solution to this issue and they have developed classes outside the classroom, encouraging the use of their TL in their interactions with other learners or initiating interaction with native speakers. These task-based learning activities may not be easy to assess but they seem to encourage a deeper approach than classroom interaction exchanges.

Some universities allow their teachers to choose the space in which they carry out their lessons. In this way, teachers are the agents of spatial transformation. In the introduction to *Teaching as a Design Science,* Diana Laurillard (2012) defines the aim of this approach as the provision of tools for the design of class venues and 'existing artefacts' (Hevner, 2009: 127). Design science emphasizes the low costs

involved in the transformation of 'common rooms, foyers and gathering areas that would need relatively little enhancement to become social learning spaces' (Somerset, 2006: 4). James H. Banning et al (2001) offer a classification of spaces that enhance good working relations, which could be used for language purposes.

Equally, the onus on spatial transformation does not need to fall on the teacher's shoulders. It could be shared by the community of campus users, with a common language learning goal. In the Irish university in which I work, there is a lack of space for 'loud' team work in foreign languages. In the short questionnaires carried out for this chapter, students manifest the need for spaces, close to their teachers for consultation, where they can talk out loud with their peers while focusing on language work. Melonie Fullick (2013) suggests that 'separating faculty members from graduate students makes it more difficult for students to have informal, serendipitous and social contact with professors'. We do not have classrooms differentiated by discipline or conglomerates of disciplines either. This has a negative impact on the sense of belonging, ownership and visibility that students and staff experience (Becher & Trowler, 1996) and consequently, on student engagement. The research carried out for Project Kaleidoscope (1998), developed in the UK in order to study the spatial features of educational institutions, shows that there is an immediate positive effect on performance of students and faculty through the provision and transformation of spaces (Jamieson, 2003: 131).

In spite of the demands of the European market, costly new buildings have either ignored the languages already present on their campuses or relegated them to the margins as language centres. The exception in the institution in which I work is Gaeilge. The commitment to building a bilingual campus has created buildings and signage through Irish. These efforts are not enough, but the attempt to foster language interaction by the manipulation of spaces is evident on this campus.

Moving from the wider campus to the specific classroom venues, spatial arrangements within a class manifest what academic institutions expect of our students and learning activities; but the way in which we conform to these arrangements also informs learning outcomes. Diana Oblinger (2004) points out that our classrooms limit learning to a specific space and time, without bearing in mind differences between groups. Their physical characteristics such as seating (free,

bound, location, comfort and shape), furniture and resources, density, privacy, noise, light and temperature definitely have a direct impact on classroom events (Douglas and Glifford, 2010: 304). For instance, as seating arrangements tend to be fixed, the physical distribution of students in a classroom can be approached from a socioeconomic perspective, as a reference point for the resources that these students employ. Most classrooms have a front and back with lines of tables and a board in front of the classroom. The first world students would be at the front, fully engaged with the requirements of the curriculum. The third world students would be at the back, those who do not comply with the curriculum and lack the resources to do so. In the middle, the second world students would be oscillating between the first and the third world. Most problematic would be to look at fourth world students, i.e. full time students with an erratic behaviour, mostly absent in class. The field of environmental psychology has a lot to offer to teachers and the compilation of case studies by Oblinger and her study group, Educause, is a good starting point.

The reality is that most language teachers do not take into account the physicality of our classrooms in their lesson plans, beyond noticing the absence of a projector and making minor seating rearrangements. Likewise, our students arrive in our classroom with previous educational baggage (Laurillard, 2012: 27) and will not dare to engage in the transformation of their learning environment. Students 'passively experience whatever is imposed upon them' (Lefebvre, 1991: 43). Teaching and learning innovations are promoting active learning environments, but the previous experience of our students contradicts this move.

The JISC report concludes that space design will only be part of the solution. It also shows that 'little work appears to have taken place in relating design and environmental issues to various space uses in higher education'. The research carried out by Lennie Scott-Webber (2004) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2006) shows that there is little difference between schools and higher education (JISC, 2001: 20). This similarity between two juxtaposed sites of learning contributes to the confusion between the secondary and postsecondary systems. Spatial cognition happens unconsciously through a process of familiarization with a certain environment (Jamieson, 2000: 131). The transition between secondary school and university, a concern in most academic institutions, needs to go beyond mere

representations of space (maps and descriptive campus walks) towards awareness of the learning activities in place.

One of the main problems with the research on learning spaces is that it tends to measure student responses to environment and not learning outcomes. Our small probe, conducted via the questionnaire at the end of this chapter, at this Irish university with the students of Spanish and in the University of Valladolid (Spain) with the students of English philology, also accounted for the students' perceptions of space, instead of their learning outcomes due to the time constraints involved. Further case studies that take into account the impact of space variables on results are needed.

Let us now turn to the questionnaires, bearing in mind that this analysis does not have a quantitative purpose in mind and it has been devised for illustrative purposes only. In the Spanish university, students were in advanced stages of language learning and five students had already graduated. These students show general satisfaction with their classrooms but a lack of vocabulary for their description– which may be influenced by the fact that they answered in their TL. They all show a preference for the smaller groups. They highlight the VLE available to them (Moodle) and underline the need for the creation of spaces to interact with native speakers. Most of them study at home without any specific reference to space arrangement beyond the need for a computer and only thirteen per cent of students in this group made a reference to solitude and silence as requisites in their study time, perhaps illustrating a change in the study habits of students.

In the Irish university, students were separated according to their academic years since we had that information readily available. This group was slightly more varied in terms of age as well. The Spanish students ranged from eighteen to twenty-one, whereas in this group some of the students were teenagers, others were in their twenties and some in their forties. We did not account for their differences in terms of age, but a more in-depth study would need to refer to those variables and clarify distinct student backgrounds. The most noticeable feature of these questionnaires is that there are only dissatisfied students in the beginners' first year groups. They denounce the massification of their classes across the Arts curriculum. Paradoxically, first year intermediate students, who studied Spanish for their Leaving

Certificate – Irish equivalent to U.K. A-levels – do not report any discontent in terms of space, even though they are also new to the campus and the facilities. The second years do not show any dissatisfaction either. This puzzling result may indicate that second year students adapt to the environment that they are using and do not question it. The survey is not comprehensive enough to throw light on the reasons for these responses and further research is needed, especially on the effect of massification alongside learning outcomes.

The lack of a mention of the VLE used on this campus (Blackboard) is more noticeable in contrast with their Spanish counterparts. Most students mention their laptops or computers as study partners but there is no mention of this virtual campus. Like their Spanish peers, their descriptions of their classrooms are not very detailed in spite of the fact that they answered in their native language. They seem aware of the need to 'tidy' their study space and some of them also highlight the need for silence. Most of them prefer to study on campus, which shows a marked cultural difference in contrast with the Spanish students.

Finally, as the Erasmus program is part of the international student experience in most universities nowadays, students were asked about their personal experiences during that year. Most use the term fluency as a benefit but their definition of fluency shows a gap between students' and teachers' expectations. Once again, this takes us back to the need to measure learning outcomes in order to account for the success of the changes implemented in learning experiences. To a great extent they also mentioned the need to interact with native speakers in their Erasmus program as a positive aspect of language immersion. They all mentioned a boost in their self-confidence, possibly related to daily exposure and content based learning in their courses through the TL as a benefit as well.

Time in Language Teaching and Learning in Contemporary University Campuses

Teachers have been long aware of time within a class, bearing in mind the distribution of class activities and content. These time slots vary from university to university and within the same universities, as some disciplines use double and triple slots, while others restrict their classes to one slot at a time. Teachers have traditionally organized their content along the academic year span, establishing the

sequence for delivery. However, as Coate (2014) points out, in most universities timetables are left in the hands of administrators who have to base their decisions on financial issues, failing to acknowledge the diversity of learning needs of the different disciplines. The need for flexibility filters from space into the issues of time, in order to maximize our students' learning on campus. The reduction of semester time and the immediacy of exams at the end of each semester, established through European standardization, have failed to acknowledge discipline-specific learning curves. For instance, the academic year in Spain starts at the end of September and finishes in June. In our questionnaires, some students question these dates and the way the content is organized – in Spain there are state curricular plans for each degree, revised at the education council for each autonomous community and at the level of local university. As a solution, Maggie Savin-Baden endorses a move away from performativity in order to focus on the learning process through continuous assessment (2008: 145). Whereas that may be possible for some modules (as Michel Märlein exposes in chapter six of this book), the nature of language courses requires assessment based on the performative outcomes defined by the European Language Framework. The learning curve from beginner level to a B1 European level (required in order to take advantage of this learning abroad opportunity) calls for more time investment than currently available in the university system.

Other issues, such as self-study time needed to invest outside the classroom, are generally overlooked. Savin-Baden points out time for reading, thinking and reflecting in academic life has been eroded (2008: 2). Coate (2014) adds the generalized perception of lacking time, but she attributes this time deficiency to the shift in the culture of learning and to the demands of a busy life. The reality is that many students need jobs to help finance their degrees, but according to Savin-Baden, students and teachers spend an average of nine hours a week on online social activities (2008: 149). This shows that the creation of new spaces encourages investment of time using them and these spaces survive if they are meaningful to our experience. Spaces are 'intimately bound with their function and structure' (Lefebvre, 1991: 94) and time is invested in the use of the space provided for the desired activity. For instance, one of the Irish beginner groups has led the organization of study groups in the evenings. In spite of the lack of a space and their busy lives, they

have established this weekly activity without any external support, proving that the issue of investment is intrinsically connected to the organization of student goals.

Another issue embedded in our academic calendar is based on the industrialist assumption that everybody will work at the maximum of their abilities during teaching term so they can relax during their holidays. This sequence of university time argues against the current European recommendations towards lifelong learning as a goal of higher education. The first year Irish students in our study, accustomed to their mid-term break in secondary school, encounter a system that rushes them through the first twelve weeks, with exams on the fourteenth week after their arrival on campus. In our questionnaires, they demand a break in the middle to catch up and rest. This midterm break has been a need identified by students and teachers with heavy workloads. On the other hand, second year Irish students demand guidance about what to do in the summer and winter holidays. Individual cases with learning difficulties – visual impairments, dyslexia… - speak up in terms of their extra time needs for which a massified stressful university culture cannot provide.

So with all these problems in mind, what are the solutions available to teachers and students in terms of time? Some teachers in science disciplines have started to use the tool of flipped classrooms. Coate (2014) describes this tool as 'a common method of teaching to encourage students to read set texts before class time, and come prepared to discuss them'. Here, the classroom is devoted to engagement with the content and interaction between participants. This tool assumes that the students will come prepared to class so it needs to be rooted in an engaged culture of learning. Students voice their concern about the restriction of time distribution of activities in class in our questionnaires. They were asked about the organization of their own time and the type of activities they use for language learning outside of the classroom. They know the benefit of preparing materials in advance of a class. In general, students express an interest in investing study time on this activity but very few plan it conscientiously. There are similarities between the language learning activities but they do not reflect their learning goals or needs, and they tend to be guided by and not anticipating class activities.

Students who have experienced the Erasmus program report their lack of time management skills. They assumed unlimited exposure and location as a sufficient

condition for language learning. Some of them made a conscious effort to spend time interacting with native speakers and they comment on the difficulties in availing of meaningful interaction and relationships. Most of them rely on passive activities, relating increased input to better performance, leaving aside the grey area of expected outputs and how to give feedback on error for every level of the student's interlanguage. Summing up, it could be argued that these students were ill-prepared for their Erasmus programmes and the question remains of how to better equip them for immersion experiences within the restrictions of the time available in college.

VLEs as part of Contemporary University Campuses

The internet has changed our habits, but it needs to be further explored towards a culture of active learning. Michael Wesch, who created the video called 'A Vision of Students Today' in 2007, shows the time spent on using internet and multimedia technology in our lives in contrast with its little use for learning purposes.

VLEs have populated the web with accessible repositories of materials and interactive applications for language learning. Thanks to this accessibility, Coate (2014) argues that 'today's students […] are able to learn almost anywhere'. The virtual campus of many universities includes a plethora of virtual libraries, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), videos of lectures, organized notes and learning aids at their fingertips. These tools support communication between members of their education system and outsiders. For instance, some teachers are exploring Twitter for student-to-student communication. The 'tweet' interaction seems to lower levels of language anxiety and encourage conversations online. Oblinger quotes a generalized student preference for 'learning experiences that are digital, connected, experiential, immediate and social' (2006: 52). Most students spend many hours on social networks but very few use them for language interaction. The virtual world has expanded the access to TL communities and spaces but they are underused in terms of active learning.

The shortest part of our questionnaire, aimed at observing the activities students carry out online, portrays a student that contradicts Oblinger's student profile. Their answers show that individual digital literacies require development in order to maximize the use of online spaces. In the questionnaires carried out for this chapter, many students quote watching T.V. and listening to the radio but very few practice

productive language skills online such as conversation –whether written or spoken – or bilingual cooperation. Except for one student, who did some research in terms of language learning skills, most students used Web 2.0 in a very utilitarian way, as an aid to their homework or for entertainment purposes. In other words, in our focus group, students seem to use 'the space of flows' only for passive comprehensive activities (Castells, 2007: 260).

Most students in our small survey claim that they need more speaking practice, but very few of them spend their extra study time on speaking activities, except on the Erasmus program. Although they are aware of language social networks and other software for audiovisual communication, they do not use them for spoken interaction. The internet has changed notions of place, time and space (Oblinger, 2004), and it runs in parallel with and cuts across our everyday lives. Consumer attitudes are not conducive to language learning. Digital literacy training may be the mechanism for unlocking this creative potential available at our fingertips. As a solution, some teachers have started to incorporate the training in the use of tools like Skype, Twitter and Audacity in their language classroom, from a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach.

On the other hand, our survey shows that some students believe that the internet can have negative effects on their language learning. One student highlighted that her dependence on technology was detrimental to the nurturing of memory skills. Some of these students were very precise about the type of language learning they think that online sources can enhance, limiting it to a specific range of passive abilities. Irish students seem to use a wider range of online resources than their Spanish peers and they are more unanimous in their assessment of the internet as an aid for language learning. This questionnaire was an excellent tool for teachers to elucidate the online resources students use on a regular basis. It gave us a quick picture of the kind of learning culture in which students participate outside of the classroom and their digital skills.

Virtual spaces are not commonly used as sites for interaction and collaboration between students and even less, between TL worlds. Most teachers use these VLEs as repositories. At the university in which I work, Spanish developed two sets of open-source materials used in our first year modules (A1 and A2). These materials,

designed by teachers, recorded and revised together with students through Spanish, English and Irish, are being piloted at the moment, but at first sight, the interactive side of learning has not been promoted enough. Instead, private study time and independent language practice prevail. Even though the collaboration between teachers and students as producers was very positive, the end-user of this material was not visualized as a 'connected and social' student.

The various solutions described in this book show the wide range of possibilities of virtual spaces. The uses and types of forums and chats that Daniel Cassany describes in chapter one; the use of social networking and virtual worlds that Luisa Panichi & Elaine Riordan elaborate in chapter two; the creation of collaborative tasks through virtual game-like application developed by Anke Berns & Concepción Valero Franco in chapter three; the range of computer-mediated conversations in the TL addressed by Manel Jebali in chapter four; the use of self-recordings for self-assessment described in chapter seven of this book serve as examples of the strategies used by teachers and students to promote active learning through multimedia technologies. Wikis have proliferated in an attempt to tackle the issue of contact during the Erasmus programme and student collaboration. When they are developed through the TL, they also achieve a language goal, with the benefit of feedback by teachers or peers, in the same way as Rosario Hernández's project of collaborative assessment does in chapter eight. Web 2.0 allows any user to step out of their consumer role into the world of creative commons, with the wider availability of internet-equipped gadgets, open source software and collaborative spaces (Oblinger, 2006: 12) – and Web 3.0 will take us even further.

Conclusions

This chapter attempted to give a review of how space and time impact our contemporary third level institutions for language teaching and learning purposes. The main problem threatening these learning environments seems to be massification and the lack of interaction, either in virtual or real life language learning interactions. An immediate solution would be to improve the TL signage on the physical campus as well as provision for spaces for TL-only interaction. University induction programmes also need to showcase the learning activities happening on campus on a regular basis and their relationship to specific spaces. A certain degree

of flexibility for students and teachers to design classrooms and open access areas would be ideal too.

Although the JISC project has proven that the transformation of spaces brings about positive effects in student performance, 'the notion that simply altering the physical structure, without an accompanying change in the social structure, will produce real change' needs to be discarded (Becher & Trowler, 1996: 523). Our language classes are not isolated events and the promotion of an ecological perspective needs to acknowledge what else is going on before, during and after college as well as in the wider context of the community (*ibid*: 525). Teachers and students may need to reassess their concepts of learning inside and outside the classroom, by reflecting on the use they make of the spaces available to them. Taking our language classes beyond the classroom walls, teachers have found solutions to bridge the gap between institutional environments on campus and outside, integrating discreet campus functions into the common objective of lifelong language learning (Jamieson, 2003: 127). Service learning has helped bridge the gap between theory and practice as well as between university and community.

Most language courses include a spoken interaction class, which could be used to question and engage students in the discussion of learning environments. The provision of forums on VLEs may also be a way to foster reflection on these aspects of language learning. E-Portfolios as described in chapter five can help incorporating an element of reflection on space and time issues around language learning.

In terms of improving the Erasmus experience, collaborative VLEs could be developed between the universities on an Erasmus link. These VLEs could be populated with activities that would engage students in both campuses and promote interaction between them, prior to arrival at their Erasmus city.

Temple (2008) suggests that we need more research to help us make better choices regarding the use of teaching-learning spaces, whether virtual or physical. A longer term solution would be to invest locally in a research project that analyses the impact of spaces in learning activities and their outcomes.

As teachers, we need to make an effort to reduce the pace of the academic year, by creating learning spaces where slow activities can be promoted and where learning

curves and sequences are, if not correlated to the pace of the course, at least transparent to students. These spaces can be developed simply by the creation of student communities of practice like in the LSUC project or on online social networks. The transformation of a social networking space into a learning space requires guidance and peer review. The control and access of specialized spaces by language students and its alignment with the activities promoted in the curriculum may bring about positive changes in student performance, and foster the move towards blended learning approaches.

In terms of time, students present a need for training in time management skills, so they can avail of language learning opportunities in the time outside of teaching terms and between academic years. A solution to imposed learning curves could be the development of modular programmes, or even MOOCs, that allow individual students to take their time with each level of language performance required. Some of these individual students need specific support in terms of time and resources, based on their learning abilities and they would need special time provisions for completion of these levels.

VLEs have helped in solving time and space issues in our learning institutions when aligned with a variety of language learning skills. Most platforms have been used as material repositories and not for TL interaction and they have added extra passive-study time to already-crammed class timetables. The solutions and online applications discussed in this book were integrated in language modules, which minimized the impact on the students' busy schedules and fostered independent use at a later stage.

REFERENCES

Banning J. and Carney Strange, C. (2001). *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments that Work.* San
        Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

Becher T, and Trowler, P. R. (1996). *Academic Tribes and Territories Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of*
        Disciplines. Philadelphia, PA.: The Society for Research into Higher Education.

Castells, M. (2007). 'Communication, Power and Counterpower in the Network Society, *International Journal of*
        Communication, 1, 238- 266.

Coate, K. (2014). 'Learning Spaces' in Ashwin, P. (ed.). *Reflective Teaching in Higher* Education. London: Bloomsbury
        Press.

Douglas, D. & R. Gifford (2010). 'Evaluation of the Physical Classroom by Students and Professors: a LENS Model
        Approach', *Educational Research,* 43:3, 295-309.

Foucault, M. (1984). 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias', *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité,* 5 (1984): 46-49.

Fullick, M. (2013). 'Finding your place',
        <http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/university_of_venus/places_of_learnin g#ixzz2nLb2Zmdi>
        and <http://speculativediction.blogspot.ca/2011/01/myths-mismatches-part-9-findingyour.html> accessed 13th December, 2013.

Hevner, A. R. (2009). 'Interview with Alan R. Hevner on "Design Science"', *Business & Information Systems Engineering,*
        1, 126-129.

Jamieson, P., Fisher, K., Gilding, T., Taylor, P.G and Trevitt, A. C. F. (2000). 'Place and Space in the Design of New
        Learning Environments', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 19:2, 221-236.

Jamieson, P. (2003). 'Designing More Effective On-Campus Teaching and Learning Spaces: a Role for Academic
        Developers', *International Journal for Academic Development*, 8:1-2, 119-133.

JISC (2001). 'Designing Spaces for Effective Learning, a Guide to 21st Century Learning Space Design'.
        <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/JISClearningspaces.pdf>
accessed 12 October, 2013.

Laurillard, D. (2012).*Teaching as a Design Science: Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology.*
        Abdingdon: Routledge.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). Translated by Donald Nicolson Smithy. *The Production of Space.* Oxford: Blackwell

McLaughlin, B. (2000). 'Myths and Misconceptions about Second Language Learning: What Every Teacher Needs to
        Unlearn'. Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. University of California:
        Santa Cruz. <http://people.ucsc.edu/~mclaugh/MYTHS.htm> accessed 12 August, 2012.

Moos, R. (1986). *Work Environment State Manual.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Norton Peirce, B. & Toohey, K. (2002). 'Identity and Language Learning'. In R.B. KAPLAN (ed.). *The Oxford*
    Handbook of Applied Linguistics, pp. 115-123. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oblinger, D. G. (ed.) (2004). 'Leading the Transition from Classrooms to Learning Spaces', An NLII White Paper,
    October 2004. <https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/NLI0447.pdf> accessed 10 October 2013.

Oblinger, D.G. (2006). *Learning Spaces*. Washington DC: Educause.

Savin-Baden, M. (2008). *Learning Spaces: Creating Opportunities for Knowledge Creation in Academic Life*. Maidenhead:
    Open University Press.

Scott-Webber, L. (2004). *In Sync: Environmental Behavior Research and the Design of Learning Spaces*. Ann Arbor, MI:
    The Society for College and University Planning.

SFC. (2006). *Spaces for Learning: A Review of Learning Spaces in Further and Higher Education*. Edinburgh: Scottish
    Funding Council.

Somerset, S. (2006). 'Investing in a learning landscape', *Interact (University of Bristol Learning Technology Support*
    Services), 32, 4-5.

Temple, P. (2008). 'Learning Spaces in Higher Education: An Under-Researched Topic' *London Review of Education*
    6(3), 229-241.

Temple, P. (2007). *Learning Spaces for the 21st Century. A Review of the Literature.* Centre for Higher Education Studies,
    University of London: The Higher Education Academy.

Time and Space in Language Learning: A Survey

Your answers will be treated anonymously and for research purposes only. Please submit your answers to Dr. Pilar Alderete: pilar.alderete@nuigalway.ie BEFORE THE 7TH OF NOVEMBER, 2013. Should you prefer to send them by post or drop them into my box, this is my office address:

Dr. Pilar Alderete - National University of Ireland, Galway. - Spanish. Arts Millennium 342. - University Rd. -Newcastle, Galway, IRELAND

Read all the questions before answering them individually.

PERSONAL DATA:

1. Your age: _____
2. Your gender: _____
3. The language/s that you are learning at the moment:
4. Where you learn them:
    a. Language 1: _____ - Location: _____
    b. Language 2: _____ - Location: _____
    c. Language 3: _____ - Location: _____
    d. ...
5. The level of each language that you are trying to learn:
    a. Language 1: _____ - I'm learning at _____ level.
    b. Language 2: _____ - I'm learning at _____ level.
    c. Language 3: _____ - I'm learning at _____ level.
    d. ...

SPACE:

1. How would you describe the classroom/s where you learn languages?
2. What are the facilities on campus like? Do you use them often? Which ones?
3. What would you like to change in terms of your learning spaces at the school/university where you are learning languages?
4. Where do you normally carry out your language study?
5. How do you organize your space for language learning?
6. What other things help you learning language in terms of space?

TIME:

1. How many hours of language class have you got every week? Are they enough?
2. How long is each class? Is it enough for you?
3. Are you satisfied with how time is used in your class? How would you improve it?
4. Are you happy with the way the academic year is organized at your learning institution? How would you improve it?

5. How much extra time do you dedicate to learning a language? How do you organize this extra time? What activities do you do?

INTERNET AND ONLINE RESOURCES:

1. Do online resources help you learn?
2. Do they speed up your language study?
3. Which ones do you use?

ONLY FOR STUDENTS WHO WERE ON A YEAR ABROAD, WORK PLACEMENT, INTERNSHIP, LANGUAGE ASSISTANTSHIP OR AN ERASMUS PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING PURPOSES:

1. How did your Erasmus immersion help you learn the target language?
2. How did you organize your time to learning this language during the year abroad or Erasmus year? What activities did you do to learn the language?